Administrator Support of Social-Emotional and Academic Needs of Students at a Selective Enrollment High School

Therese Elizabeth Plunkett

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

ADMINISTRATOR SUPPORT OF SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL AND ACADEMIC NEEDS OF STUDENTS AT A SELECTIVE ENROLLMENT HIGH SCHOOL

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

PROGRAM IN ADMINISTRATION AND SUPERVISION

BY
THERESE E. PLUNKETT

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
AUGUST 2018
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This journey in my development as a school leader was not a solitary or straight journey, it was journey which has had many twists and turns. Throughout the journey I was supported and encouraged by many. I am at this point in my journey because of the support, guidance and love of an entire village. At the start of this journey I was fortunate enough to have encountered Dr. Marla Israel. From day one she encouraged me to join the doctoral cohort. She made me believe that working towards a doctorate degree is possible while working full time and being a mom with two young daughters. She has modeled professionalism and stood by my side through both successes and disappointments along the way. Additionally, I was fortunate enough to be part of a doctoral cohort made up of amazing people. This group has been supportive throughout the journey. I will always treasure the experience of working with such a wonderful group of educators. We evolved as school leaders together, facing comparable hurdles, celebrating successes as well learning from our disappointments as a family. Without their inspiration and support I most definitely would not be where I am today.

I also want to thank Dr. Felicia Stewart and Ms. Cydney Fields for being relentless supporters, role models, advisors and mentors throughout this process. There were times when I felt like quitting. They continually reassured me and convinced me that I could to this. The teachings and guidance from both have helped form me into the leader and educator I am today. They were a sounding board, a shoulder to cry on, and a
source of endless encouragement. They believed in me when I did not believe in myself.

I especially want to acknowledge Dr. Felicia Stewart who stepped in as my chair when I was facing a set-back in the dissertation process. She provided advice, reassurance and comfort from the start. Her belief in me and persistence is what pushed me to the finish line. She worked with me to navigate unknown terrain and she was persistent and responsive throughout this process. Also, my committee members, Dr. Diane Morrison and Dr. Brigid Schultz afforded me their expertise, understanding, guidance, and encouragement along the way.

Through this journey I developed as a school administrator, but I know that a good leader gains strength from a good team. I have been privileged to work with amazing teams during my tenure as an educator. I learned to be a leader during my first position a department chair and the teachers and students I helped taught me valuable lessons on how to be an effective and empathetic leader. These lesson are what landed me where I am today. I am forever grateful to Dr. P. Joseph Powers for believing in me and giving me the opportunity to become a school administrator. When I began my role as assistant principal I was fortunate enough to experience another great team, great role models and mentors.

For as long as I can remember I loved being in school, I thank my immigrant parents for my passion for education for both students and myself. Without my parents, Patrick and Marie, I would not be where I am today. They were role models who demonstrated work ethic, belief in education, and the importance of learning. They provided me with immeasurable opportunities to be my best self and make a difference in the lives of others.
My husband, Ed, has never stopped supporting me or believing in me. He has stepped up to manage our children and home when my work life overtakes my personal life, as it so often does. He understands and supports my sometimes irrational commitment to my school and students. This journey would not be possible without him there to pick up the pieces. I also, need to acknowledge my friend, Joanie, as you have been a second mother to Gabby and Maddie since I have embarked on this journey. You have been there to feed, hug and wipe the tears for my daughters when I could not be there.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this work to my daughters, Gabrielle and Madeline, both of you are my ultimate inspiration. You have been patient and understanding of all mommy’s late nights and stressful moments. I love you to the moon and back a hundred million times. Everything I do is in hopes of creating a world where you can live and feel safe and valued.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS........................................................................................................ iii
LIST OF TABLES.................................................................................................................. ix
LIST OF FIGURES................................................................................................................ x
ABSTRACT.......................................................................................................................... xi

CHAPTER

I. INTRODUCTION.................................................................................................................. 1
   Background for the Study ............................................................................................... 1
   Importance of Educational Leadership ......................................................................... 1
   Education Law and Policy ......................................................................................... 2
   Response to Intervention and Multi-tiered Systems of Support ......................... 4
   Self-Study at the Site ................................................................................................. 5
   MTSS at the Self-Study Site ..................................................................................... 9
   Setting for Self-Study ............................................................................................... 11
   Current State of MTSS ............................................................................................ 19
   Statement of the Problem ....................................................................................... 23
   Purpose of the Study ............................................................................................... 23
   Significance of the Study ......................................................................................... 28
   Explanation of Action Research and Self Study Methodology ....................... 29
   Conceptual Framework ......................................................................................... 32
   Research Questions ................................................................................................. 34
   Limitations and Biases ......................................................................................... 36
   Key Terms .............................................................................................................. 37
   Organization of the Study ..................................................................................... 41

II. LITERATURE REVIEW ..................................................................................................... 43
   Educational Leadership ......................................................................................... 43
   How Do School Leaders Facilitate Change? ......................................................... 49
   What is MTSS? ....................................................................................................... 57
   Cognitive Development in Adolescence .............................................................. 61
   Social-Emotional Needs ....................................................................................... 63
   Parents’ Role in Social Emotional Learning ...................................................... 67
   The Relevance of Social-Emotional Learning ................................................. 68
   Social-Emotional Learning Standards ............................................................. 70
   How can MTSS be Successfully Implemented by School Leaders? ............ 71
   Summary ............................................................................................................. 75
III. METHODOLOGY .................................................................................................................. 76
   Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 76
   Research Design and Methodology .................................................................................... 80
      Self-Study ......................................................................................................................... 80
      Setting .............................................................................................................................. 82
      Procedures ..................................................................................................................... 83
      Data Collection Plan with Anticipated Data Analysis and Validity ................... 87
   Limitations and Biases ........................................................................................................ 91
   Summary ............................................................................................................................. 92

IV. RESULTS ............................................................................................................................. 94
   Introduction ......................................................................................................................... 94
   Methodology Summary ...................................................................................................... 96
   Participants ......................................................................................................................... 97
   Findings .............................................................................................................................. 98
      Research Questions ......................................................................................................... 98
         Research Question 1 .................................................................................................. 99
         Research Question 2 ................................................................................................. 105
         Research Question 3 ................................................................................................. 115
            Moral purpose ........................................................................................................ 115
            Understanding change ......................................................................................... 117
            Building relationships ......................................................................................... 118
            Knowledge creation and sharing .................................................................... 119
            Coherence making .............................................................................................. 120
   Summary ............................................................................................................................. 124

V. DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .............................................. 126
   Overview ............................................................................................................................. 126
   Study Highlights ................................................................................................................ 126
   Discussion of Findings ........................................................................................................ 128
      Transformation of School Culture ............................................................................. 129
      Challenging Power Struggles .................................................................................... 134
   Recommendations for Research .................................................................................... 136
   Limitations and Biases ..................................................................................................... 138

APPENDIX

A. SELF-STUDY DATA PROTOCOL SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS .................. 140

B. CONSULTANCY PROTOCOL............................................................................................ 142

C. SELF-STUDY DATA PROTOCOLS JOURNAL PROMPTS .............................................. 144

REFERENCE LIST ................................................................................................................ 146
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Failures 2015-2016 School Year (CPS, 2016)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. ACT Scores by Graduating Class (ISBE, 2016)</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Current Tier 1 SEL Interventions for 9th Grade Student</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. PAR Team and PD Schedule</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Data Sources</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Site Demographics 2012-2013</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Site Demographics 2016-2017</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Next Steps in Implementation</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

As an administrator at a selective enrollment high school in an urban district, I experienced firsthand the lack of differentiation for students experiencing social-emotional learning (SEL) issues, which in turn affects academic learning. This self-study examines what strategies and interventions assist administrators in targeting the social-emotional and academic needs of students. School leadership is obligated to facilitate increasing and implementing supports that address the SEL and diverse-learning needs of all students. One way in which leadership can promote addressing differentiated learning is through ensuring Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) are implemented with fidelity. MTSS formerly known as response to intervention (RtI) is a whole-school, data-driven, prevention-based initiative for improving social emotional, and academic outcomes for all students through a layered continuum of evidence-based strategies and systems. Many districts implement the use of MTSS, a framework used to assess individual needs of students and the supports needed to meet those needs.

This study is relevant because it addresses complexities of forming a team and implementing the MTSS structures at a large selective high school. Reliable planning and execution of MTSS is critical to identifying and assessing individual student needs. Meeting needs of all students is central to the mission of a successful school. The mission should be driven by school leadership. School leadership must have the best interest of the entire child at the forefront their mission and the day-to-day operations. Educational
leaders need to purposefully provide for the care of students’ academic and SEL needs.

The purpose of this research is to study the implementation of MTSS with emphasis on how school leadership facilitates change. This is a self-study designed to research the development of educational leadership and implementation of interventions for MTSS. Additionally, the effect that facilitating change has on the development of school leadership will be addressed.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Background for the Study

Importance of Educational Leadership

The importance of leadership in ensuring that the needs of all students are met while moving the mission and vision of the school forward cannot be overlooked. Leadership must be effective in addressing the social-emotional as well as the academic needs of all students regardless of the diverse population of students. School leaders must respond to the increase in the diversity of the student populations at their schools. This increase in diversity may include; physical and mental disabilities, different learning styles, cultural background, immigration status and different levels of family support (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). Leaders in education must focus their work around student learning and development while crafting a culture that will empower others in the organization to be effective (Leithwood, & Riehl, 2003).

This self-study will focus on how a leader can develop a culture that supports the social-emotional learning needs of all students in a selective high school. The study will also address how a school leader develops as they facilitate a plan to improve and implement an effective Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) to address social-emotional learning needs. The site of this study is a school in a large urban district that has many supports in place to assist schools. However, a strategic leader knows that a
one-size-fits-all-approach does not always work therefore support systems that are in place for the greater district may require modification to fit the needs of the school’s population. Strong school leaders are effective in supporting staff, allocating resources and sustaining positive working and learning environments (Horng & Loeb, 2010). School leaders must be cognizant of governmental policy when planning initiative to improve the educational experience for all students.

**Education Law and Policy**

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was enacted in 2002. NCLB was an effort to improve education for all students regardless of socio-economic status, race, home language or disability. NCLB was an intervention by the federal government to advance education for all, particularly for those schoolchildren who had been traditionally disadvantaged (Hursh, 2007). However, adherence to NCLB proved difficult for school leaders and educators because of the prescriptive requirements incorporated in NCLB (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). Race to the Top was another initiative employed by the federal government. In 2009 the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), legislation was designed with the purpose of stimulating the economy, supporting job creation, and investing in critical sectors, including education (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). ARRA delivered financing for the Race To the Top Grant (RTT). RTT was a competitive grant program designed to inspire and give incentives to states that were constructing the conditions for education improvement and reform.

The disappointment in the outcome of the NCLB and RTT to promote student
achievement, much less equality in education, led Congress to pass the Every Student Succeeds Act in December of 2015 (ESSA) (Sundquist, 2017). ESSA is bipartisan measure that reauthorizes the 50-year-old Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the nation’s national education law and longstanding commitment to equal opportunity for all students (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). This law is focused on the educational improvements in recent years, such as MTSS and Social-Emotional Learning for all. Attention to these initiatives was made hopeful by the determination of educators, communities, parents, and students across the country. Notably this law assists in supporting and growing local initiatives which include evidence-based and place-based interventions developed by local school leadership and educators to meet the needs of all students (U.S. Department of Education, 2017).

Educational leadership at the local and school levels needs to take note that ESSA highlights the need for increased access to inclusive school services within the MTSS framework. MTSS practices simultaneously and effectively integrate multiple systems and strategies to address the academic behavioral and social-emotional well-being of all students. MTSS works to improve outcomes for all students by creating safe and supportive learning environments. The signing of ESSA provides greater flexibility in determining which MTSS practices will best serve the population of the school in order to improve inclusive learning supports as well as improvement to the climate of the school (NASP, 2017).
Response to Intervention and Multi-tiered Systems of Support

The 2004 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) resulted in Response to intervention (RTI). Response to Interventions (RTI) can be defined as a student centered approach based on assessment models that use problem-solving and research-based approaches to recognize and address learning difficulties in children (Johnson, Mellard, Fuchs, & McKnight, 2006). Descriptions of RTI always include the concept of “multiple tiers of increasingly intense student interventions” (National Research Center on Learning Disabilities [NRCLD], 2007, p. 1). The background of RTI is embedded within the history of the education of students with learning disabilities (LD). The origins of RTI have historical roots in multiple fields including behavioral consultation (Bergan, 1977), data-based program modification (Deno & Mirkin, 1977), and learning disabilities (LD), as well as other sources of influence (e.g., parent groups, educational psychology) (Preston, Wood, & Stecker, 2016). The components of successful RtI implementation include assessment, progress monitoring, and data-driven decision making. The ultimate goal of RtI is to decrease the number of students being referred to Special Education and to arrange access to research and evidence-based, increased quality instruction for all students regardless of tier.

Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS) evolved from RtI. The practice of RtI was to provide effective instruction and intervention across three tiers:

- Tier 1-research based core instruction to all students;
- Tier 2-targeted intervention; and
- Tier 3-intensive intervention. (Shapiro, 2014)
However, MTSS is a more comprehensive framework that encompasses RtI. MTSS is a whole-school, data-driven, prevention-based initiative for improving academic, behavioral, and social-emotional outcomes for all students through a layered continuum of evidence-based strategies and systems (Freeman, Miller & Newcomer, 2015).
Additionally, MTSS attempts to align academic and social-emotional resources and support for students as well as for teachers and other support staff who are delivering the instruction (Kendziora & Yoder, 2016). The reader should also note that MTSS not only includes a focus on intervention but also embraces a more explicit objective of prevention than RtI (Dulaney, Hallam, & Wall, 2013).

**Self-Study at the Site**

Self-study is a methodology in which the researcher studies themselves in relationship to their work with others (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009). The focus of this self-study research is to address the administrator support of social-emotional components of MTSS and how it relates to the academic needs of students. The researcher seeks to gain a deeper understanding for the purpose of moving specific interventions, ideas and methods forward in specific settings such as schools, classrooms or other educational settings (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009). According to Pinnegar and Hamilton, self-study is defined as such for the reason that the collection of data and presentation of the work is fundamental to the study of one’s self in relation to the research and data collection. Self-study developed for the purpose and from the aspiration of individuals to study and better comprehend their practice. Loughran (2004) identified self-study as a focal point for those pursuing a better knowledge of their individual
setting and the work of those in similar fields. As stated by Bullough and Pinnegar (2001), “The aim of self-study research is to provoke, challenge and illuminate rather than confirm and settle” (p. 20).

The setting for this self-study research is a selective enrollment high school in an urban area. Selective enrollment high schools are schools which provide academically advanced high school students with a challenging and enriched college preparatory experience (CPS, 2017). The RtI model has been used with Gifted and Talented students such as those at a selective high school. While the RtI model has proven to be a successful tool for identifying student need, implementing interventions, and monitoring the effectiveness of the interventions (Fletcher & Vaughn, 2009), Seedorf (2014) has identified that the successful implementation in most schools has been lacking fidelity due to small amounts of resources, training, and support. Many large urban districts struggle with budgets and allocations of resources to meet the needs of all students. Even though the school has an enrollment close to two-thousand the target group for this study will be ninth graders. The intent is to roll the initiative out to the rest of the population after the first implementation through the action research and self-study. While resources are generally provided to meet the needs of students whose specific needs are identified by an IEP or 504 plan there are students without these plans who may require different levels of MTSS interventions to be successful. Moreover, the administration at the site realizes that addressing the tiered SEL supports for all students is critical to the overall post-secondary preparation and success for the student population. Due to the importance of addressing the SEL needs of students the site will prioritize allocating school based
funds and resources to developing and sustaining tiered supports that focus on the SEL needs of the students. Exact monetary amounts will be considered as they arise.

A review of the current literature revealed that even though many gifted educators believe RtI/MTSS would be of benefit with their population of students, there is a gap in understanding how to implement the model on a school-wide level to actually benefit all students and address their individual needs. A small percentage of public schools have successfully implemented RtI for all students (Seedorf, 2014). According to Sansoti, Noltemeyer, and Goss (2010) research has indicated that high school principals perceive RtI as important but difficult to put in to place in their setting. For example, evidenced based intervention and accountability in high schools are viewed as two of the most significantly important factors in implementation, yet school leaders express a lack of evidence-based interventions for students within secondary schools and systematic data collection systems (Sansosti et al., 2010). Data sources or testing instruments may vary and change from elementary schools to high schools, there is varying sources of data used across content areas in high schools. Intervention, accountability and progress monitoring information are essential. According to Fullan (2007), educational reform has indicated that effective and successful implementation of MTSS requires knowledge of the new practices and of skills to implement the practice of MTSS with fidelity.

As an administrator at a selective enrollment school, I am zealous about assisting teachers with developing, learning, and implementing the most effective strategies in the best interest of students. My ambition as a school leader is to enable the teachers to better implement MTSS. Additionally, to build their capacities and abilities to differentiate for
all learning styles within the different tiers of the MTSS structure for both social-emotional and academic needs. As an educational leader, I understand that it is paramount that all students are integrated and given support regardless of learning style. Under the integration presumption, as formulated in 1974, children with disabilities are to be educated with children without disabilities "to the maximum extent appropriate" unless "the nature or severity of the handicap is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily" (Colker, 2006).

Students admitted to the site of my self-study are enrolled based on high academic ability. After conferencing with and reflecting on my conversations with the counseling department at the site, it was determined that the students who need differentiation and support at the site may not be identified as having a specific learning disability but have many social emotional needs to be addressed. All student needs; academic, behavioral and social-emotional are critical to meet in the general education setting. Analyzing and reflecting on the data has revealed that of students with Individualized Education Plans (IEP) a compelling number of students are identified as having emotional disabilities (ED) or other health impairment (OHI) rather than a specific learning disability. Additionally, from collaboration with the counselor team and related service providers, as well as observations and supervision of the counseling department and their schedules it has become evident there are many students with social-emotional issues that do not have a formal label or diagnosis at the school but are in need of social emotional learning supports.
MTSS at the Self-Study Site

While the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires a causal link between a qualifying disability and the need for special education services, neither the IDEA itself, nor the federal regulations that implement it, provide guidance on how to interpret this requirement (Brigham Young University, 2009) making it all the more difficult for teachers and administrators try to meet the educational need of many different types of students who attend their schools. At the site to be studied this is an issue since the school is a selective enrollment school. This means all students need to test at a certain academic level for acceptance to the school. After consideration of the data, the inference can be made that the primary reasons for students being unsuccessful are not specifically related to academic deficiencies. Many considerations and circumstances play a part in the problem. A main factor is that there is a lack of structure in the multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) process that has contributed to a significant number of students earning multiple Fs this school year as seen in Table 1.

