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Building Level Principals as Change Agents in a Response to Intervention Reform Initiative

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

BUILDING LEVEL PRINCIPALS AS CHANGE AGENTS IN A
RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION REFORM INITIATIVE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND POLICY STUDIES

BY

KRISTEN NINNI

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

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Life loves to be taken by the lapel and told: "I am with you kid. Let's go."
~Maya Angelou

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
LIST OF TABLES	xi
LIST OF FIGURES	xiii
ABSTRACT	xiv
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
Educational Policies	1
Response to Intervention.....	5
Principal Leadership and Reform	7
Purpose of the Study	10
Research Questions	11
Significance to the Field of Educational Leadership	12
Research Design	13
Definition of Terms	17
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	19
Introduction.....	19
Response to Intervention.....	20
Multilayered Prevention System	23
Research Based, Scientifically Validated	25
Problem-Solving Method	26
Data and Assessment	29
Rtl and the Discrepancy Model.....	30
School Reform and the Change Process	32
The Progressive Period	32
Modern Reform Movements	34
Building Capacity.....	36
Cultures of Learning	38
Effective School Reform	39
Standards Based Reform	41
Leadership Succession	43
Creating Coherence	44
Moral Purpose	46
Principal Leadership for Change	47
Knowledge of the Change Process	48
Instructional Leadership	49
Distributed Leadership.....	53
Transformational Leadership.....	54
Problem Solving Teams.....	55
Skills of the Change Process.....	57

Risk Taking	58
Communication.....	58
Trust Building.....	59
Data Based Decisions	60
Collaboration	61
Self-Efficacy of the Change Process	61
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	65
Introduction.....	65
Research Design	65
Research Participants	67
Research Instruments	70
Research Procedure.....	76
Data Analysis.....	83
Ethical and Validity Issues.....	87
Limitations of the Study	88
Bias of the Researcher	89
Chapter Summary	90
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS	91
Introduction.....	91
Data Collection Process	92
Research Questions	94
Data Coding and Analysis	95
Qualitative Analysis	95
Interpretation of the Data.....	97
Perceived Knowledge of Change Concerning Principals.....	98
Perceived Self-Efficacy of Change of Principals.....	98
Perceived Skills of Change of Principals	99
Summary of Findings.....	101
Perceived Knowledge of Change Concerning Principals.....	102
Perceived Self-Efficacy of Change of Principals.....	110
Perceived Skills of Change of Principals	115
Summary of Content Analysis	132
Quantitative Analysis	134
Exploratory Factor Analysis and Instructional Group Results	135
Summary of Findings.....	138
Summary	142
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	143
Background of the Researcher	144
Limitations and Delimitations	147
Findings and Implications	148
Qualitative Findings	148
Perceived Knowledge of Change Concerning Principals.....	148

Perceived Self-Efficacy of Change of Principals.....	152
Perceived Skills of Change of Principals	154
Quantitative Findings.....	161
Provides Vision and Models Appropriate Behavior	161
Holds High Expectations.....	162
Fosters Commitment to Goals and Individual Support	162
Significance of the Study	164
Significance of the Study to Leadership	165
Recommendations for Future Research	166
Summary and Conclusions.....	168
APPENDIX A: LETTER OF INSTITUTIONAL INVITATION.....	171
APPENDIX B: LETTER OF INSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION	173
APPENDIX C: SYNOPSIS OF RESEARCH.....	175
APPENDIX D: CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH PRINCIPAL.....	179
APPENDIX E: CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH PROBLEM SOLVING TEAM MEMBER.....	183
APPENDIX F: CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH FACULTY MEMBER.....	187
APPENDIX G: BUILDING LEVEL PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL.....	190
APPENDIX H: PROBLEM SOLVING TEAM INTEVIEW PROTOCOL	192
APPENDIX I: SURVEY OF PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS.....	194
APPENDIX J: LETTER OF INSTITUTIONAL PROSPECT REFUSAL	197
APPENDIX K: TRANSCRIBER CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT	199
REFERENCES	201
VITA.....	216

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Thematic Categories and Invariant Constituent Distributions	96
Table 2: Principals' Perceptions of their Own Experience with Rtl.....	103
Table 3: PST Members' Perceptions of their Experience with Rtl.....	104
Table 4: Principals' Perceptions of Most Challenging Part(s) of Reform	106
Table 5: PST Members' Perceptions of the Reform Challenges Faced by the Principal.....	108
Table 6: Principals' Perceptions of the Degree to Which They Base Decision Making on Data	109
Table 7: PST Members' Perceptions of the Degree to Which They Base Decision Making on Data.....	109
Table 8: Principals' Perceptions of their own Leadership Styles.....	112
Table 9: PST Members' Perceptions of the Principal's Leadership Style	113
Table 10: Principals' Perceptions of How they Communicate Leadership Styles to Staff	114
Table 11: PST Members' Perceptions of How Principal Communicates Leadership Style.....	115
Table 12: Principals' Perceptions of their Methods of Ensuring Quality Instruction	117
Table 13: PST Members' Perceptions of How the Principal Ensures Quality Instruction	119
Table 14: Principals' Perceptions of the Professional Development Opportunities Provided to Staff.....	120
Table 15: PST Members' Perceptions of Professional Development Opportunities Provided to Staff.....	122

Table 16: Principals' Perceptions of How he/she has Reallocated Resources	123
Table 17: PST Members' Perceptions of Principal's Reallocation of Resources	124
Table 18: Principals' Perceptions of their Promotion of High Standards of Learning	125
Table 19: PST Members' Perceptions of How the Principals Promote High Standard of Learning	127
Table 20: Principals' Perceptions of their Role on the Problem Solving Team	129
Table 21: PST Members' Perceptions of his/her Role on the Problem Solving Team	130
Table 22: Principals' Perceptions of Use of Professional Learning Communities.....	131
Table 23: PST Members' Perceptions of Use of Professional Learning Communities.....	132
Table 24: Demonstration of Change Characteristics by Principals during Problem Solving Team Meetings.....	134
Table 25: Factor Loadings.....	135
Table 26: Internal Coefficient Alphas for Components	137

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Scree plot of a single EFA using the Varimax Rotation Method. 137

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the role of the principal in a systems change effort. Utilizing Response to Intervention (RtI) as a means of studying principals as change agents, this researcher examined the principals' ability to implement and sustain a reform effort such as RtI as perceived by the principal, problem solving team, and teachers. This study examined how the perceptions influenced the change process and the extent to which the principal demonstrated characteristics of change such as knowledge of change, self-efficacy or their belief in their ability to make changes, and skills of change as supported and most often cited in the research.

In general, the content analysis of the interviews and observations with the principals showed that the principals demonstrated perceptions of themselves that were representative of having knowledge of change, self-efficacy of change, and skills of change. The content analysis of the interviews and observations with the PST members showed that the PST members had very similar perceptions of the principals' knowledge, self-efficacy and skills of change as the principals had of themselves. The quantitative findings indicated that five components were extracted from the survey using exploratory factor analysis. All five factors were individually reliable. The five factors were provides vision and models

appropriate behavior, holds high expectations, fosters commitment to goals and individual support, provides vision and individual support, and individual support.

Overall, according to the perceptions of building principals, PST members, and general teaching staff, the principals at the three schools participating in this study demonstrate change characteristics of self-efficacy of change, knowledge of change, and skills of change. Therefore, the systems change efforts in these schools will likely demonstrate success in terms of increased student achievement and positive outcomes, according to previous literature.

Recommendations for school leaders include the assessment and identification of change skills and characteristics among building principals and use of these skills in implementation of system change efforts.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Although state and local authorities primarily govern education in America, the federal government has increasingly grown more involved in the policies that guide each state's educational system. Education as a governmental function goes back as early as the founding fathers of America's constitution. In fact, John Adams once said, "Education for every class and rank of people down to the lowest and the poorest" (Adams as cited in Barton, 1998, p. 10). The federal government as well as state governments continues to maintain this goal with recent reauthorizations of federal laws, diligent work at the state level to hold schools accountable for their performance, use of research-based teaching practices, data based decisions, and a paradigm shift in thinking about the needs for all students. With all of these efforts, this once dismal statement made by John Adams will come to fruition if we are able to engage in systems change. Our educational leaders must be at the forefront.

Educational Policies

In 1965, the federal government assumed a larger role in financing public schools with the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* of 1965 (P.L. No. 107-110 115 Stat. 1425). Later, the publication of *A Nation at Risk* by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) led the way for

widespread educational reform efforts across the United States by creating a sense of urgency. *A Nation at Risk* highlighted a growing concern that other nations were surpassing the accomplishments of the American people. Findings evidenced a level of mediocrity and the report indicated that it would threaten the future of the American people. Successive versions of federal legislation, such as reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, most recently termed the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) Act of 2001 (P.L. No. 107-110 115 Stat. 1425), required state governments to set standards for student performance and teacher quality. The law attempts to establish accountability for standardized testing results and improve fairness and equity in American education. The *Individuals with Disabilities Act* (IDEA), formerly known as the *Education of All Handicapped Children Act* (P.L. 94-142), is the primary federal program that authorizes state and local aid for special education and related services for children with disabilities. In 2004, legislation reauthorized IDEA (P.L. 108-446), which was then termed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA).

The new law preserved the basic structure and civil rights guarantees of IDEA but also marked significant changes in the law. The requirements regarding "highly qualified" special education teachers became effective immediately upon signature. Both NCLB and IDEIA call for states to be accountable for the performance of their students (Wedl, 2005). *No Child Left Behind* and the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act* merge general and

special education initiatives. Stollar, Poth, Curtis, and Cohen (2006) stated, “The high standards and expectations of NCLB are highlighting the needs of a growing number of at-risk students and students with disabilities and are raising awareness of the discrepancies in academic performance across students” (p. 10). Both policies call to question the practices that have long been in place and ask educators to alter their approach to a system that has existed for several decades. These regular and special education initiatives are educational policies for all children.

Section 1414(b)(6)(B) of IDEIA (2004) states, “in determining whether a child has a specific learning disability, a local educational agency may use a process that determines if the child responds to scientific, research-based intervention as part of the evaluation process.” This procedure is called Response to Intervention (RtI), is an eligibility determination method that involves objective, systematic, data-based examination of the cause-effect relationship between an academic or behavioral intervention or interventions and the student’s response to that intervention for the purpose of identifying, defining, and resolving students’ academic or behavior problems (Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2005). Although eligibility determination in a Response to Intervention model has the greatest impact and change for students considered to have a specific learning disability, the systemic impact of Response to Intervention in schools will focus on prevention.

In the mid-1970s, the federal government published regulations detailing procedures for the identification of students with learning disabilities. Mellard, Deshler, and Barth (2004) noted, "The regulations gave states and local districts direction for ways to operationalize the definition of the LD construct" (p. 232). The regulations provided direction for the use of the discrepancy formula. The severe discrepancy formula was met by strong negative reactions. Despite these negative reactions, the U.S. Department of Education maintained the notion that an aptitude-achievement discrepancy model is necessary to determine eligibility under the category of learning disability (LD) (Mellard et al., 2004).

Because the U.S. Department of Education did not specify a particular formula, researchers and policy makers proposed a broad array of discrepancy formulas and criteria for assessing students' underachievement for LD determination decisions. Over the years, researchers have identified numerous shortcomings in the discrepancy model for determining eligibility under the LD category. One major shortcoming cited in the research is the overrepresentation of students identified as learning disabled (Mellard et al., 2004). "National policy regarding LD diagnosis has widespread implications for children, given that those diagnosed as LD represent over 50% of all children identified with a disability and approximately 5% of the total school population" (Lerner, 2002, p. 12). Ardoin, Witt, Connell, and Koenig (2005) stated,

Identifying students in need of special services through an Rtl model will require a paradigm shift. Rather than using standardized tests in an attempt to identify what is specifically wrong within a student, an Rtl approach will require schools to examine contextual

issues (quality of instruction) and more importantly shift focus from identifying students with a deficit to identifying students at risk. (p. 74)

Response to Intervention

Rtl is a multilayered prevention system that involves identifying students' needs and puts them into layers, or tiers, based on their academic and behavioral level. A child's responsiveness to an intervention involves increasingly intensive instruction at each layer and assessment to identify students who adequately or inadequately respond to the instruction. Children who fail to respond to a universal core program in the general education setting, often referred to as tier 1, enter a secondary prevention that involves scientifically based small group instruction in tier 2. Students who fail to respond to secondary prevention programs are offered more intensive interventions at tier 3. The tertiary level, or tier 3, involves individualized instruction to meet the child's unique needs. Sometimes, but not always, this tertiary level is conducted in a special education setting with the focus on intensive remediation. If the child is then unresponsive to the tertiary level, the child may be identified as learning disabled. Fuchs and Fuchs (2006) noted, "Rtl has been codified in federal law as an alternative to traditional methods of identification of learning disabilities, and practitioners are now struggling to build Rtl models for their schools" (p. 623).

In addition to a multilayered prevention program, the successful implementation of an Rtl program involves (a) scientifically-based instruction of high quality, school wide screening of academic subject areas of math and

reading, (b) school wide screening of behavior, (c) progress monitoring of student performance, (d) implementation of research-based intervention at all tiers, (e) fidelity checks on implementation, (f) data-based decision making, and (g) problem solving teams to pull all the pieces together (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006).

Problem solving involves steps to address specific assessments and instructional activities designed to reduce or eliminate difficulties that a student may be enduring. Because problem-solving teams bring the components of Rtl together, it is important to note that leadership on a problem solving team is crucial. Because of their ability to influence the school's climate and resources, principals are arguably the most important supporters of problem-solving teams (Beckerman, 2005; Kovaleski, 2002). Bahr and Kovaleski (2006) stated, "We have observed how principal support of or participation on a problem-solving team can shape its purpose, ranging in focus from primarily disability screening to providing intervention assistance to all students" (p. 4). In fact, district or building based problem-solving teams that meet regularly have the ability to initiate and sustain school-wide initiatives. Kinsler (2008) stated, "For well over 20 years, the literature on school improvement has shown a link between collaborative data-driven problem solving at the local school level and increases in student achievement" (p. 128).

The screening and assessment components of Rtl lend themselves to early intervention and identification of learning problems. Utilizing outcome measures produced through screening and assessment procedures produces

data on which to apply decisions. Schools administrators and faculty have utilized these critical components of Rtl for many years, but they did not acknowledge these components as part of a larger system. Rtl pulls the pieces of assessment and instruction together. Brown-Chidsey and Steege (2005) stated, “What makes Rtl different from prior means of helping students is that the assessment and instruction practices are integrated into an objective data-based system with built in decision stages” (p. 26).

Although the challenges of implementing Rtl are numerous, focusing on the development of an integrated model of quality instruction gives educators an opportunity to ensure that appropriate learning experiences are occurring for all students. Applying these elements, Rtl is a reform initiative by which systems change theory is present.

Principal Leadership and Reform

To implement Rtl successfully, leadership is crucial. Hilton (2007) stated, “Principals will be an essential component in both implementation and sustainability of Rtl” (p. 17). The role of the building principal in an Rtl school reform effort needs to combine the knowledge of evidence-based practices and an understanding of systems change. The building principal must be visionary and have sustainability in a system they wish to change. The systems in educational agencies are exceedingly complex; therefore, the building principal plays an integral role in these complex systems (Morrison, 2005).

Vaughn and Roberts (2007) stated, “An essential component of successful Rtl implementation is leadership that is knowledgeable and supportive of the development and implementation of secondary interventions” (p. 43). In addition, Vaughn and Roberts stated, “several considerations for effectively implementing secondary interventions such as leadership that is committed to prevention-oriented practices and curriculum leaders who are willing to assure that scientifically based research practices are implemented” (p. 43). Lessons learned from previous research on the implementation and sustainability of other educational reforms suggests that three categories are essential: district-level practices that encourage reform, strong school leadership, and teacher buy-in (Hilton, 2007). Schools with strong leadership were identified as, “schools at which principals devoted time to the change and were successful in implementing and sustaining the change” (p. 18).

Zirkel (2007) stated, “Using Rtl properly requires careful system-wide planning, an effective change process, agile reorganization and major investment in staff development and materials” (p. 54). In a Response to Intervention model, data informs educators about student achievement. This data can assist a team with their decision to continue or adjust a plan accordingly. In fact, Fullan argued that developing cultures of evaluation is one of eight forces for leaders of change. Fullan, Cuttress, and Kilcher (2005) stated,

Assessment for learning incorporates accessing/gathering data on student learning; disaggregating data for more detailed understanding; developing action plans based on the previous two

points in order to make improvements; and being able to articulate and discuss performance with parents and external groups. (p. 54)

School wide reform models have the common characteristics of promoting high standards for all children: addressing all academic subject areas and grade levels; being research based and research tested; sharing a common focus on goals; including professional development; aligning all resources across grades and subject areas; and facilitating parent and community involvement in the Education Commission of the States (1998). However, these qualities alone will not guarantee effectiveness. Research shows that in order to implement a model successfully, faculty, staff, and parents must support it (Zukas, 2000). Further, whole school reform embraces a diverse set of programs and strategies that require a thorough investigation of all aspects of school life, from attitudes and culture to leadership and curriculum. Amuda, Kuklis, and Kline (2004) referred to these efforts as creating a competent system, which stresses systems thinking, collegiality, database decision-making, and collective accountability.

Successful reform involves not only leaders who are willing to be change agents; successful reform involves building a team of change agents. Change agents are leaders who cut across the organization without regard to the traditional hierarchy (Arrata, Despierre, & Kumra, 2007).

Fullan et al. (2005) described eight forces for leaders of change. They are:

1. Engaging people's moral purpose
2. Building capacity
3. Understanding the change process

4. Developing cultures of learning
5. Developing cultures of evaluation
6. Focusing on leadership for change
7. Fostering coherence making
8. Cultivating tri-level development

Being knowledgeable about organizational change is crucial. The effect of *change agency* on the success or failure depends deeply on those that are carrying out the change. Grasping change knowledge is central to the success of schools. When leaders develop skills and understandings in the context, they have a chance to change the contexts that constrain them (Fullan, 2003).

Research supports and most often cites the following characteristics of change as knowledge of the change process: (a) dedication to change where time is devoted to it, (b) engaging others in a moral purpose, (c) being a visionary leader, (d) establishing learning communities, (e) using data to make decisions, (f) promoting high standards, professional development, (g) reallocation of resources, (h) capacity building, and (i) consensus among faculty and community members.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of the building principal in a systems change effort. Utilizing Rtl as a means of studying principals as change agents, this researcher will examine the principal's ability to implement and sustain a reform effort such as Rtl as perceived by the principal, problem

solving team, and teachers. Furthermore, since the research supports the significance of strong leadership for systems change to occur, this study examines how the perceptions of the principal, problem solving teams, and teachers have influenced the change process. More specifically, this study will examine the extent to which the principal demonstrates characteristics of change such as knowledge of change, self-efficacy or their belief in their ability to make changes, and skills of change as supported in the research.

Research Questions

Using the Rtl reform initiative as a reform effort that schools are currently involved with, the following research questions address building-level principals as change agents:

RQ₁: According to the perceptions of principals, to what extent do they demonstrate characteristics of change as they specifically relate to: knowledge of change, self-efficacy of change, and skills of change as supported and most often cited in the change literature?

RQ₂: According to the perceptions of the problem solving teams, to what extent do building-level principals demonstrate characteristics of change as they specifically relate to knowledge of change, self-efficacy of change, and skills of change, as supported and most often cited in the literature?

RQ₃: According to the perceptions of teachers, to what extent do building-level principals demonstrate characteristics of change as they

specifically relate to knowledge of change, self-efficacy of change, and skills of change, as supported and most often cited in the change literature?

Significance to the Field of Educational Leadership

The Illinois State Regulations state the each district shall, no later than the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year, implement the use of a process that determines how the child responds to scientific, research-based interventions as part of the evaluation procedure described in 34 CFR 300.304. School districts are required to develop a plan for transition to the use of a process that determines how the child responds to scientific, research-based interventions as part of the evaluation procedure described in 34 CFR 300.304.

Although recent legislation might be the impetus for some districts to implement such a reform, the real value of an Rtl initiative is in the results. Best practices in education reveal that evidence-based practices combined with using data to drive instruction produces results for all children. Ardoin et al. (2005) stated,

Specifically, by adapting evidence-based interventions that have become part of everyday school practices, practitioners with some reallocation of professional time can take advantage of the decision-making tools within an Rtl model with the goal of more accurate decision making regarding important questions, especially those that pertain to special education eligibility decisions. (p. 617)

School districts will face many challenges when implementing an Rtl initiative (Fullan et al., 2005). Not only is strong leadership essential, but an infrastructure that lends itself to meeting the needs of all children is also a

necessary element. In order to realize this outcome, creative scheduling, frequent progress monitoring, and consistent meeting times where problem solving takes place combined with the presence of administrative leadership change the way we lead our schools today. The building leadership must sustain their reform efforts and build consensus to develop a strong program.

Research Design

The methodology for this study was a multicase study with mixed methods approach. Triangulation or converging lines of inquiry was accomplished using data from semi-structured topical interviews, field-based observations, and surveys. This study employed a mixed methods approach, and employed both quantitative and qualitative measures in the data collection process.

This study applied the epistemological framework associated with qualitative research to document perceptions of the principal by the principal, problem solving team, and teachers in three different schools in an Rtl reform initiative. Epistemology is a philosophical study of knowledge acquisition and confirmation (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). These two basic views are positivism and post-positivism. Scholars often refer to positivism as quantitative research. Post-positivism corresponds with qualitative research (Gay & Airasian, 2000). This study utilized both views.

This researcher conducted on-site, semi-structured topical interviews with three building level principals and three to five members of their building or district based problem-solving teams in three schools. This number allowed for

building-wide representation. The entire faculty at the three different schools received a survey to gain an understanding about the teacher's experience with the change process. The intent of this survey was to glean pertinent information about the building level principal and their change agency characteristics.

Quantitative evidence about principal leadership effects is tentative in nature. A review of 40 empirical studies conducted between 1980 and 1995 concluded that such effects were small, though important, and that sophisticated research designs were required to detect them (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). Leadership for the purpose of their study was conceptualized as an influence process that depends on a person's behavior receiving recognition and tacit acknowledgement as a leader by others who cast themselves in the role of followers consenting to be led (Blumberg & Greenfield, 1986; Lord & Maher, 1991). From this perspective, leadership is the process of being perceived as a leader.

Lucas and Valentine (2002) modified the Principal Leadership questionnaire by dividing it into six characteristics dealing with the constructs of people and purpose. Lucas and Valentine identified characteristics of leadership: provides vision, models appropriate behavior, fosters commitment to goals, provides individualized support, provides intellectual stimulation, and holds high expectations. Lucas and Valentine collected self-reported data from principals. The modification of this survey was pursuant of the ability to distribute it to faculty

members regarding their perceptions of the principal as a change agent and leader.

In addition, this researcher acted as a participant observer in an observer as participant role when observing the problem solving team. The importance of the building level principal's presence on problem solving teams has been well established in the research. The intent of the observation will be to observe specifically the building level principal and the leadership for change characteristics demonstrated while serving as a problem solving team member.

This researcher was interested in examining the perceptions of the principal by the principal, problem solving team, and teachers. In studying three principals as well as nine problem solving team members and teachers in three schools, this study included the examination of leadership behaviors as they related to the change process by the principal. Three elementary schools in the northern suburban region of Illinois were selected for this study. For the purpose of this study, the following criteria for building selection were developed:

1. Involvement in the Rtl initiative for at least two years
2. Participation in building-level professional development in Rtl
3. Implementation of building based problem solving team meetings on at least a monthly basis using the problem solving model with building wide representation including parents
4. Use of a multi-tiered prevention model
5. Use of data to inform and drive instruction

6. Use of Rtl for eligibility determination under the category of learning disability
7. Interventions that are scientifically based
8. Evidence of reallocation of resources and time
9. Sustainability of leadership in that the principal has served in the district as principal for at least three to five years

The three principals were selected based on the duration of their involvement in the Rtl initiative. A minimum of three to five years of experience and duration in the current building is a necessary component because the research supports the importance of sustainability of a principal to continue the change process. The following are leadership for change characteristics most often cited in the research:

- Knowledge of the change process
- Dedication to change where time is devoted to it
- Engaging others in a moral purpose
- Being a visionary leader
- Establishing learning communities
- Using data to make decisions
- Promoting high standards
- Professional development
- Reallocation of resources
- Capacity building

- Consensus among faculty and community members

Definition of Terms

To facilitate understanding of the frequently used terms of this study, terms are defined to provide exactitude regarding the meaning of words that are technical or embedded in the common language of educators. Many of the terms are embedded in the vernacular of educational leaders. The definitions of important terms used throughout this study are as follows:

Case Study - The researcher provides an in-depth exploration of a bounded system (e.g., an activity, an event, a process, or an individual) based on extensive data collection (Creswell, 2005).

Epistemology - A philosophical study of knowledge acquisition and confirmation (Gall et al., 2003)

Exploratory factor analysis - Involves a set of techniques designed to identify order and structure in such data by providing parsimonious and meaningful explanation for the observed variation and covariation in surface attributes (Tucker & MacCallum, 1997, p. 2).

Faculty - The members of the profession of teaching. Something in which one is trained or qualified (Merriam-Webster, 2008).

Mixed Methods - Procedures for collecting both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study, and for analyzing and reporting this data based on a priority and sequence of the information (Creswell, 2005).

Participant Observer - The researcher remains primarily as an observer but has some interaction with the study participants (Glesne, 2006, p. 50).

Perceptions - Quick, acute, and intuitive cognition (Merriam-Webster, 2008).

Self-efficacy - A perceived judgment of his or her capabilities to structure a particular course of action to produce desired outcomes in the school he or she leads (Bandura, 1997).