This happened because the students who should have been identified for intervention and/or support were not identified in a way which would facilitate them receiving intentional, purposeful support and interventions. When considering my reflection on the data at a deeper level, it is apparent that many of the student struggles are related to social-emotional issues such as anxiety and depression; and a few are related to students falling through the cracks academically because of executive functioning and not getting corrective and/or preventative interventions in a timely manner. This is evident when examining and reflecting on the data as seen in Table 1 for
students who are struggling on an individual basis. This premise was arrived at by examining and reflecting on several different data sources available for students such as attendance, grades, and visits to the counseling department.

Table 1

*Failures 2015-2016 School Year (CPS, 2016)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quarter</th>
<th>9th</th>
<th>10th</th>
<th>11th</th>
<th>12th</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st quarter</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd quarter</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd quarter</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th quarter</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Parent conversations, teacher classroom data, MTSS Team meetings, and student observations will be subjects of part of my journal reflections. Additionally, reflection upon the universal SEL screener used during our Freshman Connection program reveals that many students are experiencing feelings of anxiety, depression and overwhelming pressure from home and school. Due to the nature of this self-study and the information not being publicly available the exact numbers are not able to be shared. However, preliminary examination and reflection of this data highlights there are several instances of anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues that had not previously been
identified or addressed. According to CASEL (2017), addressing the SEL needs of students is inherent to the process of coordinating a framework for schools to promote the social, emotional academic learning in unison. Schools should be embedding SEL in the strategic plans, staffing, professional development, and budgets. The interventions addressed in this self-study will attempt to provide a model in which SEL is integrated as part of school wide activities and initiatives such as MTSS, CIWP, and after-school programs. Additionally, the team will facilitate the work of aligning the school wide policies and structures with SEL (CASEL, 2017).

Based on conversations with the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) and anonymous exit slips from faculty meetings, there is some evidence to suggest that since admission to the school is selective and students have to attain a certain level of proficiency to be accepted (i.e., a selective population), some teachers are more presenters of content and overlook the fact that the students are still adolescents and have social-emotional learning needs in addition to their academic needs. My journal reflections of classroom observations indicate that some staff would benefit from greater understanding and implementation of differentiation and a holistic approach to teaching and learning. This oversight, however, is not intentional. Rather, it appears to stem from a lack of understanding and consideration of the social-emotional and non-academic learning differences that the students present.

**Setting for Self-Study**

While the site of the self-study has received city, state, and national accolades, staff and faculty are always striving for improvement in all areas of educating students.
As an instructional leader, it is critical to understand and believe that being an excellent leader of an exceptional school requires more than a high level of competence. Sergiovanni (2015) shares that value added leadership is critical to strengthening the school setting and questions if leaders should settle for simply competence or strive for excellence.

A college prep school in a large urban district is the setting for this self-study. Students are currently accepted into the school through a rigorous procedure known as the selective enrollment application process. This process is based on academic success and standardized test scores in addition to the tier system which correlates to where a student lives. This tier is based on the current census data. The tiers were implemented to maintain diversity and provide equity in the admissions process for all students. Four years ago, the school added a neighborhood component allocating a specific number of seats in the freshman class to students living within a designated attendance boundary.

The school opened in the 1960s. The original focus of the school was vocational and technical programs in the district. The school later developed a Cooperative Work-Study program (CWS). The CWS was organized to give students practical experience in their subject and skill areas. During the early 1980s, the school became part of the district’s “Options for Knowledge” program and transitioned to an Academic Magnet School. Magnet schools and programs were created to provide the students of the city with unique educational opportunities in an integrated setting. The magnet school policy was designed to ensure equity and equal access to magnet schools for all children while maintaining racially balanced schools (Great Schools, 2017).
The current student enrollment is almost 2,000 students in grades nine-twelve. This is more than double the enrollment of what the school was five years ago. The current demographics are 13% Asian, 17% Black, 30% Hispanic, 36% White, and 4% other. These demographics have also changed since I joined the leadership team in 2012. Five years ago, the Black and Asian populations represented a larger portion of the school enrollment (see Figure 1 and Figure 2 below).

Note. ISBE, 2017

Figure 1. Site Demographics 2012-2013

Note. CPS, 2017

Figure 2. Site Demographics 2016-2017
Currently the school is approximately 40% low income, 10% diverse learners and 1% limited English with a mobility rate of 0.5%. Interestingly, the low income percentage has also decreased in the last five years from about 50% to the current 40%. The demographics of the school need to be considered when implementing a plan to differentiate for the varying social- emotional and academic needs of students.

The diverse population of the school is a strength of the learning community; however it presents challenges to the learning organization. The students and families come from neighborhoods and schools all across the city. The students represented in the freshman class of approximately 450 originate from 174 different elementary this presents the issue of students who have varying academic foundations related to their different elementary school experiences. Also, the incoming freshman class of 450 resides in 58 different zip codes across the city. This leads to a different kind of geographic and socioeconomic diversity that is unique to the selective enrollment environment.

The school underwent another change in the 1990s with the initiation of the College Prep program. A College Prep school is a four-year college preparatory school, offering the best and most innovative opportunities for student academic achievement. This College Prep school is ranked among the top high schools in the city, state, and country based on standardized test data and the success of low-income students. Currently, the school is the most racially and ethnically diverse of the district’s selective enrollment schools (Great Schools, 2017). The school prides itself on being intentional and purposeful about retaining the sense of achievement and commitment to excellence.
that has been generated in recent years. However, four years ago a new chapter was started in the history book for the school.

A new building, which was funded by tax increment financing (TIF) funds, opened in 2013. This was intended to be a replacement school for the original building. However, the district leadership at the time made the decision to keep the original building to create a two-building campus. The intent was to increase the number of select enrollment seats for the district’s students. This was met with both criticism and praise from the public. Since the school was funded by TIF funds a neighborhood career and technical (CTE) program was developed. There are a specific number of seats in the two pre-professional CTE programs reserved for the best qualified students living within the established boundaries. The sentiment is that students living in the neighborhood should be allowed to attend the school as their neighborhood school since their taxes helped fund the new school. These students do not necessarily have to meet the same qualifications as the students who are accepted to the school through the selective enrollment application process. However, the students still need to meet the minimum CTE requirements which are set at a stanine of 5 in reading and math with an exception made for students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). This has resulted in a broader range of skill levels in the incoming freshman classes. As a result of this broader range of ability in the class, the faculty raised a concern that the school would not be able to maintain the rigorous curriculum and our continuous improvement on the standardized state assessments. All stakeholders were concerned about how the school would handle the changes.
Despite the changes the school has maintained its academic success rate on the ACT and increased its AP participation. By graduation, 94% of students will have taken at least one Advanced Placement (AP) course. The current success rate for AP exams (a score of 3 or higher) was 85% and ACT scores have continually remained above the state and city average as noted in Table 2 below.

Table 2

ACT Scores by Graduating Class (ISBE, 2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR of Graduation</th>
<th>Average ACT Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class of 2011 (2010 Test Year)</td>
<td>24.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class of 2012 (2011 Test Year)</td>
<td>24.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class of 2013 (2012 Test Year)</td>
<td>25.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class of 2014 (2013 Test Year)</td>
<td>26.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class of 2015 (2014 Test Year)</td>
<td>27.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class of 2016 (2015 Test Year)</td>
<td>26.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Generally students who are engaged in school want to be successful and ready for the post-secondary educational experience, although that may not mean a traditional four-year college for all of the students.

The site of this self-study has few discipline compared to the larger district, the school has only 4.8% of students involved in misconduct compared to the average for the district high schools which is 45% (CPS, 2016). However, there has been a substantial increase in the amount of social-emotional problems the students are encountering. Based on conversations with the counseling team and reflective notes from counseling
department meetings the school has seen an increase in anxiety and depression as well as an increase in the number of students being hospitalized with mental health issues. Notably, this increase in anxiety, depression and social-emotional issues is not proportional to the increase in enrollment. The college acceptance rate for the students is 96% to four-year universities and 4% to two-year colleges. This correlates to what Sergiovanni (1984) addresses as competence as he strives to define excellence in leadership: “Competent schools, measure up to the standards of effectiveness….Excellent schools exceeds the expectations necessary to be considered satisfactory. Students in such schools accomplish far more and teachers work much harder than can ordinarily be expected.”

The parents are as diverse as the student population and very involved in the school. The Friends of the School parent organization has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars to supplement the school’s budget. According to the 5 Essentials Survey the parents, community and teachers are supportive of the leadership at the site (CPS.5-essentials, 2017). The 5 Essentials Survey is an evidence-based system designed to drive improvement in schools nationwide the survey reliably measures changes in a school organization and provides reports to the school. The 5 Essentials system is based on more than 20 years of research by the University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago Schools there are five components found to be critical for school success:

- **Effective Leaders:** The principal works with teachers to implement a clear and strategic vision for school success.

- **Collaborative Teachers:** Teachers collaborate to promote professional
growth.

- **Involved Families:** The entire school staff builds strong relationships with families and communities to support learning.

- **Supportive Environment:** The school is safe and orderly. Teachers have high expectations for students and support students to realize their goals. Classmates also support one another.

- **Ambitious Instruction:** Classes are academically demanding and engage students by emphasizing the application of knowledge. (Klugman, Gordon, Sebring, & Sporte, 2015)

Support of the school from all stakeholders has encouraged and developed into an excellent working relationship with the parents and community who are very supportive of the school and the teachers. The parents expect excellent communication from teachers and administration.

There is an open door policy in the office. Parents know that any concern will be handled as efficiently as possible. The teachers are a group of hardworking individuals who, for the most part, are experts in their specific content areas.

This support is evident from reflecting upon the 5 Essentials Survey. One area in which school leadership can show growth is the improvement professional development for teachers while helping to build their capacity in the area of social-emotional learning of the students. More than half of the teaching faculty has less than ten years at the school. This is due to the large growth that the school has experienced in the last four years. The community is very interested in the school, as the school is a large selling
point for real estate in the community. Also, community organizations use the building for many outside functions. The image that school has in the community is critical to our community partnerships and community stakeholders.

**Current State of MTSS**

The current system of using Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) became part of our initiatives during the 2012-2013 school year. The purposeful shift in terminology to a MTSS from RtI was done with the intention of integrating both academics and behavior as uniformly critical to student success in our educational system. The leadership at the school and the school’s stakeholders are critical for successful implementation of any initiative at an institution. This dynamic is no less true for MTSS. Specifically, a school should have leadership teams and structures in place with the purpose of ensuring that MTSS is being implemented authentically. School-based leadership teams or instructional leadership teams (ILTs) would benefit being established to ensure that building-level staff members understand the rationale for using MTSS, and have the skills and supports necessary to make the system work effectively (Gamm et al., 2012).

At the district level there are district wide implementation and professional development for all administrators on transitioning from the RtI to the MTSS model. This is important to all students and their learning, in order to ensure equal opportunity and success for all students.

There are already existing initiatives in place to address this concern. The major difference and lack of understanding at my school that existed involved the responsibility
for implementing data-based problem-solving (general education, special education, and other school based professionals). This lack of understanding can potentially limit the impact of this model on both the integrity of implementation and on student growth.

This research will be based around increasing the universal Tier 1 support for ninth grade students. Currently, all ninth grade students have access to a summer freshman connection program, one-on-one counseling sessions, freshman seminar and peer mentors. The majority of this work is provided directly by the counseling team and supported financially and logistically by the administration, the goal is to increase the Tier 1 SEL interventions so that SEL is an all school effort which involves all faculty and staff. As leader of the team I will facilitate the planning of increasing the amount of Tier 1 interventions and providing professional development for teachers in a manner that fits into our current schedule.

This self-study will examine and reflect upon several artifacts, including: parent, teacher and counselor communication; MTSS meeting notes and agendas; administration meeting notes and agendas; data from the counseling department; and attendance and grade data. Through this process of reflection and self-study, I can identify the problem as a lack of structure at my school in addressing the intersection of social-emotional and academic learning needs of students at this selective enrollment high school. I have identified four major contributing categories with multiple layers. While this is not an exhaustive list, this compilation addresses factors that are within the focus of control at the school. Each contributing factor has relevance to both the learners and the learning environment. Having reflected upon journal entries, observations, and conversations I
identified the four contributing factors as:

1. A significant number of students struggling with anxiety/depression and other social-emotional issues.
2. Students enter the school from many different elementary settings which lead to different academic foundations depending on which elementary school they attended.
3. There appears to be a significant lack of communication and partnership between teachers and families.
4. There is not enough communication and partnership with counseling and administration (lack of process and structure).

Upon reflecting on the examination and analysis of data it has become apparent that the data show that there are too many students with multiple failures, especially at the ninth and tenth grade levels as seen in Table 1. These exist for a variety of reasons: social-emotional issues, lack of preparation in elementary school, anxiety, depression, school refusal, and lack of early intervention for any or all of these contributing factors.

Examination and reflection of school based data shows that approximately 80% of the ninth and tenth grade students with multiple failures are dealing with significant social-emotional issues. Also, these numbers are not inclusive of students who received empty or incomplete grades due to social-emotional issues. Reflecting on the specific students who were struggling with grades academically it became evident that social-emotional issues were the root cause for those not achieving academically.

As evidenced in Table 1, there are a significant number of students earning
multiple failures this school year. While I understand that these numbers are not high compared to the district as a whole, they are too high considering the school is selective enrollment. Students need to test at a certain level. These failures are not a result of academic deficiencies.

Observations show that many of the issues are related to social-emotional issues such as anxiety and depression. The examination of counseling department records reveals more than course failure data. The data shows that 13% of students regularly (at least once a week) visit counselors for social-emotional reasons. This past year, approximately 30 students were hospitalized for social-emotional and mental health issues. Of these hospitalized students, approximately a third had repeat hospitalizations. Also, approximately 5% of students had significant absences (more than 20) due to social-emotional reasons. This is not acceptable to me as a leader in the school who is responsible for the best interest of all students. Too many students are falling through the cracks academically due to social-emotional issues and not getting corrective interventions in a timely manner. Based on reflections from observations, conversations and journal entries it has become apparent the focus of many teachers is on delivering the content to the students rather than differentiating to teach the individual students and meeting the needs of the individual students. Also, my contemplation of reflections on my observations has revealed that teachers seem to unintentionally overlook or forget the fact that the students are still teenagers since they are part of the selective enrollment population.
Statement of the Problem

The problem that presents itself for this study is many students are unsuccessful academically because of social-emotional learning issues rather than academic issues. This is evident from comparing standardized test scores to the school based grades. These issues need to be acknowledged and addressed for the students to not only be successful in school but also in their post-secondary lives. As an instructional leader and advocate for all students in the school it is critical for me to ensure that all stakeholders collaborate to ensure the social-emotional needs as well as academic needs are being met at the school.

I would like to facilitate a shift in our SEL support so that all students are remaining on track and achieving successful outcomes. Additionally, I would like to implement a paradigm shift in the culture of the school to be one that ensures all students are receiving the social-emotional and academic supports that they need to be successful. An outside observation may reveal that the school environment appears comfortable for most students and most students are successful; but this is not enough to be an excellent school. In order to be excellent we need to address the whole child and all of their learning needs, both social-emotional and academically.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this self-study is to determine what strategies and interventions will assist an administrator in targeting the social-emotional and academic needs of students at a selective enrollment high school. The diverse student population includes affluent families who exhibit lots of pressure on their child to succeed. On the other hand,
there are many students from lower socioeconomic areas where it is not uncommon that
the pupil is the first to graduate high school with plans to attend college. The school is in
the spotlight and image is very important to all stakeholders. The school has been very
purposeful in trying to equalize the experience of students by working with partners to
provide many outside learning opportunities available for all students through community
partners and local universities. This can be difficult to accomplish as many students have
access to private learning opportunities and tutors because of their family situations.

Not only do the students experience different family situations, but there is also a
difference in the communication the students experience between their teachers and
families. The issue is twofold. First, many teachers do not maintain regular
communication with parents, counselors, and administrators if a student appears to have
academic, behavioral, or attendance issues. The issues tend to be overlooked until they
have been escalated to a priority level; and, depending on the family and their resources,
the students will receive different levels of interventions beyond the school walls. For
example, many families will engage in outside therapy, counseling, or tutoring to help a
student, while others will not. In some cases, the parents are not aware of the situation
until it absolutely requires intense supports. Secondly, the school needs to improve its
Tier 1 social-emotional supports for all students.

Based on my observations and reflections of interventions that have been put in
place regular communication initiated by teachers and earlier interventions across the
tiers would be beneficial before the issues are escalated. Additionally, better anecdotal
records should be kept by teachers and counselors to share information in a more
structured method. Among school personnel there are many types of professionals who have expertise that can support MTSS implementation. Some, such as school psychologists, have particular content knowledge that can lend substantial support to implementation efforts (Forman & Crystal, 2015).

The lack of anecdotal data often makes it difficult to pull all pieces together when a student is supervised by at least seven different teachers and a counselor. If there was a better structure in place for keeping data on students who are receiving tier 2 and 3 interventions the administrators would be better able to assist in making informed decisions when difficult situations arise relating to the best ways to help a student manage his or her issues. The importance of communication and collaboration across support personnel is essential for integrated MTSS implementation. Challenges arise when implementation efforts taking place include academic and behavioral MTSS trainers who are not communicating and collaborating on a regular basis (Foreman & Crystal, 2015).

While there is no “one size fits all” solution it would be beneficial if the administration had a basic template of information for all students that would help in making evidence based decisions. Additionally, the communication between all stakeholders in regards to follow-up interventions and progress monitoring would be very helpful. If all stakeholders are aware of the results, then the team as a whole can make a more informed decision whether or not the interventions that are in place are adequate or if they should be modified based on the outcomes that are being observed in the students social-emotional and academic progress. Since this self-study is based in action research it is critical to communicate that the goal of MTSS is to gather information and share it
with all faculty to ensure consensus-driven action planning occurs for academic and behavioral implementation (Freeman et al., 2015).

Another purpose for this research is to highlight the importance of MTSS in all schools, and that regardless of enrollment type, every school should have the best interest of the entire child at the forefront of not only their mission but in the day to day operations. Educators need to care for students and also need to help students get better in the one thing that can serve them for life - their day-to-day learning (Sharratt & Fullan, 2013). If students are struggling with social-emotional issues their day-to-day learning may also become a struggle.

As a leader, I believe that I need to be accountable for ensuring meaningful professional learning systems are in place for teachers. At the same time I need to be accountable for ensuring implementation with fidelity of interventions for students. This is necessary for any interventions to be successful. Research has shown that school systems that improved from great to excellent focused 78% of their interventions on professional learning and only 22% on accountability/compliance (Fullan & Knight, 2011). The conclusion is that once the capacity of teachers reaches a certain level, peer culture becomes the source of innovation and energy. This is significant to me as I am striving to not only help students but to change a culture. This can lead to sustainability where the teachers and other stakeholders become change agents (Fullan & Knight, 2011). According to Fullan (2009), each element that affects the school and classroom improvement must be integrated into a seamless whole. This alignment and cohesion is imperative in producing collective efficacy and results across the entire organization.
As I work on this self-study, strive to address the problem, and make sustainable change to processes and systems in my school I need to remember that students benefit when leaders and their teams of stakeholders are united in pursuit of higher goals in the best interest of all students (Sergiovanni, 1992). As my dissertation will be a self-study of my development as a leader, another purpose of my research will be to include reflection on what is effective leadership and how it relates to implementation of MTSS structures and processes.

The ultimate goal of my research is to bridge the gap in the understanding that exists for many teachers and learning organizations about the connection between social-emotional learning for students as it relates to academics. I also want to better understand what interventions work with different types of learning styles. I am passionate about this topic. I believe “systemic change throughout every aspect of education, involving new structures, policies, and practices, is needed within the educational system to foster educational equity for all students” (Ingraham, 2015, p. 78).

Additionally, it will be critical that the selection of interventions is based on evidence and fit for the context in which the self-study is taking place. Whatever results emerge from the self-study it critical for the process and plan that is designed and implemented be a good fit for our learning community. Moreover, when planning it is imperative that stakeholders realize we cannot use a generic system. We need to avoid the “one size fits all mindset.” As a leader, I will need to ensure the process and plan are a good fit for the students and teachers at my school.
Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in the development of a leader as they study their impact on building teacher capacity and improving student outcomes using an MTSS framework. The study will address issues around the implementation of MTSS in high schools. This is an area that is lacking in the research especially for high academic ability students with social-emotional learning issues. There is considerable research that provides commentary on the issues that schools face when trying to implement MTSS. This research also addresses the need for more specific implementation practices that will elicit better execution of MTSS the process and, as a result, better outcomes for students in social-emotional and academic learning. There are several critical factors for successful implementation including effective leadership and use of data-based decision making (Forman & Crystal, 2015).

Most studies on leadership development and effectiveness have been conducted by outside researchers (not the school leaders themselves). This self-study will serve as a useful model for school leaders to investigate the effectiveness of their own leadership styles in a specific context. Educational leaders are at place where it is critical that they address the intersection of academic and social emotional learning and how they address it within their specific context. The understanding of the implementation of social-emotional and academic MTSS interventions with fidelity is continually changing. The perspective gained through this study can help to further this discussion about the academic and social-emotional learning experiences in a 9-12 high school. If we wish to understand effective implementation of MTSS as it relates to high school, it is imperative
that school leaders put the teachers and their students at the center of our discussions and debates. This self-study can encourage school leaders to put themselves and their practices at the center of their research and as a result will give the education community a stronger idea about how teachers and students experience the implementation of MTSS at a school level.

By sharing the usefulness of this study with participants it will increase the trustworthiness of the researcher and increase catalytic validity by sparking a dialogue that acts as an impetus for change. The plan for the action research portion of this self-study is that the change is significant enough in this first cycle so that other members of the faculty and staff will want to join in the next action research cycle. Based on anonymous exit slips it is evident that most faculty members want to be change agents within the learning organization.

**Explanation of Action Research and Self-Study Methodology**

The purpose of my study is to investigate how I can affect the implementation of MTSS at a selective enrollment high school and how I make meaning of the experience as I engage together with the faculty and teachers in the school to improve tiered supports for all students. In conducting this work, I will strive to give my students, parents, and teachers a voice. In order to accomplish this task, I will facilitate teacher engagement. Secondly, I will conduct this self-study in conjunction with a professional learning cycle based on the participatory action research model around the implementation of MTSS focusing on social emotional support at the selective enrollment school site as teachers and students participate in the freshman focus Tier 1 support program. Participatory
action research (PAR) method supports ‘real people tackling real problems in real time’ (Soffe, Marquardt, & Hale 2011). PAR is a self-governing process where members of the team reflect and collaborate to transform current organizational practices in order to address an authentic problem (Kindon, Pain, & Kesby 2010); a PAR group works together to make decisions and works on issues by implementing actions through multiple cycles (McTaggart, 1997). Through this self-study and PAR process I anticipate that my research will not only ensure the implementation of necessary supports for all students, but will engage teachers in the implementation and providing of MTSS to all students. My intention is that that this work will transform me as an instructional leader.

Self-study allows for practitioners to examine and to improve their own practice (Pine, 2009). This also supports the idea that educators have the responsibility to assess our progress with students, unveil inconsistencies between our practices and beliefs, and to challenge our thinking (LaBoskey, 2004).

Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) state that the purpose of self-study is to attain knowledge as well as to “provoke, challenge and illuminate” (p. 20). They explain self-study as a methodology that is initiated by, and focused on, educators as we relate to our instruction and to our students. Additionally their research states that autobiographical self-studies should (a) ring true and enable connections, (b) promote insight and interpretation, (c) engage history forthrightly through the author’s honesty, (d) center on the issues that make someone an educator, (e) be told in an authentic voice, (f) aim to improve learning for oneself and others, (g) focus on something genuine, (h) attend to persons in settings, and (i) offer fresh perspectives (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001).
I plan to conduct my self-study with the goal to better understanding my experiences as an instructional leader to build the capacity of the teachers in my building. I also want to implement tiered supports in my school so that all students will achieve success in their high school years as well as receive the social-emotional supports that they need. I specifically intended to challenge myself to enhance my leadership and facilitate a team to create sustainable systems that will benefit the social-emotional and academic learning needs of all students in the building. Self-study can promote this type of leadership growth through inquiry that will allow me to closely examine my practices and beliefs as an instructional leader. Lastly, I hope that the self-study highlights my reactions to the urgency of implementing MTSS at a selective enrollment high school as well as the knowledge I will gain from working with teachers and other faculty to do what is best to support all students.

With regards to my self-study I will maintain a reflective journal using both written and audio recordings of my weekly reflections, and work with a critical friend as well as use a variety of reflection to collect additional data. A reflection on the analysis of the success of intervention put in place by the team as a result of my leadership will also be used. This analysis will include reflection on examination of students’ grades, test scores, attendance, and counseling data as well reflection on teacher, parent, and student conversations.
Conceptual Framework

According to Fullan (2014), school leaders should challenge the organization to face the issues that have no simple solutions and require us to learn. Leadership not management is needed to find answers to complex issues and problems that schools face surrounding social-emotion issues. Fullan describes five components of leadership that influence positive change:

1. Moral Purpose
2. Understanding change
3. Relationship building
4. Knowledge Creations and Sharing
5. Coherence Making

All of these leadership components working together will mobilize a commitment to the organization putting their ideas into action to affect change. This study will employ Fullan’s (2014) Models of Change Theory to address administrator support of social-emotional and academic needs of students at a selective high school. In using Fullan’s theory, it is critical to be aware of the difference between external and internal commitment to making the change. According to Argyris (2000), external commitment is elicited by guidelines and practices put in place by management to facilitate organization members to complete tasks. Internal commitment is attained from the energy of the individuals because of the inherent rewards of getting the job done.

An area for change that can be addressed as a solutions area is the arena of teacher training. Observations reveal that many teachers do not have the experiences, training
strategies necessary to address social-emotional learning issues they encounter. Teachers today are required to have an ever-expanding knowledge base and skills that support working within a multi-tiered system of supports, including response to intervention (MTSS/RtI). Yet most teachers do not possess these skills (Prasse et al., 2012). As implementation unfolds in the nation’s K-12 districts, preliminary data from higher education indicate support for MTSS/RtI as a component of teacher preparation. However, it is evident that teacher preparation programs have yet to consistently and comprehensively produce a teacher corps that accomplishes these outcomes skills (Prasse et al., 2012). The development of clarity around MTSS practices, processes and professional learning cycles (PLC) involvement can be very muddled. The work will not be easy; nevertheless it is critical that learning organizations and school leaders realize that the processes and practices that are developed are sustainable for students, teachers and administrators.

Acknowledgement that school improvement and teacher/staff development are related is imperative. Staff development - specifically in MTSS - can be used as a basic organizational change in the way schools operate (Fullan, 1990). Sustained teacher professional development is critical in building teacher capacity in keeping learning on track. The fundamental lever for improving student learning based on recent research is teacher professional development (Elmore, 2004). Once a plan is established it will be imperative that the foundation is laid so that it is sustainable. “Sustainability does not simply mean whether something will last. It addresses how particular initiatives can be developed without compromising the development of others in the surrounding
The main focus of this self-study will be the professional learning cycle to create a wraparound system of Tier 1 supports for freshman level students which will be discussed in the next section. A team has been created to address this Tier 1 support; and the team has begun to plan for more structured supports for the freshmen during our ninety minute academic lab block. Change in systems and structure involving MTSS is never easy. Dulaney et al. (2013) describe that the delineated MTSS structure goes beyond the traditional one-dimensional triangle and distinguishes four learner facets represented in a classic three-dimensional pyramid structure with a capstone over the top, representing a unified organization in which all are empowered to learn through systematic school-wide support. In addition, there are many stakeholders specifically involved in the plan. Bringing all together with a common goal is a key function I will have as the facilitator of the action research cycle; but it is important to not lose sight of the importance of stakeholders in this process. The group of facilitators of key importance to MTSS implementation is inclusive of teachers, administrators, specialists, support staff, parents/families, and community partners.

**Research Questions**

In order to better understand the connection between addressing the intersection between social emotional learning through MTSS I am designing an action research cycle that addresses the following research questions:

1) How do I help teachers understand the connection between social-emotional learning as it relates to academics?
a. I will reflect upon anonymous exits slips from PD sessions to inform how well teachers at my school understand this connection.

2) What strategies can I facilitate and help implement to ensure that the academic and social-emotional needs of all students are being met?
   a. How can I address the needs of Tier 1, 2 and 3 supports through classroom instruction?
   b. How can I develop and build capacity of teachers to implement the facilitation and development of sustainable MTSS systems to help to ensure all students receive appropriate tiered supports?

3) How has my leadership transformed as outlined by Fullan’s Theory of Change and the five components of leadership that Fullan (2014) describes that converge to affect positive change:
   1. Moral Purpose
   2. Understanding change
   3. Relationship building
   4. Knowledge Creations and Sharing
   5. Coherence Making

The first research question focuses on how I will work with teachers as an effective leader to facilitate the implementation of interventions that will address the social emotional learning of all students. The social-emotional interventions at the Tier 1 level are critical to help avoid students falling through the cracks. Table 1 demonstrates that the number of students struggling academically increases from the first to the fourth
quarter. Also, it can be noted from observations and reflections on data that the number of students with significant social emotional issues increases throughout the years and their progression through high school. If we have the correct interventions in place to take early action steps, the hope is that we will see a decrease in these numbers.

The second research question focuses on my role as the leader in facilitating the team to look at the data and how we can implement the development of an MTSS structure that will ensure the needs of tiered supports - both social-emotional and academic for students at all levels. This will be very difficult as many teachers non-intentionally overlook the fact that even students with high academic scores may need MTSS supports whether academic or social-emotional. Also, this will have to be addressed with the parents and students as well. Many students at the school have never received Bs before, much less Fs for grades. I know that I will need to provide faculty and staff with literature on the intersections of social-emotional learning and academics. I also want to emphasize reminders about the importance of supporting the whole-student; academically, socially, behaviorally, and emotionally.

**Limitations and Biases**

While MTSS is a universal topic that needs to be addressed in all schools this study may have limitations because of the context. The study will be conducted as a leader of a selective enrollment high school with a diverse selective population. The researcher will focus on intervention for ninth grade students. The researcher understands that all students need differentiation and have learning differences. However, the issues presented at a high school that has a test-in policy may be different from the strategies
and issues that other schools may be encountering.

Additionally, I realize that my excitement and openness about the work involved in my self-study will cause a concern and that my bias may have an effect on the interpretations of data and observation, in an effort to eliminate some of this bias I will engage in reflections and dialogue with a critical friend. As a researcher studying myself, it is critical for me to be cognizant of my conflicting roles in the school. I work as leader in the context of the study and I want positive change to happen, but I need to ensure I am able to act effectively as both a researcher and a school leader. Transparency in collecting and interpreting data will be essential to a successful intervention. I cannot eliminate my bias that I clearly want the interventions to effect positive change.

In addition to biases there will be challenges to this study. I acknowledge that working in a large school will be cause for implementation obstacles and communication challenges to ensure that every student is receiving the same intervention with fidelity. Progress monitoring and data collections can also be challenging at large a high school. Progress monitoring can pose issues in many schools; however, the site for the study is fortunate in that the challenges of student mobility and attendance are not present. There will be many people involved in delivering the interventions and multiple moving logistical pieces in working within the confines of the teachers contracted scheduled time and student schedule.

**Key Terms**

**ACT Test:** The ACT is a standardized test designed to measure high school students’ general educational development and their ability to complete college-level
work. The ACT is curriculum based; it is not an aptitude test. The questions on the ACT test the core subjects that students typically study through their third year of high school (English, reading, mathematics, and science) (ACT, 2017).

**Differentiation:** A way of thinking about teaching and learning. It is a philosophy. As such, it is based on a set of beliefs: students who are the same age differ in their readiness to learn, their interests, their styles of learning, their experiences, and their life circumstances. The differences in students are significant enough to make a major impact on what students need to learn, the pace at which they need to learn it, and the support they need from teachers and others to learn it well. Students will learn best when supportive adults push them slightly beyond where they can work without assistance. Students will learn best when they can make a connection between the curriculum and their interests and life experiences. Students will learn best when learning opportunities are natural (Tomlinson, 2000).

**Diverse Learner:** A diverse learner in the setting for the self-study is a student with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits or restricts the condition, manner or duration under which the average person in the population can perform a major life activity, such as walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, learning, working or taking care of oneself (Yell, 1998).

**Emotional disability:** a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child's educational performance: including but not limited to an inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors, an inability to build or
maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers, inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances, a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression, a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems (Knoblauch, 1998).

**Executive Functioning:** Cognitive abilities necessary for goal-directed behavior and adaptation to a range of environmental changes and demands (Duff, Schoenberg, Scott, & Adams, 2005).

**Executive processing:** Information processing skills that involve devising and carrying out strategies for remembering and solving problems (Boyd, Bee, & Johnson, 2006).

**Freshman Connection:** A summer program for all incoming freshman that provides the opportunity for students to prepare for the transition to high school from elementary school (CPS, 2016).

**Holistic Approach:** The notion of ‘status’ refers to the overall conception of one’s own place or position in relation to all the elements in one’s world, including oneself (Korthagen, 2004).

**Individualized Education Program (IEP):** A legal document that defines a child's special education program. An IEP includes the disability under which the child qualifies for special education services (also known as his *classification*), the services the team has determined the school will provide his yearly goals and objectives and any *accommodations* that must be made to assist his learning (Yell & Shriner, 1997).

**Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA):** A law ensuring services to
children with disabilities throughout the nation. IDEA governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education and related services to more than 6.5 million eligible infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities (Yell, 1998).

**Instructional Leadership Team (ILT):** A team of faculty and staff which assumes that the critical focus of behavior of teachers as they engage in activities directly affecting the growth of students (Southworth, 2002).

**Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS):** An integrated, comprehensive framework that focuses on core instruction, differentiated learning, and student centered learning, individualized student needs, and the alignment of systems necessary for all students’ academic, behavioral and social success (Averill, & Rinaldi, 2011).

**On-Track for Graduation:** The student has accumulated five full course credits, the number needed to be promoted to tenth grade and the student has no more than one semester F (that is, one-half of a full credit) in a core subject (English, math, science, or social studies) (Allensworth & Easton, 2005)

**Participatory Action Research (PAR):** PAR is a self-governing process where members of the team reflect and collaborate to transform current organizational practices in order to address an authentic problem (Kindon et al., 2010); a PAR group works together to make decisions, and works on issues by implementing actions through multiple cycles (McTaggart, 1997).

**Professional Development (PD):** Professional teaching and learning activities intended to help administrators, teachers, and other educators improve their professional understanding, capability, expertise, and efficacy. Includes actions that advance skills,
knowledge, proficiency of teachers and educators (OECD, 2009).

Social Emotional Learning (SEL): The progression through which students attain and successfully apply the understanding, attitude and skills essential for understanding emotions, set and achieve goals, show and feel empathy for others, establish and sustain constructive relationships and make responsible decisions (CASEL, 2018).

Freshman Seminar: A course designed to help students in their academic and social development as they transition from elementary school to high-school. This is a discussion-based in which counselors provide and exchange information and idea. There is also an emphasis on community building within the classroom (Hunter & Linder, 2005, pp. 275-276).

Response to Intervention (RtI): The practice of providing high-quality instruction and interventions matched to student need, monitoring progress frequently to make decisions about changes in the instruction or goals, and applying child response data to educational decisions (Batsche et al., 2005).

Tax Increment Financing (TIF): A public financing method that is used as a subsidy for redevelopment, infrastructure, and other community-improvement projects in many countries, including the United States. Similar or related value capture strategies are used around the world (Dye & Merriman, 2006).

Organization of the Study

This self-study consists of five chapters followed by a reference section and appendices. Chapter II is a review of the related literature. Theories of educational
leadership and how school leaders facilitate change at their school will be discussed. There will also be a description of MTSS and how MTSS can be successfully implemented by school leaders. The review of literature will also examine the cognitive development in adolescence and social-emotional needs of adolescents as well as the parents’ role in social-emotional issues. The relevant social-emotional learning and social-emotional learning standards will also be reviewed. Chapter III will describe the methodology and research design being employed in this study. Chapter IV will be a discussion of the findings and results from the reflections on data considered in this study.

This study will seek to find methods and systems to better address the social emotional Tier 1 supports for all students at the sight and improve the quality and structure of tiered interventions for students requiring social-emotional supports. The objective of Chapter V is an interpretation of the findings. The researcher will provide recommendations based on the interpretations of reflection and analysis of how effective leadership and the use of participatory action research can improve the MTSS systems and interventions to address the needs of students at a selective enrollment school. Additionally, Chapter V will include an analysis of my development as an educational leader in my role as a school administrator. A list of references and appendices will be included at the conclusion of the study.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Educational Leadership

Since the beginnings of the principalship in American education, educators have struggled to give distinct definition to the role. History has shown that principals were once urged to be bureaucratic executives followed by humanistic implementers to eventually becoming instructional leaders (Lashway, 2003). The role of the school administrator has changed over the years. At one time the job of school leader was thought of as managerial a role. Over time, the job as a school leader has revolutionized into a role that is transformative in nature. The change in the role of a school leader has its roots within the school reform initiatives (Deal & Peterson, 1990). According to Hallinger and Heck (2010), research generally maintains the conclusion that leadership in a school contributes to student learning through a set of socio-cultural and organizational processes that define the school’s capability for academic improvement.