Triangulation - The process of corroborating one source of data with other sources of data (Gall et al., 2003; Gay & Airasian, 2000)

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The review of literature in the areas of school reform and principal leadership for change form the basis of this chapter. The section on school reform focuses on reform from a historical perspective and the organizational characteristics associated with the change process. Sections following focus on the role of the principal as a leader for change. Specific attention is given to necessary knowledge, self-efficacy, and skills of change. The educational research is summarized and synthesized.

The literature review in the above-mentioned areas provides a framework for this study, which is to examine the leadership for change capabilities of the building level principal in a systemic change effort in the successful implementation of a school wide reform initiative. Specifically, this study assesses the extent to which the building level principals demonstrate characteristics of change according to the perceptions of the principal by the principal, problem solving team members, and teachers about the principal's knowledge, skills, and self-efficacy of the change process. Demonstration of leadership for change was studied within the context of an Rtl reform initiative.

Response to Intervention

Over the past several years, state directors of special education, along with other members of the special education community, have expressed “concern over the rapid rise in the number of students identified as learning disabled” (Cox, Bell, & McCallum, 2003, p. 505). The term has primarily been applied to students whose primary disability is reading. Cox et al. stated, “This concern has led to an increasing lack of confidence in the discrepancy model as a means for identifying students with learning disabilities” (p. 526).

In 2001, the U.S. Department of Education sponsored the Learning Disabilities Summit, in which there was an endorsement of the RtI approach to identify specific learning disabilities. In 2004, Congress passed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA, 2004) where authorization of local education agencies (LEA) to utilize an RtI approach was given. The ideas and beliefs of providing high-quality instruction and interventions matched to student need, frequent progress monitoring to make changes about instructional goals, and applying child response data to important educational decisions began many years ago (Batsche et al., 2005).

The publication of *A Nation at Risk* by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) served as a stimulus for widespread demands for school reform across the United States (Stollar, Poth, Curtis, & Cohen, 2006). In 2001, the President’s Commission on Excellence in Special Education endorsed a responsiveness to intervention diagnostic approach for LD. In 2002, the

Elementary and Secondary Education Act, commonly known as the NCLB, mandated that schools must provide not only equal educational opportunities, but also high-quality education with scientifically based practices for all students.

Stollar et al. stated,

To demonstrate that a high-quality education is provided for all students, schools must establish a timeline of benchmarks with the U.S. Department of Education for demonstrating that 100% of their students are making adequate yearly progress in academic subjects by 2014, as measured by statewide achievement tests. (p. 181)

The federal government is not only holding schools accountable for providing services to students with disabilities; more importantly, the federal government is now holding schools accountable for improving educational outcomes for all students (Stollar et al., 2006). In 2004, the most recent reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act stated that the LEA may determine if a student has a specific learning disability based on whether a student responds sufficiently to a scientific, research-based intervention. The common element in both NCLB and IDEIA is that evidenced-based practices are considered the best way to provide instruction and intervention. Fuchs and Fuchs (2006) stated,

Rtl has been codified as an alternative to traditional methods for identification of learning disabilities, and practitioners are now struggling to build Rtl models for their schools, even as the federal government invests research monies to develop and validate such practices. (p. 622)

Burns, Appleton, and Stehouwer (2005) recently conducted a study to examine the effectiveness of Rtl on improved systemic and student outcomes.

The significant findings indicate that “both systemic and student outcomes improved with an Rtl model in use is a promising sign” (Burns et al, p. 389). In addition, the study found that on average, “less than 2% of the student population was identified as LD among studies examining field-based Rtl models” (Burns et al., p. 389). Vellutino et al. (1996) discovered that the use of response to early intervention to identify at-risk readers resulted in only 3% of students from the population scoring below the 30th percentile after one semester of remediation versus 9% using exclusionary criteria only.

The State of Illinois described foundational principles of Rtl included in the District Self-Assessment template. This template served as an informational gathering tool so that districts may more easily complete the Rtl Plan that was due in January of 2009. The following principles of Rtl are described in the self-assessment tool:

- All students receive research-based and standards-driven instruction in general education.
- The learning of all students is assessed early and regularly (ongoing progress monitoring).
- If there are concerns about student progress, increasingly intense tiers of intervention are available to groups or individuals.
- Individual student data gathered through the process may be used to determine appropriateness of a special education referral (e.g., in the case of students who do not respond adequately to intervention or who

require ongoing intensive intervention in order to sustain growth) and as part of a comprehensive evaluation for determination of special education eligibility (Illinois State Board of Education, retrieved April 24, 2008).

In addition, The State Board of Education in Illinois described seven major components that must be present for full implementation to occur. They are consensus building and collaboration, standards based curriculum and research based instruction, research based assessment practices, student/intervention and problem solving team process, intervention strategy identification, resource allocation, and ongoing professional development (Illinois State Board of Education, retrieved April 24, 2008). All of the above mentioned components must occur in a multilayered prevention system.

Multilayered Prevention System

According to Batche et al. (2005), "RtI is the practice of (1) providing high-quality instruction/intervention matched to student needs and (2) using learning rate over time and level of performance to (3) make important educational decisions" (p. 5). Batche et al. found that these three components are essential elements of a multilayered prevention system. Fuchs and Fuchs (2006) concluded,

Within the context of a multilayered prevention system, responsiveness to intervention (RtI) integrates increasingly intensive instruction and, at each layer, employs assessment to identify students who are inadequately responsive and who therefore require intervention at the next, more intensive layer. (p. 621)

This last decade has been marked with a focus on a service delivery model that utilizes data to inform decision making about student progress. Rtl begins with instruction in the general education classroom and utilizes a universal core program. Students who do not respond to general education instruction that is research based and proven effective enter into secondary intervention. Secondary prevention programs are for students who are at risk for academic problems and thus require additional, more targeted instruction. In their study of secondary interventions, researchers Vaughn and Roberts (2007) concluded that this instruction would ultimately close the achievement gap between current performance and expected performance. In fact, Vaughn and Roberts found, “a minority, less than 10% of all secondary intervention students, make little or no substantial progress when provided with a research-based, standardized intervention” (p. 3).

Students who then do not respond to secondary interventions, commonly called tier 2 interventions, enter into intervention that is more intensive at the tertiary level. A tertiary level involves interventions that are individualized and formulated to meet each student’s unique needs (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). Often but not in all cases, tertiary interventions involve special education faculty members because of the expert knowledge of individualized instruction that these teachers possess. However, it is important to note that Rtl is a multitier prevention system designed to prevent long-term academic and social failure, and not designed solely to prevent special education eligibility (Fuchs & Fuchs,

2006). In a study of the implementation of a three-tiered Rtl model conducted by Ardoin et al. (2005), students who did not adequately respond to secondary interventions underwent a peer-tutoring model. The more intensive intervention-utilizing peer tutoring resulted in gains in fluency for 4 out of 5 students (Ardoin et al., 2005).

Batsche et al. (2005) wrote,

The large-scale implementation of any professional practice requires an understanding of the core principles that guide the practice as well as the components that define the practice. The principles on which Rtl is based are supported by research and common sense. (p. 19)

Some of the ideas and philosophies that surround Rtl do not just encompass a multileveled prevention model. The principles of Rtl are part of a core belief system that includes the understanding that we can effectively teach all children, early intervention is essential, use of a problem-solving method to make decisions in a multilayered intervention system, use of research-based, scientifically validated instruction, monitoring student progress, using data to make decisions, and assessment for the purposes of screening, diagnosis of the problem, and progress monitoring (Batsche et al., 2005).

Research Based, Scientifically Validated

The Rtl model, as outlined by Fuchs (2003) and Vaughn and Fuchs (2003), is characterized by three successively more intensive phases of empirically based instruction/intervention. During Phase I, or Tier 1, students are monitored in terms of their response to the core curriculum or normal classroom

instruction. It is essential to evaluate the adequacy of classroom instruction because, as suggested by Fuchs, schools cannot determine that a student has a reading problem without the student having previous exposure to quality instruction. Both NCLB and the IDEA 2004 require the use of scientifically based curricula and interventions. The requirement ensures that all students are exposed to curriculum and teaching that has demonstrated effectiveness. Research based, scientifically validated interventions/instruction provide our best shot at implementing strategies that will be effective for a large majority of students (Batsche et al., 2005).

Problem-Solving Method

According to Kovalski and Glew (2006), "The problem-solving model, and particularly its implementation in the context of collaborative teams, has over time evolved from a process to assist teachers with difficult to teach children to a frequently proposed major component of school reform efforts" (p. 16). Kovalski and Glew stated,

Recently problem-solving teams have been found to be an integral part of a three-tier model that has been advanced not only as a replacement structure for remedial and special education programs but also as an alternative method by which students are identified as having learning disabilities. (p. 19)

Research has supported the effectiveness of using a clearly defined method to determine student need and to develop and evaluate interventions. Fuchs (2003), as cited in Burns et al. (2005), identified four group-level problem solving models that are consistent with Rtl, two of which are used to make

decisions regarding special education eligibility: Heartland Agency Model (Iowa), Ohio's Intervention Based Assessment (OIA), Pennsylvania's Instructional Support Teams, and Minneapolis' Public School's Problem-Solving Model. With their roots in prereferral group problem solving, these four are widely accepted as large-scale implementations of RtI currently in practice (Fuchs, 2003).

In a study examining the statewide implementation of Instructional Support Teams (ISTs) in Pennsylvania, Hartman and Fay (1996) found that "schools implementing ISTs were able to serve and maintain large numbers of students in general education programs performing needed prevention function for up to 9% of the school population per year at an 84% success rate" (Hartman & Fay).

Burns et al. (2005) stated,

Research on prereferral intervention assistance teams found strong effects for students such as increased task completion and decreased behavioral and academic difficulties and systemic outcomes such as reduction of referrals to and subsequent new placements in special education.... (p. 382)

Four basic steps form the logical structure of problem solving (Tilly, 2002 as cited by Batsche et al., 2005). At its core, the problem-solving method requires answering four interrelated questions. They are:

1. Define the problem - Is there a problem? What is it?
2. Analyze - What is happening?
3. Develop a Plan – What shall we do about it?
4. Evaluate – Did our plan work?

Problem solving teams coordinate efforts to improve performance for individual students who need intensive intervention. The teams solve student problems by decreasing the discrepancy between expectation and current activities. These teams serve to increase student achievement and may be in the form of grade level problem solving, in which groups of students are discussed, or individual problem solving, in which a team gathers to discuss one student.

A critical component of school wide improvement is the establishment of a district or building leadership team. This is another form of a problem solving team including, “people who are seen as leaders in the building and who others will follow” (NASDSE, 2008, p. 14). Specific curricular areas should be represented on the leadership team. These curricular areas may include student services, special education, reading, math, and behavior. The mission of the leadership team is to provide building wide leadership for systems level problem solving and continuous improvement.

Leadership team members have established roles such as data mentor, content specialist, facilitator, faculty liaison, and instructional leader for resource allocation (NASDSE, 2008). In order for effective and successful leadership teams to sustain themselves they will need assistance organizing their thinking and planning to build infrastructure, networking opportunities, attendance by the principal and leadership team members at professional development opportunities, and will benefit from assistance by an outsider for troubleshooting (NASDSE, 2008). Kinsler (2008) stated, “Successful schools serving high-need

communities know that different teacher behaviors may be required on a school-wide, grade-level, or subject-area basis and that educators need to work collaboratively both to discern specific challenges and to adapt or supplement instruction to accommodate these needs” (p. 131). Leadership teams address improved student achievement in a collaborative manner that is both efficient and effective.

Data and Assessment

An integrated data collection/assessment system to inform decisions at each tier of service delivery is an essential element of determining a student’s Rtl. In general, assessment of Rtl is based on a behavioral tradition of the assessment of academic skills and behavioral performance (Batsche et al., 2005). The overarching format for these assessments is curriculum-based assessment and its variants, such as CBM (Deno, 1985, Shinn, 1989) and CBE curriculum based evaluation (Howell & Nolet, 2000). These procedures have a 30-year history of application across a variety of curriculum areas and grade levels. Kaminski and Good (1996) have expanded CBM procedures to the assessment of early literacy skills with the DIBELS (dynamic indicators of basic early literacy skills). To be useful in a multileveled prevention system, assessment procedures selected for the types of decisions described above must have nine characteristics:

1. Directly assess the specific skills embodied in state and local academic standards;

2. Assess “marker variables” that have been demonstrated to lead to the ultimate instructional target (e.g., reading comprehension);
3. Are sensitive to small increments of growth over time;
4. Can be administered efficiently over short periods;
5. May be administered repeatedly (using multiple formats);
6. Are readily summarized in teacher-friendly data displays;
7. Can be used to make comparisons across all students;
8. Can be used to monitor an individual student’s progress over time; and
9. Have direct relevance to the development of instructional strategies that address the area of need. (Batsche et al., 2005, pp. 25-26)

Batsche et al. (2005) stated:

In addition to assessing student performance, a comprehensive assessment of Rtl also needs to include an appraisal of the success of school personnel in providing scientifically validated and robust interventions at Tiers 1 and 2. The use of Rtl requires an infrastructure of support that ensures that such interventions are provided. However, for each student, it cannot be assumed that evidence-based strategies were used at an appropriate level of effectiveness. Thus, evaluation teams need to carefully articulate the essential components of the intervention and determine through direct observation the extent to which the strategy was implemented according to established guidelines without sufficient treatment fidelity, determination of a student’s Rtl cannot be validly assessed. (p. 26)

Rtl and the Discrepancy Model

Brown-Childsey and Steege (2005) stated, “The IQ achievement discrepancy formula method of identifying learning disabilities emerged as a means of operationally defining the features associated with certain learning problems” (p. 21). Specifically, the presence of an average to above average IQ along with lower than expected academic achievement provided a way of documenting that a student could learn but was not learning (Peterson & Shinn,

2002, as cited by Brown-Childsey & Steege). Despite the apparent face validity and logic of the IQ achievement model, many years' worth of research has shown that it does not reliably identify those students with learning disabilities (Fletcher, Stuebing, LeDoux, & Lyon, 2002).

Batsche et al. (2005) confirmed that "Rtl eligibility determination for special education services occurs when a student's response to both core instructional and supplemental interventions does not result in movement toward achieving benchmarks and peer performance levels" (p. 28). In addition, if a student's response to intensive interventions produces a meaningful growth rate, but the growth rate requires significant and ongoing services beyond general education, the child may be considered for special education.

The Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act passed by the U.S. Congress in November 2004 included language specifically incorporating Rtl practices into special education procedures. This language includes the expectation that scientifically based instruction in reading and math are prerequisite for identification of a specific learning disability. IDEIA 2004 includes an expectation that Tier 1 Rtl procedures be used to determine disability status (Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2005). Use of scientifically based instruction with high standards outcomes are the basis for No Child Left Behind as well. Therefore, the elements defined in Rtl are a critical bridge between general and special education and build upon the language in both IDEIA and NCLB.

School Reform and the Change Process

The Progressive Period

Accountability in education is not a newly devised idea or expectation. In fact, the Progressive Period in educational reform is considered one of the first movements toward accountability in education (Mehta, 2006). Because of the remarkable number of parallels to the accountability movement of today, the Progressive Period warrants exploration as it relates to school reform and the change process. In addition, identifying some of the foundational principles of the Progressive Period gives credence to the specific expectations outlined in our current state of educational reform.

The Progressive Period was perhaps one of the longest and most intense periods of educational reform in the history of our country, lasting from the early teens into the 1940s (Elmore, 1996). During the Progressive Period, educational reformers challenged structure and beliefs about educating America's youth. They sought to change the instructional techniques or pedagogy of teachers and challenge both students and teachers to become innovative thinkers. Elmore wrote, "what is most interesting about the progressive period, as compared with other periods of educational reform, is that its aims included explicit attempts to change pedagogy, coupled with a relatively strong intellectual and practical base" (p. 7). One particular leader who is considered one of the great intellectuals of our time, John Dewey, intellectualized teaching by encouraging practitioners to understand how children process information, learn, and utilize information from

real life problems. This was indeed a shift in focus from fact and recitation in a teacher-centered classroom to student-centered classrooms where children inquired and were engaged in-group activities (Elmore, 1996).

Not only had the change in pedagogical practices made the Progressive Period a time of great reform. This period would look much like what we call *standards-based reform* today, which sets standards, sets up systems of measurement to evaluate progress towards those standards, and then evaluates performance and uses rewards and punishment to spur improvement (Bobbitt, as cited in Callahan, 1962). “Claims that today’s reformers are the first to emphasize accountability or focus on ‘inputs’ over ‘outputs’ are historically shortsighted” (Mehta, 2006, p. 58). Some of the most evident parallels between the Progressive Period and modern reform movements are the organizational shifts in power, the pessimistic social and psychological conceptions of motivation by both teachers and students, and finally the faith in science that guides reform (Mehta, 2006). Like any reform movement, the reformers themselves faced opposition. Mehta stated,

The end of the early movement of efficiency reforms was brought about not by the triumph of an alternative view of the nation’s educational problems and how to fix them, but rather by a changing sense of what the society’s problems were and a vastly different view of the ability of the captains of industry to address them. (p. 81)

Changes during the Progressive Period shifted power and thinking away from locally controlled school boards and toward central administrators, such as principals and superintendents. There was also a shift of power away from

teachers, while the use of testing and accountability as policy levers lessened the autonomy of individual teachers empowering the superintendent, commander of the accountability chain.

The Progressive Period of reform and the reformers that braved the trail had effectively defined the problems in the educational system as inefficient. In an attempt to alter these inefficiencies, shifts in power and an attempt to standardize education while intellectuals such as John Dewey focused on child-centered education resulted in the demise of an alternative view. Educational leaders can learn from this period of great change. The lessons learned and the similarities drawn between modern reform initiatives and those of the Progressive Period give those involved in school reform and the change process an opportunity to provide sustainable change. In order to understand more thoroughly how policy agendas sustain change, we need to look not only at the identified problems and solutions within a given field, we need to look at how change in the broader set of social and political assumptions affect the specific debates within a substantive area (Mehta, 2006).

Modern Reform Movements

Morrison (2005) stated,

Starting with the 1983 *Nation at Risk Report* of the National Commission of Excellence in Education, our *National Education Goals 1994*, the *Goals 2000: Educate America Act* and *No Child Left Behind Legislation*, the demand for educational reform has been endorsed at national, state, and local levels. (p. 1)

Most of the early school reform movements in the 1980s and 1990s were federal or state-prescribed legislative or top down mandates that increased accountability and oversight of schools, teachers, and students, but failed to promote specific initiatives that would improve students' academic achievement and social development (Bacharach, 1990; Sergiovanni & Moore, 1989). It was in the early 1980s, however, when educational reform became a popular topic of debate. Specifically, the focus of reports such as the National Commission on Excellence in Education Report, *A Nation At Risk*; the Carnegie Forum's Task Force on Teaching Report, *A Nation Prepared*; and the National Governor's Association Report, *A Time For Results*, was on the quality of American public education, and reform had now become a political issue (Fahey, 1991).

In 1998, Congress appropriated \$145 million for the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration program (CSR/D). The focus of the design of the CSR/D was to encourage schools to engage in a comprehensive effort that would better meet student learning needs (U.S. Department of Education, 2000a). This prompted dramatic growth in school reform. With the passage of the NCLB Act in 2001, CSR became a fully authorized program, and was no longer a demonstration program (Tushnet, Flaherty, & Smith, 2004). Further NCLB described 11 components of comprehensive school reform: proven methods, comprehensive design, professional development, measurable goals, support from staff, support for staff, parent and community involvement, external assistance, evaluation, coordination of resources, and scientifically based

research (NLCB Act, Title I, Part F, Section 1606). In a longitudinal assessment of comprehensive school reform, Tushnet et al. found that schools utilizing comprehensive school reform used evidence from research that the reform model chosen improves student achievement. In fact, 57% of comprehensive reform model schools reported that the implemented reform effort influenced their performance goals and thus increased student achievement. This difference between CSR and non-CSR schools was statistically significant at the .01 level (Tushnet et al., 2004).

Building Capacity

To ensure the spread of the knowledge of effective change processes, school districts can create strong professional learning communities and build capacity so that the change continues to occur over time. Capacity involves policies, strategies, resources, and action that increase power in the employees of a school to move forward (Borko, Wolf, Simone, & Uchiyama, 2003). In addition, capacity allows employees to develop new knowledge, skills, and competencies with a newly shared identity that motivates and lends itself to collaboration for change (Fullan et al., 2005). Newman, King, and Youngs (2000) defined school capacity as “the collective power of the full staff to improve student achievement schoolwide” (p. 300). Knapp (2007) defined an organization’s capacity as its “receptivity to reform ideas and ability to sustain them over time” (p. 65).

In a case study of two elementary schools identified as exemplary by Washington educators, Borko et al. (2003) analyzed the school's progress toward successful enactment of Washington's reform vision. The researchers utilized six dimensions of school capacity: principal leadership; professional community; program coherence; technical resources; knowledge, skills, and dispositions of individual teachers; and learning opportunities for teachers. The findings of this study "suggest instructional leadership is a key factor in determining the success of school improvement efforts, and that a distributed model of leadership may be particularly important to change efforts" (p. 197).

Additional learning opportunities for teachers and the professional community, both fostered by strong leadership, may influence remaining factors in a model of school capacity for reform (Borko et al., 2003). "Both schools have made substantial progress toward achieving the goals of the Washington reform" (p. 198). Further studies synthesizing ideas from the literature on organizational change and school reform find that a critical force in a school's capacity to educate students is principal leadership (Newman, King, & Youngs, 2000).

Building capacity for the entire school is a crucial element to this component of successful school reform. It is evident in some research that small groups of committed reformers rarely influence their peers (Elmore, 1996). In fact, creating variations in the structures of groups and schools may lead to reforms that are more successful. Elmore postulated,

The first job of structural reform should be to create more variation in structure – more small schools, more schools organized into

smaller sub-units, more structures that create stronger group norms inside larger schools, more ways of connecting adventurous teachers with their less ambitious and reflective colleagues – but not structures that isolate the true believers from the skeptical and the timid. (p. 20)

Combining like-minded people with those that oppose school reform creates a climate and culture of learning. There is tremendous power when peers learn from one another. Prawat (1996) stated,

The goal of a learning community is to build connections between people, socially and intellectually. Control interferes with this process; it distances people from one another. Commitment strengthens interpersonal connections...building a learning community is tantamount to developing a commitment to shared learning. (p. 91)

Cultures of Learning

Developing a culture of learning is an essential component to school reform. Fullan et al. (2005) wrote about the importance of developing cultures of learning. They stated, “Developing a culture of learning involves a set of strategies designed for people to learn from each other (the knowledge dimension) and become collectively committed to improvement (the affective dimension)” (p. 55). Adults generate knowledge in a social context. Within the social context, the learning and new information that is absorbed creates action that initiates change. Following the formation of professional learning communities is the clear definition of an established culture for learning. Schools that develop cultures of learning are more likely to demonstrate successful change because they constantly seek and develop teacher’s knowledge and skills (Fullan et al., 2005). In a study of four exemplary schools working to meet

the demands of the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA), Wolf, Borko, Elliott, and McIver (2000) found,

Teachers' responses to large-scale reform efforts exist in a larger web of connections and are dependent on their collaborative and consistently positive stance toward learning as well as their principal's leadership. Thus human capital, the knowledge and willingness to learn on the part of individuals, is inextricably linked to social capital, the relationships of trust and willingness to risk among school personnel. (p. 349)

In addition, school faculty not only learns from within the confines and structures in the building they teach, they can also learn from other schools and districts. This is considered a powerful new strategy in which schools and districts share information and experiences with each other to gain insight into future success or failure. This idea is called *lateral capacity building*, and it encourages the development of cultures of learning across schools and districts (Fullan et al., 2005).

Effective School Reform

Few things seem more difficult than altering the day-to-day operations of a school district. In an organization that thrives on structure, any small change leads to a larger more systematic change in schools. However, most schools are changing constantly. Modifications in scheduling, curricula, grouping practices, testing, and adding and subtracting teaching and administrative roles occur frequently. School reform, however, is not about altering or changing the day-to-day operations in a school. School reform is about long-term, deep systemic change that occurs locally and is meaningful and purposeful. Fullan and Miles

(1992) contend that all large-scale changes must be implemented on the local level by those directly involved, rather than policy makers who are removed from local efforts.

Halvorsen (1992) supports the position that effective change requires an internal ownership in the reform effort, local investment, and commitment to the change process. Research supports that effective schools have principals who are strong leaders (Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, & Lee, 1982; Gillat & Sulzer-Azaroff, 1994; Hallinger & Murphy, 1987) who arrange programs to develop specific teacher skills participate in the assessment of student achievement (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). At the heart of school reform is leadership that will sustain the change process utilizing lessons from previous successful and unsuccessful reform initiatives, and actively engage in reform lessons with the goal of ongoing systematic change. White's (1990) synthesis of research found, "A school culture which encourages risk-taking, embraces cooperative decision making, provides trust and support, and encourages continual growth options is received as an important factor in the successful implementation of change" (p. 213).

Hargreaves (2000) stated, "Across the world, educational reform is itself a huge priority" (p. 1). Change or reform is complicated and demanding. Fullan (2001) wrote, "The more complex society gets, the more sophisticated leadership must become. Complexity means change, but specifically it means rapidly occurring, unpredictable, nonlinear change" (p. ix). For change to take hold there is a need for consistent leadership as well as support from the district (Finnan,

2000; Stringfield, Millsap, & Herman, 1997; U.S. Department of Education 2000a).

Standards Based Reform

We are currently living in an era of standards based reform. Constant pressure from the state and federal government to meet progress goals are always present in school districts. To be successful, reform efforts must include both pressure and support (Firestone, Monfils, & Camilli, 2001; Fullan, 1991, McLaughlin, 1990). Pressure sends the message that the state and federal government is serious about reform, and support focuses on issues of capacity, in which there is a provision of resources such as personnel, time, materials, and learning opportunities so that schools may carry out the reform vision.