There is not one distinct model of the practice of effective leadership. However, it is conceivable to recognize a common range of comprehensive educational values, personal and interpersonal abilities, characteristics, competencies, dispositions, decision making practices and a range of strategic actions which all effective leaders possess and use (Day, Hopkins, Harris & Ahtaridou, 2009). According to the research characteristics of successful leadership revolve around a few central themes. Effective school leadership
supports schools to develop a mission and vision that encompass the best thinking about teaching and learning (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). First, an important theme for leaders is that they not only create goals for their institution but also work to create a shared sense of purpose and direction. Second, it is important to realize that leaders fundamentally work through other people. Leaders facilitate the conditions that allow others to be effective. As a result leadership has both a direct and indirect effect on school goals and success. Finally, leadership is shared functions rather than a role and those functions that can be shared by building capacity of those in the organization (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003).

According to Bennis (1990), there are four competencies of leadership:

- management of meaning,
- management of attention,
- management of trust, and
- self-management.

A competent educational leader must first be able to manage the meaning of schooling, which means that the leader should have a clear comprehension and knowledge of the purpose for schools and is able to move the organization toward fulfilling that purpose. Management of attention for an educational leader is their capability to get teachers to concentrate and develop their energies in the direction of fulfilling the purpose of school; e.g., they will use their talents to teach in the best interest of the children. Management of trust for educational leaders is their ability to execute their position and responsibilities in such a way that others have faith in in them and their style of leadership. Management of
one’s self for the educational leader is being aware of who they are; knowing their strengths and weaknesses while being able to employ their strengths and shore up any weaknesses in their skill set (Smith & Andrews, 1989). Within this framework of competent leadership, there are many styles of leadership that an educational leader may choose to apply. Educational institutions need special leadership because they are special places. Along with providing basic organizational tenacity, constancy and structure school leaders are required to respond to the distinctive political realities they face (Sergiovanni, 2007). A school leader must keep in mind that the schools serve a variety of stakeholders; parents, student and community. Moral leadership is one framework of leadership that fits the unique needs of educational leadership. Moral leadership places an emphasis on bringing together the diverse group of stakeholders for the common good of the community. The goal of leadership is to create a community of shared followers. The leadership cannot exist if there is not a strong goal or vision to work towards or follow (Sergiovanni, 2007).

Acknowledging the four qualities of a competent educational leadership discussed above is critical as I look to use moral leadership as a context for my self-study in making a systemic change in how an administrator provides and facilitates the support of social-emotional and academic needs of students at a selective enrollment high school. Moral leadership is a lens in which I view my role as a school leader. Moral leadership is a very diverse kind of leadership. Rather than seeking to being followed, moral leaders strive to serve (Sergiovanni, 1992). Instead of showcasing their own skills, moral leaders incline to cultivate the capabilities of others. This is where the concept of shared leadership and
building the capacities of teachers and other faculty becomes critical. Involvement of all stakeholders strengthens the capacity of the educational organization to change. When trying to accomplish system changes it is imperative to realize the potential of collaborative teams at all levels and in all environments and I must commit to collective inquiry, data-driven decisions, and ongoing professional development to obtain the needed results for all involved (Sharratt & Fullan, 2009) while keeping the best interest of the students at the forefront of my self-study research.

Sergiovanni poses an interesting question when asks “Why we choose to do what we do?” What is it that drives a person to want to be a leader in a school? Around the globe school leaders are being held progressively more accountable for educational quality in the belief that students’ success or failure is determined by the way a school is run (Fullan & Watson, 2000). How a leader leads is critical to the school. Not every leader will have the same style but in order to be effective it is imperative that the educational leader work with a moral purpose (Fullan, 2014). The idea of moral purpose is to act intentionally to make a positive difference in the lives of member of the organization. School leaders need to use their moral purpose as the guiding force to reach their goals.

According to Heifetz (1994), many schools and learning organizations are of looking for the leadership to be a savior and solve all the problems of the organization. “Instead of looking for saviors, schools should be calling for leadership that will challenge us to face problems for which there are no simple, painless solutions problems that require us to learn new ways” (p. 21). An alternative image of leadership, argues
Heifetz, is one of “mobilizing people to tackle tough problems (p. 15). Leadership, then, is not mobilizing others to solve problems we already know how to solve, but to help them confront problems that have never yet been successfully addressed. This is more than just a leader acting as a manager. The leader must navigate the path for the learning organization to make change; in order to do this the leader must make adaptive change as opposed to technical changes (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009). Along with the idea of adaptive change the leader must seek to be collaborative in their goal setting.

Effective school leaders include all relevant stakeholders in establishing non-negotiable goals for their school. The processes to achieve the goals that are articulated should be implemented by not just the leader but the teachers and staff as well. School leaders should be involving teachers, staff and school community members in setting the goals and all stakeholders reach an acceptable level of agreement regarding goals and agree to support the attainment of those goals (Waters & Marzano, 2006). The entire learning community must be committed to systems change for the benefit of addressing the needs of all students.

Effective leaders in schools are those that have the capacity to build collaborative cultures by creating positive relationship with all stakeholders. This collaboration occurs through professional learning communities (PLCs) within schools. These leaders have a shared vision that can only be realized through building capacity and working together as a learning organization (Harris, Hopkins, Hadfield, Hargreaves & Chapman, 2013). Schools are facing turbulent times with unfunded mandates with more accountability. Changing needs of student and families also play a factor in the issues that schools face.
This will require the school leader to build the leadership capacity of many in the learning organization. If leadership is distributed it will have a greater potential to effect sustainable improvement for the school community.

Often, discussions of distributed leadership conclude with the acknowledgment that many individuals take responsibility for leadership in schools. This view, however, does not tell the entire story, from a distributed leadership viewpoint, leadership practice that results from interactions among leaders, followers, and their situation is critical. Distributed leadership includes all the interaction and collaboration that takes place within the learning organization it is not only delegating tasks to other members of the organization (Spillane, 2005). That being said the effective school leader must lead with a moral purpose and engage other stakeholders using a distributive leadership to facilitate implementation of MTSS in a school. This is because multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) is a more comprehensive framework that encompasses RtI. MTSS is a whole-school, data-driven, prevention-based initiative for improving academic, behavioral, and social-emotional outcomes for all students through a layered continuum of evidence-based strategies and systems (Freeman et al., 2015). Additionally, MTSS attempts to align academic and social-emotional resources and support for students as well as for teachers and other support staff who are delivering the instruction (Kendziora & Yoder, 2016). The reader should also note that MTSS not only includes a focus on intervention but also embraces a more explicit objective of prevention than RtI.

Improvement and change within a school necessitates the school to examine current practices and then move forward to build the agreement and structure essential to
maintain implementation and ensure sustainable improvement. Collaboration is critical for leaders working around the development of the MTSS framework and promoting a common language based on this framework. An organization wide belief and acceptance of collaboration must exist, and the capacity of individuals and learning communities must be built at all school levels with all stakeholders so progress is continuing and sustainable (Dulaney et al., 2013).

**How do School Leaders Facilitate Change?**

According to Gusky (1995), historically teachers have demonstrated resistance to the changes that are proportional to the required amount of change to make impact. Teachers resist change because they feel burdened or conflicted by the process (Evans, 1996). MTSS is a change in the sense that many high school teachers have thought about educating students with learning differences whether identified as a diverse learner or not. Research that has analyzed school reform also shows that those trying to facilitate change often miscalculate or undervalue how the working environment and previous constraints put upon faculty will affect progress and at the same time overemphasize the capacity of their innovation and ideas to change the methods of teaching and learning in the learning community (Cuban, 1993). Also, recent literature notes that increasing teacher resistance is present in schools seeking to adopt comprehensive reforms such as MTSS. The reasons commonly cited for this resistance are insufficient time for planning and collaboration with colleagues and relevant professional development to support model implementation, alignment with state assessments, and the creation of a common vision (Desimone, 2000; McChesney & Hertling, 2000).
Educational leaders looking to implement competent and effective programs need to have access to more contextual research to understand how social emotional learning and prevention programs are being delivered effectively and under what circumstances these practices are taking place. Educational leaders need clarification on how several programs can be coordinated so that a continuum of instruction can be provided. They need to understand what aspects of the social emotional MTSS implementation process are most important, and what alterations can be made without harming the integrity of the intervention. Information about how schools are handling the move toward comprehensive prevention programming is also a critical piece for leaders to examine. Additionally, the schools need to find improved methods to measure and clarify the behaviors being addressed and interventions being used. This could ultimately be used as means of documenting a broader range of success for social-emotional learning and interventions (Greenberg et al., 2003).

Lawson (2013) notes that it is much easier to assure stakeholders, specifically classroom teachers, that research-based academic intervention using an MTSS modeled approach will work; the academic research is hard to deny and easy to support. However, convincing teachers that an MTSS approach or intervention to support behavioral need and/or social-emotional learning is the best research-based strategy proves to be considerably more difficult. School leaders need to remind teachers of what Devine and Cohen (2007) tell us about students. Feeling safe in school—socially and emotionally as well as physically—supports students’ academic achievement and social development. They indicate that everybody wants to feel secure before he or she can participate in
school in a productive health manner. They stress that to make schools truly safe, all stakeholders need to consider the school in its entirety, the classroom, and the individual. Therefore, they conclude that educators and schools must consider social, emotional, ethical, and academic education (Devine & Cohen, 2007).

In order for a school to increase and value improved academic and behavioral outcomes among all students from one year to the next, the teachers must be purposeful about employing their respective and specific skills, knowledge, and dispositions in methods that will forward the shared work of the learning community. The cumulative capacity of a school’s faculty to heighten the outcomes of students throughout their professional learning community can be regarded as the organizational capacity of the school (Newmann, King, & Youngs, 2000). Throughout the literature, the definitions of a professional community may vary; however, it is evident that professional communities that function at a higher level are associated with higher levels of student achievement and development (Seashore Louis and Marks, 1998). There is a certain agreement that the most immediate and compelling consideration that influences student academic outcomes is the quality of instruction which is provided to the students by the classroom teachers (Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004). This quality of instruction is related to Tier 1 supports for all students. Therefore, it is critical to ensure the competence of the individual teacher for the facilitation of effective classroom practice.

Developing clarity around MTSS practices, processes, and professional learning cycles (PLC) involvement can be complex. Research identifies that implementing MTSS is not easy and also identifies how critical it is that schools realize that the processes and
practices that are developed are sustainable for students, teachers and administrators. The first area to be addressed in the implementation process is the arena of teacher training. Teachers are expected to have expansive skills, expertise, and knowledge that reinforce working among a multi-tiered system of supports, which includes response to intervention (MTSS/RtI). However recent research has demonstrated that most of the practicing educators do not possess the necessary skills (Prasse et al., 2012). As the implementation of MTSS is unfolding in the K-12 districts of our country, preliminary data from higher education indicate support for MTSS/RtI as a component of teacher preparation. According to Prasse et al. (2012), there is evidence to show that preparation programs for teachers have not consistently and comprehensively produced a teacher program that accomplishes these necessary outcomes skill. Borrowing MTSS training strategies from teacher preparation programs is a possibility in training current teachers in the implementation of MTSS. By developing clarity around MTSS practices, processes, and professional learning cycle (PLC) involvement implementation can be made more effective.

The depicted MTSS structure moves beyond the traditional one-dimensional triangle and identifies four learner facets represented in a classic three-dimensional pyramid structure with a capstone over the top, signifying a unified organization in which all are empowered to learn through systematic school-wide support. (Dulaney et al., 2013)

Leider (2017) recommends that school administrators generate a vision for SEL in school, and develop a long-term SEL action plan. High Schools should prioritize a clear
vision for SEL, as well as a long-term commitment to its implementation. Creation of this vision can be as a catalyst for influencing SEL systems and best practices at the school. Schools should develop a long-term commitment to SEL which embraces an action plan that prioritizes SEL for all students to enrich their academic and personal achievement. Evidence supports that there is a need for professional development in the area of SEL.

Research reported that subjects were asked whether they had received SEL training in pre-service training, 30.24% agreed or strongly agreed, and 69.76% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Additionally, they were asked the same about in-service and the result was 26.09% agreed or strongly agreed that they had received such training, and 73.91% disagreed or strongly disagreed (Leider, 2017). Finally, when teachers were asked if they were interested in receiving professional development in support of integrating SEL into their daily instruction, 97.78% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that they would like this training, and 2.22% disagreed or strongly disagreed (Leider, 2017). Making an action plan that provides for MTSS training that supports the SEL professional development for teachers is critical.

In addition, there are many stakeholders specifically involved in making a plan. Bringing all stakeholders together with a common goal is a key function the leader has as the facilitator of the MTSS implementation cycle. All stakeholders in this process are significant and leaders is must not lose sight of their importance in this process. All stakeholders including teachers, administrators, specialists, support staff, parents/families, and community partners are key to successful implementation of MTSS
Implementing and facilitating MTSS is necessary, it is critical that schools have the best interest and the individual needs of the student population at the forefront of the mission and the day to day operations and agenda setting (Sharratt & Fullan, 2013). Educational leaders and teachers must work together to care for students. Additionally, these educational professionals need to help students improve in the one thing that will serve them throughout their life, that is how they learn day-to-day in and out of the academic setting (Sharratt & Fullan, 2013). If students are struggling with social-emotional issues, their day-to-day learning may also become a struggle.

Research has shown that leaders need to have not only accountability but meaningful professional learning systems in place for teachers as well as students for any intervention to be successful (Fullan & Knight, 2011). The research also shows that school systems that improved from great to excellent focused 78% of their interventions on professional learning and only 22% on accountability (Fullan & Knight, 2011). The conclusion drawn is that the peer culture becomes an authority of innovation and vitality when a certain level of capacity is attained by the teachers themselves. This is a significant factor to help students, a change in culture or paradigm shift that may be necessary. This can lead to sustainability where the teachers and other stakeholders become change agents (Fullan & Knight, 2011). Every single element that plays a role in the school and classroom improvement must be incorporated into a unified whole. This alignment and consistency produces collective efficacy and results across the entire organization (Fullan, 2009).
Schools are faced with many issues and it is important to note that “systemic change throughout every aspect of education, involving new structures, policies, and practices, is needed within the educational system to foster educational equity for all students” (Ingraham, 2015).

There is much research that provides commentary on the issues that schools face when trying to implement MTSS and addresses the need for more specific implementation practices that will elicit better implementation of MTSS and as a result better outcomes for students in social-emotional and academic learning. There are several critical factors for successful implementation including effective leadership and use of data when making decisions (Forman & Crystal, 2015).

Moral leadership is a lens which school leaders can adapt in making a systems change. When making system changes it is imperative to recognize the future power of collaboration and cooperative teams at all levels of the organization. Additionally, schools and leaders should execute collective inquiry, data-based decision making, and continuous cyclical professional learning in order to have the learning organization attain the needed results to improve outcomes for all involved (Sharratt & Fullan, 2009) while keeping the best interest of all students regardless of the learning style at the forefront of the implementation process. The administration must commit to demonstrating a responsibility to and pledge to make changes by establishing a team of stakeholders. Appropriate professional learning opportunities are the responsibility of the administration or leader. The leader has an obligation to provide professional learning opportunities and training from outside consultants, in-house experts, or district-level
staff with aptitude and competence in areas where the team needs support and
development (Handler et al., 2007). Success of the implementation relies on being able to
assemble a cohort of dedicated faculty who maintain leadership and trustworthiness
amongst their fellow colleagues. The members might include those who are active and
trusted in the learning organization’s community and who may also possess expansive
knowledge and aptitude in both classroom management and/or academic instruction.
Representatives of the cohort should incorporate faculty from varying aspects of school
the community (e.g., general education teachers, special education teachers, teachers of
all grade levels, learning specialists, paraprofessionals and support personnel) as an
approach to heighten staff participation (Handler et al., 2007).

The capacity of a school or team at a school must acknowledge and be inclusive
of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of individual teachers. The faculty must
demonstrate professionalism and be capable in several areas including pedagogy,
classroom management, curriculum, and assessment practices. Additionally, it is
necessary that teachers hold students and themselves accountable to high expectations for
student learning. The impact and importance of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of
teachers on the outcomes for students is most certainly recognized throughout literature
related to the licensure, education, and professional learning for teachers. However, it is
also critical that the competence of individual teachers be applied in a coordinated and
collaborative operation. This facet of organizational capacity accentuates the educational
relevance of the many social resources at the school, which is referred to as school wide
professional community (Dinham, Crowther, King, & Bouchard, 2011). Ensuring that the
faculty must demonstrate professionalism and be capable in several areas including pedagogy, classroom management, curriculum, and assessment practices involves including MTSS tiered support for all students. Providing MTSS is necessary to establish a culture where teachers hold students and themselves accountable to high expectations for student learning.

**What is MTSS?**

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) evolved from Response to Intervention (RtI). The practice of RtI is to provide effective instruction and intervention across three tiers.

The depicted MTSS structure moves beyond the traditional one-dimensional triangle and identifies four learner facets represented in a classic three-dimensional pyramid structure with a capstone over the top, signifying a unified organization in which all are empowered to learn through systematic school-wide support. (Dulaney et al., 2013)

Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) is the combination of the use of both School-Wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS) and Response to Intervention (RtI) (Sailor, 2009). Alternatively, it could be defined as the combined system meant to address the layered domains of education including literacy and social competence with integration of several tiered intervention models into one coherent system (Freeman et al., 2015). Tier 1 places emphasis on school wide, differentiated universal core instruction, while Tiers 2 and 3 provide intensive and increasingly individualized interventions (Batsche et al., 2005). Within the MTSS framework, there exist many evidence-based
programs and interventions, with the desired result being improved academic and behavioral outcomes for all students, both those students in general and special education (Utley & Obiakor, 2015). The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) states that, schools must ensure that there are appropriate behavioral, social, and emotional supports in place at the school and/or district level to meet the needs of all students (NASP, 2009) and in saying this it recommends an inclusive MTSS system and structure that addresses the academic and social, emotional, and behavioral growth of all students.

The MTSS framework implemented in schools can be found to include both the principles of response to intervention (RtI) and positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) which integrate a continuity of system-wide structures, resources, strategies, and evidence-based practices for addressing barriers to student learning and discipline (Kansas State Department of Education, 2009). However, the MTSS framework is more inclusive and spans a wider range than RtI or problem solving being implemented in isolation. MTSS enables the creation of systems and structures that deliberately focus on leadership, professional learning, and building a learning community that develops a culture of intervention within the scope of the curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Ultimately this provides supports for the selection and implementation of evidenced-based interventions provided to students in response to their academic, social-emotional and/or behavioral needs. This includes interventions and high-quality instruction designed to meet the needs of both struggling as well as advanced students’ learning style (Kansas State Department of Education, 2009). MTSS
is purposeful in establishing a progress monitoring process including ongoing progress monitoring of the impact and the effect of instruction to ensure each student is able to achieve high standards (Kansas State Department of Education, 2009). The critical piece to this is that schools and leaders of schools prioritize the implementation of MTSS. They must realize that for implementation of MTSS to reap benefits it is necessary for schools to implement MTSS with fidelity. This implementation must include coordinated systematic and evidence-based practices targeted at responding to the different levels of intensity and needs students. These practices should be related to their social emotional/behavioral development as well as their academic development and progress (Utley & Obiakor, 2015).