School leaders must understand both state and local assessments and communicate their interpretation of both local and state assessments so that the school and community members have what they need to move forward. School leaders need *assessment literacy*, defined as the collective capacity of teachers and leaders in schools to examine data, make critical sense of it, develop action plans based on the data, take action, and monitor progress along the way (Fullan, 2001). Data for improvement is very different from data for surveillance. Accountability does not produce productive schools if the purpose is to identify the culprits. The essence of accountability is looking forward, using data to inform judgments about current performance to formulate plans for reasonable actions (Earl & Katz, 2003). There must be a trend toward a place where accountability is

for improvement and leaders must become experts in interpreting data, transforming it into knowledge and making decisions based on intrinsic reasons for collecting and using data (Earl & Fullan, 2003). Fullan et al. (2005) discussed developing cultures of evaluation when they wrote,

Our highest yield strategies for educational change recently developed is assessment for learning (not just assessment of learning). Assessment for learning incorporates:

- Accessing/gathering data on student learning;
- Disaggregating data for more detailed understanding;
- Developing action plans based on the previous two points in order to make improvements; and
- Being able to articulate and discuss performance with parents and external groups. (p. 56)

When schools and school systems increase their collective capacity to engage in ongoing assessment for learning, they achieve major improvements (Fullan et al., 2005).

In addition to developing a culture of evaluation, another important aspect of standards based reform and the change process is the establishment of a culture of inquiry. A culture of inquiry involves school-based self-appraisal, meaningful use of external accountability data in an environment where there is a commitment to confronting the brutal facts (Collins, 2001). In fact, Storms and Gordon (2005) wrote, "Developing skills and strategies for exploring what those test scores mean in terms of practices that are working and not working is increasingly becoming a focus in educational administration credential and degree programs" (p. 60).

Leadership Succession

An important component of school reform and change is planning for leadership succession. The mismanagement of succession is often due to the flawed basic assumptions about leadership (Hargreaves, 2005). Heroic leaders who turn around failing schools stand out while transformation leaders, rather than transformational leadership, get the greatest attention in leadership research (Gronn, 1996, as cited by Hargreaves, 2005). Above all, distributive leadership, leadership that spreads across organizations without diminishing the importance of the principal's role, makes succession less dependent on the talents or frailties of particular individuals (Hargreaves, 2005). Because leadership is so crucial to change, those appointing new leaders must know what type of leadership is best for leading productive change is an element that cannot go unnoticed.

There are many different leadership styles. Collins (2001) found that charismatic leaders were negatively associated with sustainability. Fullan et al. (2005) wrote that leaders of the so called "great" organizations were characterized by "deep personal humility" (p. 56) and "intense professional will" (p. 57). Building enduring greatness is part of distributive leadership that focuses on long-term results. Fullan et al. focused on leadership for changes when he stated, "The main mark of a school principal at the end of his or her tenure is not just that individual's impact on student achievement, but rather how many leaders are left behind who can go even further" (p. 57). Leaders must not only

foster their own success but also the success in others. In doing so, they develop decision-making capabilities in others.

Creating Coherence

Fullan (2001) wrote, "Change is a leader's friend, but it has a split personality: its nonlinear messiness gets us into trouble" (p. 6). Fullan et al. (2005) wrote about the ability to foster coherence making when he stated, "Coherence making involves investing in capacity building so that cultures of learning and evaluation through the proliferation of leadership can create their own coherence on the ground" (p. 57). Coherence is then defined in the context of "making" is complex and somewhat elusive. However, it can be viewed as the principal's ability to work on connectedness so that the inherent overload, fragmentation, and non-linearity of change in complex societies does not cause harm to the changes that are occurring (Fullan, 2001).

Revitalizing the life in a school by making changes should not only occur through the lens of the building leadership. Building leadership must also see change through the eyes of those experiencing the change process (Fullan, Bertani, & Quinn, 2004). Members of a school organization must realize the benefits of the change and become confident that the changes are going to be attained. The only way to believe in the change is to experience it by engaging in the implementation (Leithwood, 2005). Creating coherence is not only developing a vision and communicating it, it is also about demonstrating how everything fits together in the big picture (Halvorsen, 1992). Having multiple innovations that do

not connect is counterproductive. Rather, developing patterns of coherence so that those innovations interconnect is much more effective for change to occur (Fullan et al., 2004).

In a dissertation study conducted by Castellon (2007) entitled *Relationship between teachers' perceptions of principal leadership behaviors and instructional choices of reading interventions for at risk students*, data gathered revealed themes of effective principal leadership in schools undergoing reform efforts. For example, "teachers who perceived their principals as strong in principal leadership behaviors were able to articulate the school vision, worked toward group goals, and promoted school-wide efforts to raise student achievement" (p. 1). This study demonstrates the effectiveness of strong leadership in school reform. Further, the study demonstrates the extent to which a leader can greatly influence the coherence of a school utilizing their ability to build capacity and involve teachers in the reform efforts. The perceived strength of a leader is therefore greatly important throughout the change process.

Another study that utilized Harvey's *Checklist for Change* (2001) examined the factors that support change in institutions that are implementing new programs. Harvey's list contains the following nine factors as critical for the sustaining of school improvement efforts: planning and preparation, timing, congruence with mission, environmental sensitivity, clarity and simplicity, unpretentious realism, sufficient not indulgent resources, strong, central leadership, and reduced individual propriety interest. In this study, Borda (2007)

determined which steps in Harvey's *Checklist for Change* change leaders as being the most significant in schools that have successfully sustained changing programs perceived.

Although all nine factors were used to a high degree by leaders in schools with successful sustainability of change, "strong, central leadership was the most critical factor"(Borda, 2007, p. 1). The data also revealed the importance of maintaining cohesion and building capacity in schools as an identifiable factor in school improvement success. Borda stated, "ironically, the most effective leaders empowered others to make change possible" (p. 1).

Moral Purpose

Last, there is the *why* of change; a moral purpose must exist so that all the above-mentioned actions can occur with integrity and meaning. A moral purpose improves education systems so that all citizens learn and contribute to a larger society. Fullan et al. (2005) stated, "In education, moral purpose involves committing to raise the bar and close the gap in student achievement – for example, increasing literacy for all, with special attention to the most disadvantaged" (p. 54). When moral purpose is at the forefront of a reform initiative, the principal as a moral role model must work to create and sustain the climate, culture, and community that exemplify the very values he or she espouses.

Multiple pressures hinder and cause barriers to school reform. These pressures range in scope from political, social, and economic pressures to

everyday pressures such as bullying, racial discrimination, and accountability. A moral leader brings dedicated, highly competent teachers together to work for the continuous betterment of the schools (Sergiovanni, 1992). Bolman and Deal (2000) predicted, "Culture and core values will be increasingly recognized as the vital social glue that infuses an organization with passion and purpose" (p. 185).

Principal Leadership for Change

Multiple studies have been conducted that focus on educational leadership for change. These studies date back to the mid-1900s. They focus on reaching a conclusion about effective leadership styles. Because this study's aim is to examine the building level principal's knowledge, self-efficacy, and skills of change in the context of Rtl, a current reform initiative, the case can be made to examine current leadership styles and their relationship to change.

The research substantiates that effective and strong leadership is a critical component of any change effort. Schools that demonstrate high levels of implementation success with change efforts such as Instructional Support Teams (ISTs) or problem solving teams had strong principal leadership in place (Kovaleski, Gickling, & Morrow, 1999). The strength of an educational leader comes from their knowledge, skills, and self-efficacy of the change process.

Public education in the United States is facing continuous scrutiny combined with accountability to increase student achievement. Much of the attention for accountability dates back to the 2001 NCLB (U.S. Department of Education, 2002a). Rammer (2007) noted, "The law mandates that every school

must demonstrate annual progress toward the goal that all students perform on standardized tests at a proficient or advanced level in the content areas by 2014” (p. 67). This accountability requirement has made the role of the building level principal ever more critical. Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) suggested,

At no time in recent memory has the need for effective and inspired leadership been more pressing than it is today. With increasing needs in our society and in the workplace for knowledgeable, skilled, responsible citizens, the pressure of the school intensifies. (p. 123)

Knowledge of the Change Process

We live in a complex society with multiple demands. Our complex society inevitably involves constant change that is rapid and nonlinear. Change is chaotic and relentless. It is messy and awkward at times. Nonetheless, “today’s leaders, regardless of their fields, are obliged to prepare to lead change, understand the process and nature of change, and provide the essential support so that those involved in change can be successful” (Edgehouse, Edwards, Gore, Harrison, & Zimmerman, 2007, p. 11). Understanding the change process cuts across all aspects of change, and leadership must realize that change takes time. Leaders must take into account factors that they would rather not have to stop and deal with (Fullan, 2005). A deep and solid understanding of the change process ignites the vision, strategies, and plan for future growth. Leaders and faculty alike may not feel a sense ownership to the change process initially. Initially, there is skepticism and criticism. The commitment and energy will sustain the ownership and implementation of the change process. Fullan wrote, “The change process is

about establishing the condition for continuous improvements in order to persist and overcome inevitable barriers to reform” (p. 55). He noted that change is “about innovativeness not just innovation” (p. 55).

Finally, the school community and constituents need to be involved in the change process in order for it to be sustainable over time. Fullan (2005) wrote, “Cultivating trilevel development involves focusing on all three levels of the system and their interrelationships, and giving people wider learning opportunities within these contexts as a route to changing the very contexts within which people work” (p. 58). Focusing on the school and community, the district, and the state will bring about national changes that will sustain themselves over time. A commitment to changing the context involves systemic thinking across all levels of the school organizations. Simultaneous individualized and system-wide change while constructing knowledge in the context of actual situations will ultimately lead to successful school reform.

Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership is one of several defining characteristics of successful schools. School leadership makes a difference in student achievement and school effectiveness. Effective leadership means more than simply knowing what to do; it is knowing when, how, and why to do it (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). Waters et al. stated,

Effective leaders understand how to balance pushing for change while at the same time, protecting aspects of culture, values, and norms worth preserving. They know which policies, practices, resources, and incentives to align and how to align them with

organizational priorities: They know how to gauge the magnitude of change they are calling for and how to tailor their leadership strategies accordingly. Finally, they understand and value the people in the organization. They know when, how, and why to create learning environments that support people, connect them with one another and provide the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to succeed. (p. 2)

Waters et al. found 21 specific leadership responsibilities significantly correlated with student achievement. Waters et al. defined these 21 leadership responsibilities:

1. The extent to which the principal fosters shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation (culture),
2. Established a set of standard operating procedures and routines (order),
3. Protects teachers from issues and influences that would detract from their teaching time or focus (discipline),
4. Provides teachers with materials and professional development necessary for the successful execution of their jobs (resources),
5. Is directly involved in the design and implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices (curriculum, instruction, assessment),
6. Established clear goals and keeps those goals in the forefront of the school's attention (focus),
7. Fosters shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation (knowledge of curriculum, instruction assessment),
8. Has quality contact and interactions with teachers and students (visibility),
9. Recognizes and rewards individual accomplishments (contingent rewards),
10. Establishes strong lines of communication with teachers and among students (communication),

11. Is an advocate and spokesperson for the school to all stakeholders (outreach),
12. Involves teachers in the design and implementation of important decisions and policies (input),
13. Recognizes and celebrates school accomplishments and acknowledges failures (affirmation),
14. Demonstrates an awareness of the personal aspects of teachers and staff (relationship),
15. Is willing to and actively challenges the status quo (change agent),
16. Inspires and leads new and challenging innovations (optimizer),
17. Communicates and operates from strong ideals and beliefs about schooling (ideals/beliefs),
18. Monitors the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student learning (monitors/evaluates),
19. Adapts his or her leadership behavior to the needs of the current situation and is comfortable with dissent (flexibility),
20. Is aware of the details and undercurrents in the running of the school and uses this information to address current and potential problems (situational awareness),
21. Ensures that faculty and staff are aware of the most current theories and practices and makes the discussion of these a regular aspect of the school culture (intellectual stimulation). (p. 4)

Instructional leadership is one of many aspects of principal leadership in today's schools. However, there is not an exact science to instructional leadership and therefore one does not ask the question: Are principals engaging in instructional leadership? Rather, Are principals aware of what they are doing in the guise of instructional leadership? In a recent study regarding Ontario

principals, Castle, Mitchell, and Gupta (2002) concluded that principals who had been out of the classroom for some time felt uncomfortable serving as instructional leaders because they equated instructional leadership with curriculum expertise.

However, recent literature does not cast the principal as an all knowing expert. In fact, researchers such as Grimmer (1996), Reitzug (1997), Sergiovanni, (2000), and Starrat (2000) argued that the role of the principal is more appropriately defined as that of a facilitator of processes, such as collaborative inquiry, problem solving, and school development and improvement. Further, principals understand their role as instructional leaders to be as much about “bringing visibility to the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of staff members as about imparting new knowledge” (Mitchell & Castle, 2005, p. 412).

Mitchell and Castle (2005) stated, “Principals receive a degree of support and substance for engaging school people in educational matters and for building their own capacity for instructional leadership” (p. 430). If principals are able to anchor their activity in instructional leadership, they can then create conditions that encourage intellectual conversations, stimulate new thinking, and energize teaching and learning (Mitchell & Castle, 2005). These kinds of activities support researchers Dufour (2002) and Grimmer’s (1996) believe in the strong connection that exists between leadership and learning. According to Newman, King, and Rigdon (1997), such capacity can be measured along three dimensions: “teacher knowledge and skill, school autonomy to act, and shared

commitment and collaboration toward a clear purpose for student learning” (p. 47).

Distributed Leadership

Another type of leadership is the distributed leadership style. A distributed leadership perspective argues that successful educational leadership is not simply a function of what superintendents do in districts or what assistant principals do in schools. Rather, educational leadership in the distributed form involves the practices of multiple individuals and occurs through the complex network of relationships and interactions among the entire faculty of the school (Scribner, Sawyer, Watson, & Myers, 2007). Leadership is not embedded in formal roles (Bass, 1981; Smylie & Hart, 2000); it emerges from relationships between people (Crow, Hausman, & Scribner, 2002; Scott, 1992). In the distributed model, leadership is embedded in the relationships between networked roles (Ogawa & Bossert, 1995; Pounder, Ogawa, & Adams, 1995; Smylie & Hart, 2000). “Such networks support a multidirectional flow of influence throughout the organization. In the school context, our understanding of leadership is enhanced by examining the multidirectional social influences occurring between teachers, administrators, parents, students, and other stakeholders” (Scribner et al., 2007, p. 69). In a recent study of teacher teams in a distributive leadership model, Scribner et al. found, “purpose, autonomy, and patterns of discourse play important roles in the exercise of leadership and group functioning” (p. 92). By exploring patterns of discourse in teacher groups, the

researchers found that there were passive and active patterns of discourse. Both patterns of discourse provided examples of how distributed leadership is a complex phenomenon. In summary, in a distributive model of leadership the line between organizational support and surveillance is quite thin (Scribner et al., 2007). Therefore, it is important for leaders engaged in this model of leadership to refrain from oppressive and controlling structures and instead attempt to promote collaborative structures of shared governance.

Transformational Leadership

Geijsel, Sleeper, Leithwood, and Jantzi (2003) stated, "Virtually all theoretical treatments of transformational leadership claim that, among its more direct effects, are employee motivation and commitment leading to the kind of extra effort required for significant organizational change" (p. 236). Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach (2005) developed a model that included three categories of leadership practices in a transformational leadership capacity. These leadership practices include "setting directions, developing people and redesigning the organization" (p. 3). Other studies of transformational leadership, which resemble the practices described by Leithwood and Jantzi, include vision building, intellectual stimulation, commitment and effort to change and individualized consideration (Bass, 1997). MacDonald (1991) concluded, "It is the quality of the teachers themselves and the nature of their commitment to change that determine the quality of teaching and the quality of school improvement" (p. 3).

Evidence reviewed by Leithwood and Riehl (2005) suggested that successful leadership creates a compelling sense of purpose in the organizations by developing a shared vision of the future, helping build consensus about relevant short-term goals and demonstrating high expectations for colleagues' work. In addition, Leithwood and Riehl concluded that providing support for individual colleagues' ideas and initiatives, providing intellectual stimulation (e.g., reflection on existing practices), questioning assumptions, considering new practices, and modeling important values and practices were part of transformational practices in school leadership. Successful principals are visible and accessible to faculty, students, and parents and were readily available to provide assistance as needed (Leithwood, 2005). In addition, successful principals encouraged cultures of collaboration by distributing leadership. Last, successful principals are skilled communicators. "They demonstrated considerable cognitive flexibility which was evident in their willingness to listen carefully to the ideas of others, in their open-mindedness, and in the creativity and lateral thinking which they applied to their problem solving" (p. 3).

Problem Solving Teams

Problem solving teams provide a venue in which accountability can be discussed. In fact, problem-solving teams are appealing mechanisms for change in schools (Rafoth & Foriska, 2006). In addition, the presence of the building level principal on the problem-solving team is mentioned frequently in the literature as an important factor in the team's effectiveness. In a survey of state departments

of education, Buck, Polloway, Smith-Thomas, and Cook (2003) found that almost half 49% of the respondents indicated that their problem solving teams were led by school administrators or student service coordinators. Rafoth and Foriska (2006) stated, "The participation of administrators in problem-solving teams has consistently been identified as a factor in team and intervention success" (p. 131). Because of their ability to influence the school's climate and resources, principals are arguably the most important supporters of problem solving teams (Beckerman, 2005; Kovaleski, 2002).

Sindelar, Griffin, Smith, and Watanabe (1992) found that although most teachers liked principals who are strong academic leaders, they are more satisfied with collaborative teamwork when the principal is not the team leader. Kruger (2006) found that when administrative support was used to increase teachers' sense of worth, their problem-solving skills and self-efficacy regarding planning and assessing interventions was enhanced. Rafoth and Foriska (2006) stated, "Administrative support was also defined as a commitment to academic quality, the propagation of a culture of change within the school, and the encouragement of teacher decision making" (p. 133).

Several variables for successful problem-solving teams emerged in the research. Teacher empowerment is a key variable in successful intervention teams (Rafoth & Foriska, 2006). Effective middle school administrators were able to identify key teacher leaders and involve them in shared decision-making. Last, Rubinson (2002) found that principal mobility was a significant barrier to team

success, and schools where problem solving teams failed to thrive lacked visible and active principal support, partly on account of high attrition.

Skills of the Change Process

There are skills involved in the change process, and although change is one of the more challenging aspects of educational leadership, it is not unattainable. Sparkes (1999) wrote, "Change, whether initiated externally or internally, is welcomed in a quality school" (p. 290). Schools that welcome change build it into their culture. "Such a culture consists of enthusiasm for the visioning process, willingness to take calculated risks, experimentation, celebration of success, and forgiveness for failures" (p. 290) To extend this idea, a study of students in the Executive Leadership Program at Fordham University's doctoral degree program found that students identified the following skills and abilities associated with leadership:

1. Conceptualize the process of school reform and operations, within a wider social and political context;
2. See one's own intellectual and professional growth as a widening and extending process, with degree work as part of life-long learning;
3. Create and communicate a vision for the school, and to become the catalyst facilitator in carrying out this vision;
4. Become an intellectual leader in the school, so that new ideas and concepts receive attention and support;
5. Link course content, critical reflection, and research." (Thomas & Cooper, 1992, p. 4)

Risk Taking

Risk taking is also a necessary skill of the change process. Unfortunately, risk taking is not an encouraged component of teacher education programs nor is it nurtured in school environments (Sparkes, 1999). It is much more common to encourage conformity in schools, and even complacency is often the school cultural norm. However, for change to occur, people need to step out of their comfort zone. They need to feel safe about being risk takers. In a study of teachers' perceptions on principal leadership, researchers Blasse and Blasse (2000) found that effective principals encouraged teachers to redesign instructional programs and supported diverse approaches to teaching and learning. This encouragement resulted in "increased teacher motivation, efficacy, and reflective behavior, including greater variety in classroom instruction, risk taking and planning" (p. 134).

Communication

To encourage risk-taking, members of the school community need to be part of a larger conversation about change and the results it will bring (Sparkes, 1999). Sparkes wrote, "The principal is identified by a number of the contributors as critical in the change process" (p. 291). A principal who wishes to initiate change must inform teachers that they will be supported. In addition, principals must actively listen to and understand the reasoning behind the different opinions all stakeholders even if all the ideas differ. Kouzes and Posner (1987) studied activities and skills that changed the status quo. In their study, they found that the

primary contributions were recognizing good ideas, supporting those ideas, and offering a willingness to challenge the system through risk taking.

Trust Building

Change also involves trust building. In their study on school reform in Chicago during the 1990s, Bryk and Schneider (2002) examined the reasons why some Chicago schools got better at educating children during that decade, while others did not. Their findings surprised many. It was not curriculum, technique, professional development support, models of governance, or budgets (Palmer, 2008). These external variables did not have significant power to predict who would succeed and who would fail. However, the one variable, relational trust, made a huge difference (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Palmer synthesized the research by stating,

If your school had high levels of relational trust and/or leaders who cared about that factor, your chances of getting better at educating children were over 50%. But if your school had low levels of relational trust and/or leaders who did not regard trust as worth attending to, your chances of getting better at educating children were only one out of seven. (p. 13)

This begs the questions of what relational trust is and what is behind it. Palmer (2008) proposed that moral agency is what lies behind relational trust. Moral agency is “the personal capacity to sideline one’s ego for the sake of a larger good and collegial community which is the collective capacity to collaborate rather than compete” (p. 14).

Data Based Decisions

Utilizing data to make instructional decisions is another skill that is necessary, yet challenging, for effective leadership today. There is no denying that in schools today, principals feel enormous pressure from NCLB (2001) to bring about changes that will improve outcomes for students, particularly students who are not performing well academically (Storms & Gordon, 2005). It is imperative that principals develop the skills and strategies necessary for exploring what tests scores mean in terms of which instructional practices are working and which are not. Because of this, there is an increasing emphasis on collaborative inquiry as an approach to engage teachers in inquiry around closing the achievement gap (Storms & Gordon, 2005).

What is data-driven decision making? The American Association of School Administrators (2002) identified five key elements: (a) transcend past data collection practices associated with various mandates, and engage in a systemic data collection process; (b) a comprehensive analysis of the data designed to identify performance gaps between expectations and actual productions by various shareholder groups, assess the validity of policies and procedural guidelines, determine the effectiveness of interventions, and foster the problem identification process; (c) appropriate internal and external reporting of bias free data which is evocative and compelling; (d) utilizing data to foster continuous school improvement through identification of improvement needs within the process, and provide feedback during the intervention process; and (e)

establishing collegial dialogue based upon data. Further, the Education Commission of the States (2000) found that data is used by policymakers and schools for six primary purposes: “(1) discovering issues, (2) diagnosing situations, (3) forecasting future conditions, (4) improving policies and practices, (5) evaluating effectiveness, and (6) promoting accountability” (p. 2).

Collaboration

The role of the building level principals is no longer that of a manager only. Building level principals must seek to collaborate and coordinate their skills with those in the building at large. Building level principals are aware of the skills and strengths of those around them and constantly tap into those skills and strengths. Mulkeen and Cooper (1992) stated, “School districts are decentralizing, shifting greater responsibility to the school site. For district administrators, this change requires a new role, one of facilitator, coach and supporter rather than manager” (p. 17).

Self-Efficacy of the Change Process

It is well established in the research that in this era of accountability and significant school reform, efforts to improve schools increasingly look to the principal to spearhead change efforts at the school level (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). Good principals are the cornerstones of good schools and without them, schools cannot succeed (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). What principals do is a direct consequence of what and how they think (Leithwood & Steinbach, 1995; Leithwood et al., 1994; McCormick, 2001; Sergiovanni, 1991).

A promising avenue to understanding a principal's motivation and behavior is a principals' sense of efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004).

A principal's sense of efficacy is a judgment of his or her capabilities to structure a particular course of action to produce desired outcomes in the school he or she leads (Bandura, 1997). Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004) stated, "Self-efficacy is a perceived judgment of one's ability to effect change, which may be viewed as a foundational characteristic of an effective school leader" (p. 573). Self-efficacy has a significant impact on goal-setting, level of aspiration, effort, adaptability, and persistence (Bandura, 1986). "In assessing self-perceptions of competence, the principal assesses personal capabilities such as skills, knowledge, strategies, or personality traits balanced against personal weaknesses or liabilities in a particular school setting" (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004, p. 574).

A robust sense of efficacy is necessary to sustain the productive attention, focus, and perseverance of effort needed to succeed at organizational goals (Wood & Bandura, 1989). Leadership self-efficacy has been related to direction setting and to gaining followers commitment, as well as in overcoming obstacles to change (Paglis & Green, 2002). Perceived self-efficacy influenced analytic strategies and subsequent organizational performance of managers in a simulated organizational environment (Wood & Bandura, 1989). There was a strong relationship between leadership self-efficacy and performance evaluations by objective observers in a leadership simulation and to leadership rating by

peers and superiors, as well as to subordinates performance abilities (Chemers, Watson, & May, 2000). Furthermore, research evidences that leader's self-efficacy mediates employees' engagement with their work (Luthans & Peterson, 2002). Worker engagement occurs when the worker is cognitively vigilant and/or emotionally connected to others to find meaning in his or her work (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004).

Research evidenced that principals with a strong sense of self-efficacy persistently pursue their goals, and are more flexible and more willing to adapt strategies to meeting contextual strategies (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). Principals view change as a slow process. They are steadfast in their efforts to achieve their goals, but they do not persist in unsuccessful strategies (Osterman & Sullivan, 1996). Confronted with problems high efficacy principals do not interpret their inability to solve problems immediately as a failure (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). They regulate their personal expectations to correspond to the conditions, typically remaining confident and calm, and keeping their sense of humor, even in difficult situations. Principals with higher self-efficacy are more likely to use internally based personal power, such as expert, informational, and referent power when carrying out their roles (Lyons & Murphy, 1994).

Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004) stated,

Principals' efficacy beliefs to influence the level of effort and persistence they put forth in their daily work, as well as their resilience in the face of setbacks. It is not enough to hire and retain the most capable principals – they must also believe that they can successfully meet the challenges of the task at hand. (p. 582)

Bandura (2000) explained, “When faced with obstacles, setbacks, and failures, those who doubt their capabilities slacken their efforts, give up, or settle for mediocre solutions, those who have a strong belief in the capabilities redouble their effort to master the challenge” (p. 120). The role of the principal is increasingly defined in terms of academic achievement and success as measured by high-stakes assessment results; a principal’s sense of efficacy plays a critical role in meeting the expectations and demands of the position (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004).

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The intent of this chapter is to describe fundamental components of the research design and methodology of this study as it relates to the purpose of the study. The overall purpose of this study was to examine systematically the principal's involvement and leadership in a systems change effort in the context of an Rtl reform effort. This chapter focuses on the procedures applied to frame, collect, and analyze the data while exploring both qualitative and quantitative approaches of a mixed methods research design.

Research Design

The methods used in this mixed methods research design include the constant comparative method and multicase study to answer the research questions. The constant comparative method is a research design for multidata sources through which formal analysis begins early, is analyzed throughout the data collection process, and compared to the multidata sources. For example, the first rule of the constant comparative method is that “while coding an incident for a category, compare it with the previous incidents in the same and different groups coded in the same category” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, as cited in Lincoln & Guba, 1985). “When researchers study two or more subjects, settings, or

depositories of data they are usually doing what we call multicase studies” (Bogdan & Bilken, 2007, p. 69).

Three settings were chosen using purposeful or critical sampling. These three subjects were chosen because they are “believed to facilitate the expansion of the developing theory” (Bogdan & Bilken, 2007, p. 73). The accomplishment of triangulation, or converging lines of inquiry, through semi-structured topical interviews, field based observations, and surveys. This study employed a mixed-methods approach, indicating the use of both quantitative and qualitative measures during the data collection process. This study applied the epistemological framework associated with qualitative research to document perceptions of the principal, problem solving team, and teachers in three different schools in an RtI reform initiative. Epistemology is a philosophical study of knowledge acquisition and confirmation (Gall et al., 2003). There are two basic views of relationships between knowledge and perceptions of observed individuals and operating in a research environment. These two basic views are positivism and post-positivism. Positivism is commonly referred to as quantitative research. Post-positivism corresponds with qualitative research (Gay & Airasian, 2000). This study utilizes both views.

The use of both quantitative and qualitative research methods incorporates strategies appropriate for this study because, as Gall et al. (2003) stated, “qualitative research plays a discovery role, while quantitative research plays a confirmatory role” (p. 24). Moreover, qualitative research is a naturalistic

inquiry into a phenomenon that provides in-depth descriptions unique to specific settings and people through immersion of the researcher into the environment (Brewerton & Millward, 2001; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The quantitative component of this study included exploratory factor analysis of survey research. Tucker and MacCallum (1997) wrote,

The field of factor analysis involves the study of order and structure in multivariate data, which involves both theory about the underlying constructs and dynamics which give rise to observed phenomena, and methodology for attempting to reveal those constructs and dynamics from observed data. (p. 1)

Tucker and MacCallum (1997) continued, “Factor analysis involves a set of techniques designed to identify order and structure in such data by providing a parsimonious and meaningful explanation for the observed variation and covariation in surface attributes” (p. 2).

Research Participants

Prior to beginning the study, this researcher informed the participants about any risks involved in the study and the potential consequences, and gathered their informed consent. Next, this researcher communicated the intent of the investigation. The informants were aware of the fact that their names would not be revealed. There were not be any identifiable student school based data used for this research. Last, this researcher communicated the findings of the study to the participants.

“All sampling is done with some purpose in mind. Within the conventional paradigm that purpose almost always is to define a sample that is in some sense

representative of a population to which it is desired to generalize” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 200). The use of critical sampling gave this researcher the opportunity to explore three different schools that utilized Rtl with the goal of expanding the developing theories surrounding the implementation of a reform initiative. Participants included three building level principals, three members of their problem solving teams, and the faculty at large in three different school districts. There are typically five to seven members on a problem solving team however, due to time constraints the study included three members. This number allowed for building wide representation. In addition, in order to choose problem-solving members efficiently, a convenient sampling model was used for the problem solving team members only. According to Creswell (2005), “Convenience sampling is a quantitative sampling procedure in which the researcher selects participants because they are willing and able to be studied” (p. 590).

The three principals were selected based on the duration of their involvement and specific activities in the Rtl initiative. A minimum of three to five years experience and duration in the current building was a necessary component since the research supports the importance of sustainability of a principal to continue the change process. “Principals who are making strides in school improvement need to remain in their schools for more than five years if their changes are going to stick – otherwise schools become like early flying machines: repeatedly crashing just before take off” (Hargreaves, 2005, p. 171).

The problem solving teams consisted of a representative sample of school faculty. Their role in the school and their presence on the problem-solving team led to their selection. Some schools utilize different members of their school faculty for problem solving based on the identified problems the student faces. To ensure that a representative sample of faculty from different disciplines is present in each school, the faculty's role in the school and their experience and knowledge of the problem solving process is what determines their selection. The three faculty members in each school included general education teachers, special education teachers, school psychologists, school social workers, speech/language pathologists, parents, and reading specialists. The interview of the problem-solving team was on an individual basis using convenient sampling. In two out of the three schools, the interview with the problem solving team occurred after the interview with the principal.

The entire faculty of the school received the survey. Faculty members ranged in age, gender, and experience. The survey was distributed and completed at a faculty meeting. This researcher distributed and explained the survey, the purpose of the study, and directions for completing the survey at the faculty meeting. The researcher then asked a volunteer to collect the surveys and exited the location of the faculty meeting. The volunteer returned the survey in an envelope to this researcher. The process took approximately 15 minutes.

Gerson and Horowitz (2002) stated, "A theoretically focused study needs to choose a carefully targeted sample that is well situated to illuminate the issues

under analysis” (p. 26). Therefore, the selected three elementary schools located in the northern suburbs of Illinois fulfilled the following criteria:

1. Involvement in the Rtl initiative for at least two years
2. Participation in building level professional development in Rtl
3. Implementation of building-based problem solving team meetings on at least a monthly basis using the problem solving model with building wide representation including parents
4. Use of a multi-tiered prevention model
5. Use of data to inform and drive instruction
6. Use of Rtl for eligibility determination under the category of learning disability
7. Interventions that are scientifically based
8. Evidence of reallocation of resources and time
9. Sustainability of leadership in that the principal has served in the district as principal for at least three to five years

Research Instruments

The purpose of this study was to collect, interpret, and analyze data with the intent to describe principals as change agents. Multiple data sources led to the triangulation of data to explore converging lines of inquiry. Principals and problem solving team interviews, observation of the problem solving teams, and surveys provided information regarding the principal's knowledge, skills, and self-efficacy of the change process in an Rtl reform initiative. Survey research

provided the data from the faculty to determine the perceptions of the faculty about the principal as an agent of change. Semi-structured interviews and observation of the principal's role on the problem solving team provided the data from the principal. Finally, semi-structured interviews and observation provided the data from the problem solving team.

Gay and Airasian (2000) noted that most researchers use a semi-structured interview approach, because the rigidity of structured interviews inhibits the ability to probe further into areas, and unstructured interviews tend to be time-consuming and unproductive. Therefore, the interview in this study utilized a semi-structured approach. O'Leary (2004) noted that a semi-structured interview:

Generally start with some defined questioning plan, but pursue a more conversational style of interview that may see questions answered in an order more natural to the flow of conversation. They may also start with a few defined questions but be ready to pursue any interesting tangents that may develop. (p. 164)

Brewerton and Millward (2001) further noted that semi-structured interviews incorporate elements of structured and unstructured interviews, thus creating an environment whereby the researcher has the advantage of relatively easy analysis accompanied by the flexibility to probe into areas of interest in greater depth. Gall et al. (2003) further clarified semi-structured interviews by noting the researcher asks "a series of structured questions and then probing more deeply using open-form questions to obtain additional information" (p. 240).

An interview schedule as defined by Gall et al. (2003) is comparable to an interview guide. In the development of the interview guide, this researcher will align the semi-structured questions with the central research questions and the research that supports systems change efforts. The interview guide provides a framework for in-depth exploration of a phenomenon (Citro, Ilgen, & Marrett, 2003). An interview guide is an instrument that contains topics and generally identifies essential interview questions (Bechhofer & Paterson, 2000).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) identified certain steps in carrying out an interview. The steps may not necessarily be linear, but their inclusion is necessary at some point in the process. These steps involve “deciding on whom to interview, preparing for the interview, initial moves, pacing the interview and keeping it productive, and terminating the interview and gaining closure” (p. 270).

The participants in this study as described above were principals who have sustained their role for a minimum of three to five years and were involved in specific activities as they relate to Rtl. Therefore, the decision about whom to interview was accomplished utilizing critical sampling and gaining informed consent with the above mentioned participant criteria for Principals. The choice of problem solving team members was through a convenient sampling method for members who were available for interview following the interview with the Principal. The locations of such interviews were the school environment. Specificity within the school environment was be determined by the principal or problem solving team member.

The interview guide began with what Lincoln and Guba (1985) described as a “grand tour” question. The “grand tour” question

...gave the respondent practice in talking to the interviewer in a relaxed atmosphere while at the same time providing valuable information about how the respondent construes the general characteristics of context. The respondent was also given an opportunity to organize his or her head by being asked other general questions leading up to the matters that the interview wants discussed in detail later. (p. 270)

The additional questions were developed and align with the central research questions and the research that supports systems change efforts. The distribution of a survey to the entire faculty at the three different schools was to gain an understanding about the faculty’s experience with the change process. The intent of the survey was to glean pertinent information about the building level principal and their change agency characteristics.

The Principal Leadership questionnaire as modified by Lucas and Valentine (2002) has a dichotomous construct comprising both people and purpose. Lucas and Valentine identified six characteristics of leadership for change: provides vision, models appropriate behavior, foster commitment to goals, provides individualized support, provides intellectual stimulation, and holds high expectations. Lucas and Valentine collected self-reported data from principals. All statements began with “I”. There was a modification of the questionnaire for use with all school faculties to examine their perception of the principal. Therefore, the modified version of the survey statements began with “The principal” instead of “I.”

The utilization of a survey offered many benefits. One of the main benefits was that it was flexible and could deal with different types of data. Thomas (2003) stated, "Surveys are useful in revealing the current status of a target variable within a particular entity" (p. 44). In this study, that particular variable is the principal and their ability to initiate and sustain change.

The survey used a Likert Scale model. The use of a Likert Scale was to ask participants to respond to a series of statements based on a limited range of possible answers. Faculty members responded to 24 statements by indicating whether they Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Neutral (3), Disagree (2), or Strongly Disagree (1). There were six main categories for these statements:

- Provides Vision
- Models Appropriate Behavior
- Fosters Commitment to Goals
- Provided Individualized Support
- Provides Intellectual Stimulation
- Holds High Expectations

Observations allow the researcher firsthand information by observing people and places in the research site (Creswell, 2005). The intent of the observation was to observe specifically the building level principal and the leadership for change characteristics demonstrated while serving as a problem solving team member. This researcher acted in a participant observer role. While acting in this role, "the researcher remains primarily as an observer but has some

interaction with the study participants” (Glesne, 2006, p. 50). Because the context of this study involved leadership in relation to Rtl, something this researcher has a strong background in and is a current practitioner, there was a rationale to participate in the observer as participant capacity. Because it was important to gain the trust of and develop relationships with the problem solving team members, including the principal, interviews of both the principal and members of the problem solving team were conducted prior to the observation of the problem solving team.

The ethnographic approach to participant observation was to search for paradoxes in the language used during the social interactions of the problem solving team members. The search for paradoxes involved, but was limited to, listening for evidence of the critical components of change agency as it related to Rtl.

Guba and Lincoln (1981) wrote,

Observation... maximizes the inquirer's ability to grasp motives, beliefs, concerns, interests, unconscious behaviors, customs, and the like: observation...allows the inquirer to see the world as his subjects see it, to live in their time frames, to capture the phenomenon in and on its own terms, and to grasp the culture in its own natural, ongoing environment; observation... provides the inquirer with access to the emotional reactions of the group introspectively – that is, in a real sense it permits the observer to use himself as a data source; and observation... allows the observer to build on tacit knowledge, both his own and that of members of the group. (p. 193)

During the observation, this researcher utilized running notes that were straightforward and anecdotally organized into categories (Lincoln & Guba,

1985). After returning from each observation, this researcher recorded a description of people, objects, events, activities, and conversations. Additionally, this researcher recorded ideas, strategies, reflections, and hunches as well as patterns that emerged (Bogdan & Bilken, 2007). “These are fieldnotes – the written account of what the researcher hears, sees, experiences, and thinks in the course of collecting and reflecting on the data in a qualitative study” (p. 118). Both descriptive and reflective field notes were taken and analyzed throughout the data collection process. Descriptive field notes provided a word picture of the setting, people, actions, and conversations as observed while reflective field notes captured the researcher’s frame of mind, ideas, and concerns.

Research Procedure

A draft version of the research instruments was field-tested in March of 2009. One school was chosen that shared similar backgrounds with the target participants for this study. The pilot study participants were principals, problem solving team members and faculty at large that fulfilled the criteria for participation in the study. Upon completion of the interview questions and survey, the participants were asked to comment on the structure and clarity of both the interview questions and survey. Using the feedback from the principals and faculty, questions and survey items were revised to clarify wording. A total of eight structural changes occurred following field testing. Most field testing participants were confused by the grand tour interview question and suggested that it state “tell me a little about your experience with the Response to

Intervention reform initiative.” One principal made a suggestion to change the order of the questions to avoid duplication of answers. In the survey, under the provides vision statement number 3 was confusing for some. The participants suggested the statement read, “the principal excites faculty members with his/her vision of what the staff will accomplish together” instead of “what the staff will be able to do if they work together.” Another suggestion for the survey was to change the first statement under Provides Individualized Support was changed to provides extended training to develop teacher’s knowledge and relevant skills instead of knowledge and skills relevant to being a member of the school faculty. The directions in the survey were underlined, made clearer by stating, “mark an x in the box that represents your opinion, and Rtl was put in parenthesis.

The research literature identifies multiple benefits to field testing including the enhancement in quality of the research by establishing a feedback mechanism which facilitates the revision of the interview guide (Brewerton & Millward, 2001; Gay & Airasian, 2000). It provides the researcher with insight into the validity of the questions or items in a survey by providing an opportunity to assess if the questions are reasonably unbiased and measures the intent of the study (Gall et al., 2003; Gay & Airasian, 2000). Additionally, it provides a framework to gauge the physical elements of the interview such as running time, points of clarity, etc. (Brewerton & Millward, 2001). Finally, it provides training opportunities for the researcher.

This study asked three schools in the northern region of Illinois to participate in a study examining the principal as a change agent in a Response to Intervention reform initiative. In February of 2009, the principals of selected schools were contacted by email regarding this study. Follow up materials included the letter of institutional invitation (see Appendix A), the letter of institutional cooperation (see Appendix B), the synopsis of research (see Appendix C), the consent to participate in research for the principal (see Appendix D), consent to participate in the research for the problem solving team members (see Appendix E), and consent to participate for the faculty members (see Appendix F). Upon achieving consent and Institutional Review Board approval, this researcher began scheduling the interviews, observations, and distribution of surveys.

All responses remained confidential. Applied measures minimized the possibility of breach of confidentiality. Safekeeping of information collected that identified individuals and/or institutions by name, including audio tapes, were in a locked file cabinet. The destruction of this information followed the completion of this study. All identities were preserved. Individual names and the names of school districts remained anonymous in the final writing. The surveys remained in a locked file. Respondents will receive a unique identifier. The coding and analysis of the data included the use of this identifier. Observation data did not include individual names or the names of school districts.

In two of the three schools, the order of the collection of the data at each school site was the following: interview of principal, interview problem solving team members, observation of problem solving team, and survey distribution at faculty meeting. In all three schools, the building level principal was interviewed separately. Convenience sampling led to the choice of problem-solving team members. The problem solving team members participated in separate interviews. Thus, the problem solving team interview occurred after the interview with the principal. The collection of observations regarding the building based problem solving team followed the interviews.

Finally, surveys were distributed and completed at a faculty meeting. This researcher distributed and explained the survey, purpose of the study, and directions at the faculty meeting. The researcher then asked a volunteer to collect the surveys. The volunteer returned the survey in an envelope to this researcher. The process took approximately 15 minutes.

This researcher collected all data from one site before moving on to the next. Bogdan and Bilken (2007) wrote, "When they do multicase studies, most qualitative researchers do not do fieldwork at more than one site at a time. They do their field work for one case and then move to the next" (p. 70).

Characteristics of change agency cited in the research framed the interview questions. Prior to the interview, the interviewees received a copy of the questions via email attachment. They also received a copy during the interview. During the interview process, this researcher collected evidence using

handwritten notes and an audio recording of the interview session. The handwritten notes enhanced the capacity of the researcher and supported efforts to create an effective interview environment to support the data analysis. Transcription of the audio recordings included nuances in utterances or pauses in the discussion. A contracted transcriptionist transcribed the interviews. This person signed a transcriber confidentiality agreement (see Appendix J).

The establishment of credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability was through a variety of methods and the in-depth discussion regarding his procedure appears later in this chapter. The establishment of one-way credibility and trustworthiness was through member checks. Upon completion of the transcribed interviews, the participant received a copy of the transcribed interview and the opportunity to review and comment on the content of the interview transcription. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that “the member check, whereby data, analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions are tested with members of those stakeholder groups from whom the data were originally collected, is the most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (p. 314).

Only half of the participants responded after reading the transcribed interviews. Some of the suggested changes included inaccurate acronyms such as PBAS was really meant to be PBIS and VA was meant to be called PA (project arrow). However, some participants wished to add additional information and clarifying information as they related to interventions done, resource

allocation, and staff development opportunities. For example, one member added information about bus referrals and noted that in November, they had seven referrals for bus behavior and this was a decrease. Another member spoke of resource allocation; trading three teacher assistants for one teacher. Finally, a PST member added a lot of additional information about staff development such as staff meetings, Everyday Math series training, TAR (teachers as readers), and district and state institute days.

Another technique addressing researcher bias was a reflexive journal. “The reflexive journal is a kind of diary in which the investigator on a daily basis or as needed, records a variety of information about self and method” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 327). The journal consisted of separate parts that included the daily schedule and logistics of the study, personal diary that provided the opportunity for catharsis, reflection upon what was happening in terms of this researchers values and interests, speculation about growing insight, and a methodological log where methodological decisions and accompanying rationales were recorded (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

“In participant observation studies, all the data are considered to be field notes; this term refers collectively to all the data collected in the course of such a study” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 119). The conversion of running notes into field notes followed the observation session. The observation sessions were not tape recorded, as were the interviews. Although there are numerous advantages for tape recording observation sessions such as an unimpeachable data source,

completeness of the data, opportunities for review of nonverbal cues such as significant pauses or raised voices, respondent distrust offset advantages (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Because problem-solving groups are often quite large and may include parents, the likelihood that tape recording may cause discomfort and unwillingness to speak candidly is high. "The fact that recording does provide an accurate and unimpeachable record is often more than sufficient to constrain open and candid responses" (p. 272). Therefore, the observation sessions utilized field notes only for data collection.

For the purposes of collecting rich data, descriptive fieldnotes encompassed the following areas: portraits of the subjects, reconstruction of dialogue, description of physical setting, accounts of particular events, depiction of activities, the observer's behavior. Not only did a description of the physical setting occur while observing the problem solving team, there was a completion of observation and descriptive field notes of the physical environment of the research setting. "Rich data" or "rich field notes" are phrases used to refer to field notes well endowed with good description and dialogue relevant to what occurs at the setting and its meaning for the participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

"In addition to the descriptive material, field notes contain sentences and paragraphs that reflect a more personal account of the course of the inquiry...with the emphasis on speculation, feelings, problems, ideas, hunches, impressions, and prejudices" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 122). The reflective field notes were in the form of observer comments and memos. Interspersed

throughout the field notes were observer comments, while longer memos appeared at the end. Observer comments, memos and other such materials contained the following: reflections on analysis, reflections on method, reflections on ethical dilemmas and conflict, reflections on the observer's frame of mind (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

It was the intent of this researcher to distribute the survey to members of the faculty as they are gathered together. This occurred at a faculty meeting. Because the survey was short in length, the amount of time needed for completion was approximately 15 minutes. The 15 minute completion time, excluded both the principal and this researcher. The faculty received a small token of appreciation in the form of candy upon completion.

Data Analysis

“Analysis involves working with the data, organizing them, breaking them into manageable units, coding them, synthesizing them, and searching for patterns” (Bogden & Biklen, 2007, p. 159). The use of a constant comparative method for developing grounded theory guided data analysis and interpretation. Glaser and Strauss (1967, as cited by Lincoln & Guba, 1985) described four stages of the constant comparative method: “comparing incidents applicable to each category, integrating categories and their properties, delimiting the theory, and writing the theory” (p. 339). In the first stage, categories emerge. Glaser and Strauss stated,

The constant comparison of the incidents very soon starts to generate theoretical properties of the category. The analyst starts

thinking in terms of full range of types or continua, of the category, its dimensions, the conditions under which it is pronounced or minimized, its major consequences, its relation to other categories, and its other properties. (p. 106)

As data was analyzed through a constant comparative method, two categories emerged; those that have been constructed by the researcher and those that have emerged through the respondents. "A theme is a statement or proposition about something. Sometimes, themes can be identified by the presence or absence of specific words" (Brewerton & Millward, 2001, p. 152). The use of thematic or categorical coding to code the qualitative data gathered resulted in the analysis included in this study. The development of a thematic coding system ensured that themes were both exhaustive and exclusive. A theme is exhaustive if occurrences are frequent and are subject to categorization. This process was exclusive if an occurrence of a specific statement fell under only one category.

Strauss and Corbin (1990) defined three means of coding: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. For the purposes of this study, the analytic phase included open coding. Open coding involved asking questions and making comparisons by labeling phenomena within the data. Open coding allowed the researcher to discover, name, and describe categories based upon their properties and dimensions. Emerging from open coding was a general category that was comprised of specific properties that described by the variations in dimensions. Open coding "fractures the data and allows one to identify some categories, their properties, and dimensional locations" (p. 97).

Completion of the integration of the categories and their properties was through a shift from comparing incidents to other incidents classified into the same category to comparing incidents to the primitive versions describing the category (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This process tested previously established properties. For example, if new incidents that emerged into categories failed to exhibit properties already established, it was necessary to formulate subcategories.

To develop theories, the constant comparative method “curbs what others could otherwise become an overwhelming task” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 110). Since the process of integrating categories occurred at the very beginning of the data collection process, the researcher gained a parsimonious and focused understanding of the data early. The delimitation enabled the saturation of categories. Because they were so well defined, it became unnecessary to add further examples. Since the reduction of theory delimitation and saturation categories resulted in the constant comparative method, irrelevant incidents and categories did not waste time. Thus, theory formation was efficient.

As stated earlier, the factors indicated as essential components of principal leadership for change characteristics as defined by Lucas and Valentine (2002) form the basis of the survey used in this study. One of the first steps in utilizing exploratory factor analysis was to determine the indicators that were present in the survey. These indicators were provides vision, models appropriate behavior, fosters commitment to goals, provides individualized support, provides

intellectual stimulation, and holds high expectations. The quantitative component of this study utilized correlation analysis computed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) (Green, Salkind, & Akey, 2000). The application of correlation analysis computed the relationships between the indicators listed above. The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient Indices determined the level of significance of certain indicators.

Data gathered addressed the following questions:

1. According to the perceptions of principals, to what extent do building level principals demonstrate characteristics of change as they specifically relate to knowledge of change, disposition of change, and skills of change as supported and most often cited in the change literature?

The data collected and coded to address this question was from the semi-structured topical principal and problem-solving team interviews, team observations, and principal and faculty surveys. This researcher conducted the interviews and observations. In addition, this researcher distributed the survey with written directions pertinent to the completion and return of the instrument.

2. According to the perceptions of the problem solving teams, to what extent do building level principals demonstrate characteristics of change as they specifically relate to knowledge of change, disposition of change, and skills of change as supported and most often cited in the change literature?

The collected and coded data to address this question was from semi-structured topical interviews with members of the problem solving teams and observation of the problem solving team.

3. According to the perceptions of teachers, to what extent do building level principals demonstrate characteristics of change as they specifically relate to knowledge of change, disposition of change, and skills of change as supported and most often cited in the change literature?

Faculty surveys resulted in the data to address this question.

Ethical and Validity Issues

The use of multiple research techniques increased the validity of this study. The utilization of multiple methods greatly enhanced the data. By collecting data through different techniques and venues, this researcher increased the validity of this study. Triangulation refers to collecting data in multiple ways. Triangulation and the process of corroborating one source of data with other sources of data enhanced the credibility of the research (Bechhofer & Paterson, 2000; Flick, 1992; Gall et al., 2003; Gay & Airasian, 2000). It was the intent of this study to triangulate the data by (a) collecting evidence from the principals (Bechhofer & Paterson, 2000), (b) conducting a cross categorical comparisons between responses of different research participants to identify recurring results and patterns (Gall et al., 2003; Gay & Airasian, 2000), (c) comparing and coding each interview transcript with well-supported theories of

the change process and role of the building level principal (Boyatzis, 1998, Flick, 1992; Gall et al., 2003), (d) member checking (Gall et al., 2003; Heaton, 2004), and (e) examining the perceptions of the members of the entire school as they relate to the building level principal's skills, knowledge, and self-efficacy of the change process through survey research and exploratory factor analysis.