The MTSS framework works to be preventative in nature and strives to make connections of all the supports available within schools. All aspects of the system must be integrated to support and sustain student learning for all. MTSS bases its principles and practices on what research have shown to be effective in creating successful and sustainable change in addition to what is necessary to provide the most effective instruction to all students (Kansas State Department of Education, 2009). Research has demonstrated that the interconnectivity of academics, social-emotional issues and behavior exists. By seeking to address the behavioral and social-emotional issues within buildings, improvement is seen in student performance and engagement. The inverse is also true: when schools work systematically to address improved student learning, behavioral issues decrease and academic success increases. Intervening early in the student’s school career can prevent failure later on in their educational career (Kansas
State Department of Education, 2009).

As a result of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004) with its prioritization coming from the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) a three-tiered identification and instructional model, response to intervention (RtI) was developed to ensure all students have the supports needed to be successful in school (Seedorf, 2014). The Response to Intervention (RtI) model which was the predecessor to MTSS, has demonstrated to be a successful instrument for identifying specific needs of students, implementing the appropriate interventions, and coming full circle to follow with progress monitoring to ensure the effectiveness of the interventions (Seedorf, 2014). However, it has been found that implementation of this model with gifted and talented students has not been as successful due to lacking fidelity of implementation and small amounts of resources, training, and support (Seedorf, 2014).

Successful implementation of MTSS is complex and depends upon accurate decision making processes. Accurate and timely data are required for accomplishing good decisions and improving student outcomes. The use of accurate and timely data is critical to the different dimensions of MTSS including initial screening, core class instruction, interventions used, progress monitoring and finally evaluation. An effective MTSS team is one that collects and analyzes both systems data and student data using a systematic method. Following these practices can assist in ensuring that MTSS is intentionally and purposefully planned and implemented in an efficient way that results in effectiveness for all students (Metcalf, 2014).
Cognitive Development in Adolescence

In order to effectively meet the needs of all students, leaders in an educational setting serving adolescents should possess an understanding of adolescent development, as well as the needs of adolescents related to their cognitive and physical development. Adolescence is a time of growth and development. Teenagers experience two major growth spurts in the brain. The first occurs between the ages of 13 and 15 years old. The second growth spurt of the brain begins around age seventeen and continues into adulthood (Boyd et al., 2006). During the first growth spurt the cerebral cortex becomes thicker and the neural pathways become more efficient. During this period of development it is believed that a qualitatively different neural network emerges which enables teenagers to reflect on their cognitive processes and think more abstractly (Fischer & Rose, 1994). Also, during this growth spurt of the brain change in the prefrontal cortex of the brain occurs. This part of the brain is responsible for the executive processing that enable one to control and organize our thought processes. During the second growth spurt the frontal lobes of the cerebral cortex are developing, this area of the brain controls ones planning and logic (Davies & Rose, 1999). This information is very important for educational leaders to consider as we address the social-emotional needs of students through MTSS as they transition to a progress through high school.

The school system in which the self-study is taking place is an eight-four system. This is a system in which children spend eight years attending an elementary school and then move on to high school for four years. Smith (2006) identified that it is typical for
students to show academic decline after entering high school and the academic decline predicts persistence in college during the first two years. Educators have tried to address this problem by creating transitional models such as the middle school or the junior high models. Neither of these approaches has been able to solve the transitional problem for students (Boyd et al., 2006).

Additionally, it should be noted that students in the junior high or middle school system show greater transitional losses that those in the eight-four system (Linnenbrink, 2010; Offenburg, 2001). An earlier study by Alspaugh (1998) included 16 school districts. The study found that students who attended middle schools experienced greater achievement loss in the transition to high school than students making the transition from a K-8 school. However, “The findings imply that students placed in relatively small cohort groups for long spans of time experience more desirable outcomes” (p. 25). These losses are in the areas of academic performance and self-esteem. This is an issue that clearly needs to be addressed by educational leaders at high schools regardless of the antecedent.

A general pattern of success or failure for adolescents seems to emerge during the beginning days of high school. This pattern continues into their adult years. An example of this is that students who fail one or more courses in the first year of high school are far less likely than their peers to graduate high school (Neild, 2009; Neild & Balfanz, 2006). However, research also shows that high schools can present students with opportunity to develop in social-emotional areas through participation in elective and extracurricular activities (Larson, 2000; Larson & Brown, 2007).
Social-Emotional Needs

This literature review will consider and examine some of the major social-emotional, behavioral and cognitive theories which influence the educational setting today. This information is relevant since it speaks to the intricacies of assessing the distinct and individual student needs and the preparation necessary in meeting those needs. As an educational leader that believes all students can learn, it is critical to address what must be done when students do not learn or are unable to learn? Learning styles of students differ and students learn at different paces, educational leaders must plan to address these differences. Working as a leader in a school where social emotional learning in addition to academic learning needs must be assessed and addressed it is critical that one is aware of the social emotional needs and developmental theory. There are schools and school districts that have implemented systems to assess individual needs and implemented the planning required in meeting those needs while other schools have overlooked the opportunity to learn and teach throughout their interactions with their students, teachers, parents, and community. School leaders must strive to create a school culture conducive to meeting these teaching and learning opportunities. Additionally, it is critical to address leadership theory and behaviors that influence implementing and sustaining a system of support that supports the social emotional, behavioral and academic learning needs of students in a selective enrollment high school.

Schools must concentrate on their fundamental mission of teaching and learning to be effective. This must be in place for all children. That must be the overarching goal of schools in the 21st century (Ravitch, 2000, p. 467). There is a broad range of evidence
which indicates school-based prevention and youth development interventions have the most benefit when they concurrently improve and develop students’ personal and social assets, as well as enhance the quality of the environments in which students are educated (Eccles & Appleton, 2002; Weissberg & Greenberg, 1998). Therefore, one can assert that school-based prevention programming rooted in coordinated social, emotional, and academic learning should be central to preschool throughout high school education. This presents critical challenges in establishing and sustaining school-based social emotional learning plans which address prevention and youth development because it is entangled with the expansive challenges of educational reform and improvement (Greenberg et al., 2003).

There is national agreement that 21st century schools need to offer more than academic instruction in order to nurture success in school and life for all children. The life experiences of children, youth, and society has changed significantly during the last century (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001; Weissberg, Walberg, O’Brien, & Kuster, 2003). Included in these changes are the increased economic and social stresses on families; dwindling of community institutions that cultivate children’s social, emotional, and moral development; and increased easier access by children to different forms of media that encourage behavior that is detrimental to social, emotional and physical health.

Some developmental theorists support the relevance of a social-emotional system of support in a school setting that addresses the social-emotional and behavioral needs in addition to the academic needs of students. A social learning theory developed by
Bandura (1997) incorporates his findings which state that behaviors are learned using both cognitive and social skills. Social Learning Theory integrates the emphasis of modeling into human development.

Bandura (1997) outlined three types of modeling: live, verbal, and symbolic. Additionally, cognitive theorist Jean Piaget (1971), the first to describe cognitive theory, noticed that children thought differently than adults. Piaget is known for the stages he believes all children experience while developing. These stages are sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal/abstract operational. He proposed that at each of these stages children have unique cognitive needs. This is necessary for educators to understand while trying to provide different tiers of support to each individual child to help them achieve success.

According to Bloom (1976) the influence of student’s background or past experience on student achievement has a correlation with their learning environment. Bloom’s research demonstrates that students can master the majority of content if they are provided a favorable learning environment. He also discussed how a decreased rate of learning occurred when the learning environment did not meet the needs of the students. Bloom also believed most students could master any topic if they have access to the right learning environment and their needs are met. Maslow’s (1968) research also discusses the importance of meeting the social-emotional needs of humans so that they are driven to meet their personal goals. Maslow discussed the five levels of needs which include the need for food and water, the need for personal safety, the need to belong, esteem needs, and the need for personal fulfillment. By meeting these five basic needs, humans may be
more likely to live the life they aspire to have. Not fulfilling theses needs may cause a person to experience struggles in making the necessary strides to achieve their goals. Meeting the individual needs of all students is a key component of MTSS (Jimerson, Burns & VanDerHeyden, 2015).

According to Jung (2006), individuation is a process that allows for a person to become whole and achieve all of their dreams. A person must assimilate the conscious and unconscious beliefs, needs, and experiences to realize their dreams to achieve this individuation. Providing an intentional tiered system of support could facilitate this process. Rogers (2003) advocated a more humanistic approach to social and emotional development. Rogers suggested that the most important entity in the educational setting student is student. Additionally, Rogers believed teachers are only able to further learning because learning comes from one’s past experiences. A school should be open to learning from the students and also work to facilitate connections for students. The teacher’s role is considered to be that of a guide who directs learning rather than the expert who tells what and how to learn. This philosophy is instrumental in creating a student-centered classroom and school. This is also a critical part of MTSS implementation in schools considering that that the most important entity in the educational setting is the student it is imperative that selective enrollment schools consider the circumstances of the students who are admitted to the schools. Students in selective enrollment schools have been admitted through a high stakes admissions process. This process can have negative impact on students, parents and teachers. For some students, the stress of high stakes testing can cause students to become sick, have difficulty sleeping, or avoiding school.
Students can also feel that their performance is reflective of their value and potential (Spann, Law, & Kaufman, 2015). Many parents feel the pressure as well and as a result may unintentionally place extra stress on their student.

**Parents’ Role in Social-Emotional Learning**

Observations indicate that many students at selective school have very involved parents. Involved parents in and of itself is not a negative. However, “helicopter-parenting” has shown to have negative impact. Helicopter parents are described as parents managing many areas of their student life while hovering closely (van Inge et al., 2015). Helicopter parenting has been connected with lower levels of self-worth and higher levels of risk behaviors for those teenagers who also described low levels of warmth from their parents (Nelson, Padilla-Walker, & Nielson, 2015). Also, according to LeMoyne and Buchanan (2011), helicopter parenting was found to have a negative impact on psychological well-being and a positive correlation with young adults taking prescription medication for anxiety and depression.

Additionally, not only do students feel they must do well in school, but they also have to be successful socially and be involved in extracurricular activities such as sports (Crystal et al., 1994). The data has shown competition between academic and nonacademic interests which cause stress among American students generally takes an especially high toll on high achievers. Data indicates high-performing students dedicate more time to studying than do their lower performing counterparts. At the same time, the value high performing students put on out-of-school activities such as being good at sports and dating is not significantly different from that of other students. Since high
performing students appear to spend extra time on their studies they may experience even greater struggle than their low-achieving counterparts in their effort to participate in their interests that compete with academics (Crystal et al., 1994). Social-emotional issues that start during adolescence are important to note because in a given year between 13% and 20% of United States’ youth experience a mental disorder of some type and half of adult mental disorders originate during adolescence.

According to Prochaska, Le, Baillargeon, and Temple (2016), students who screened positive for anxiety did not necessarily report getting professional mental health treatment. While these positive screenings are not diagnostic, these discoveries put forward the idea that potential need for social-emotional and mental health interventions may be higher than anticipated.

**The Relevance of Social-Emotional Learning**

Since the passing of the No Child Left Behind Act education has been focused on teaching to core content standards with the goal of improving academic achievement scores, particularly in reading and mathematics. Across the country, schools are being held accountable for these scores (Hamilton et al., 2007). At the same time teaching to, and support for, the behavioral, social, and character domains have been relegated to no or inadequate dedicated instructional time (Greenberg et al., 2003). Nevertheless, schools are expected to prevent violence, substance use, and other disruptive behaviors that are clearly linked to academic achievement (Fleming et al., 2005; Malecki & Elliott, 2002; Wentzel, 1993). The prevalence of discipline problems, for example, correlates positively with the prevalence of violent crimes within a school (Heaviside, Rowland, Williams, &
Farris, 1999) which, in turn, affects attendance and academic achievement (Eaton, Brener, & Kann, 2008; Walberg, Yeh, & Mooney-Paton, 1974). Further, mental health concerns become more prevalent as students move into adolescence and can contribute to behavioral problems that detract from academic achievement (Costello, Mustillo, Erkanli, Keeler, & Angold, 2003). Disciplinary problems (Dinks, Cataldi, Lin-Kelly, & Snyder, 2007; Eaton et al., 2008; Eisenbraun, 2007) and underachievement abound (Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy). There is an urgent need in schools for the educational professionals to learn more about the role of behavior, social skills, and character in improving academic achievement (Eccles, 2004; Meece, Anderman, & Anderman, 2006).

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills that they need in order to: recognize and manage their emotions; demonstrate caring and concern for others; establish positive relationships; make responsible decisions; and handle challenging situations constructively. According to the literature, quality SEL instruction can produce a variety of constructive results. Students learn to process, integrate, and selectively apply SEL skills in developmentally, contextually and culturally appropriate ways. In conjunction with a safe, caring, participatory, and responsive school climate this instruction produces positive outcomes including: promotion of mental wellness; prevention of mental health issues; school connectedness; reduction in student absenteeism; reduction in suspensions; adoption, implementation and institutionalization of new practices; and improved academic outcomes.
Social-Emotional Learning Standards

When discussing education, teachers and administrators are always cognizant of state learning standards. These standards are statements that address what students should know and be able to do as a result of educational instruction they receive. Standards present the goals and benchmarks for student learning in each subject area, grade by grade.

States have the authority to cultivate their own education criteria, which is usually completed with input from a large number of educational professionals and other stakeholders. However, school districts may have some flexibility when adopting state standards as long as they comply with the state’s overall goals.

There exist national model standards as an attempt to raise the educational bar by providing examples of high-quality standards in diverse areas of the curriculum. Educational standards in subject areas have been an important focus of educational reform since the 1980s. By the late 1980s, almost all states had learning standards for Math and English Language Arts. However, the quality of standards across the country is variable. As an effort to improve the quality of learning standards for Math and English Language Arts nationwide, states came together to develop the Common Core, which are national model standards designed largely to replace a state's own standards in Math and English Language Arts (Dusenbury, Zadrazil, Mart, & Weissberg, 2011).

While, many states have social and emotional learning content infused to one degree or another in other sets of learning standards there are some states that choose to develop their own SEL standards based on the National Comprehensive Counseling and
Guidance Standards for students, these are quite comprehensive in terms of social and emotional learning. Although integration into other sets of standards is important, this approach may not place sufficient emphasis on social and emotional learning, which is why some educational researchers recommend free-standing standards for social and emotional learning, as well as integration of social and emotional learning into other sets of learning standards (Dusenbury et al., 2011).

Interestingly, Illinois is one of the only few states that currently has free-standing, comprehensive learning goals and benchmarks for social-emotional learning. The Illinois Standards for Social and Emotional Learning were adopted in 2004. They are for students to: develop self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success; develop social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships; and demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts (Dusenbury et al., 2011). A number of additional states (e.g., New York, Washington, and Kansas) are considering or adopting state policies that would have the effect of moving those states toward development of comprehensive, free-standing social and emotional learning standards.

**How can MTSS be Successfully Implemented by School Leaders?**

Addressing the SEL standards can be addressed by successful implementation of MTSS. School leaders can be the catalyst in facilitating MTSS to address SEL issues. Increasing regular communication initiated by teachers would allow the schools to intervene before the issues needing to be addressed by MTSS become escalated. Additionally, better anecdotal records should be kept by teachers and counselors to share
information in a more structured method.

Included in school faculty are several different types of professionals who maintain expertise that can provide foundational support for MTSS implementation. Specifically, school psychologists have appropriate and distinct content knowledge that can provide considerable support to implementation efforts (Foreman & Crystal, 2015).

A struggle to implementing MTSS is a lack of anecdotal data. This often makes it difficult to coordinate all the pieces together when a student is dealing with at least seven different teachers and a counselor. If there was a better structure in place for keeping data on students who receive different Tier 2 and 3 interventions, the administrators would be better able to assist in making informed decisions when difficult situation arise. The emphasis of regular collaboration and communication across all MTSS team personnel is a key factor necessary for successful integrated MTSS implementation. Challenges emerge when attempts at implementation include academic and behavioral MTSS personnel who do not collaborate and communicate on a regular or schedule basis (Freeman et al., 2015). While no “one size fits all” solution exists, it would be great if the administration had a basic template of information for all students that would help in making evidence based decisions. The action research method of cyclical inquiry is a way to assist in the facilitation of this communication of both qualitative and quantitative data relating to intervention for students. Additionally, the communication between all stakeholders in regards to follow-up interventions and progress monitoring would be very helpful. If all stakeholders are aware of the results, then the team as a whole can make a more informed decision whether or not the interventions that are in place are adequate or
if they should be modified based on the outcomes that are being observed in the students’ social-emotional and academic progress. As the leader of this action research, it is critical to communicate that the ultimate goal of MTSS is to assemble the data and present it to the faculty to establish that consensus steers the action planning to happen for both academic and behavioral implementation (Freeman et al., 2015).

School leaders need to also be leaders of effective implementation or agents of change to assist the school and faculty through inspiring, guiding, goal setting, conflict resolution, resource provision, and adjustment of organizational policies and procedures as they relate to MTSS. This is important so that appropriate implementation strategies are used and barriers to implementation are addressed (Foreman & Crystal, 2015). There is the ongoing problem of inequality present in education, and this inequality poses implications for expansion of MTSS efforts and other initiatives to improve teachers and schools (Dinham et al., 2011).

This interest in providing equity inspires further discussion in reassessing educational leadership. If the teachers are to use their capacity to focus their individual and collective power to enhance achievement for all students then leadership must be purposeful and intentional about supporting these efforts (Dinham et al., 2011). Pierre Bourdieu (2000) encourages both researchers and academics to execute a “scholarship with commitment” to ensure that scholarly knowledge into practice (pp. 14-15). This is how leaders can facilitate and address the implementation of MTSS can to improve learning outcomes for all.
According to Reeves (2006), there are several dimensions of leadership with which one can lead. These different dimensions of leadership can play a significant part in the implementation of MTSS. Visionary leadership is critical for a leader to be effective. Being a visionary allows an individual to understand they are part of a larger context. It also reassures them of their individual influence on the larger context of the organization. Relational leadership embodies the ideas of trust and integrity. An effective leader has appropriate, meaningful relationships which involve empathy, inquiry, and a respect for confidentiality. These are all critical factors for implementing MTSS in a learning organization. Relational leaders demonstrate an excitement for their goal, purpose and the people they are surrounded by. The goal and purpose of MTSS is for all students to achieve better outcomes. Systems intelligence in the leader will demonstrate an understanding of each interaction and its influence upon the entire organization; and it will communicate its complexity by allowing every member of the learning organization to understand as well as consistently avail themselves of the important interconnections of MTSS. Systems leadership is not merely inclusive of complexity, but also about an even greater challenge to recognize, acknowledge and use simple patterns. The reflective leader who takes the time to record their small wins and setbacks, think about the lessons learned, document conflicts between values and practice, identify the difference between behaviors, and notice trends emerge over time, is critical to successful MTSS implementation. Also critical to facilitation of MTSS are collaborative leaders who understand they can use their authority to make decisions, but realize they will only be able to implement those decisions only through collaboration.
Summary

This chapter reviewed literature about educational leadership, how the role of the educational leader has evolved over time and the development of effective leadership. Critical to this study the chapter also reviewed how leaders facilitate change in a learning organization more specifically around the facilitation of effecting change to the MTSS structure to ensure the needs of all students are addressed. Furthermore, the discussion of the development of MTSS as it currently exists in schools to meet the social-emotional needs of students is discussed. The influence of the cognitive development of adolescence and parental influence is also addressed as this is an important factor in determining the social-emotional learning needs of students at the self-study site. Finally, there is discourse of how school leaders can facilitate a change in the MTSS process to support the SEL needs of all students.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The methodology for this research is self-study based around participatory action research (PAR). PAR is a practice where participants work deliberately, cooperatively and collectively to transform practices based on the specific context of the situation being presented in order to address a problem (Kindon et al., Kesby 2010). The participants in the PAR team will be current faculty members from the ILT and MTSS teams, the researcher will be the facilitator of the PAR team. According to Bullough and Pinnegar (2001), self-study is a methodology that is initiated by and focused on educators; teachers and administrators working within the context of their job, as they relate to the context of their setting. LaBoskey (2004) states that self-study is aimed at the improvement to transform oneself as a tool to facilitate change within the context of one’s work. This chapter will provide an explanation of the research design and methodology to be employed in the study. Included in the chapter is an explanation of my role as a facilitator of participatory action research and its role in the development of my educational leadership skills. The chapter will further provide background information on self-study, identify the research design, and describe the setting and procedures for data collection. Additionally, a brief overview of the data analysis procedures will be discussed. The self-study determines and identifies what strategies and interventions assist this administrator
in targeting the social-emotional and academic needs of students at a selective enrollment high school.

The study is grounded in my reflections of daily observations as a school leader, journal entries, conversations and feedback from a critical friend surrounding my professional practice. Prior examination of observations and reflections has identified that there are numerous non-IEP students at the researcher’s site that require social-emotional support and/or interventions.

Analysis of my reflections and observations has also ascertained that students without IEPs do not necessarily receive the necessary supports for the social-emotional learning issues that are presenting themselves in the school environment. Further reflections on my journal entries to date and conversations with colleagues have revealed evidence that the leadership needs to investigate the primary reasons for students being unsuccessful. There is evidence, based on reflections of ILT minutes and conversations with the MTSS team and counseling department that there is room for improvement in current structure of MTSS systems and Tier 1 social-emotional supports for all students. The issue to be considered is that not all students are attaining academic success in school; the reflections on observations indicate this is due to social-emotional reasons. Consideration and reflection upon this data highlighted there are several instances of anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues that had not previously been identified or addressed. This research works to identify was in which the researcher can facilitate the implementation of interventions to help students related to their social-emotional learning needs.
As I began my career as an administrator, I realized that I would need use different methods and strategies so that my students were successful in school. As a classroom teacher, I could manage the situation for each of my students and react to the differentiation needed for each of the individual students so that all students were successful and achieved regardless of the learning style or type of support needed. Having been a veteran teacher in several types of classrooms, I had many strategies, interventions, and success stories to share. However, I had to find a way to make all of this meaningful and useful to the teachers in my school. Additionally, it was critical to use best practices so that I could guarantee that all teachers and students be developed, and that the progress of all the intervention supports was monitored.

The goal of this self-study is to better understand the connection between addressing the intersection between academic and social emotional learning through MTSS. This study will use a participatory action research cycle that addresses the following research questions:

1) How do I help teachers understand the connection between social-emotional learning as it relates to academics?
   a. I will reflect upon anonymous exits slips from PD sessions to inform how well teachers at my school understand this connection.

2) What strategies can I facilitate and help implement to ensure that the academic and social-emotional needs of all students are being met?
   a. How can I address the needs of Tier 1, 2 and 3 supports through classroom instruction?
b. How can I develop and build capacity of teachers to implement the facilitation and development of sustainable MTSS systems to help to ensure all students receive appropriate tiered supports?

3) How has my leadership transformed as outlined by Fullan’s Theory of Change and the five components of leadership that Fullan (2014) describes that converge to affect positive change:

1. Moral Purpose
2. Understanding change
3. Relationship building
4. Knowledge Creations and Sharing
5. Coherence Making

Ensuring best practices in schools requires leaders to have not only accountability but meaningful professional learning systems in place for teachers as well as students for any intervention to be successful. Research has shown that school systems that improved from great to excellent focused 78% of their interventions on professional learning and only 22% on accountability (Fullan & Knight, 2011). The conclusion is that once the capacity of teachers reaches a certain level, peer culture becomes the source of innovation and energy. This is significant to me as the objective of my work is improving student social-emotional and academic learning as well as changing a culture. This can lead to sustainability where the teachers and other stakeholders become change agents (Fullan & Knight, 2011). “Each element that affects school and classroom improvement must be integrated into a seamless whole. This alignment and cohesion produces collective
efficacy and results across the entire district” (Fullan, 2009, p. 47)

Three years ago, after a year’s transition period, I decided to change my approach to facilitating the MTSS team and develop professional learning cycles at my school. The MTSS structure and professional learning cycles are a work in progress. This self-study will be a compilation of my reflections on the steps my facilitation to implement professional learning and action cycles approach to the facilitation of teams to address the social-emotional needs of students at my school. The participatory action research cycle methodology will provide a means in which I will be able to reflect upon my capacity as an instructional leader to challenge myself and my team to analyze data, work collaboratively to identify issues in their classrooms, and ask questions with the goal of understanding the root cause of the issues. After considering the issues we can propose possible solutions.

**Research Design and Methodology**

**Self-Study**

This self-study will use a Participatory Action Research cycle design to determine what strategies and interventions will assist an administrator in targeting the social-emotional and academic needs of students at a selective enrollment high school. Self-study has great value in the field of educational leadership. As a self-study researcher the orientation is toward improvement. The researcher believes that those educational theories are living. The theories live in the practice of those doing the work. Leadership work is based in our practice that is continually evolving. The growth and change in our practice is part of the foundation for how our understanding of our practice grows and
changes and also how theories of our practice grow and change (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009).

Self-study is a method that can be engaged in relation to researching one’s own practice in order to better understand: oneself; learning style; leadership style; and, the development of knowledge about these. According to Loughran (2004), recent literature demonstrates that there exists a clear incentive for practitioners to merge ideas around these principles of self-study in ways that inspires ongoing improvement of practice in such work. Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) provide guidelines for conducting rigorous self-study. Autobiographical self-studies should (a) ring true and enable connections, (b) encourage insight and understanding, (c) involve history candidly through the researcher’s trustworthiness, (d) focus on the issues that make someone an educator, (e) be shared with a genuine voice, (f) aim to improve learning for oneself and others, (g) focus on something genuine, (h) attend to persons in settings, and (i) offer a fresh perspective.

This self-study was conducted with the goal of better understanding my experience and role in affecting changes as a school leader as worked to engage the faculty in implementing MTSS structures to address the social-emotional and academic needs of students at the setting. Explicitly, I intended to challenge myself to improve my leadership style to make the MTSS intervention process and intervention more accessible for teachers and effective with students. Conducting a self-study can enable this type of transformation through inquiry that permits one to carefully examine and analyze their practices and philosophies of leadership.
Setting

This study will take place in a selective enrollment high school in a large urban district. Students are currently accepted into the school through a standardized process. This process is based on academic success and standardized test scores in addition to the tier system which correlates to where a student lives. The tier is based on the current census data. The tiers were put in place to maintain diversity and provide equity in the admissions process for all students. Four years ago the school added the neighborhood component Career and Technical Education (CTE) program to its admissions process. Career and Technical Education programs prepare student for a specific post-secondary vocation or area of study. The CTE program allocates 75 seats in the freshman class to students living within a designated attendance boundary regardless of their tier.

The original school building opened in 1960s. This building housed the original vocational and technical preparation program, qualifying students for vocational work after graduation. The school was one of the first schools in the district to engage in a cooperative work-study program. The program was organized to give students practical experience in their specific technical subject and skill areas. However, with changing times the school changed as well. The school has always enrolled students from any part of the city. However, during early 1980s the school became part of the district’s program to provide more opportunity for students from all neighborhoods in the urban district. This was when the school became an academic magnet school. Magnet schools and programs were created to provide the students of the city with unique educational opportunities in an integrated setting. The magnet school policy was designed to ensure
equity and equal access to magnet schools for all children while maintaining racially balanced schools (Great Schools, 2017).

The current enrollment of the school is 1,820 students in grades 9-12. This is more than double the enrollment from five years ago. The current demographics are approximately 13% Asian, 17% Black, 30% Hispanic, 36% White, and 4% other. These demographics have also changed since I started working at the school. Five years ago, the Black and Asian populations represented a larger portion of the school enrollment. Currently, the school is approximately 40% low income, 10% diverse learners, and 1% limited English with a mobility rate of 0.5%. It should also be noted that the low-income percentage for the school has also decreased in the last four years from about 50% to about 40%. The demographic data of the setting paints an important picture that needs to be reflected upon when completing a self-study of the capacity to act as administrator that facilitates the support of social-emotional and academic needs of students at a selective enrollment high school.

**Procedures**

The procedures used in this self-study investigate how a leader in a selective enrollment school can affect the implementation of MTSS at a selective enrollment high school and how I make meaning of the experience as I engage together with the faculty and teachers in the school to improve tiered supports for all students. In conducting this work during the course of my regular duties and responsibilities I will reflect upon my knowledge and capacity to give my students, parents, and teachers a voice. In order to accomplish this task, I will conduct a self-study on my experiences as I work to engage
my teachers in participatory action research. Furthermore, in doing this I will reflect upon my facilitation of the action research cycle on the implementation of MTSS at the selective enrollment school site as teachers and students participate in the Tier 1 support program focused on social-emotional learning.

Before presenting the team with dilemma, I employed the National School Reform Faculty (NSRF) protocol for *Framing Consultancy Dilemmas*. The plan is to work with the PAR team first using the NSRF Consultancy *Protocol* to assist the team in thinking more expansively to address the issue of providing tier 1 social-emotional supports to all freshmen students. The team under my facilitation worked to develop an intervention that appropriately and effectively uses our school’s schedule and resources to provide Tier 1 social-emotional supports for ninth grade students and in doing so be able to identify those students who may need more intensive supports but do not have a documented plan, either IEP or 504 in place to receive the needed support or intervention. This plan increases the tier 1 universal supports for students. See Table 3 for current SEL Tier 1 interventions.
Table 3

Current Tier 1 SEL Interventions for 9th Grade Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freshman Introductory Conference: Schedule one on one conference with assigned counselor</td>
<td>Once during the 1st quarter of the school year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freshman Seminar: Lessons presented by the counselors addressing issues such as interpersonal communications skills, time management, stress management, academic help-seeking, test anxiety, organizational skills, college and career planning.</td>
<td>Bi-monthly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Mentoring Program: 11th and 12th grade students under the advisement of a counselor and teacher serve as peer mentors to all freshmen.</td>
<td>Mentors make informal contact with their mentees bi-weekly and formal large group activities take place on a quarterly basis.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The PAR team, composed of faculty and staff from the ILT and MTSS teams will also work to collaboratively to facilitate, implement and monitor the intervention and the professional development provided to faculty. The team will meet weekly to discuss progress, outcomes, and problem solve with the intervention that has been implemented. The weekly meetings will rotate between planning the intervention and reflecting on data about the intervention. See Table 4 for schedule of meetings and professional development activities.
Table 4

**PAR Team and PD Schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT</th>
<th>WHO</th>
<th>WHEN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to MTSS Tier I Intervention</td>
<td>All faculty meet by department</td>
<td>August Professional Development (PD) Days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAR (Participatory Action Research) Team Planning Meeting</td>
<td>PAR (Participatory Action Research) Team to plan delivery of weekly intervention.</td>
<td>Every other Tuesday during common planning (6th Period)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAR team reflection/analysis meeting</td>
<td>PAR Team to reflect on successes and challenges of weekly intervention.</td>
<td>Every other Tuesday during common planning (6th Period)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Level Meetings</td>
<td>All faculty meet by grade level</td>
<td>Every other Friday during Principal Direct Professional Development time (early release days for students)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report summary data analysis and reflecting on intervention to faculty</td>
<td>All faculty</td>
<td>School Improvement Days</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My intention is that through this process, my research will not only provide information about my capacity as a change agent but also ensure the necessary supports for all students and assist to engage teachers in the implementation and provision of MTSS to all students. This self-study process can transform me as an instructional leader as well. Self-study allows for practitioners to examine and to improve their own practice (Pine, 2009). This will also support the idea that educators have the responsibility to assess our progress with students, unveil inconsistencies between our practices and beliefs, and to challenge our thinking (LaBoskey, 2004).
Data Collection Plan with Anticipated Data Analysis and Validity

By reflecting on my observations and investigation of several sources of data, I will examine the effectiveness of a freshman-focused intervention on students’ social-emotional and academic learning needs being met. Also, several sources of data including: team meeting notes and agendas, researcher’s reflective journal, critical friend conversations, analysis on data trends and conversations with faculty, students and parents will be deliberated and then reflected upon as part of my self-study to evaluate how well I comprehend the teachers understanding of the connection between social-emotional learning as it relates to academics. Additionally, I will also reflect upon the data to evaluate what strategies I as a leader can facilitate and help implement to ensure that the academic and social-emotional needs of all students are being met. Table 5 details how each source of data is connected to each of the previously mentioned research questions.

Before I actually start reflecting and analyzing data source, I understand that communication of my plan for self-study about Participatory Action Research is critical to have buy-in. I will use communication as I work in building rapport that is needed. Commitment to the project is critical. I want my team to be invested in the participatory action research cycle because of its importance to addressing the needs of students, not just extra volunteer work. Using professional development time to present observations of relevant data and interviews that include student voices will also help to create a sense of urgency around this action research cycle that I will use as a basis for my self-study. Also, everyone’s voice being heard increases the validity of the findings from my self-
study. When the teachers I am working with see the transparency with which I am working they will know I am being true to the improvement of interventions for students, professional learning for teachers, and my development as a leader.

Table 5

**Data Sources**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTIONS AND DATA SOURCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How do I develop teachers so that they understand the connection between social/emotional learning as it relates to academics?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What strategies can I facilitate and help implement to ensure that the academic and social/emotional needs of all students are being met?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How can I as an instructional leader address the needs of tier 1, 2 and 3 supports through classroom instruction?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How can I help facilitate the development of an MTSS process to help to ensure all students receive appropriate tiered supports?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflections upon Qualitative and Quantitative information attained from anonymous exit slips from team meetings</th>
<th>Reflection on Student grade data trends</th>
<th>My reflection on trends evident in student data from Grade and attendance records</th>
<th>Reflect on ILT meeting agendas and notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflections on data from journal around administrator/teacher conversations</td>
<td>Reflections on data trends from counseling department regarding # of students needing SE interventions</td>
<td>My reflection on examining teacher anecdotal notes for struggling students from grade level and course team meetings and class time</td>
<td>Researcher reflection journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection on MTSS referral data from referral forms</td>
<td>Reflection on meetings with MTSS team, classroom teachers (initial, midpoint and exit)</td>
<td>I will reflect on my notes from intentional class observations looking specifically for SEL strategies evident in classes. I will use a protocol for what I see during observations so that reflections are consistent.</td>
<td>Examine and reflect upon artifacts i.e. look at old processes to compare.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Intentional reflections on my observation notes from ILT, MTSS and PLC meetings | Reflection on my notes and experiences from conversations with teachers, students, counselors and parents. | My personal reflections on anonymous student reflections collected at end of every 5 weeks from Ac Lab teachers. |
This data will provide the opportunity for triangulation which will increase the validity of my self-study research and also within the action research cycle. Reflection on student, teacher, counselor and parent conversation, exit slips, meeting agendas and notes, observation notes and examination of artifacts will provide valuable qualitative data that will provide information that can be triangulated. It will also provide me the opportunity to investigate what is working about the interventions. Additionally, it will be imperative to examine and reflect on results of exit slips data to see if teacher and student perceptions of the interventions are in line with the perceptions that are revealed from informal observations. This reflection will also provide the ability for the researcher to analyze their impact on facilitating change to address the intersection of the social-emotional and academic needs if students as a selective high school setting.

The researcher will also present the results of the reflections and observations in a timely manner in order to increase the validity of the study. The desired outcome is that those who read the findings will be able to apply them to the larger context of the school or other selective enrollment high schools that may be experiencing similar issues. This generalizability will also increase the external validity of the study; external validity is increased as the ability for the study to replicate in a different context. While I know my study may have its limitations because the context in which I am doing the study is fairly specific it will be grounded in local realities and therefore be useful to local participants (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 120).

Sharing the usefulness of this study with all stakeholders will increase the trustworthiness of the researcher and also increase catalytic validity by sparking a
dialogue that acts as an impetus for change. The intended goal of the research cycle is that the change is significant enough in this first action research cycle to encourage other members of the faculty and staff will want to join in the next action research cycle with the incentive for them being that they want to be a change agent within the learning organization. The researcher has consistently been transparent with faculty and staff when working on goals to increase student outcomes, the continual use of transparency to create engagement will be critical to the work. Part of this transparency will be attained by providing feedback throughout the process. Not just at the end. I will do initial, mid-point, and end check-ins with team members of the team. This type of data collection can allow for triangulation and validity. Triangulation of data is a method in which the researcher uses multiple sources of data to gain understanding. This increases the validity by allowing for cross verification from multiple data sources. Additionally the use of triangulation can minimize bias by using multiple sources of data and data collection findings reinforce each other (Kennedy, 2009). This is also a way for the researcher to have more data, member checking and feedback/ reflection from participants to reflect upon in the self-study which increases the validity of the study. Continuous and ongoing data collection throughout the action research cycle and openness about the agenda and purpose of the research will add to the democratic validity of the research. As I act as an observer and reflect upon my role as a leader in the process of facilitating the support of the social-emotional and academic needs of the students I intend to encourage the members of the learning organization to be reflective and critical of data in the team meetings. This transparency will lead to an increase dialogical validity as we plan for the
next cycle and as reflect my effectiveness as leader in facilitating a change in the MTSS structure. As I work on my self-study I realize the importance of discussing the study with individuals not involved in the study, such as a critical friend. This will improve my focus and reflections on data analysis and interpretations. Additionally, these conversations will help bring to light biases of the data that I may have and alternative interpretations.