Boyatzis described the validation process through exploring data-driven coding and theoretical/research based coding practices. Boyatzis additionally validates documentary evidence and cross-categorical analysis as data-driven coding practices, while comparing the data to literature and theory based models provides additional forms of validity.

To ensure validity, this researcher engaged in member checking and shared interview transcripts, analytical thoughts, and drafts of the final report with research participants to ensure the accurate representation of their ideas.

Limitations of the Study

Due to the research design and time constraints, this study was subject to a number of limitations. These limitations were:

1. The participant sample is limited to three principals, 9 members of a problem solving team, and approximately 150 teachers all serving the northern suburban region of Illinois.
2. The interviewer to tape record all interviews for transcript accuracy attained permission; however, the subtleties and nuances of body

language and facial expression was lost in the transcription of the dialogue.

3. The summary of results of this study was limited to the participant sample and may or may not transcend to other principals involved in an Rtl reform initiative.

Bias of the Researcher

This researcher recognizes that there was a risk of potential bias with regard to principals involved in the change process. These biases were:

1. This researcher is a principal involved in Rtl.
2. As a principal, this researcher has taken a lead role in the district wide implementation of Rtl.
3. This researcher self-identifies as a change agent.

Therefore, in order to keep account for and acknowledge researcher biases during the research of this project, the researcher kept a reflexive journal. As mentioned earlier, this journal was an introspective journal that displayed the investigators mind processes, philosophical positions, and bases of decisions about the inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This researcher utilized this reflexive journal during the collection of each data set. Throughout the data collection process, this researcher shared the journal with the dissertation director in order to ensure the researcher kept personal bias from coloring the data collection, display, and analysis.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, this researcher presented the methods used to collect data and answer the research questions. The goal of this research was to examine systematically the principal's involvement and leadership in a systems change effort in the context of an Rtl reform effort. Chapter Three focused on eight main sections. The first sections, the introduction and research design, defined the mixed methods approach used for this research study. The next sections focused on research participants, research instruments, research procedures, and data analysis. Last, a definition and description of the ethical and validity issues as well as limitations to the study concluded this chapter. The mixed methods approach and the developed instruments used for this study are essential in verifying the validity and reliability of the results presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

The purpose of this mixed method, multiple case study research was to explore the role of the building principal in a systems change effort involving Rtl and the extent to which the principal demonstrated characteristics of change. These characteristics included knowledge of change, self-efficacy or their belief in their ability to make changes, and skills of change as supported in the research. The study used an exploratory mixed method in a multiple case study design based upon quantitative statistical comparison and qualitative content analysis. The analysis of the qualitative data was through the constant comparative method. Separate content analyses analyzed principals' perceptions and problem solving team (PST) members' perceptions according to their interviews and observational field note data. The use of critical sampling led to the selection of the three schools, and thus the three principals. The duration of principal involvement and their specific activities in the Rtl initiative led to the selection of the principles. A minimum of three to five years experience and duration in the current building was a necessary component since the research supports the importance of sustainability of a principal to continue the change process.

The analysis of the quantitative data from the teacher surveys included the application of an exploratory factor analysis approach. The combination of both quantitative and qualitative analysis provides a more comprehensive understanding of the leadership dynamic as it relates to systems change involving Rtl.

Chapter Four begins with documenting the implementation of the data collection process, review of the research questions, data coding and analysis, qualitative analysis as well as a presentation of the invariant constituents and thematic categories revealed through the analysis process as related to the research questions, interpretation of the data, and summary of findings. There is then a description of the quantitative analysis procedure is then described and followed by a presentation of the results. The chapter concludes with a summary.

Data Collection Process

The data collection followed the process outlined in Chapter Three. Twenty-six principals of northern Illinois schools received an email regarding participation in the study. Follow up materials were sent via U.S. Postal mail and included the letter of institutional invitation (see Appendix A), the letter of institutional cooperation (see Appendix B), the synopsis of research (see Appendix C), the consent to participate in research for the principal (see Appendix D), consent to participate in the research for the problem solving team members (see Appendix E), and consent to participate for the faculty members (see Appendix F).

It should be noted that initially the criteria for building selection stated that “sustainability of leadership in that the principal has served in the district as principal for at least five years.” Due to the time constraints and the fact that none of the 17 participants that responded to the initial email met the five year requirement, this researcher applied for an Institutional Review Board Amendment to the study. The criteria for building selection was changed from “the building principal has served in the district for at least five years” to “the building principal has served in the district for three to five years.”

Thirteen principals responded via email to state that they had only been a principal in their current building for one or two years. One principal responded stating that they had been part of a number of studies this year and that declined the opportunity to participate. Three principals responded stating that they would like to participate but they did not meet the five-year requirement. Of these three, one had been a principal in their current building for three years and two others were in their respective buildings for four years. Upon approval of the IRB amendment, this researcher proceeded with the study of these three building principals and their respective schools. Of the 26 emails and participation packets sent via U.S. postal mail, 17 responses were received and nine potential participants did not respond.

Interviews with nine PST members and three principals were conducted. In addition, field notes were maintained by the researcher for use in the content analysis. Survey data were collected from faculty members for quantitative

analysis. Informed consent was obtained prior to all interviews, survey distribution, or observational notation on circumstances or meetings. Confidentiality measures were taken to protect individual confidentiality as outlined in Chapter Three. Factor analysis and content analysis was performed on the survey data and the interview data, and observational field note data obtained for use in the study with particular interest in identifying concepts related to the principal leadership dimensions related to systems change as identified by previous research.

Research Questions

The following research questions address building level principals as change agents in schools using the Rtl initiative as a reform effort:

1. According to the perceptions of principals, to what extent do they demonstrate characteristics of change as they specifically relate to: knowledge of change, self-efficacy of change, and skills of change as supported and most often cited in the change literature?
2. According to the perceptions of the problem solving teams, to what extent do building level principals demonstrate characteristics of change as they specifically relate to knowledge of change, self-efficacy of change, and skills of change as supported and most often cited in the change literature?
3. According to the perceptions of teachers, to what extent do building level principals demonstrate characteristics of change as they

specifically relate to: knowledge of change, self-efficacy of change, and skills of change as supported and most often cited in the change literature?

Data Coding and Analysis

The employment of a mixed method research design led to the answers to the research questions. The qualitative analysis consisted of content analysis of interviews and observational field notes. NVivo8® qualitative analysis software, used to store, organize, and represent qualitative data, was used to assist in the qualitative analysis procedure in an attempt to improve validity of the qualitative results. Quantitative data were analyzed using factor analysis of survey data obtained from faculty at each of the three schools.

Qualitative Analysis

The content analysis of the interview, observational, and journal documentation included coding the text of the documentation into categories (Neuendorf, 2002), which included breaking the text of the documentation into key components or units, words, sentences, and themes. The examination of these key components, or invariant constituents, helped determine relevance to the characteristics of principal leadership. NVivo helped to facilitate the grouping of the invariant constituents into the appropriate category and to generate frequency percentages for those invariant constituents, as represented by the documentation used in the study. NVivo has a strong capacity for mixed methods analyses, leading to its choice as the analysis software to include in this study.

Since the study involved a constant comparative method, frequency percentages helped to build the theories among the multiple cases. To provide a rationale for incorporating frequency tables Sorensen (2008) states “one can obtain a view of the output with textual data supporting that frequency, thus allowing presentation of both the frequency supporting the strength of the theme and the illustrative evidence behind it” (p. 108). The thematic categories illustrated in Table 1 demonstrate the invariant constituents by theme, based upon the questions given in the interviews in the context of answering this study’s research questions as mentioned above.

Table 1

Thematic Categories and Invariant Constituent Distributions

Thematic Categories	# of invariant constituents for Principals group	# of invariant constituents for PST group
Experience with Rtl	3	3
Most challenging parts of reform	5	9
Relying on data to make decisions	3	3
Principal leadership styles	3	9
Communicating the leadership style	3	3
Ensuring quality instruction	8	9
Professional development opportunities provided to staff	5	5
Reallocation of resources	4	4
Ways to Promote high standards of learning	5	7
Role on Problem Solving Team	4	7
Professional learning communities	2	2

Interpretation of the Data

The main objective of the content analysis for the current study was to determine the perceptions of principals in terms of their knowledge of change, self-efficacy of change, and their skills for change, as well as the perceptions of problem solving team (PST) members of their principals' knowledge of change, self-efficacy of change and skills for change. Analysis of the interviews conducted with the principals from schools A, B, and C, as well as three PST members from each of the schools were through content analysis. This was through comparing incidents applicable to each category at each of the three schools, integrating categories and their properties, delimiting the theory to make them well defined and writing the theory.

The questions given in the interviews in the context of answering this study's research questions as mentioned above resulted in the thematic categories in the content analysis. Invariant constituents were selected from the qualitative data and clustered together to create the thematic categories, which then underwent conversion into themes. The identification of the eleven themes outlined below resulted from the data. Themes 1, 2, and 3 attempt to describe the perceived knowledge of change concerning principals, while themes 4 and 5 have more to do with the perceived self-efficacy of change of principals. Themes 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 characterize the perceived skills of change of principals.

Perceived Knowledge of Change Concerning Principals

Theme 1: Principals perceive themselves as having substantial experience with the Response to Intervention reform initiative. In general, the PST members also perceive themselves as having substantial experience with the Rtl reform initiative.

Theme 2: Principals' perceptions of the most challenging parts of reform include training and developing qualified staff, while PST members' perceptions of the most challenging parts of reform for principals are extremely diverse.

Theme 3: Principals perceive themselves as relying strongly on data to make decisions. PST members also perceive themselves as relying strongly on data to make decisions.

Perceived Self-Efficacy of Change of Principals

Theme 4: In terms of leadership styles, principals perceive themselves as collaborative, and encouraging/supportive. In general, PST members also perceive their principals' leadership styles to be collaborative and encouraging/supportive.

Theme 5: Principals perceive themselves as communicating their leadership styles clearly. PST members also perceive principals as communicating their leadership styles clearly.

Perceived Skills of Change of Principals

Theme 6: Principals perceive themselves as ensuring quality instruction by providing professional development opportunities to staff, offering guidance and feedback to staff, and monitoring school progress. PST members' perceptions of principals' methods of ensuring quality instruction also focuses on supporting staff.

Theme 7: Principals perceived the professional development opportunities provided to staff to include mainly general training. PST members perceived the same.

Theme 8: Principals perceive themselves as having reallocated resources mainly in terms of scheduling, staff composition. PST members also perceive principals as having engaged in scheduling reallocation and staff composition reallocation.

Theme 9: Principals perceive themselves as promoting high standards of learning through improving the quality of instruction, encouraging staff, and maintaining currently high standards. PST members' perceptions of how principals promote high standards of learning are through communicating their high expectations and encouraging staff.

Theme 10: Principals perceive themselves in a supportive or observer role in the context of the Problem Solving Team. In turn, PST members perceive themselves more so in leadership roles.

Theme 11: Principals perceive their schools as currently offering informal learning communities, but as moving towards the installment of professional learning communities. The majority of PST members also perceive this.

The change characteristics discussed in themes 1, 2, and 3 relate to the knowledge of change. These are experience or familiarity with Rtl, ability to address the challenging aspects of reform, and the degree of consideration of data that goes into decision-making, respectively. According to the content analysis on principals' perceptions of themselves, all (100%) of the principals reported being well experienced with Rtl. According to the content analysis on the PST members' perceptions, all of PST members also reported having either substantial or some experience with the Rtl program. This suggests that effective Rtl is occurring at the schools of interest, and therefore that both the principals and PST members have considerable knowledge of the reform initiative. The content analysis also showed that all of the principals and all of PST members perceived that principals were able to acknowledge and address the challenging aspects of reform, regardless of what the specific challenging aspects were. This further indicates that the principals had a working knowledge of change as it applies to Rtl. Additionally, all of principals and all of PST members reported considering the use of data very important to decision-making, which supports the idea that the principals had a true understanding of what it takes to implement reform in a school.

Summary of Findings

In summary of the content analysis of the principals' perceptions of their own demonstration of change characteristics, each principal perceived himself or herself as showing all of the change characteristics. Support for this is through the fact that content analysis of the PST members' perceptions about the principals also indicated that PST members viewed their respective principals as showing all of the change characteristics. Analysis of the field observations also supports the idea that the three principals assessed in this study do display change characteristics.

The research questions that guided the qualitative portion of the study were:

1. According to the perceptions of principals, to what extent do they demonstrate characteristics of change as they specifically relate to: knowledge of change, self-efficacy of change, and skills of change as supported and most often cited in the change literature?
2. According to the perceptions of the problem solving teams, to what extent do building level principals demonstrate characteristics of change as they specifically relate to knowledge of change, self-efficacy of change, and skills of change as supported and most often cited in the change literature?

Organization of the themes that encompass these change characteristics are under three groups: those demonstrating knowledge of change, those

relating to self-efficacy of change, and those exhibiting skills of change. The thematic categories presented facilitated the following themes.

Perceived Knowledge of Change Concerning Principals

The first group of themes demonstrates the knowledge of change. Themes 1, 2, and 3 are included in this group. There is a presentation of each theme with the related thematic category along with frequency data and textural support.

Theme 1: Principals perceive themselves as having substantial experience with the Response to Intervention reform initiative. In general, the PST members also perceive themselves as having substantial experience with the Rtl reform initiative.

The first thematic category, experience with Rtl, was determined by three invariant constituents for both principals and PST members. According to the data (see Table 2), all of principals perceived themselves as having substantial experience with the Response to Intervention reform initiative, which serves as evidence of the principals' perceived knowledge of change. As Principal A says, "We'll talk about problem solving, in the problem solving process, which is exactly what Response to intervention is." Principal B states "In terms of response to intervention though, when it started to kind of make its way federally, probably connected a little bit more with No Child Left Behind, and so that was when I started working here, was six years ago. Just sharing information with staff about response to intervention, what that might look like in terms of an entitlement

decision, so we were having those conversations six years ago, and then changed the focus of our pupil personnel teams to really be more symptomatic and follow a structure and make sure that we had services available at the different tiers.” Principal C says, “I was one of the first inclusion facilitators in the state of Illinois.” Principal C was observed asking the team about how language barriers affect the educational environment. This demonstrates knowledge of the RtI process and potential special education eligibility concerns.

Table 2

Principals' Perceptions of their Own Experience with RtI

Invariant Constituents	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience
Substantial experience	3	100%
Some experience	0	0%
Little/no experience	0	0%

As illustrated in Table 3, the majority of PST members interviewed at each school also perceived them as being familiar with RtI. Participating PST members admitted to either having been trained in RtI reform in the past, or currently receiving RtI training, and mandated by the principals of the schools and the tenets of the reform initiative. PST member from School A says, “So we learned about Response to Intervention with learning about the tiers along with learning about interventions. We had a lot of training last year.” PST member from School B says, “The data will show us tier 1, tier 2, tier 3, and the kids that are in the red. Therefore, those kids, it automatically says start intense intervention. They are not responding to programming. When we sit down, in the

data meetings to talk about every kid in the class, not just the ones that are struggling, we talk about all students.” PST Member from School C says, “I was initially trained five years ago as a third grade classroom teacher. I had that basic training that year and got to do problem solving with just one of my students as a test study case. I got into this position where I do a lot more with Response to Intervention and problem solving than I ever did before. Throughout the last four years we've really made some big gains in revamping our master schedule so we can get students extra time for reading and we changed our special education model of service delivery to give kids more.”

At School C a team was observed discussing fidelity and learned that a particular intervention is not being done with fidelity. This is an essential component of an Rtl model.

Table 3

PST Members' Perceptions of their Experience with Rtl

Invariant Constituents	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience
Substantial experience	7	78%
Some experience	2	22%
Little/no experience	0	0

Theme 2: Principals' perceptions of the most challenging parts of reform include training and developing qualified staff, while PST members' perceptions of the most challenging parts of reform for principals are extremely diverse.

The second thematic category, perceptions of the most challenging parts of reform include training and developing qualified staff, while PST members' perceptions of the most challenging parts of reform for principals are extremely diverse. As Table 4 shows, all of the principals perceived training and developing qualified staff as the most challenging part of reform. The most difficult part for Principal A incorporates time and training for staff, "Having the time I think, to really get people trained and have those conversations and give people those experiences." This also appears in the field notes for school A, where it states, "The SSC (Student Services Coordinator) mentions that time is a challenge." Principal B says, "you could be intervening all over the place, but what good-, that's not a good use of your time either, if what everybody's supposed to get isn't quality because the training is not there." Principal C states, "so there's always some regression with staff if you don't maintain the level of staff development that it really needs in order to have sustainability." In the observation conducted at School A, the field notes indicate that the Principal asks one of the district problem solving coaches how the district plans to get new staff up to speed on all the trainings. The coach then indicates that many things are changing but the next step involves expanding the staff knowledge base. The Principal agrees that everyone should be involved.

Table 4

Principals' Perceptions of Most Challenging Part(s) of Reform

Invariant Constituents	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience
Training and developing qualified staff	3	100%
Time and effort needed to implement reform model	1	33%
Obtaining staff buy-in	1	33%
Ensuring that the reform will benefit all students	1	33%
Becoming familiar with concepts of the reform	1	33%

As illustrated in Table 5, some PST members also agree that the most challenging part of reform for principals is training and developing qualified staff; however, this is not an overarching perception among PST members. Their answers include training and developing qualified staff, time and effort needed to implement reform model, obtaining staff buy-in, ensuring that the reform will benefit all students, becoming familiar with the inner concepts of the reform, providing resources to support staff, balancing responsibilities, scheduling and collecting data. The most common responses are training and development of qualified staff and providing resources to support staff, both given by three PST members. Following this is the acquisition of staff buy-ins and time and effort needed to implement reform model, answered by two PST members. Other answers were given by one PST member only. Some PST members also agree

that the most challenging part of reform for principals is training and developing qualified staff but this is not an overarching perception among PST members.

One PST member from school A states, "It's just the resources and being able to do it because Response to Intervention is not always kids, it's the problem solving piece and sometimes we feel like we are overburdening or overtaxing our support staff because they're a big part of it and as much as we're really good at having everyone be a key player and sometimes we struggle with that because we could really use more support." Another PST member from school B states, "And so I assume that that extra scheduling compared to regular scheduling duties is what probably would be a challenge for her." PST member from school C states, "I think that a lot of us feel like we're not trained consistently. Every year we have you know new kids who need new interventions, we have new interventions and I personally even though I've been here for a while see that a lot of people here feel like they're just trying to keep up with it all."

Table 5

PST Members' Perceptions of the Reform Challenges Faced by the Principal

Invariant Constituents	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience
Training and development of qualified staff	3	33%
Providing resources to support staff	3	33%
Scheduling	2	22%
Time and effort needed to implement the reform model	2	22%
Obtaining staff buy-in	2	22%
Collecting data	1	11%
Ensuring that the reform will benefit all students	1	11%
Balancing responsibilities	1	11%
Becoming familiar with inner workings of reform	1	11%

Theme 3: Principals perceive themselves as relying strongly on data to make decisions. PST members also perceive themselves as relying strongly on data to make decisions.

Thematic category three, relying on data to make decisions, demonstrated that all of principals had the perception that they based their decision-making on data. As Principal A says, "I almost can't think of when we don't, because it's so ingrained in what we do here." Principal B says, "And data's a piece of information. That's how I look at it. And we measured and have measures of academic progress and they (the teachers), totally bought into that assessment tool. And this has helped us make really great decisions, classroom, district wide. And they have learned to analyze that data." Principal C says, "(referring to data) well, you know, almost anything, everything that the school is." Principal C was

observed looking at a graph and identifying huge inconsistencies. The School psychologist then noted that in looking at the entire year, there has been progress.

Table 6

Principals' Perceptions of the Degree to Which They Base Decision Making on Data

Invariant Constituents	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience
Very much	3	100%
Somewhat	0	0
A little/Not at all	0	0

Likewise, as illustrated in Table 7, it appears to be a general consensus among PST members that they rely heavily on data to make decisions. One PST member from School C observes, "We sit down and look at data consistently here." In response to the interview question about using data to make decision, a PST member from School A states, "I can think of a hundred things."

Table 7

PST Members' Perceptions of the Degree to Which They Base Decision Making on Data

Invariant Constituents	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience
Very much	9	100%
Somewhat	0	0
A little/Not at all	0	0

Perceived Self-Efficacy of Change of Principals

The change characteristics referred to in themes 4 and 5 relate to self-efficacy of change, or the perceived judgment one's capabilities to structure a particular course of action to produce desired outcomes. These change characteristics are (a) demonstration of leadership qualities conducive to change, and (b) ability to communicate leadership, goals and objectives. According to the content analysis, principals and PST members most commonly perceived principal leadership styles to be collaborative, supportive/encouraging, and exhibitivite of high expectations. It is apparent that these qualities are reflective of self-efficacy in principals when attributed to sentiments such as the following from Principal C: "I think the way I communicate it, and the way we plan things out, people give it a shot... So whether it's here or whether it was in the other place, or really any position I was in, somehow people trust what I say." Related to leadership style is the ability of principals to communicate that leadership to the staff, along with the associated goals and objectives. The content analysis showed that principals and PST members unanimously perceived that each of the principals was capable of communicating his or her leadership clearly and effectively. Such confidence in one's leadership ability further supports the appearance of self-efficacy of change within the studied principals.

Theme 4: In terms of leadership styles, principals perceive themselves as collaborative, and encouraging/supportive. In general, PST members also

perceive their principals' leadership styles to be collaborative and encouraging/supportive.

Three key invariant constituents for the principal participants and nine key invariant constituents for the PST participants determined the fourth thematic category, principal leadership styles. Tables 8 and 9 illustrate the key invariant constituents and frequencies for this thematic category. All the principals perceived their own leadership styles to be collaborative and encouraging or supportive. The majority of principals perceived their leadership styles to include high expectations.

Principal A exemplifies this perception by saying, "I think if you can start that core, then you get people who want to be kind of a part of it." Principal A also stated, "Well I would hope that people would see me as collaborative. I try to model what I want on a day-to-day basis for my staff. I think I set high expectations. And hold people accountable but I don't think I micromanage them". Principal B stated, "I had to take a step back and really think about, that people do look at me as the leader. And that is how I'm viewed. That took me a whole year to get used to that, but now, I think because I earned respect from the people that I work with, that's what I am. That's my job. You know, my job description says that 51% of my day is supposed to be spent as an educational leader, informing and helping in instruction. And that's what I do. And that's what I like." Principal C states, "Somehow people trust what I say, I think the way I communicate it, and the way we plan things out, people give it a shot."

Additionally, support was also demonstrated through resources. In the field observation, the Principal at School A discussed reaching consensus about the use of SMART boards vs. laptops on carts. The principal demonstrated a desire to obtain the supports necessary for quality instruction to occur.

Table 8

Principals' Perceptions of their own Leadership Styles

Invariant Constituents	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience
Collaborative	3	100%
Encouraging/Supportive	3	100%
High Expectations	2	67%
Direct/Straightforward	1	33%

PST members' perceptions of their principals' leadership styles closely match principals' perceptions of their own leadership styles. PST members found their principals to have the following characteristics in their leadership styles: being collaborative, being encouraging and/or supportive, being hands-on and involved, and exhibiting high expectations. One PST member from School A exemplified several of these invariant constituents when stating, "I would say [the leadership style is] very motivating, very challenging, high expectations, very supportive, and really what works for kids kind of leader." PST member A from school B stated, "She offers support to us, on what we need, whether it's time or resources, you know, she's certainly there to help us out with that. She even offers her own time frequently to help us out, that's very helpful. She's willing to give up a lot of her time to help us." PST member B from School C states, "He is

very hands on and involved. And when a problem occurs he wants to be there, he wants to sit in on our meetings and he communicates how aware he is of what's going on throughout the school and the only way you could know that much is by being out there.”

Table 9

PST Members' Perceptions of the Principal's Leadership Style

Invariant Constituents	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience
Collaborative	9	100%
Encouraging/Supportive	7	78%
High Expectations	4	44%
Hands –on/Involved	4	44%
Motivating	2	22%
Direct/Straightforward	1	11%
Fostering Independence	1	11%
Focused	1	11%
Encouraging of Risk Taking	1	11%
Knowledgeable	1	11%

This data is further supported by the observational field notes from school C, which demonstrate support for collaborative behavior incorporated in the problem-solving meeting, “The principal mentioned that this is of great instructional consideration and that the team needed to solve this problem together.” In addition, observational field notes taken from school A’s problem solving meeting noted, “The principal communicated the importance of

teamwork, collaboration, and communication for effective planning and implementation to occur.”

Theme 5: Principals perceive themselves as communicating their leadership styles clearly. PST members also perceive principals as communicating their leadership styles clearly.

The fifth thematic category, communicating the leadership style, was determined by three key invariant constituents for both the principals and the PST members. According to Table 10, all of the principals perceived themselves as communicating their leadership styles clearly and effectively. Principal B states, “We're doing it because we know it makes good sense for kids and it'll result in progress for them. So we are in a really good place and I tell them that all the time.” As Principal C says, “I can communicate stuff like RTI, problem solving, PBIS, what are we doing now, student engagement, IPI, you know, teachers always feel, and so do I, that there's a lot of stuff on the plate.”

Table 10

Principals' Perceptions of How they Communicate Leadership Styles to Staff

Invariant Constituents	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience
Through clear/effective communication	3	100%
By setting out reachable goals to be met/expectations	2	67%
Sharing and communicating	2	67%

In general, PST members also perceived their principals as communicating their leadership styles clearly. One PST member from School A

states, “There are times though that she will approach someone and say you know what I really know that you need this support and this is the opportunities I’m gonna give you.” Another PST member from School B says, “if [the principal says] this is the direction we’re going... we’re gonna move right with it because it’s gonna make a positive impact on the students, and so we just follow right along.” Lastly, another PST member from school C said, “He shows us leadership as less as management now and more of true leadership, true, you know, getting out there and doing it.”

Table 11

PST Members’ Perceptions of How Principal Communicates Leadership Style

Invariant Constituents	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience
Through clear, effective communication	8	89%
By being present/approachable/available	4	44%
By setting a goal/vision for the school and guiding everyone towards it	2	22%

Perceived Skills of Change of Principals

Themes 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 consist of change characteristics having to do with skills of change. These change characteristics include methods of ensuring quality instruction, the provision of professional development opportunities for staff, reallocation of resources, promotion of high standards of learning, taking on a participant-observer role on the Problem Solving Team, and the use of professional learning communities within the school. According to the

content analysis, both principals and PST members perceived the principals as exhibiting numerous characteristics representing the skills for change. For example, the ability to reallocate scheduling in order to allow teachers to observe others instructing, is one skill that is key to successfully implementing reform. Employing methods to ensure quality instruction and promoting high standards are also skills that are fundamental to reforming a school.

Theme 6: Principals perceive themselves as ensuring quality instruction by providing professional development opportunities to staff, offering guidance and feedback to staff, and monitoring school progress. PST members' perceptions of principals' methods of ensuring quality instruction also focuses on supporting staff.

Thematic category six, ensuring quality instruction, demonstrated that principals perceive themselves as ensuring quality instruction by providing professional development opportunities to staff, offering guidance and feedback to staff, and monitoring school progress and that PST members' perceptions of principals' methods of ensuring quality instruction also focuses on supporting staff. Table 12 shows that the majority of principals perceive themselves as ensuring quality instruction through providing professional development opportunities to staff, monitoring progress, and offering guidance and feedback to staff.

According to Principal A, "It's setting those expectations is providing professional development in the areas that you think your teachers need."

Principal A was observed talking about job embedded professional development that has occurred in the school. She noted that teachers feel safe and secure to ask for help and take risks because the expectation is that they will move forward. Principal B states, “The reading specialist and I have instituted the focused classroom, we call them walk throughs. The teacher will tell us what the focus of the lesson is supposed to be. And so she (the reading specialist) and I will sit, observe, and take notes and we're looking for the five big ideas of reading and what kinds of activities the kids are engaged in, and then at the end of that two days, we'll meet back with the classroom teacher and talk about what we saw. And give feedback about how instruction is being delivered.” According to Principal C, ‘I'm interested to see how that works and how I can guide [staff] to be reflective about the practice in a way that's meaningful to them.’”

Table 12

Principals' Perceptions of their Methods of Ensuring Quality Instruction

Invariant Constituents	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience
Providing professional development opportunities	2	67%
Progress monitoring	2	67%
Offering guidance/feedback	2	67%
Setting vision and guiding staff/school towards it	1	33%
Adhering to curriculum structure	1	33%
Performing staff observations/evaluations	1	33%
Being approachable	1	33%
Focusing on student engaged learning	1	33%

Similarly, PST members across the three schools perceive principals as focusing on support staff, providing resources for staff, and developing and training staff as the main component of ensuring quality instruction (see Table 13). A PST member from School A states, "Very frequently we'll find an article in our mailbox from our Principal that has something to do with quality instruction and she'll have the expectation that you know you'll have read that and that you've had a discussion about that article with someone." According to a PST member from School B, "We have meetings where we talk about doing different projects, and then, she has pop in visits, she has conversations, I think we have our evaluations, so I think, and she's brought people in, we've attended conferences and such." According to a PST member from School C, "At our last SIP meeting he sat down and said ok, well, how do we get number 6 and if I pop in what should I see and talking about what is cooperative learning he passed out this great article that talked about how round robin is not an effective instructional technique."

Table 13

PST Members' Perceptions of How the Principal Ensures Quality Instruction

Invariant Constituents	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience
Supporting staff (providing resources, personal/professional support, training)	8	89%
Performing staff observations/evaluations	7	78%
Being open to innovative teaching techniques	2	22%
Focusing on student-engaged learning	2	22%
Setting vision and guiding staff/school towards it	1	11%
Paying attention to at-risk students	1	11%
Ensuring standards of the curriculum	1	11%
Staying up-to-date on current research concerning education	1	11%
Setting objectives for students and clearly stating them	1	11%

Theme 7: Principals perceived the professional development opportunities provided to staff to include mainly general training. PST members perceived the same.

The seventh thematic category, professional development opportunities provided to staff, demonstrated that both principals and PST members perceived general training provided to staff. Table 14 shows that the principals from all three schools had the perception that professional opportunities provided to staff included mainly general training, and secondarily, specialized training, out of district training, presentations by experts, etc. As Principal A indicates:

In addition, data obtained through observations (field notes) from school A noted, 'Principal mentions that she sent a team to the Marzano

training. OC- this is another sign of a great leader, one who offers solid professional development.”

Principal B states, “We opened up our year, at our August institute, we have two half days of training, and our school psychologist and our school psych intern trained everybody in the problem solving process and said, this is how we're gonna be conducting business from now on.”

Principal C states, “There's tons of staff development up front with all this in year 1, 2, and 3, and we still get new teachers and we cycle them through the first training, and that always helps.”

Table 14

Principals' Perceptions of the Professional Development Opportunities Provided to Staff

Invariant Constituents	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience
General training	3	100%
Specialized training	2	67%
Referring to administrators at other schools/districts for expertise	1	33%
Out-of-district training	1	33%
Presentations by experts	1	33%

Table 15 shows that PST members' perceptions were aligned with those of the principals. All PST members also perceived the available professional development opportunities as consisting first and foremost of general training, followed by other types of development opportunities. A PST member from School A describes her experience with professional development, "Well, through the problem solving IASPIRE workshops, we do those, and I probably have gone to I don't know, six to eight of them in the last three years or so. They have a variety of districts in attendance." One PST member from School B describes training as, "it was a couple of days worth of attending different workshops and RTI and all kinds of stuff on reading. And then she's brought people in to talk to us. Yeah, reading strategies, or just even, just classroom strategies to help with differentiation and such." Another PST member from School C states,

I was involved in all the, what we call problem solving cycle 1, cycle 2, cycle 3 training. I did a lot of presentations and things to other schools. And I think I've actually learned more when I presented other schools and get feedback from other schools than I did going through the process myself. I go to all the, I'm one of the problem solving coaches, and so they have coaches' meetings every 6-8 weeks or so around the district, and so I go to those. And that is a definite help, built in staff development. It's good to have kind of a network of people. And that, the professional development has helped the problem solving coaches at the district level have been great with helping to keep that going.

Table 15

PST Members' Perceptions of Professional Development Opportunities Provided to Staff

Invariant Constituents	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience
General training	9	100%
Specialized training	5	56%
Presentations by experts	4	44%
Discussions about progress	2	22%
Referring to administrators at other schools/districts for expertise	2	22%

Theme 8: Principals perceive themselves as having reallocated resources mainly in terms of scheduling, staff composition. PST members also perceive principals as having engaged in scheduling reallocation and staff composition reallocation.

Four invariant constituents determined thematic category eight, reallocation of resources, for the principal participants and four for the PST members. The principals from all the schools have been shown to perceive their reallocation of resources as mainly falling under the categories of scheduling and staff composition. According to Principal A:

I was able to get some more support teachers, some more special ed teachers by reallocating some money that was originally for teacher assistant. So that I could get more certified teachers, one of my issues were I really felt like some of my students were not getting enough direct instruction from a certified person.

Also:

I think the thing that I've reallocated more has been time and what we spend our time on.

Principal B stated, "Resources are reallocated based on interventions and area of expertise covered by staff." Principal C stated, "Staff's not doing traditional role. The project arrow teacher, which is my gifted teacher, is teaching interventions. That's reallocation. And it's looking at the staff and who we have and have a good master schedule. That's key in problem solving and RTI."

Table 16

Principals' Perceptions of How he/she has Reallocated Resources

Invariant Constituents	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience
Time/scheduling	3	100%
Staff composition	3	100%
Interventions	1	33%
Area of expertise covered by staff	1	33%

The majority of PST members also perceive that the principals' reallocation has mainly gone to time/scheduling issues or staff composition issues, as shown in Table 17. As one PST member from School C states, "By completely reworking the schedule that way I think that's been a great way to have his you know his different teachers collaborate." Another PST member from School B states,

Yeah. Well, I really think when I first heard about RTI and they're saying whether you're gonna use anybody in the school to help out with something, so, I don't-, it's hard here cause it's so small, it's like a family, somebody asks you to do something, You just do it.

You have no issue with it at all, and so I think, like I said, making sure if someone needs to leave lunch duty she (the Principal) goes down to lunch duty so that they can go do an intervention with this student. Like she has her finger on the pulse of what's going on around her so that people are able to get to the students that they need to get to. Having that team behind you makes all the difference.

Table 17

PST Members' Perceptions of Principal's Reallocation of Resources

Invariant Constituents	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience
Time/Scheduling	6	67%
Staff composition	2	22%
Area of expertise covered by staff	1	11%
Budget	1	11%

Theme 9: Principals perceive themselves as promoting high standards of learning through improving the quality of instruction, encouraging staff, and maintaining currently high standards. PST members' perceptions of how principals promote high standards of learning are through communicating their high expectations and encouraging staff.

Thematic category nine demonstrates that principals perceive themselves as promoting high standards of learning through improving the quality of instruction, encouraging staff, and maintaining currently high standards. PST members' perceptions of the ways in which principals promote high standards of learning are through communicating their high expectations and encouraging staff. As Table 18 shows, the majority of principals perceive themselves as promoting high standards of learning through the following methods: improving

the quality of instruction, encouraging staff and maintain the currently high standards.

Principal A states, "I think it's you know setting expectations for staff. I mean I do remember having a teacher say to me you know you actually care about what we do in our classroom." Principal B states, "What is a high standard, what will really move our kids forward, what has programming attached to it that can get those kids to a higher level, so they're (the staff) just kind of thinking a little differently." When asked about promoting high standards for learning, Principal C states, "I don't have to. The staff know this is in the best interest of kids. They figure that out themselves. And not only do they put it in their work hours, they go beyond it. And they are focused. I mean what a great problem to have as an administrator."

Table 18

Principals' Perceptions of their Promotion of High Standards of Learning

Invariant Constituents	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience
Improving quality/method of instruction	2	67%
Encouraging staff	2	67%
Maintaining current high standards	2	67%
Discussions with staff	1	33%
Promoting school culture	1	33%

PST members' perceptions of how the principals promote high standard of learning include principals communicating their high expectations to the staff and students, encouraging and supporting staff in their instruction, and also working

towards the expectations and goals laid out for the school. This data can be seen in Table 19. PST member from School A stated, It's very clear that she expects high standards so her expectations are clear and you know she really works to see you know what are the issues that we need to address in order to obtain those high standards." Another PST member from School B describes the high expectations set by the Principal by stating, "Just as we have classroom expectations, we have whole school expectations, hallway expectations, lunchroom expectations. And I think just getting a handle on that behavior piece allows them (the students and staff) to know like hey, we are here to learn". PST member from School C states, "well one of the things that he does is that he's always talking about quality instruction. One of his key things is you need to stay objective before you provide that instruction because then you're catching all the students."

Additionally, the observation of the problem solving team meeting at School B ended on a positive note. Everyone discussed his or her progress and the changes in the school within the last four years. The team felt that the positive changes were a result of the encouragement of the building principal and Response to Intervention.

Table 19

PST Members' Perceptions of How the Principals Promote High Standard of Learning

Invariant Constituents	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience
Communicating high expectations	6	67%
Encouraging staff	5	56%
Working towards expectations/goals	4	44%
Creating relationships with students	1	11%
Communicating high expectations	1	11%
Evaluating student engagement	1	11%
Focusing on success of all students, not only at-risk	1	11%

Theme 10: Principals perceive themselves in a supportive or observer role in the context of the Problem Solving Team. In turn, PST members perceive themselves more so in leadership roles.

Thematic category 10, role on Problem Solving Team, demonstrates that principals perceive themselves in a supportive or observer role in the context of the Problem Solving Team. In turn, PST members perceive themselves more so in leadership roles. According to Table 20, principals do not perceive themselves as leading the Problem Solving Team. Rather, they perceive themselves as stepping back and allowing other members to play a leadership role, play the role of an observer, but also offering insight and feedback when needed.

As Principal A states, "Well, I see myself as setting kind of the bigger vision for where I think this school needs to go. You know, and really just trying to guide them toward that vision." During the observations the Principal at School A

was observed getting the meeting back on track and moving the agenda along to look at the three year plan. She mentions that systemically the Curriculum Based Measurements (CBMs) work. When discussing teams the Principal at School A was also observed mentioning current realities. The Principal was observed discussing how to move Rtl to the next level. She mentioned the self assessment of problem solving that the problem solving leadership team members would complete. Where are we with Rtl? She asks. She would like to look at perceptions of staff in the building about where they are with Rtl.

Principal B states, "I try really hard to be a casual observer and to offer insights and feedback when I have them." Observations at School B show the Principal as a change agent in the role of facilitator the team began to look at individual children's data. The Principal began inquiring right away. One of the roles of a facilitator is adhering to the change process. Questioning is an important component of the change process. The questions being asked are about the intervention. Is the only intervention being used Read Naturally (this is an intervention used for fluency and comprehension). It was determined that this was in fact the only intervention being used. At that point, the team considered use of alternatives or other interventions.

As Principal C says, "You gotta be actively involved and not too actively involved so they're not thinking about too, you just kinda gotta be a conscience once in a while." At School C, The principal spoke about the impact on full day kindergarten while the team was looking at student data. It was noted that this

change has made a difference. A discussion of the differences occurred. The Principal noted that the group that they started out with nine children who all had significant needs yet they all fit right in now. This is a big change from the year before. The teachers then mention the quality instruction and core programming that occurs. The principal asks about an ELL component for a particular student and the team mentions that this student is ELL. The Principal asks the team to consider the affect of language factors on the educational environment. It is noted in observer comments that the Principal plays a role of inquirer. Asking questions is an essential component of the change process.

Table 20

Principals' Perceptions of their Role on the Problem Solving Team

Invariant Constituents	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience
Stepping back and allowing other members to play leadership role	2	67%
Offering insight and feedback when needed	2	67%
Playing the role of observer	2	67%
Setting vision for the school and guiding the school towards the vision culture	1	33%

This allows the PST members to take on more prominent roles on the Problem Solving Team (see Table 21) One PST member from School A mentions, "You know to have that bag of tricks to know what's out there and to understand the data and you know help the teachers look at the data and analyze it you know then use whatever resources we have to help those little

guys.” Another PST member from School B states, “I think my role is to talk about how a student is doing within the classroom. And what kinds of things, problems or deficiencies I see within the classroom. And how can we help that student.” Another PST member from School B states, “My role is to co-facilitate and just be on equal playing field, we're all there to brainstorm ideas, you know. I see one aspect of a child that another team member might not.”

Table 21

PST Members' Perceptions of his/her Role on the Problem Solving Team

Invariant Constituents	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience
Facilitating meetings/Acting as leader	5	56%
Monitoring progress	3	33%
Being aware of what needs to be done	3	33%
Managing data	3	33%
Acting as interventionist	2	22%
Communicating with teachers	2	22%
Helping to create solutions for problems	1	11%

Theme 11: Principals perceive their schools as currently offering informal learning communities, but as moving towards the installment of professional learning communities. The majority of PST members also perceive this.

The final thematic category, professional learning communities, demonstrated that both principals and PST members perceive their schools as currently offering informal learning communities, but as moving towards the installment of professional learning communities. As Table 22 shows, all of principals had the perception that successful informal learning communities were

already in place at their schools. One hundred percent of principals also had the perception that their schools were moving towards formal learning communities.

As Principal A states, “It's, you know, I would tell you that I have some grade levels that I would consider professional learning communities, they really do try to learn. I've tried to model that with my leadership team in terms of providing them with, you know, we'll do our article reviews and that kind of thing, kind of model that for them.” Principal B states, “So, I don't think I use the term professional learning community, but that's what we're trying to do. And we're redoing our evaluation instrument and we're gonna be adding a professional growth plan for folks that are tenured and I really think that that will help as well, so that they're doing more individual reflection and they're doing a more project based evaluation.” Principal C states, “It's groups of teachers meeting together for the purpose of student.”

Table 22

Principals' Perceptions of Use of Professional Learning Communities

Invariant Constituents	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience
Successful informal learning communities in place	3	100%
Moving towards formal professional learning communities	3	100%

Table 23 shows that some PST members also perceived that there were successful informal learning communities in their schools. PST member from

School A stated, “Well, you know, this is something that we're really trying to build more and more and especially with team goals and everything.” Another PST member from School B stated, “So that, that feels like a professional learning community, but you know, like I said, the administrators brought that opportunity to us. So they're always working on, on doing those kinds of things that would benefit us as professionals. A PST member from School C states, “You know, really informal, you know, teams meeting together, or an observation day going on today. People talking for the purposes of student achievement.”

Table 23

PST Members' Perceptions of Use of Professional Learning Communities

Invariant Constituents	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience
Successful informal learning communities in place	3	33%
Moving towards formal professional learning communities	4	33%

Summary of Content Analysis

In general, the content analysis of the interviews with the principals showed that the principals demonstrated perceptions of themselves that were representative of having knowledge of change, self-efficacy of change, and skills of change. The content analysis of the interviews with the PST members showed that the PST members had very similar perceptions of the principals' knowledge, self-efficacy and skills of change as the principals had of themselves.

In addition to principal and PST member interviews, field observations were recorded during Problem Solving Team meetings to assess the degree to which the principal of each school demonstrates change characteristics. The data can be seen in Table 24. The field observations found that all of the principals exhibited all of the change characteristics except discussion of reallocation of resources and promotion of professional learning communities. This could be attributed to the potential difficulty of observing these two particular change characteristics during Problem Solving Team meetings.

In addition, a reflexive journal was created in order to record the researchers' personal feelings about each of the schools regarding social atmosphere, setting, impression of the principal, and level of advancement of school. The reflexive journal was used during data collection process so that the researcher remained objective. During discussions with this researcher's director, the reflexive journal was used as part of the discussion guide. Although no analyses were conducted on the reflexive journal, the information in the reflexive journal could prove to be of use in potential future studies looking at relationships between school atmosphere, setting, etc. and factors related to the implementation of Rtl, such as success rates for students.

Table 24

*Demonstration of Change Characteristics by Principals during Problem Solving**Team Meetings*

Change Characteristics	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience
Experience/Familiarity with Rtl was observed	3	100%
Leadership qualities were observed	3	100%
Goals/objectives/vision were communicated	3	100%
Challenges of reform were addressed	3	100%
Data was considered in relation to making decisions	3	100%
Methods to ensure quality instruction	3	100%
Professional development opportunities were provided to staff	3	100%
High standards of learning were promoted	3	100%
Participant/observer role was assumed	3	100%
Learning communities (informal or formal) were promoted	0	0
Reallocation or discussion of reallocation of resources occurred	0	0

Quantitative Analysis

The next part of this chapter illustrates the analyses performed on the quantitative data collected from teacher surveys concerning their perceptions of the principals. The main objective of this portion of the current study was to

determine the factor loadings of the provided survey dataset. The rotated factor matrices, the reliabilities, and the factor loadings are all described in detail.

All surveys were collected at faculty meetings. All faculty members that attended the faculty meeting completed the survey. However, some faculty members were not in attendance for various reasons. Therefore, the response rate is as follows: School A had a response rate of 79%, School B had a response rate of 80%, and finally School C's response rate was 84%.

Exploratory Factor Analysis and Instructional Group Results

Exploratory factor analysis was used to discover the factor structure and to examine the internal reliability of the survey. First a scree plot was used to determine the number of factors. Then to define the grouping variables and survey validities, a single EFA, using the Varimax Rotation method was used. Figure 1 shows a scree plot. The results are presented in Table 25.

Table 25

Factor Loadings

Rotated Component Matrix^a					
	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
Q1	.324	.276	.240	.621	.141
Q2	.582	.360	.131	.188	.031
Q3	.749	.225	.317	.103	.182
Q4	.821	.137	.150	.315	.162
Q5	.724	.088	.284	.382	.262
Q6	.521	.306	.353	.481	-.033
Q7	.563	.441	.305	.282	.082
Q8	.468	.435	.356	.420	.023

Rotated Component Matrix^a					
Q9	.264	.166	.756	.188	.070
Q10	.372	-.049	.691	.228	.089
Q11	.199	.328	.695	.068	.233
Q12	.137	.339	.564	.253	.287
Q13	.464	.405	.506	.034	.264
Q14	.500	.109	.310	.135	.683
Q15	.078	.240	.105	.350	.798
Q16	.254	.050	.279	.639	.330
Q17	.156	.118	.241	.809	.172
Q18	.283	.282	-.015	.729	.118
Q19	.196	.516	.494	.346	-.035
Q20	.251	.481	.489	.406	-.160
Q21	.644	.313	.365	.274	.020
Q22	.249	.831	.168	.183	.125
Q23	.193	.878	.190	.157	.148
Q24	.195	.833	.124	.143	.170

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser
Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 7
iterations.

Questions 2-8, and 21 loaded into Component 1, Questions 19, and 22-24 loaded into Component 2, Questions 9-13 and 20 loaded into Component 3, Questions 1, and 16-18 loaded into Component 4, and Questions 14 and 15 loaded into Component 5.

Due to the low number of questions in Component 5, low reliability is expected and subsequently lower coefficient alphas; however, the other Components seem reasonably well balanced.

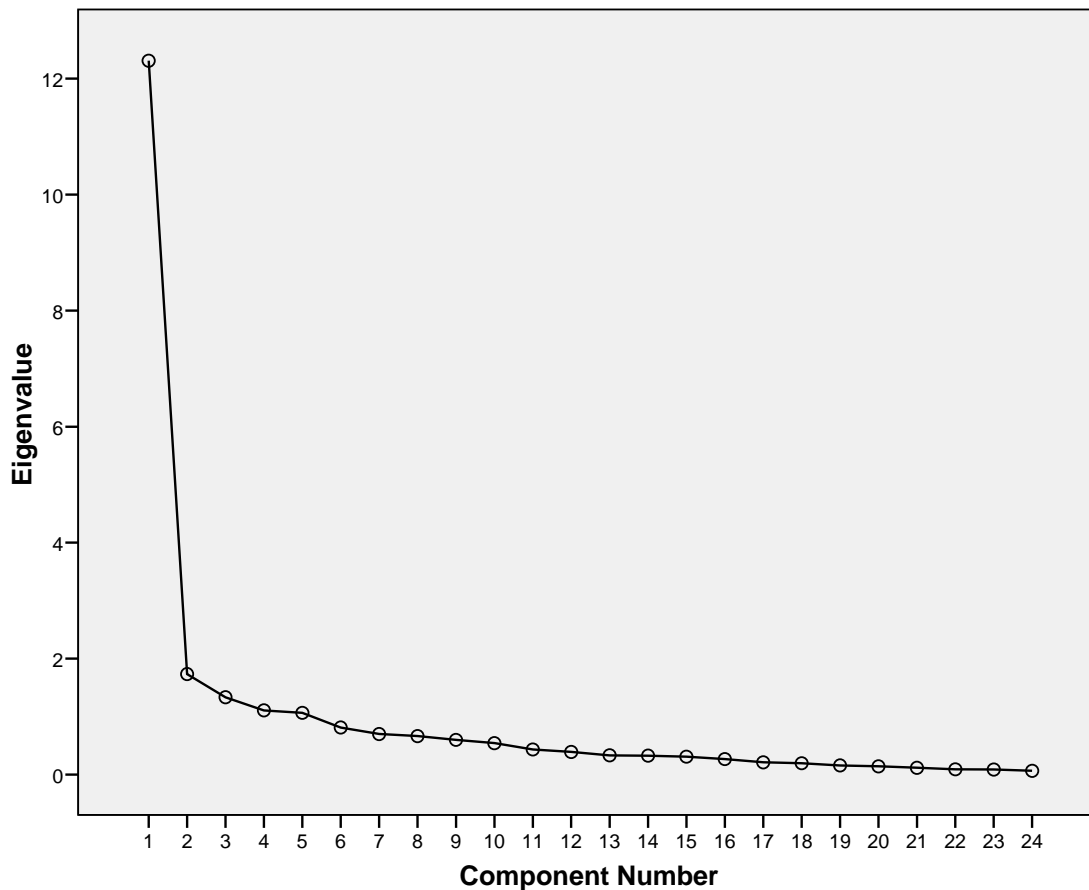


Figure 1. Scree plot of a single EFA using the Varimax Rotation Method

Table 26

Internal Coefficient Alphas for Components

Sub-scale	Item N	Alpha
Component 1	8	.928
Component 2	4	.887
Component 3	6	.857
Component 4	4	.844
Component 5	2	.780

The reliability figures for all five components are excellent. More specifically, since all components have coefficient alphas larger than .70, there is enough

evidence to state that the components thus extracted are reliable, and that the survey as a whole is reliable.

Summary of Findings

The findings indicate that five components were extracted, all of which are individually reliable. Most components were either four questions or larger; there was one smaller component of only two questions, but it too was reliable.

Comparison to the hypothesized construct:

Provides Vision	<p>The principal has both the strong ability and judgment to overcome most obstacles.</p> <p>The principal commands respect from everyone on the faculty.</p> <p>The principal excites faculty members with his/her vision of what the staff will be able to accomplish together.</p> <p>The principal makes the faculty members feel and act like leaders.</p> <p>The principal gives the faculty a sense of overall purpose in their leadership role.</p>
Models Appropriate Behavior	<p>The principal leads by doing rather than simply telling.</p> <p>The principal symbolizes success and accomplishment within the educational profession.</p> <p>The principal provides good models for faculty to follow.</p>
Fosters Commitment to Goals	<p>The principal provides for faculty participation in the development of school goals.</p> <p>The principal encourages faculty members to work toward the same goals.</p> <p>The principal uses problem solving to work toward school goals.</p> <p>The principal works toward whole faculty consensus in establishing priorities for team goals.</p> <p>The principal regularly encourages faculty members to evaluate their progress toward achievement of team goals.</p>
Provides Individualized Support	<p>The principal provides extended training to develop teacher's knowledge and relevant skills.</p> <p>The principal provides the necessary resources to support</p>

teacher's implementation of the school program.
 The principal treats faculty members as individuals with unique needs and expertise.
 The principal takes faculty opinions into consideration when initiating actions that affect their work.
 The principal behaves in a manner thoughtful of teachers personal needs.