**Limitations and Biases**

While MTSS is a universal topic that needs to be addressed in all schools this study may have limitations because of the context. The study will be conducted as a leader of a selective enrollment high school with a diverse selective population. The researcher understands that all students need differentiation and have learning differences. However, the issues presented at a high school that has a test-in policy may be different from the strategies and issues that other schools may be encountering. There are concerns associated with self-study because the work is so very specific to one context as well as being very personal to the researcher. However, as LaBoskey (2004) notes the objective of self-study is trustworthiness achieved by the consideration to detail and the comprehensive explanation of the process and why the process was executed in the chosen manner.

Additionally, I realize that my excitement and openness about the work involved in my self-study may create a bias in the interpretations and observation of the data. In an effort to eliminate some of this bias, I will engage in reflections and dialogue with a critical friend. As a researcher studying my educational leadership actions it is critical for
me to be cognizant of my conflicting roles in the school. I work as leader in the context of the study and I want positive change to happen, but I need to ensure I am able to act effectively as both a researcher and a school leader.

Summary

This self-study is intended to develop an enhanced understanding of how I as an educational leader can successfully foster and maintain strategies and interventions that will assist in the implementation of MTSS in a high school setting. This study will specifically focus on the facilitation and establishing of Tier 1 for all students supports that target social-emotional learning. The administrator will approach the work through the lens of Fullan’s (2014) five components of leadership that influence that converge to affect positive change.

1. Moral Purpose
2. Understanding change
3. Relationship building
4. Knowledge Creations and Sharing
5. Coherence Making

A Tier 1 social-emotional intervention has been implemented at the self-study site in an effort to improve student academic outcomes by addressing the social-emotional learning needs of all students. As a result of this study I hope to learn how Tier 1 social-emotional interventions can increase social emotional learning and improve academic outcomes for all students as well as helping to identify students needing a more intense level of support. The reflective nature of self-study will permit me to analyze the desired
outcomes by considering my personal attainments and failures in concert with limitations that were present in the study. Additionally, I will examine the changes in my leadership and the effect of my leadership on the issue presented.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this self-study was to determine what strategies and interventions would assist a school leader in targeting the social-emotional learning (SEL) and academic learning needs of students at a selective enrollment high school. My considerations and thoughts based on observations at the site in the context of my work indicated that there was a necessity to address the social-emotional learning (SEL) needs of students at the school. The goal of the study was to reflect upon my role as a school leader, my leadership capacity, and my development within the context of my work as a school administrator. In this study, I reflected upon my efforts while directing and guiding a participatory action research (PAR) cycle. PAR is a method that supports “real people tackling real problems in real time” (Soffe et al., 2011). PAR is a self-governing process where the leader leads members of the team to reflect and collaborate to transform current organizational practices in order to address an authentic problem (Kindon et al., 2010); a PAR group works to together to make decisions, and works on issues by implementing actions through multiple cycles (McTaggart, 1997). My intent in the process was to examine successes and areas of growth during the participatory action research cycle and to improve myself as leader with the intent of positively impacting the social-emotional learning of students and thus having an effect on student outcomes.
During the course of this study while analyzing my leadership was aware that it was necessary for me to consistently be cognizant of all stakeholders; teacher, students, parents and community.

In leading the administrative and instructional team which was composed of department chairs (math, English, science, diverse learners, social science, world language, PE, and fine arts), counselors, and other administrators through the PAR progression the goal was to specifically create and execute the implementation of Tier 1 SEL supports for all ninth grade students. During the development and process of leading the team that was implementing the SEL Tier 1 supports for ninth grade students as a leader I made it clear that the ambition for the team was to be purposeful and deliberate in striving to equalize and improve social-emotional learning the experience of all students.

Throughout the process of this research self attributes as a school leader and educator were identified. Another result of the study was that I further developed my knowledge about collecting, examining and then reflecting on information such as; journal entries, anonymous exit slips, publically available test scores, meeting agendas and notes, that I could use to make informed decisions as a school leader. What I value as school leader and educator was and my self-perspective in the context of my leadership revealed. This was accomplished by analytically scrutinizing reflective journals, work documents and transcripts from critical friend interviews. These artifacts provided me with evidence of my decision making processes, challenges faced, successes celebrated as well as reactions to events.
Methodology Summary

The original Tier 1-SEL intervention was originated in the summer of 2016 before the 2016-2017 school year and went through many variations throughout the action research cycle up until the first semester of 2017-2018 school year. The process allowed me to reflect upon my leadership and study myself in the context of implementing the Tier-1 SEL intervention over a period of seventeen months. During this time I was able to analyze and reflect upon the creation and implementation of the program, meeting agendas and notes, observations of interventions, journal entries and interviews conducted with a critical friend.

There are several benefits to this study. First, I was able to methodically observe my leadership and my role in a learning organization. This ultimately facilitated and continues to assist me to be a better educational leader. Second, I employed the use of critical friend interviews to eliminate my bias and better understand the experiences of leading a participatory action research team in order to successfully facilitate the implementation and execution of a Tier 1 intervention. Third, observation of student outcomes and teacher participation provided me with feedback to reflect upon my development as a leader.

Examination and analysis of reflections for this self-study were completed through the lens of Fullan’s (2014) Models of Change Theory. Fullan describes five components of leadership that influence positive change:

1. Moral Purpose
2. Understanding change
3. Relationship building

4. Knowledge Creations and Sharing

5. Coherence Making

All of these leadership components functioning simultaneously can activate an organization to dedicate themselves to put their ideas into action to affect change. In using Fullan’s theory it was critical to be aware of the difference between external and internal commitment to making the change. According to Argyris (2000), external commitment is brought about by guidelines and practices put in place by management to facilitate organization members to complete tasks. Internal commitment is arrived at from the energy of the individuals because of the inherent rewards of getting the job done. Fullan’s (2014) five practices from his Models of Change Theory in this study were acknowledged and summarized in relationship to the research questions. In working to seek out answers to my research questions I will employ Fullan’s five components of leadership as I reflect upon my own leadership and its development.

Participants

I am the subject of this study which revolve around my work as a school administrator. The focus of this research is to reflect on my leadership experiences in implementing a Tier 1 SEL supports in the context of my work at a school. This work occurred as a normal part of my administrative duties and working with the students and teachers. Neither teachers nor students were asked to engage in this study. Specifically, I studied myself and my development as a leader as it relates to implementing Tier 1 SEL supports.
This self-study is an analysis of my reflections on the data gathered through professional development, teacher team meetings, and the decisions I make as a school administrator. My reflections will also be on work product that will be collected through professional development and meeting agendas and minutes. I will be meeting with teachers teams and facilitating professional development for all teachers as part of my regular work day. All identifying information will be removed from these documents before analysis. Only publically available school or student data was analyzed. All data will be aggregated and completely anonymous with no ability to identify the school or students.

Findings

The findings will be presented in relation to the research questions that I set out to answer as I engaged in a self-study to study my leadership in the context of my daily work.

Research Questions

1) How do I help teachers understand the connection between social-emotional learning as it relates to academics?
   a. I will reflect upon anonymous exits slips from PD sessions to inform how well teachers at my school understand this connection.

2) What strategies can I facilitate and help implement to ensure that the academic and social-emotional needs of all students are being met?
   a. How can I address the needs of Tier 1, 2 and 3 supports through classroom instruction?
b. How can I develop and build capacity of teachers to implement the facilitation and development of sustainable MTSS systems to help to ensure all students receive appropriate tiered supports?

3) How has my leadership transformed as outlined by Fullan’s Theory of Change and the five components of leadership that Fullan (2014) describes that converge to affect positive change:

1. Moral Purpose
2. Understanding change
3. Relationship building
4. Knowledge Creations and Sharing
5. Coherence Making

**Research Question 1.** How do I help teachers understand the connection between social-emotional learning as it relates to academics?

As I work to explore possible answers to this question, I have engaged in holistically observing my experiences since first discerning a need for improvement in the teacher understanding of the social-emotional learning needs of all students throughout the 2015-2016 school year. I first had to determine areas in which to celebrate success and areas of possible growth within the school setting while at the same time identify what would be limitations of my practice based on resources and contractual obligations. The first step in this process was to raise teacher awareness of social-emotional learning. In order to do this I had to look towards my own leadership and make adjustments. My leadership developed markedly in the following ways: (a) I
changed my role as a leader from a more managerial role to that of a facilitator/educator; (b) I worked to understand, challenge and confront the power struggles that existed with the learning organization; and (c) I became more knowledgeable about my role as a leader the transformation and development of a school culture.

An excerpt from my journal from May 2017 states, “I believe that to be an effective school leader I need to take chances, think differently, challenge the status quo and motivate others.” When I entered school leadership as a profession I always envisioned excellent leadership as challenging the status quo as a means to provide students more meaningful educational experiences. Studying my leadership has made me aware that I not only need to challenge the status-quo but motivate others to do so as well. This concurs with Fullan’s (2006) premise that in working towards change it boils down to one word: motivation. My motivation is ensuring that all students receive the tiered supports that appropriately address both their academic and social-emotional learning needs. An action plan must motivate people to put in the effort both individually and collectively in order to get results, without motivation improvement is not possible.

Consideration of evidence from my observations provided me with the opportunity to ascertain that while some individual teachers at the site may have been aware of specific SEL needs of certain students, collectively the teachers needed to be motivated to address the social-emotional learning needs of all students. I believe that intrinsically teachers as a whole want to meet the needs of all students but may need to be made aware of these SEL needs. I chose to develop motivation by presenting data from the counseling department at a team meeting. This presentation of data revealed that most
teachers were not aware that many of the students who presented academic struggles were also presenting with SEL issues. Academic and SEL issues for students are definitely intertwined as the two issues do not exist mutually exclusive of each other. A journal entry reflecting on conversation with teachers alluded to the realizations that the change I was seeking to create would not be instantaneous.

I am really surprised that [Redacted] told me that asking them to work on community building during academic lab time is not important. They said that these student come here to learn academics, they all have to test to get in and they want to go to go to a good college. We as teachers have too much curriculum to cover to worry about this SEL stuff you are asking us to do. (journal entry, August, 2017)

Another journal entry from this point confirmed that I would need to work on staff development in the area of SEL developing buy-in from faculty.

I and two team members introduced the plan for SEL intervention at our PD this morning by asking teachers to remember how their high schools experience influenced their lives. [Redacted] said I had a math teacher who really cared about us and we all knew that even if we hated math she would get us through the class I knew we were there to learn but also felt a sense of family. [Redacted] stated he did not like high school at all he was an outsider and still remembers that if you were not one the “A-list” or “popular kids” nobody cared about you. I was definitely saddened by this response and it raises apprehension about how some teachers will embrace this intervention. I am also concerned as [redacted] shared that they were in college so long ago that they never received any teacher training around SEL. (journal entry, August, 2017)

I recognized that facilitating the Tier 1 SEL intervention for the ninth grade students would pose challenges however; I was not expecting such negative reaction from some of the teachers. While not expected, I understand that experiencing setbacks is part of the change process.

Fullan (2004) reminds us that a change and transformation of a school culture is achievable but usually accompanied by messiness. Much of the evidence at the beginning
of my reflective journal questions my decisions as leader as I start to facilitate the implementation of the intervention. Initial analysis of my journal entries reveals much frustration for me as a school leader however upon a closer analysis and reflection I came to realize that as a leader I was able to acknowledge my frustration and respond to setbacks with the ability to observe and listen to teachers and in turn be flexible in my own thinking to ensure the intervention would be implemented in the best interest of the students. As Fullan also states, a culture of change provides the potential for innovative advances.

Anonymous exit slips form faculty professional development were also analyzed and reflected upon. Reflection on the analysis of the information contained in these exit slips confirmed what was evident from other sources of data. The majority of teachers reported that they are willing to work on SEL interventions however; they do not feel they are adequately trained in this area. A sample response from an exit slip stated:

I am excited that the school and the administration feel that the social emotional learning of our students is important, I have long been in favor of addressing all the needs of the students not just the content area but I am afraid I will not be able to handle this adequately without additional supports, this was never really addressed when I did my teacher training many years ago. How will the administration make sure we have the support and PD that is needed to make this SEL intervention worthwhile for students? (August, 2017)

As the leader in the execution of implementing SEL supports I am aware that teacher training is a critical area to be addressed in the implementation process. I must continually remind myself that teachers are expected to have expansive skills, expertise, and knowledge that reinforce working among a multi-tiered system of supports including SEL supports. Also, recent research has demonstrated that most of the practicing
educators do not possess the necessary skills (Prasse et al., 2012). Creating a regular professional development schedule that targets building the skills of teachers in addressing the initiative at hand (in the case SEL supports) learning of all students is critical to the success of any initiative.

There were also times throughout the implementation process when teachers questioned the purpose of the SEL intervention; “doesn’t this take away from quality time to work with and tutor students in areas where they struggle?” I provided research to ensure teachers that as a school we are not only responsible for academic learning and that academic learning and that academic outcomes do not exist in a silo separate form social-emotional learning. Research verifies that addressing the SEL need of students will result in improved academic outcomes (CASEL, 2017; Greenberg et al., 2003). I found myself frustrated at times of push-back from some teachers but knew in my heart this intervention was in the best interest of the students and that I would have to work through my frustration with teacher push-back and look for way to move forward. This was clearly evident in a journal entry:

I just left a meeting with the team and we are still getting push-back from several teachers from different content area departments. They are not seeing or agreeing with the usefulness of the intervention. I have also received some emails from teachers stating that they feel this time could better utilized by letting students attend tutoring sessions. The team members are in agreement that we need to resend the rationale for program to entire faculty as well as share the rationale and intervention purpose with the parents and guardians of the ninth grade students. Getting all stakeholders on board is critical to the success of the intervention. (journal entry, September, 2017)

According to Fullan (2004), for a leader to be effective they must have a moral purpose and work on improving that moral purpose. The moral purpose involves both the
end result and the means to attain that result. While working through this study I am aware that I need to be an authentic leader to get results. Authentic leaders with moral purpose display character.

Additionally, they are explicit about their desire to make difference and use strategies that will mobilize a team to tackle tough problems such as addressing the SEL needs of all students and helping teachers understand the connection between social-emotional learning as it relates to academics. Understanding the change purposeful planning and process are necessary for me to be an effective leader in implementing change, as a leader I need to also be intentional and enthusiastic about the steps I take to address the intersection of SEL and academic needs with the faculty. Good ideas from a leader are important, but it is also critical for the leadership to sustain initial enthusiasm so that it can be transformed into internal commitment amongst all stakeholders.

This self-study reaffirmed my belief in the importance of creating buy-in from stakeholders around social emotional learning. SEL is an issue that the school should be addressing in the best interest of all students. Even though I may face resistance because of teacher perception that the students most in need of this intervention mentioned are not in the majority. I am still zealous about the fact that schools need to meet the academic, social, emotional and behavioral needs of all students to the best of our ability for students to achieve post-secondary success. I also acknowledge the fact that meeting these needs looks very different for all students and we should not marginalize certain groups. The study revealed that the process for implementation and next steps is cyclical (see Figure 3).
In summary in order for me to help teachers understand the connection between social-emotional learning as it relates to academics I need to accomplish several tasks. As a leader I first need to purposefully listen to teachers about what education and development they need as teachers and what they observe to be the needs of the students. Additionally, make intentional observation of teachers, classroom, and students are essential to assess where teachers are at in understanding the connection between social-emotional learning. Secondly, resources and evidence based practices must be collected and studied. Finally, I need to share resources, practices, and research with teachers to assist in educating them in the connection between social-emotional learning as it relates to academics in the context of our school.

**Research Question 2.** What strategies can I facilitate and help implement to ensure that the academic and social-emotional needs of all students are being met?

a. How can I address the needs of Tier 1, 2 and 3 supports through classroom instruction?
b. How can I develop and build capacity of teachers to implement the facilitation and development of sustainable MTSS systems to help to ensure all students receive appropriate tiered supports?

In researching answers to this question and sub-questions I needed to critically examine various facets of my experiences as a school leader in ensuring the SEL need of student were being met. First, I considered what I was able to learn about myself as a school leader and educator and about the students. Second, I concentrated on my responses to the implementation of Tier 1 SEL supports within the structure of MTSS at my school. While this self-study empowered me to investigate my leadership development it was not always comfortable. In searching for answers it was necessary for me to observe my leadership using an evaluative and critical manner through the lens of Fullan’s (2014) theory of change. Digging deep into my professional practice and decision making in addressing the needs of Tier 1, 2 and 3 supports through classroom instruction was imperative in order to learn about my leadership growth and development. Determining how my leadership has grown and transformed as result of implementing this particular initiative separate from my collective development as more experience school leader was not always easy.

As I strive to determine what strategies can I facilitate and help implement to ensure that the academic and social-emotional needs of all students are being met I now know that I need to cognizant of those who may resist change and possible implementation dips. According to Fullan (2001), implementation dips are to be expected as we strive to move the school forward. An implementations dip is a dip in outcomes
and/or confidence as we work to deal with a new initiative that will require new skills and new understandings. While working toward providing tiered support of SEL and academic learning I came to understand this issue better in the context of my work and development as a school leader. Additionally, members of the faculty were experiencing two types of issues. There is the psychological fear of change or newness and the fear actual lack of skill of knowledge to make the change take root and be successful. In studying my leadership I became more sensitive to these fears and worked with the faculty and team to measure success but at the same time creates way to encourage faculty and sustain the implementation of the initiative.

I have become aware that I get personal satisfaction out of taking chances to move the school forward with new and innovative ideas in all areas even if it involves delving into the unknown. At the start of this school year I was convinced that formalizing the tiered supports was going to be a hard push with faculty and fail (especially the SEL supports). I felt the teachers would provide lots of push-back and as a result would not be prepared to implement tiered supports in their classes and end up disappointing me and everyone else on the team. As it turns I was right about the push–back but as I received this push- back I forced myself to really listen to concerns and discover ways to address the teachers’ needs and fears and continue moving forward while increasing my own learning as leader and supporting the needs of all students. (journal entry, October, 2017)

Listening to those with whom you disagree is critical to be an effective leader. As Fullan (2014) states we are more likely to learn from those we disagree with than from those we agree with. Healthy tension and a disagreement can work to strengthen a leader and their organization.