Provides Intellectual Stimulation

The principal challenges faculty to reexamine some basic assumptions they have about their work at the school.
 The principal stimulates faculty to think about what they are doing for the students.
 The principal provides information that helps faculty think of ways to implement the school program.

Holds High Expectations

The principal insists on only the best performance from the school faculty.
 The principal shows everyone that there are high expectations for the faculty as professionals.
 The principal will not settle for second best in the performance of our work as faculty.

The construct has five components instead of six. Here is the approximate structure:

Provides Vision and Models Appropriate Behavior

The principal commands respect from everyone on the faculty.
 The principal excites faculty members with his/her vision of what the staff will be able to accomplish together.
 The principal makes the faculty members feel and act like leaders.
 The principal gives the faculty a sense of overall purpose in their leadership role.
 The principal leads by doing rather than simply telling.
 The principal symbolizes success and accomplishment within the educational profession.
 The principal provides good models for faculty to follow.
 The principal provides information that helps faculty think of ways to implement the school program.

High Expectations

The principal provides the necessary resources to support teacher's implementation of the school program.
 The principal behaves in a manner thoughtful of teachers' personal needs.

	<p>The principal challenges faculty to reexamine some basic assumptions they have about their work at the school.</p> <p>The principal stimulates faculty to think about what they are doing for the students.</p>
Fosters Commitment to Goals	<p>The principal provides for faculty participation in the development of school goals.</p> <p>The principal encourages faculty members to work toward the same goals.</p> <p>The principal uses problem solving to work toward school goals.</p> <p>The principal works toward whole faculty consensus in establishing priorities for team goals.</p> <p>The principal regularly encourages faculty members to evaluate their progress toward achievement of team goals.</p> <p>The principal stimulates faculty to think about what they are doing for the students.</p>
Provides Vision and Individual Support	<p>The principal treats faculty members as individuals with unique needs and expertise.</p> <p>The principal takes faculty opinions into consideration when initiating actions that affect their work.</p> <p>The principal behaves in a manner thoughtful of teachers' personal needs.</p> <p>The principal has both the strong ability and judgment to overcome most obstacles.</p>
Individual Support	<p>The principal provides extended training to develop teacher's knowledge and relevant skills.</p> <p>The principal provides the necessary resources to support teacher's implementation of the school program.</p>

While this measure, based on EFA results, is similar to the hypothesized measure, there are significant differences. The new first observed measure combines the hypothesized measures vision and appropriate behavior, and completely encompasses appropriate behavior. The second measure is essentially high expectations, and includes all questions in the hypothesized measure dealing with that theme. The third measure is essentially the original

measure of 'Fosters Commitment to Goals.' Individual Support, a very large hypothesized measure, was split into two measures, one of which included only questions from Individual Support, and one that also included questions from the 'Provides Vision' measure.

In consequence, while there are significant differences between the hypothesized and observed constructs, there are also key similarities. Three measures were kept mostly intact. In general, the reliability and construct validities were structurally sound.

Summary

Chapter Four provided an explanation of the qualitative and quantitative analyses used to examine the data, as well as the findings from these analyses. The data collected from principal and PST member interviews with regard to the perceptions of principals' change characteristics were analyzed using the content analysis method. The data collected from teacher surveys concerning their perceptions of principals' change characteristics were analyzed using the exploratory factor analysis method. The content analysis indicated that for the most part, principals' and PST members' perceptions of principals' change characteristics were in line, although there were differences. The exploratory factor analysis indicated that the hypothesized and observed constructs had significant differences, but also key similarities.

The following chapter, Chapter Five, will provide a deeper discussion of the findings in the context of existing literature cited in the literature review of

Chapter Two. Chapter Five will also provide a list of limitations of this study. This will be followed by suggestions for future research stemming from the results and conclusions of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this mixed method multiple case study was to examine the role of the building principal in a systems change effort. Specifically, this study examined the extent to which the principal demonstrates characteristics of change such as knowledge of change, self-efficacy or their belief in their ability to make changes, and skills of change as supported in the research. Findings from the cross analysis of the case studies revealed eleven themes, which were then further grouped into three larger categories of perceived knowledge of change concerning principals, perceived self-efficacy of change of principals, and perceived skills of change of principals.

Chapter Five provides a connection between the themes presented and the literature review in addition to the commonalities resulting from the cross analysis of the case studies. In addition, Chapter Five offers recommendations, which include the significance of the study, the significance of the study to leadership, and recommendations to school leaders. The chapter concludes with recommendations for further research and a brief summary.

Background of the Researcher

It was with great honor that the researcher had the opportunity to interview and study three schools that have successfully implemented and sustained the RtI reform effort. There is a purpose to all educator endeavors and the arrival at the topic of this dissertation was done so with intent and passion. It was with purpose and tenacity that this researcher maintained the motivation to see this dissertation to completion.

This researcher began teaching special education in a residential treatment facility for boys with emotional disabilities in Upstate New York. It was there that she realized that resilient children have some commonalities. One commonality was a love of reading. Reading was observed to be a positive escape for these children. This discovery prompted pursuing a masters' degree in reading. From there this researcher continued to teach special education. The information obtained and lessons learned from the graduate program in reading had an intended application of remediating children with disabilities in reading. The everyday purpose was to give the children the tools and strategies they needed for a successful and gradual return to general education. In a few cases, this persistent effort and tireless determination helped children find their way to spend most of their day with typical peers.

In 2001, this researcher moved to Illinois and continued as a special education resource teacher. Although teaching special education continued to be exciting, this researcher felt she would have a larger impact if she taught in the

general education setting. The movement to the general education classroom proved to be both challenging and rewarding. The positive experience prompted more thinking about how this researcher could utilize her skills to make the most impact on the students she served.

This researcher decided to pursue a doctoral degree in the in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies program at Loyola University Chicago. This researcher found experiences that added a unique set of skills. Reading, special education and general education experience gave this researcher the tools and strategies she felt would be beneficial to an administrative role.

After nine years in the classroom, this researcher accepted an administrative role. Simultaneously, this researcher began the writing phase of her dissertation. Choosing to conduct a study on both change and Response to Intervention was intentional. This researcher became extremely passionate about Response to Intervention because for the first time in her career, there was a place to hang her personal philosophies. Her personal philosophies were that all children regardless of their place in general or special education deserve an education that responds to individual strengths and needs. Special education and general education staff needed to have a forum where they collectively problem solve about students regardless of their place in special or general education. Finally, educational policy provided a structure, an easily understood conceptual

framework that links special education and general education to be ONE education for ALL children.

The research shows that both NCLB and IDEIA call for states to be accountable for the performance of their students (Wedl, 2005). *No Child Left Behind* and the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act* merge general and special education initiatives. Stollar, Poth, Curtis, and Cohen (2006) stated, “The high standards and expectations of NCLB are highlighting the needs of a growing number of at-risk students and students with disabilities and are raising awareness of the discrepancies in academic performance across students” (p. 10). Both policies call to question the practices that have long been in place and ask educators to alter their approach to a system that has existed for several decades. These regular and special education initiatives are educational policies for all children.

While completing this dissertation, this researcher, the administrative team, and grade level teams fully implemented RtI at the school of employment. The accomplishments of the school have been numerous; and there are far too many to name. Few of which this researcher can take full credit for. The only credit this researcher can take for the reform initiatives that have sustained themselves is that every day this researcher believes deeply that all children deserve to be educated in a manner that accentuates their strengths, identifies their needs, and finds creative ways to meet those needs.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations to this study involve the potential bias that the researcher may have brought into the analysis process. The potential bias included that the researcher (a) is a principal involved in Rtl, (b) is a principal and has taken a lead role in the district wide implementation of Rtl, and (c) self-identifies as a change agent. In order to mitigate researcher bias, account for, and acknowledge the researcher's biases, the researcher kept a reflexive journal. The reflexive journal was an introspective journal that displayed the investigators mind processes, philosophical positions, and bases of decisions about the inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This researcher utilized this reflexive journal during data collection and shared the journal with the dissertation director in order to ensure the elimination of personal bias during the data collection and analysis.

Due to the research design and time constraints, this study was subject to a number of delimitations. The study was limited to the case study analysis and cross-case analysis of specific schools and the Rtl program. The participant sample was limited to three principals, nine members of a problem solving team, and approximately 150 teachers all serving the northern suburban region of Illinois. Lastly, the summary of results of this study was limited to the participant sample and may or may not transcend to other principals involved in an Rtl reform initiative.

Findings and Implications

Chapter Four presented an analysis of the gathered data from each of the participating schools and stakeholders within those schools. The data analysis on the gathered data on each case study and cross analysis resulted in the identification of eleven themes, then stratified under three categories of themes. In addition, quantitative data analysis across the cases resulted in identification of change characteristics demonstrated by the principals.

Qualitative Findings

The resultant themes and major categories provide insight with regard to the knowledge of change, self-efficacy of change, and skills of change of the school principals. In addition, there is a discussion of the major thematic categories, as they relate to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. The themes address the research questions of the study.

Perceived Knowledge of Change Concerning Principals

Themes 1, 2, and 3 reveal evidence of the principals' perceived knowledge of change. These three themes specifically revealed that (a) principals perceive themselves as having substantial experience with the Response to Intervention reform initiative. In general, the PST members also perceive themselves as having substantial experience with the Rtl reform initiative (Theme 1), (b) principals' perceptions of the most challenging parts of reform include training and developing qualified staff, while PST members' perceptions of the most challenging parts of reform for principals were extremely

diverse (Theme 2), and (c) principals perceive themselves as relying strongly on data to make decisions. PST members also perceive themselves as relying strongly on data to make decisions (Theme 3).

The findings suggest principals generally perceive themselves to have experience with Rtl, perceive the most challenging parts of reform lie in the development of staff, and generally rely on data to support decision making. These findings, particularly the latter, demonstrate a desire on the part of the principals to remain focused on the changes as they occur and respond appropriately to current situations, exemplifying knowledge of change.

Themes 1 and 3 show key similarities in both the responses of principals and the responses of PST members. Since substantial experience with the Rtl reform initiative allows and expects that the application of data be for decision making, it makes sense that if both principals and PST members have substantial or some experience, they use data to make decisions. Further, according to the content analysis on principals' perceptions of themselves, all of the principals reported substantial experience applying Rtl. According to the content analysis on the PST members' perceptions, all of the PST members also reported having either substantial or some experience with the Rtl initiative. This suggests that effective Rtl is occurring at the schools of interest, and therefore that both the principals and PST members have considerable knowledge of the reform initiative. Additionally, all of the principals and all of the PST members reported considering the use of data very important to decision-making, which

supports the idea that the principals had a true understanding of what it takes to implement reform in a school.

The content analysis from theme 2 also showed that all of the principals and all of the PST members perceived that principals were able to acknowledge and address the challenging aspects of reform, regardless of what the specific challenges were. This further indicated that the principals had a working knowledge of change as it applies to Rtl. However, principals' perceptions of the most challenging aspects of reform include training and developing qualified staff, while PST members' perceptions of the most challenging aspects of reform for principals were extremely diverse. All principals identified training and developing qualified staff as the most challenging aspects of reform. Although, PST members also identified training and development of qualified staff as a challenge, other challenges included providing resources to support staff, scheduling, time and effort needed to implement the reform model, obtaining staff buy in, and collecting data.

Halverson (1992) supports the position that effective change requires an internal ownership in the reform effort, local investment, and commitment to the change process. Research supports that effective schools have principals who are strong leaders (Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, & Lee, 1982; Gilat & Sulzer-Azaroff, 1994; Hallinger & Murphy, 1987) who arrange programs to develop specific teacher skills participate in the assessment of student achievement (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). Change is nonlinear and chaotic. The unknown of change is

often a huge discomfort to those directly implementing. Fullan (2001) wrote, "The more complex society gets, the more sophisticated leadership must become. Complexity means change, but specifically it means rapidly occurring, unpredictable, nonlinear change" (p. ix). PST members tend to be the key players implementing the reform initiative as evidenced by theme 10 Principals perceive themselves in a supportive or observer role in the context of the Problem Solving Team. In turn, PST members perceive themselves more so in leadership roles. PST members do not just lead when they are in problem solving meetings, they lead in the lunchroom, in the parking lot and in the classrooms. They may see and hear of challenges that the principal will not. The diversity of the PST members' answers may be a direct result of their exposure to a variety of challenges and although a principal experiences exposure to those same challenges, a principal must constantly seek solutions to those challenges. Nonlinear change needs a principal to smooth out the path ahead of all the constituents. It is for this reason, that this researcher believes all three principals saw training development of qualified staff as the most challenging aspect of the reform and the PST members' answers were diverse.

According to Edgehouse et al. (2007), "Today's leaders, regardless of their fields, are obliged to prepare to lead change, understand the process and nature of change, and provide the essential support so that those involved in change can be successful" (p. 11). A deep and solid understanding of the change process ignites the vision, strategies, and plan for future growth (Fullan, 2005). It

is the commitment and energy that will sustain the ownership and implementation of the change process. One principal stated, “So there’s always some regression with staff if you don’t maintain the level of staff development that it really needs in order to have sustainability.” Fullan wrote, “The change process is about establishing the condition for continuous improvements in order to persist and overcome inevitable barriers to reform” (p. 55). In schools, staff development allows for continuous improvement.

Perceived Self-Efficacy of Change of Principals

The change characteristics referenced in themes 4 and 5 relate to the change characteristics of self-efficacy. These change characteristics include (a) demonstration of leadership qualities conducive to change, and (b) ability to communicate leadership, goals and objectives. The findings suggest that principals and PST members perceived principal leadership styles to be collaborative, supportive/encouraging, and exhibit high expectations. These qualities are reflective of self-efficacy in principals. The specific themes identified were: (a) Theme 4: In terms of leadership styles, principals perceive themselves as collaborative, and encouraging/supportive. In general, PST members also perceive their principals’ leadership styles to be collaborative and encouraging/supportive. Additionally, many PST members viewed their principal as hand-on and involved. Although the principals did not mention specifically being hands-on and involved, some comments support this perception on behalf of the PST members. For example, one principal state, “you know, my job

description says that 51% of my day is supposed to be spent as an instructional leader, informing and helping in instruction. And that's what I do. And that's what I like." In theme 5: Principals perceive themselves as communicating their leadership styles clearly. PST members also perceive principals as communicating their leadership styles clearly. Many PST members also viewed their principal as present and approachable. There are similarities to perceptions in theme 4, in which there is a perception that principals are hands-on and involved. A principal's approachability often indicates that they are hands-on and interested in providing support for anything that a PST member might need. Most principals mention setting out reachable goals. However, few PST members mention goals. Goal setting is often part of professional learning communities. Since all schools have the beginnings of professional learning communities, it makes sense that PST members have not yet been exposed to goal setting as evidenced by theme 11; Principals perceive their schools as currently offering informal learning communities, but as moving towards the installment of professional learning communities. The majority of PST members also perceive this.

Literature does not cast the principal as an all knowing expert. Rather, researchers such as Grimmer (1996), Reitzug (1997), Sergiovanni, (2000), and Starrat (2000) argued that the role of the principal is more appropriately that of a facilitator of processes, such as collaborative inquiry, problem solving, and school development and improvement. Further, principals understand their role

as instructional leaders to be as much about “bringing visibility to the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of staff members as about imparting new knowledge” (Mitchell & Castle, 2005, p. 412). Mulkeen and Cooper (1992) stated, “School districts are decentralizing, shifting greater responsibility to the school site. For district administrators, this change requires a new role, one of facilitator, coach and supporter rather than manager” (p. 17).

According to previous literature, a strong sense of efficacy is necessary to sustain the productive attention, focus, and perseverance of effort needed to succeed at organizational goals (Wood & Bandura, 1989). There is a relationship between leadership self-efficacy as well as direction setting and gaining followers’ commitment, as well as in overcoming obstacles to change (Paglis & Green, 2002). Principals with a strong sense of self-efficacy are conclusively persistent in pursuing their goals, but are also more flexible and more willing to adapt strategies to meeting contextual strategies (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). Principals with higher self-efficacy are more likely to use internally based personal power, such as expert, informational, and referent power when carrying out their roles (Lyons & Murphy, 1994).

Perceived Skills of Change of Principals

Themes 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 evidenced change characteristics related to skills of change. These change characteristics include methods of ensuring quality instruction, the provision of professional development opportunities for staff, reallocation of resources, promotion of high standards for learning, taking

on a participant-observer role on the Problem Solving Team, and the use of informal learning communities within the school. According to the content analysis, both principals and PST members perceived the principals as exhibiting numerous characteristics representing skills of change. For example, the ability to reallocate scheduling in order to allow teachers to observe others instructing, is one skill that is key to successfully implementing reform. Employing methods to ensure quality instruction and promoting high standards are also skills that are fundamental to reforming a school.

Thematic category six, ensuring quality instruction, demonstrated that principals perceive themselves as ensuring quality instruction by providing professional development opportunities to staff, offering guidance and feedback to staff, and monitoring school progress and that PST members' perceptions of principals' methods of ensuring quality instruction also focused on supporting staff. Most principals perceived themselves as ensuring quality instruction through providing professional development opportunities to staff, monitoring progress, and offering guidance and feedback to staff. It is interesting to note that in theme 2 content analysis showed principals' perceptions of the most challenging aspects of reform include training and developing qualified staff, while PST members' perceptions of the most challenging aspects of reform for principals were extremely diverse. All principals identified training and developing qualified staff as the most challenging aspects of reform. If principals' perceptions of the most challenging aspect of reform are the training and development of

staff, another conclusion can be that another challenging aspect is also ensuring quality instruction. This researcher believes it can. The ideas and beliefs of providing high-quality instruction and interventions matched to student need, frequent progress monitoring to make changes about instructional goals, and applying child response data to important educational decisions began many years ago (Batsch et al., 2005). Further, according to Batche et al., “Rtl is the practice of (1) providing high-quality instruction/intervention matched to student needs and (2) using learning rate over time and level of performance to (3) make important educational decisions” (p. 5). Further, it is important to note that there is no mention of staff evaluations in principals’ perceptions as a method to ensure quality instruction. However, evaluations were mentioned by most of the PST members’ as indicated perceptions of how the principal ensure quality instruction.

The seventh thematic category, professional development opportunities provided to staff, demonstrated that both principals and PST members mainly perceived professional development to include mainly general training to staff. All principals believed professional development to include general training while many felt that specialized training, out of district training and presentations by experts. Few principals and PST members mention referring to administrators at other schools/districts for expertise. Lateral capacity building, encourages the development of cultures of learning across schools and districts. Through this powerful new strategy, school districts share information and experiences with

each other to gain insight into prospective success or failure (Fullan et al., 2005). It can be concluded that since this is a relatively new strategy, the schools that were studied do not utilize this for professional development.

In thematic category eight, both principals and PST members perceive reallocation of resources to mainly include scheduling and staff composition. One principal stated, "Staff's not doing traditional role. The gifted teacher is teaching interventions. That's reallocation. And it's looking at the staff and who we have and have a good master schedule. That's key in problem solving and Rtl".

Thematic category nine demonstrates that principals perceive themselves as promoting high standards of learning through improving quality instruction, encouraging staff, and maintaining high standards. PST members' perceptions of the ways in which principals promote high standards of learning are through communicating their high expectations and encouraging staff. Because problem solving teams bring the components of Rtl together, it is important to note that leadership on a problem solving team is crucial. Because of their ability to influence the school's climate and resources, principals are arguably the most important supporters of problem solving teams (Beckerman, 2005; Kovaleski, 2002). Bahr and Kovaleski (2006) stated, "We have observed how principal support or participation on a problem solving team can shape its purpose, ranging in focus from primarily disability screening to providing intervention assistance. An observation of a problem solving team meeting at one school ended on a positive note. Everyone discussed that throughout the last four years,

the school has completely changed. The team felt that the positive changes were a result of the encouragement of the building principal and Response to Intervention.

Although principals did not mention communication in their perceptions of themselves as promoting high standards of learning, theme 5, content analysis, indicated that principals perceive themselves as communicating their leadership styles clearly. PST members also perceive principals as communicating their leadership styles clearly. In theme 10, most PST members' perceptions of how principals promote high standards of learning felt it was through communicating high expectations. There is a connection between themes in this case since many of the comments in theme 5 had to do with communication and student achievement. This researcher can conclude that it is the perception that principals' promotion of high standards of learning is through their leadership style. Further, an essential component of the principal's leadership style is a promotion of high standards of learning. For example, one principal said, "we are doing it because it makes good sense for kids and it'll result in progress for them. So we are in a really good place and I tell them that all the time." Another PST member stated, if (the principal says) this is the direction we're going...we're gonna move right with it because it's gonna make a positive impact on the students, and so we just follow right along."

Thematic category ten, role on the Problem Solving Team, demonstrates that principals perceive themselves in a supportive or observer role in the context

of the Problem Solving Team. In turn, PST members perceive themselves so in leadership roles. Principals do not perceive themselves as leading the Problem Solving Team. Rather, they perceive themselves as stepping back and allowing other members to play a leadership role, play a role of an observer, but also offering insight and feedback when needed. The research substantiates that effective and strong leadership is a critical component of any change effort. Schools that demonstrate high levels of implementation success with change efforts such as Instructional Support Teams (ISTs) or problem solving teams had strong principal leadership in place (Kovaleski, Gickling, & Morrow, 1999). Sindelar et al. (1992) found that although most teachers liked principals who are strong academic leaders, they are more satisfied with collaborative teamwork when the principal is not the team leader. Most problem solving team members viewed their role as facilitating meetings and acting as leader. Many problem solving team members felt that their role included monitoring progress, being aware of what is necessary and managing data. A few problem solving team members felt their role was acting as interventionist, communicating with teachers, and helping create solutions to problems. Occasionally problem solving team members have specific and identified roles; often though they do not. None of the problem solving teams were observed to have defined roles. However, they clearly assumed certain roles possibly based on their experience or expertise.

The final thematic category, professional learning communities, demonstrated that both principals and PST members perceive their schools as currently offering informal learning communities, but moving towards the installment of professional learning communities. All of the principals had the perception that successful informal learning communities were already in place at their schools. All principals also had the perception that their schools were moving towards formal learning communities. Developing cultures of learning is an essential component to school reform. Fullan et al. (2005) wrote about the importance of developing cultures of learning. They stated, "Developing cultures of learning involves a set of strategies designed for people to learn from each other (the knowledge dimension) and become collectively committed to improvement (the affective dimension)" (p. 55).

The findings suggest that both principals and PST members perceived the principals as exhibiting numerous characteristics representing the skills for change. These change characteristics include methods of ensuring quality instruction, the provision of professional development opportunities for staff, reallocation of resources, promotion of high standards of learning, taking on a participant-observer role on the Problem Solving Team, and the use of informal learning communities within the school. The strength of an educational leader comes from their knowledge, skills, and self-efficacy of the change process.

Quantitative Findings

The Principal Leadership Questionnaire as modified by Lucas and Valentine (2002) was conclusively a reliable instrument. Cronbach alpha reliability scores were assigned to each characteristic assessed on the Principal Leadership Questionnaire: providing vision (.894), modeling appropriate behavior (.899), fostering commitment to goals (.804), providing individualized support (.844), providing intellectual stimulation (.917), and holding high expectations (.755). According to Lucas and Valentine, these Cronbach alpha reliability scores were highly significant. The higher the score, the more reliable the characteristic.

Quantitative analysis revealed specific change characteristics and how they are manifest by the principals, as perceived by staff. These characteristics included that the principal provides vision and models appropriate behavior, holds high expectations, fosters commitment to goals, and provides individual support. These characteristic behaviors are discussed individually.

Provides Vision and Models Appropriate Behavior

Seven characteristic behaviors were associated with providing vision and modeling appropriate behaviors. These behaviors include that the principal (a) commands respect from everyone on the faculty; (b) excites faculty members with their vision; (c) makes faculty feel and act like leaders; (d) gives the faculty a sense of overall purpose in their leadership role; (e) leads by example; (f) symbolizes success and accomplishment within the educational profession; and (g) provides good models for faculty to follow. These identified behaviors

exemplify change characteristics in terms of all three aspects of self-efficacy of change, knowledge of change, and skills of change.

Holds High Expectations

There was a noted association between five behaviors and high expectations. These behaviors included that the principal (a) provides information that helps faculty think of ways to implement the school program; (b) provides the necessary resources to support teachers' implementation of the school program; (c) behaves in a manner thoughtful of teachers' professional needs; (d) challenges faculty to re-examine basic assumptions; and (e) stimulates faculty to reflect on what they are doing for the students. These characteristics reflect on the skills of change used by principals to affect change.

Fosters Commitment to Goals and Individual Support

Six behaviors were associated with the characteristic of fostering commitment to goals and for individual support. The characteristic behaviors reflecting fostering commitment to goals included that the principal (a) provides for faculty participation in the development of school goals; (b) encourages faculty members to work toward the same goal; (c) uses problem solving to work toward school goals; (d) works toward whole faculty consensus in establishing priorities for team goals; (e) encourages faculty to evaluate their progress toward achievement of goals; and (f) stimulates faculty to reflect on what they are doing for students. The behaviors identified for individual support included that the principal (a) treats faculty members as individuals; (b) considers faculty opinion in

decision making; (c) behaves in a manner thoughtful of teachers' personal needs; (d) has both the ability and judgment to overcome obstacles; (e) provides extended training to develop teachers' knowledge and skills; (f) provides necessary resources to support teachers' implementation of the school program. These characteristics are representative of skills of change and knowledge of change.

These behaviors as cited by the general teaching staff on the survey instrument demonstrated several skills of change among the principals, as well as knowledge of change, and demonstrated self-efficacy for change by the principals. The behaviors cited by the teacher participants support the findings of Waters et al. (2003), who found 21 specific leadership responsibilities significantly correlated with student achievement. Many of the specific behaviors cited in this quantitative analysis are analogous to those specified by Waters et al.

The findings are also consistent with evidence reviewed by Leithwood and Riehl (2005), which suggested that successful leadership creates a compelling sense of purpose in the organizations by developing a shared vision of the future, helping build consensus about relevant short-term goals and demonstrating high expectations for colleagues' work. Conclusions drawn by Leithwood and Riehl included that providing support for individual colleagues' ideas and initiatives, providing intellectual stimulation (e.g., reflection on existing practices), questioning assumptions, considering new practices, and modeling important

values and practices were part of transformational practices in school leadership. Successful principals are visible and accessible to faculty, students, and parents and were readily available to provide assistance as needed (Leithwood, 2005). In addition, successful principals encouraged cultures of collaboration by distributing leadership. Finally, research has revealed successful principals are skilled communicators. The findings of this study support the previous literature in this regard.

Significance of the Study

This mixed method multiple case study sought to examine the role of the building principal in a systems change effort, specifically, the extent to which the principal demonstrates characteristics of change such as knowledge of change, self-efficacy, and skills of change as supported in the research. The findings suggest that principals indeed demonstrate such characteristics of change. The study is significant as it contributes to the body of literature concerning change characteristics and the impact of principal leadership in affecting change within a school environment. It is significant that PST members' perceptions were generally in line with that of the school principals, supporting the perception of a truly collaborative environment. The study, through analysis of principals' and staff members' perceptions, identifies behaviors, skills, and knowledge critical to the successful adaptation of change in terms of Rtl reform within a school setting.

Significance of the Study to Leadership

Given that Illinois school districts are required to implement Response to Intervention at the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year, building level principals will need to be knowledgeable about the change process, implementation and sustainability of a reform initiative. Rtl uses a process that determines how the child responds to scientific, research-based interventions as part of the evaluation procedure. Principals will need to be knowledgeable about this process and have the ability to ensure its implementation. However, the value of an Rtl initiative is in the results. Best practices in education reveal that evidence-based practices combined with using data to drive instruction produces results for all children.

Many challenges exist to the successful implementation of Rtl reform in the school. Strong leadership is essential to the implementation process, as well as an infrastructure that lends itself to meeting the needs of all children. Essential to meeting these requirements is elements of creative scheduling, frequent progress monitoring, and consistent meetings where problem solving takes place in combination with change directed administrative leadership. The building leadership must sustain their reform efforts and build consensus to develop a strong program.

School leadership can use the information provided by this study to assess the procedures, skills, and knowledge of staff and principals in order to facilitate effective change within the school. School principals must understand

the importance of their role in terms of their self-efficacy, knowledge for change, and skills of change, and how these elements affects the successful implementation of change in the school. The identification of self-efficacy in principals can be through their leadership style, most often perceived as collaborative and supportive in this study. Principals can recognize this leadership style as an effective means of promoting successful change. Principals should also note the importance of providing professional development and learning communities for their staff in an effort to promote positive change.

Recommendations for Future Research

The present study provided insight into the role of the school principal in the change process. Future research could expand on this research by providing information with regard to specific student outcomes resulting from particular leadership styles and or principal behaviors characteristic of the change characteristics of self-efficacy for change, knowledge of change, and skill of change. In particular, a quantitative study assessing characteristics of change and relating these characteristics to successful implementation of change would provide further support for the findings in this study.

Although the response rate on from surveys taken at the faculty meeting was good, they ranged from 79% to 84%. This indicated that between 16% and 21% of staff were not in attendance at the faculty meetings where the there was a collection of surveys. The application of additional research can be on the purpose of faculty meetings and the effectiveness on teacher performance.

Another topic that might be of interest is the perceived purpose of the evaluation instrument used by administrators by teachers. In the study, PST members believed that the principal ensured quality instruction through use of the evaluation instrument. However, the principals made no mention of the evaluation instrument.

Recruiting research participants proved to be challenging given the initial criteria which stated that principals needed to serve in the current building for five years or more. None of the twenty-six principals that were recruited met this criteria for building selection. Additional research in the sustainability of the principal might prove beneficial to the field. Questions such as what is the average length of stay in the principalship and why do principals leave the principalship might be questions to guide the research.

It should be noted that the principals in this study were all at one point in their career involved in special education to some extent. This researcher noted this in the reflexive journal and calls to question how the background of a principal influences their leadership style and thus the success of the school they lead. It might be hypothesized that a strong educational background with a variety of teaching experiences will make a stronger and more effective leader.

Finally, effective teaming and identified roles of problem solving teams might provide additional information for school reform. Observed behavior of problem solving team members may be helpful in confirming essential roles for problem solving team members. Additionally, the extent to which problem solving

teams are influential in sustaining the change process would be an area for further discovery.

Summary and Conclusions

This qualitative study utilized a mixed method approach within a multiple case study design to examine the role of the principal in a systems change effort. The study sought to evaluate the extent to which the principal demonstrates characteristics of change such as knowledge of change, self-efficacy, and skills of change. Through the qualitative and quantitative data analysis on the data obtained from each of the three schools, commonalities and themes were revealed.

Resulting from the qualitative analysis, 11 themes emerged from the data. Further categorization of these themes was resulted in three overarching themes addressing the research questions of the study. The three major themes identified included perceived knowledge of change concerning principals, perceived self-efficacy of change of principals, and perceived skills of change of principals.

The findings were consistent with the review of the literature and previous assessments and analyses of principal involvement in systems change efforts. The findings also shed light on the research questions. Cross analysis revealed the common characteristics of the principals in the three schools as they relate to and influence the change effort. Quantitative data analysis contributed to the

understanding of the perceptions of staff regarding the behaviors and characteristics of the principals as they relate to system change.

The qualitative findings addressed the first and second research questions in terms of how principals perceive their change characteristics of self-efficacy, knowledge, and skills of change. Findings suggest principals and PST members perceived the principals as exhibiting numerous characteristics representing the skill for change. These included ensuring quality of instruction, provision of professional development opportunities for staff, reallocation of resources, promoting high standards of learning, maintaining a participant-observer role within the problem solving team, and use of professional and informal learning communities. Principals and PST members also perceived principal leadership style to be collaborative, supportive, and exhibitive of high expectations, qualities that reflect self-efficacy of principals. In addition, Principals and PST members perceive themselves as knowledgeable and experienced with Rtl, find development of staff not only critical to the change process, but also challenging to the process, and rely heavily on data to support their decision making.

Finally quantitative analysis was used to answer the third research question in terms of how general teaching staff perceived the extent that building level principals demonstrate characteristics of change as they specifically relate to knowledge of change, self-efficacy of change, and skills of change as supported and most often cited in the change literature. The elements revealed by general teaching staff included providing vision and model behaviors, holding

high expectations, fostering a commitment to goals, and providing individual support. Therefore, findings suggest teachers perceived many characteristics central to knowledge, self-efficacy, and skills of change on the part of their building principals.

Overall, according to the perceptions of building principals, PST members, and general teaching staff, the principals at the three schools participating in this study demonstrate change characteristics of self-efficacy of change, knowledge of change, and skills of change. Therefore, the systems change efforts in these schools will likely demonstrate success in terms of increased student achievement and positive outcomes, according to previous literature. Recommendations for school leaders include the assessment and identification of change skills and characteristics among building principals and use of these skills in implementation of system change efforts.

APPENDIX A
LETTER OF INSTITUTIONAL INVITATION

(Date)

(Name)

(Street Address)

(City), (State) (Zip)

Dear (Salutation),

My name is Kristen Ninni and I am a doctoral candidate in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies program at Loyola University Chicago. I am also one of the Principals at Culver Elementary School in Niles, IL. It is an honor to formally invite your school's participation in a research project I am conducting.

This study generally explores school reform and utilizes Response to Intervention (RtI) as a vehicle for looking at systems change in schools. In particular, this study explores building-level principals as change agents in a Response to Intervention reform initiative. **Enclosed is a synopsis of the research including a description of my intent to participate, as needed, as a member of your building based problem solving team.** The synopsis also includes an overview of both the process and any associated risks to participants.

Loyola University Chicago's Institutional Review Board (IRB) requires a signed letter of cooperation by an appropriate official before approval of my study at your school will be granted. I have included a sample letter of cooperation for your review.

I will contact you in the coming weeks to discuss your institution's participation in my study. Thank you for your kind consideration of my proposal.

Respectfully,

Kristen E. Ninni

Ph.D. Candidate, Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
Loyola University Chicago

KEN

Enclosures

APPENDIX B
LETTER OF INSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION

(Date)

Mrs. Kristen Ninni
4738 N. Lincoln Ave #3
Chicago, IL 60625

Project Title: Building Level Principals as Change Agents in a Response to
Intervention Reform Initiative

Researcher: Kristen Ninni

Dear Kristen:

You have proposed a study for which you will serve as investigator. Having read
The synopsis of your study, I grant you approval to conduct this study at (Name
of Institution) on behalf of the institution.

In this study, I understand that you will collect data from interviews and
observations with Principals and problem solving team members. You will also
survey the faculty. You are permitted to have access to problem solving team
meetings. For the purposes of this study, all information dealing with student
data shall not be included in the study for the sake of human anonymity.

This consent is provided on the condition you also receive permission from
Loyola University Chicago's Institutional Review Board panel to conduct this
study.

Sincerely,

(Name of Institutional Representative)

(Title of Institutional Representative)

APPENDIX C
SYNOPSIS OF RESEARCH

SYNOPSIS OF RESEARCH

Building Level Principals as Change Agents in a Response to Intervention

Reform Initiative

Kristen Ninni

Doctoral Candidate, Loyola University Chicago

kristenninni@hotmail.com

773-791-7478

Who am I?

My name is Kristen Ninni, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies program at Loyola University Chicago. I am also one of the Principals at Culver Elementary School in Niles, Illinois. Please contact me with any questions.

What is the purpose of this study?

This study generally explores the perceptions of the principals, problem solving teams, and the school faculty and the extent to which principals demonstrate characteristics of change. In particular, the study looks at the principal's knowledge of change, self-efficacy of change, and skills of change as supported and most often cited in the change literature.

How is the study being conducted?

Multicase studies of three building-level principals from schools that have fully implemented Response to Intervention. At each school, data will be collected from interviews and observations from members of the school's problem solving team. Additionally, the faculty members in each school will be given a survey.

How will the results be handled?

All information collected will be kept confidential and secure. The names of all participants and schools will not be released or known to anyone other than

myself. The data collected will be analyzed and reported as part of my dissertation. A summary of the results of the study will be provided upon the conclusion of my study.

What are the possible risks to participants?

There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this research beyond those experienced in daily operations of a school. Appropriate measures will be taken to minimize the possibility of a breach of confidentiality. Individuals and institutions will be assigned a unique identification number. Data will be kept safely secured in a locked file cabinet and then destroyed upon completion of the study.

What are the possible benefits to participants?

Participants will contribute to a greater understanding of the role of the building-level principal as a change agent.

What am I requesting of participants?

Interviews will be held at times and **locations within the school environment** that are convenient for participants. A one hour, audio-taped interview will be conducted to gather principal's perceptions and experiences as they relate to school reform. All interviews will be transcribed by a hired transcriber who will have signed a transcriber confidentiality agreement. The building based problem solving team will be observed to examine paradoxes in language used and the relationships developed as they relate to leadership for change. While observing, my role is that of participant observer. **Therefore, I will participate, as needed, and offer my own knowledge and expertise as it relates to Response to Intervention and the problem solving process.** Last, faculty members will be asked to complete a survey that examines the change process in their school

and the leadership by the building principal that was needed to initiate this change.

Permission to tape-record the interview for the later transcription will be asked at the time of the interview. All tapes and transcripts will be kept secure and confidential. Confidentiality will be maintained through the use of a unique identification number in the report findings.

APPENDIX D
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH
PRINCIPAL

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Project Title: building-level Principals as Change Agents in a Response to Intervention Reform Initiative

Researcher: Kristen Ninni

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Janis Fine

Introduction:

You are being asked to take part in a research study being conducted by Kristen Ninni for a dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Janis Fine in the Department of Education at Loyola University of Chicago.

You are being asked to participate because you are a principal who has fully implemented Response to Intervention in your school and therefore are perceived as a change agent.

Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether to participate in the study.

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to explore the extent to which building-level principals demonstrate characteristics of change as they relate specifically to their knowledge of the change process, their belief in their ability to change, and their skills of change. Another major aspect of this study is to explore the perceptions of the building-level principal by the principal, problem solving team members, and faculty at large.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to:

- Participate in an hour-long interview about your experiences involving the Response to Intervention reform initiative. The interview will be audio taped and transcribed. **Upon completion of the transcription, you will be given a copy of the typed transcription, an opportunity to check the transcription for accuracy, and suggest revisions to the transcript, if necessary. All identifiers will be removed when the transcription is in the final stage.**
- An observation of the problem solving team will be conducted at a location specified by you, the principal, to observe leadership for change in action. At the time of observation, your presence will be crucial since I will be examining paradoxes in language as they relate to leadership for change. **While observing, my role is that of participant observer. Therefore, I will**

participate, as needed, and offer my own knowledge and expertise as it relates to Response to Intervention and the problem solving process.

- Members of the school faculty will be surveyed at a faculty meeting to examine their perceptions of the building-level principal and the extent to which you exhibit characteristics of change. **The approximate length of time to complete the survey is 15 – 20 minutes.**

Risks/Benefits:

There are slight risks to be considered in the participation of this study. **The nature and content of the interview will involve a candid discussion of the successes and failures of implementation as they relate to the paradigm shift that Response to Intervention presents.** All necessary precautions will be taken to ensure **confidentiality** of you as a study participant. There are no direct benefits to you from participation. **However, a final copy of the completed dissertation will be provided giving you an opportunity to glean information regarding faculty members' perceptions and information related to the leadership for change characteristics of other principals who have engaged in the same reform effort.** Additionally, it is hoped that this research will add to the body of research in leadership, education, reform and Response to Intervention in particular so that other principals may benefit from your success.

Confidentiality:

- All responses will remain confidential. Measures will be taken to minimize the possibility of breach of confidentiality. Information collected that identifies individuals and/or institutions by name, including audio tapes, will be kept safely secured in a locked file cabinet. This information will be destroyed upon completion of the study. All identities will be preserved. Individual names or the names of school districts will not be mentioned in the final writing.
- Observation data will not include individual names or the names of school districts.

Voluntary Participation:

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want to be in this study, you do not have to participate. Even if you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.

Contacts and Questions:

If you have questions about this research study, please feel free to *contact*:
 Kristen Ninni at kristenninni@hotmail.com or 773-791-7478
 Dr. Janis Fine at jfine@luc.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Compliance Manager in Loyola's Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

Statement of Consent:

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understood the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in this research study. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date

APPENDIX E
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH
PROBLEM SOLVING TEAM MEMBER

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Project Title: building-level Principals as Change Agents in a Response to Intervention Reform Initiative

Researcher: Kristen Ninni

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Janis Fine

Introduction:

You are being asked to take part in a research study being conducted by Kristen Ninni for a dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Janis Fine in the Department of Education at Loyola University of Chicago.

You are being asked to participate because you are a member of the problem solving team and have participated in the full implemented Response to Intervention in your school.

Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether to participate in the study.

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to explore the extent to which building-level principals demonstrate characteristics of change as they relate specifically to their knowledge of the change process, their belief in their ability to change, and their skills of change. Another major aspect of this study is to explore the perceptions of the building-level principal by the principal, problem solving team members, and teachers at large.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to:

- Participate in an hour-long interview about your experiences involving the Response to Intervention reform initiative. The interview will be audio taped and transcribed. Upon completion of the transcription, **you will be given a copy of the transcription** and an opportunity to check the transcription for accuracy and suggest revisions to the transcript, if necessary. All identifiers will be removed when the transcription is in the final stage.
- An observation of the problem solving team will be conducted to observe leadership for change in action. **This observation will take place at a location specified the principal. This observation will take place following the completion of all interviews. The principal will be present during the observation since the active involvement of a principal on a problem solving team is crucial. Additionally, this researcher will act as**

a participant observer. While observing, my role is that of participant observer. Therefore, I will participate, as needed, and offer my own knowledge and expertise as it relates to Response to Intervention and the problem solving process.

Risks/Benefits:

There are slight risks to be considered in the participation of this study. The nature and content of the interview will involve a candid discussion of the successes and failures of implementation as they relate to the paradigm shift that Response to Intervention presents. All necessary precautions will be taken to ensure **confidentiality** of you as a study participant. There are no direct benefits to you from participation; however, it is hoped that this research will add to the body of research in leadership, education, reform and Response to Intervention in particular so that other principals may benefit from your success.

Confidentiality:

- All responses will remain confidential. Measures will be taken to minimize the possibility of breach of confidentiality. Information collected that identifies individuals and/or institutions by name, including audio tapes, will be kept safely secured in a locked file cabinet. This information will be destroyed upon completion of the study. All identities will be preserved. Individual names or the names of school districts will not be mentioned in the final writing.
- Observation data will not include individual names or the names of school districts.

Voluntary Participation:

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want to be in this study, you do not have to participate. Even if you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.

Contacts and Questions:

If you have questions about this research study, please feel free to *contact*:
Kristen Ninni at kristenninni@hotmail.com or 773-791-7478
Dr. Janis Fine at jfine@luc.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Compliance Manager in Loyola's Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

Statement of Consent:

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understood the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree

to participate in this research study. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date

APPENDIX F
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH
FACULTY MEMBER

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Project Title: building-level Principals as Change Agents in a Response to Intervention Reform Initiative

Researcher: Kristen Ninni

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Janis Fine

Introduction:

You are being asked to take part in a research study being conducted by Kristen Ninni for a dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Janis Fine in the Department of Education at Loyola University of Chicago.

You are being asked to participate because you are a member of the faculty and have participated in the full implemented Response to Intervention in your school.

Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether to participate in the study.

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to explore the extent to which building-level principals demonstrate characteristics of change as they relate specifically to their knowledge of the change process, their belief in their ability to change, and their skills of change. Another major aspect of this study is to explore the perceptions of the building-level principal by the principal, problem solving team members, and teachers at large.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to:

- **Complete a survey that will last approximately 15 – 20 minutes. The survey examines your perceptions of the building-level principal and the extent to which he/she exhibits characteristics of the change process.**

Risks/Benefits:

There are slight risks to be considered in the participation of this study. **The nature and content of the survey asks questions regarding the principal as a change agent. All necessary precautions will be taken to ensure confidentiality of you as a study participant.** There are no direct benefits to you from participation; however, it is hoped that this research will add to the body of research in leadership, education, reform and Response to Intervention in particular so that other principals may benefit from the success of your principal.

Confidentiality:

- The names of school districts will not be mentioned in the final writing.
- The surveys will be kept in a locked file. Respondents will receive a unique identification number. This identification number will be used when coding and analyzing the data.

Voluntary Participation:

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want to be in this study, you do not have to participate. Even if you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any questions or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.

Contacts and Questions:

If you have questions about this research study, please feel free to *contact*:
 Kristen Ninni at kristenninni@hotmail.com or 773-791-7478
 Dr. Janis Fine at jfine@luc.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Compliance Manager in Loyola's Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

Statement of Consent:

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understood the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in this research study. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date

APPENDIX G

BUILDING LEVEL PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Building Level Principals as Change Agents in a
Response to Intervention Reform Initiative
Semi-Structured Principal Interview Protocol

1. Tell me a little about your experience with the Response to Intervention.
2. Why did you choose to become an educational leader in an administrative role? (again looking for a purpose)
3. How would you describe your leadership style? (looking for skills)
4. In what ways do you communicate this leadership style with your faculty? (communicate vision)
5. From your perspective what has been the most challenging part of the Response to Intervention reform initiative? (looking for time/dedication to the process)
6. What has your experience been like in your career as an educational leader? (looking for a purpose and the beginning evidence of a vision)
7. Give an example of a situation where you used data to inform your decision-making.
8. How do you ensure that quality instruction is occurring at your school?
9. What professional development opportunities has your faculty had as they relate to Rtl?
10. In what ways have you reallocated resources in the school?
11. How do you promote high standards for learning within the school community? (looking for high standards and buy-in from the entire school community)
12. What is your role on the problem solving team?
13. Are professional learning communities present in the building and if so how do you see their effectiveness as they relate to Rtl?
14. What were some of the steps you took to initiate the Rtl initiative in your school? (looking for skills and knowledge of the change process)

APPENDIX H
PROBLEM SOLVING TEAM INTEVIEW PROTOCOL

Building Level Principals as Change Agents in a
Response to Intervention Reform Initiative

Semi-Structured Problem Solving Team Member Interview Protocol

1. Tell me a little about your experience with the Response to Intervention.
2. How would you describe the principal's leadership style? (looking for skills)
3. In what ways does the principal communicate this leadership style to the faculty? (communicate vision)
4. From your perspective what has been the most challenging part of the Response to Intervention reform initiative for the principal? (looking for time/dedication to the process)
5. Give an example of a situation where you used data to inform your decision-making.
6. How does the principal ensure that quality instruction is occurring at your school?
7. What professional development opportunities have you had as they relate to RtI?
8. How has the principal reallocated resources in the school?
9. How does the principal promote high standards for learning within the school community? (looking for high standards and buy-in from the entire school community)
10. What is your role on the problem solving team?
11. Are professional learning communities present in the building and if so how do you see their effectiveness as they relate to RtI?

APPENDIX I
SURVEY OF PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS

Response to Intervention (RtI) as a reform initiative

Please take a few minutes to respond to the statements and questions regarding the implementation of Response to Intervention in your school. Consider the actions of the principal in relation to the ability to make changes as they relate to Response to Intervention. Mark an X in the box that you feel represents your opinion. All responses are kept confidential and will only be reported in summary form.

Statement	Strongly Agree 5	Agree 4	Neutral 3	Disagree 2	Strongly Disagree 1
Provides Vision					
The principal has both the strong ability and judgment to overcome most obstacles.					
The principal commands respect from everyone on the faculty.					
The principal excites faculty members with his/her vision of what the staff will be able to accomplish together.					
The principal makes the faculty members feel and act like leaders.					
The principal gives the faculty a sense of overall purpose in their leadership role.					
Models Appropriate Behavior					
The principal leads by doing rather than simply telling.					
The principal symbolizes success and accomplishment within the educational profession.					
The principal provides good models for faculty to follow.					
Fosters Commitment to Goals					
The principal provides for faculty participation in the development of school goals.					
The principal encourages faculty members to work toward the same goals.					
The principal uses problem solving to work toward school goals.					
The principal works toward whole faculty consensus in establishing priorities for team goals.					
The principal regularly encourages faculty members to evaluate their progress toward achievement of team goals.					

Provides Individualized Support					
The principal provides extended training to develop teacher's knowledge and relevant skills.					
The principal provides the necessary resources to support teacher's implementation of the school program.					
The principal treats faculty members as individuals with unique needs and expertise.					
The principal takes faculty opinions into consideration when initiating actions that affect their work.					
The principal behaves in a manner thoughtful of teacher's personal needs.					
Provides Intellectual Stimulation					
The principal challenges faculty to reexamine some basic assumptions they have about their work at the school.					
The principal stimulates faculty to think about what they are doing for the students.					
The principal provides information that helps faculty think of ways to implement the school program.					
Holds High Expectations					
The principal insists on only the best performance from the school faculty.					
The principal shows everyone that there are high expectations for the faculty as professionals.					
The principal will not settle for second best in the performance of our work as faculty.					
Additional Comments:					

Demographic Information:

Please check the appropriate box based on your current position.

_____ Classroom Teacher

_____ Support Staff

APPENDIX J
LETTER OF INSTITUTIONAL PROSPECT REFUSAL

(Date)

(Name)

(Street Address)

(City), (State) (Zip)

Dear (Salutation):

Thank you for your interest in my study that explores the building-level principal as change agent in a Response to Intervention (RtI) reform initiative. I provided (Name of School) information about my study and an invitation to participate. As it turns out, I have filled my quota.

While I am unable to have your school participate in my study, please know that your willingness to participate is greatly appreciated. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Kristen Ninni

Ph.D. Candidate,

Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

Loyola University Chicago

KEN

APPENDIX K
TRANSCRIBER CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

TRANSCRIBER CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

I, _____, agree to transcribe the interviews for the doctoral research of Kristen Ninni entitled “Building Level Principals as Change Agents in a Response to Intervention Reform Initiative”. I will maintain strict confidentiality of the data files and the transcripts. This includes, but is not limited to the following:

- I will not discuss them with anyone but the researcher.
- I will not share copies with anyone except the researcher.
- I agree to turn over all copies of the transcripts to the researcher at the conclusion of the contract.

I have read and understood the information provided above.

Transcriber’s Signature

Date

Researcher’s Signature

Date

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After completing her Bachelors in Science degree in Elementary and Special Education at University of Dayton, Kristen began teaching students with emotional disabilities at a residential treatment facility. While teaching there she began a graduate program in Reading and Language Arts at State University College at Cortland. She continued teaching special education as an inclusion specialist and completed the Masters Degree in 2001.

In 2001, Kristen became a special education resource teacher in Illinois. Two years later, Kristen changed courses, began teaching sixth grade general education classes and began the doctoral program at Loyola University Chicago. She is deeply passionate about educating students in the least restrictive environment and ensuring that early and ongoing intervention occurs in schools. It is Kristen's hope that we will continue to grow as a nation in our educational programs so that our country can be among the top performers.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL SHEET

The Dissertation submitted by Kristen Ninni has been read and approved by the following committee:

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The Dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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