As I develop in my role as a school leader, I have come to realize that I should have good ideas and be able to present them articulately in a way that all can understand but at the same time I need to seek opportunities to listen to those who doubt ideas and
work to build relationships with them in order to move the implementation of initiatives forward for the benefit of the students. In studying myself, I have reaffirmed that including those with whom we disagree is critical for good leadership. These people may have fresh ideas that could have been missed; this is especially true when an organization is tackling complex and diverse issues.

Additionally, having those with whom you disagree as allies is a bonus when it come to the politics involved with the execution of implementing a new initiative such as SEL supports for all students. During my growth as a school leader I have learned the importance of being aware of different opinions. This is evident in my reflective journal:

I cannot lose sight of the fact that the entire purpose of implementing a Tier 1 SEL support for students was to prioritize the importance of addressing the SEL need and academic needs of students based on the MTSS framework and as a result improve the academic learning and social emotional learning for the students. This requires putting the needs of the students before that of the teachers or me. By keeping this as my main focus and staying committed I am enabling the team to experience small successes. I have also found that by not losing sight of the focus I have improved my ability and courage in being able to have difficult conversations and work with the teachers when it appears they may not be acting in the best interests of the students. (journal entry, October, 2017)

This process also reaffirmed my understanding that compliance to directives does not always yield results. Having teachers fill out logs of what they did during the intervention time just looked good on paper and was not always making a difference in the student but forcing myself to be a more active participant by visiting classes and giving useful feedback would be of more benefit to helping the teachers execute what the team was asking and as a result benefit the students. Additionally this would allow me to have more concrete evidence as we moved forward to tweak the intervention to better meet the need of all students.
After discussing some concerns with [redacted] I realized using my time and energy to create Google forms and check lists to ensure that teachers were complying with what I was asking and instructing for the initiative was not going to guarantee that the students were having meaningful experiences with SEL intervention or that the teachers were prepared to execute what was being asked and meet the student needs. Instead I decided to spend my time observing in classrooms and having meaningful conversations with teachers. I feel that focusing on listening to concern and giving feedback will make this whole facilitation more successful. [Redacted] told me that they really appreciated me visiting their class and participating during the intervention because I was not expecting the teacher to do something that I would not do myself. I truly believe this in the best interest of the students and I think the faculty is coming around to this way of thinking. I have had [redacted] share information about SEL issues with the [team] and the member have been able to communicate the SEL needs of our student to their department in a smaller group setting. I feel smaller groups lead to better conversations and a realization about what is happening in the building. (journal entry, October, 2017)

Sub-question 2a: How can I address the needs of Tier 1, 2 and 3 supports through classroom instruction? This first step for me as a leader is to ensure that the teachers understand the multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) framework and the definitions of Tier 1, 2, and 3 supports and how they are different. I know from observations much of what is included in the different tiers of support is provided for at my school however teachers are not explicit about labeling what is happening as tiered supports. When I observe in classrooms I regularly see the universal differentiated supports rooted in strong instruction that all students are receiving. An example of this is revealed in the following journal entry:

I was as excited as I observed lesson in [redacted] class. They were differentiating for the learning styles of all students. The lesson was set up and directions were written on the board for students to get into their groups for a small group activity. Additionally the teacher explained the activity and direction were also available at each table. Students worked on a task in their groups and then were given the opportunity to present the solution both orally and visually in their groups and to the entire class. The teacher walked from group to group to listen and assess small group class discussions making note of questions or success and then allowed the
student to engage in a large group discussion to give feedback pertinent to the class activity. I also notice that [Redacted] made appropriate accommodations for a student with anxiety. This was done by the way in which they explained the requirement of the activity to the student in a way that reduced their stress. The lesson was also scaffolded to address needs of diverse learners as the groupings were done with intention and purpose to meet the needs of all students. (journal, September, 2017)

This was a perfect example of Tier 1 academic support. As a leader I need to ensure we are explicit and recognize the tiered supports we are employing in the education of students at our school. Based on regular observation of our teachers we are hitting the mark on Tier 1 academic interventions. The majority of teachers use pre-assessment to gauge where students are at in relation to what is being taught and to form groups. They also use this information to add complexity and depth to curriculum to challenge some students while they scaffold lesson to assist those who may have difficulty accessing the curriculum. However, I do feel there could be some assistance given in providing systems and structure that will foster the integration of social-emotional skills. This is where the Tier 1 SEL intervention came into play to ensure all ninth grade students are explicitly receiving these SEL support.

I also observed that the administrative team in conjunction with the school staff regularly provides academic Tier 2 and 3 supports. Tier 2 supports are basically supplemental supports by which teachers use strategic interventions to assist students that need supports that include small group instruction, more time, and/or focused instruction. The research site provides for this by scheduling every student for a colloquium period in which they can receive both enrichment and intervention from teachers if needed. Anonymous exit slips from teacher professional development (PD) provided evidence
that this is working and that students are being successful if the student need is specifically academic; however our venue for Tier 2 intervention does not always work if there are social-emotional learning (SEL) issues in the picture.

I love having the opportunity to work with struggling students in small groups and re-teach material or re-engage the students with curriculum. I am seeing success with many students but not all. I asked a particular student why they are not participating and taking advantage of this resource. They told me that not being able to grasp an understanding of a concept in class causes them anxiety and then when they come to see me they are more anxious because they feel disappointed in themselves for not understanding and get depressed thinking about the grade so they just choose to avoid the issue altogether. I have referred the student to the counselor but I feel we should have something more structure because I feel like this student is not alone in their feeling. (Exit slip from PD, November 2017)

This response also confirms my observations that many students entering high school are not able to cope with the everyday life of academic, behavior and social-emotional issues in high school. As mentioned previously the site is a selective school with students coming from many different backgrounds and as a school it is necessary to afford all students the social-emotional Tier 1 supports learning that will provide them with the tools necessary to deal with the day to day issues of being a high school student. I knew going into the facilitation of this work that I would need to work to get some teachers and students excited about the SEL intervention. At first I was nervous about the response I would get from student as well as teachers.

A student came to ask me why they had to participate in the intervention every other Friday. They said they could just as easily work on homework and be fine. I did not necessarily want to share homework is not everything school work is definitely important. I had to choose my words carefully and explain that school is about much more than doing homework and that we need to learn to have healthy conversation and build relationships with other in our community. So many of these students are so concerned about their grades that they lose sight of what being a contributor to society can look like. I know the culture at selective school with many high pressure students but I have to work to change that culture and be
true to the mission of our school and ensure we graduate well-rounded and holistic students. (journal entry, November, 2017)

In trying to change the culture and make SEL a priority at the school I know that my next steps after establishing the moral purpose is to work on building relationships with the teachers and the students for the intervention to be successful and sustainable. Fullan (2014) stresses the importance of relationships in striving to make change. If individuals feel connected to an initiative they will want to make a difference and work towards that change. When establishing relationships, the leader needs to be clear about standards and expectations, pay attention to all, recognize people, explain the rationale behind the move, celebrate with the groups and lead by example.

Sub-question 2b: How can I develop and build capacity of teachers to implement the facilitation and development of sustainable MTSS systems to help to ensure all students receive appropriate tiered supports? In answering this question, I again look to Fullan’s (2014) components of leadership; specifically, Relationship Building and Knowledge Creation and Sharing. Leaders seeking to make change must remember that development of the individuals is not adequate, they must change the culture. As I observed though my work if only a portion of the teachers are on board and trained in an intervention the success is limited. The leadership must work to build a collective capacity within the faculty. In facilitating this intervention I have found that a collaborative culture tends to breed more sustainability and success. However, as a leader I must continually make certain that the collaboration is focusing in the right area. Along with building the collective capacity that is needed to for successful implementation of the SEL support intervention I need to be self-aware. This is critical when setting
expectation for the implementation or looking to the team for input. Flexibility is paramount in planning and intervention. Throughout this self-study I frequently found the need to adjust my expectations for team members and teachers. There was also times that modifications to the logistics were needed due to staffing, scheduling and other resource availability. I experienced setbacks and had to rethink my approaches to the initiative. Some of those setbacks were due to how the intervention and how my intent was perceived. While I had much support I still encountered power struggles with some staff members. They did not embrace the idea of a shift in culture to more explicitly address the SEL needs of all student.

I think that I was very motivated to help students and had the best interest of students at the heart of my. However, certain past history of the school should have been considered. When the school profile started to be that of a more rigorously academic school many teachers and staff began to have tunnel vision about content area and curriculum. I do not think that should be minimized, however, we need to consider the whole student; behavior, social and emotional learning not just the academic. I did not think this would be as much as a power struggle as it turned out to be. Having come from teaching at a neighborhood high school, I am constantly having to prove myself to some as they do not feel I am as academically minded or capable as teachers who are teaching at a selective high school. Nothing could be further than the truth I care very much about high standards of academics but I know that students who are struggling with behavioral, social, and emotional issues will struggle to do well academically even it is not as visually evident as some might. I really need to think about building better relationships and sharing my knowledge in this area of work so that I do not come up against as much resistance form staff members. (Critical Friend Interview, November, 2017)

Through this study I have found that that any new initiative will be more successful if it is grounded in teachers working together collaboratively to learn from evidence about student learning. Professional development and education of teacher are relevant pieces that must be include to assist in the building of this collaboration. The
school’s collective capacity, working concurrently with the individual capacity of its stakeholders, has the greatest impact on both academic and social-emotional learning.

At the last team meeting there were several teachers who had concerns about the Tier 1 support were implanting for the ninth grade students. However, now I can tell that the concerns are not necessarily grips that they are coming from a place of genuine concern for students and wanting to implement the intervention with fidelity. The team agrees that this year is a learning curve but we can learn from this year and make improvements for the following years to create sustainability. One teacher shared that there are teachers who are concerned about what they are going to do from week to week but then acknowledged that in listening to colleagues at Friday PD meetings and in looking at the Google Drive, they have been astonished by the clever, sometimes deceptively simple ideas that our colleagues have come up with. Another teacher later stated that they believe this intervention can truly can be a laboratory to try different community-building activities and to address the social-emotional learning needs of students. (Journal Entry, December, 2017)

In summary, when seeking out strategies I can facilitate and help implement to ensure that the academic and social-emotional needs of all students are being met I must ensure that teachers work collaboratively to learn from evidence about student learning outcomes.

Additionally, I understand that providing of professional development opportunities are crucial to developing the teachers’ understanding of the MTSS framework and the definitions of Tier 1, 2, and 3 supports and how they differ. This study also revealed that my leadership has been transformed over the years and through this process. My confidence to challenge the status-quo and powers struggles in my school has grown and developed. I have become courageous about doing what is in the best interest of the students even if it is not popular or supported by some of the faculty. The process of this study has allowed me to rethink what good and effective leadership looks and feels like. Additionally, there exists more openness and sensitivity to addressing the
needs of all stakeholders. This research has also prompted me to continually investigate how I as leader can be more responsive to the faculty, students and parents at my school.

**Research Question 3.** How has my leadership transformed as outlined by Fullan’s Theory of Change and the five components of leadership that Fullan (2014) describes that converge to affect positive change:

1. Moral Purpose
2. Understanding change
3. Relationship building
4. Knowledge Creation and Sharing
5. Coherence Making

This research question has been the most intriguing for me to explore and reflect upon. A quote from my journal states:

> I want school to be a place where students are able to learn free from the stigma or stress of the communities they come from. School should be a place that is safe for all students to be themselves and archive success. School should be about learning. Students not only need to be academically prepared but mature, compassionate, socially skilled, and well-rounded. (journal Entry, August, 2017)

In looking at this quote I had to discern how my leadership was developing to address what I truly wanted to achieve as a leader. I have come to understand that I cannot lead without moral purpose, understanding change, relationship building, knowledge creation, or coherence making.

**Moral purpose.** According to Fullan (2002), leaders with Moral Purpose support the goal of making a difference in the lives of students, they have a “commitment to improving standards, no matter what, and ensuring that the gap between students is
narrowed when it comes to achievement.” I want to tackle the problem I see to make
difference for all and know I cannot as achieve this without employing strategies that will
make a difference in my learning organization. As a leader, I seek to awaken the moral
purpose in others and develop their commitment to great schools for all students. As I
emerge as a leader I have come to believe more in the collective capacity of a school and
also believe that if I am an effective leader I will help in developing leaders within my
school so that the initiatives started are sustainable and that the school continues to grow
even after my tenure as school leader may conclude.

I know that many teachers were resistant to implementing the SEL intervention
for ninth grade students as they felt this was taking away from their time to teach
content but when reflecting upon note from team meetings I realize that the
resistant teachers are coming around. [Redacted] shared that they experienced
students who were very enthusiastic about the program and willing to share why
they thought it was important for our school to address these needs of students.
Another teacher shared that a student in their group said they were happy about
his because so many tome teacher seem to forget the students are people too and
that we have feelings. (journal entry, November, 2017)

Later on that month I reflect upon a conversation I had with a teacher in my office:

[Redacted] was in my office to discuss a situation they were having with a student
and then we just started talking about how the year was going. I asked what their
thoughts were on the SEL initiative. They shared that they were aware that I was
getting resistance from some faculty at the beginning but that they felt the
teachers resisting the idea were in the minority that they were just the voices that
were the loudest. They reminded me that change is hard and as long as the change
is being made for the right reasons that I should not give up. They also shares that
they could see how this initiative/intervention will only get better time.
Everything takes time. They also told me that they believed this was a great way
in which to build school culture. You have to remember that you are following
your hear and doing what you believe is right for kids. The teacher told me they
realized that the purpose behind this work I was doing was in the best interest of
the students. (journal entry, November 2017)

This conversation indicated to me that many of the teachers understood that I was striving
to lead with a *Moral Purpose*. This evidence shows that the purpose of my work was to support the goal of making a difference in the lives of students with a commitment to improving the academic and social-emotional learning regardless of barriers.

*Understanding change.* Leaders who understand change realize that it is better to innovate discerningly with coherence that innovating and implementing many ideas at once. Additionally, understanding change means knowing that having the best ideas is not enough. Leaders who understand change assist others while assessing and finding meaning and commitment to new innovations. I know that through this study I am learning to understand change much better than previously. As a leader strives to change culture, it is essential to realize that making change is about creating a culture not just a structure for change. The leader must be cognizant to not repeatedly adopt new ideas or innovations rather they should work on generating the capacity to pursue, analytically evaluate, and incorporate fresh concepts and practices into the culture (Fullan, 2014).

I have found that it is easier when speaking with teachers in my office to expect the change will happen. As most teachers who are comfortable having a conversation with me are on the same page as I am in regards to supporting students and their SEL needs. I can run theoretical ideas past them and it seems like all will work out. However, when it comes to putting theory and idea into action thing get more complicated. Regardless of how good the ideas are or appear to be I need to make sure that the team and the faculty that I am leading develop meaning of the change so that they understand why the change is being made. I believe that if they understand the reasoning behind proposed changes they will be able to be more committed to facilitating the change. Additionally, it is important for me to model the change and culture shift I want to see. (Critical friend Interview, September, 2017)

I now have an increased awareness of the important of understanding change for a leader and for the organization as a whole. Being a democratic and coaching leader assists in gaining consensus through team participation and helps in developing team
member for future success. Creating a harmony and building bonds among team member is also crucial and important fact of the change process.

**Building relationships.** Leaders who build relations are intentional about consistently fostering purposeful interaction problem solving with those that different from themselves. Additionally, in those who are good at building relationships are cautious of consensus that comes too easily (Fullan, 2001). Throughout the process of this self-study, I learned to adapt. The implementation of the SEL intervention for students provide me the opportunity to listen and learn from others and in doing so I was able to improve on and build new relationships with my colleagues in the school.

I know what I am taking on will not be easy but I truly believe in what I am doing and have already gained support of some of my colleagues. While I understand everyone may not be in agreement with me all of the time I also believe that most faculty what to a contributing part of the school especially when what is happening is benefiting the students. There will always be tension and disagreement but if can come together to work through that tension to forma a consensus we can arrive at better ideas and increasingly meet the academic and SEL needs of all students. This is not going to be easy, many are not comfortable dealing with SEL issues but I know in facilitating this team I can help some become more comfortable. Feeling connected to the school is significant for both teachers and students and I feel this initiative will help strengthen that connection and increase relationships across the community. (journal Entry, October, 2017)

This study has also made me aware that I have the resolution and the self-confidence to challenge the power structures in my school and reconsider what research shows is best for students. I also now understand more clearly the importance of relationships in making change. I have become more open to discovering what teacher, students and all stakeholders consider being of benefit to all students. I know I will continue to investigate ways to build relationships with the context of my work as a school leader and ensure that the decisions I make are responsive to the needs of the
students at my school.

**Knowledge creation and sharing.** According to Fullan (2001), knowledge creation and sharing takes place when a leader understands that in order for information to become knowledge and of value to a school it must be looked at in social context of the situation. The procedures used in this self-study investigation of my leadership allowed me to create and share knowledge as I lead a team through the implementation of Tier 1 SEL support for ninth grade students. I was able to share and create knowledge in the context of my work as reflected upon and made meaning of the information (journal, exit slips, meeting motes and agendas, informal observations of interactions between students and faculty). Additionally, I reflected upon and the experience while engaging with the faculty and teachers in the school to improve tiered supports for all students.

I know this has not always been easy for some of the teachers but I am glad I persisted in doing what I thought was best for students. At first there was push-back as revealed from anonymous exit slips and various emails but as I continued to lead the facilitation of this intervention I felt the tables turn. Students were giving me positive feedback such as: it is nice to know you care about the rest of us not just our brain…providing this time at the end of the week has been a great way for me to feel more connected to my high school.

A teacher shared the following with me:

On a different note, I just wanted to let you know that I am enjoying my time with my [redacted] kids and I wanted to formally ask that we keep the same kids each year like you had mentioned at the start of the year. I know sometimes plans change, so I wanted to take a moment to say that I love my group of kids, I enjoy the time together, and we are making good strides toward creating a positive culture in here. I have even taken on a mentorship role with one of them. I would love to continue building these relationships over the next 3.5 years and watch them walk across the graduation stage.

Thanks for listening and have a great day!
At an ILT meeting we looked at student data and everyone was pleased with the observation that less 1% of ninth graders were receiving failing grade and the number of social-emotional learning issues presented to the counselors had decreased significantly as compared to this time last year. Sharing positive outcomes and the results of the work was imperative in creating more buy-in and sustainability for the universal intervention. (journal entry, January 2018)

Upon reflecting upon my journal I was able to ascertain that as result of the intervention there has been a steady decrease in the escalation of social-emotional issues among ninth grade students to needing higher level intervention. Reflection upon meeting notes makes it clear that students are increasingly advocating for themselves when feeling anxious or stressed. Students are becoming more comfortable with the supports that are offered at the school. Additionally students are aware that they have resources of support with adult staff in the building including; counselors, teachers, administrators, and support staff. This is a result of using the information in the context of its situation. The intervention was designed to meet the specific needs of the school, adapting evidenced based interventions to fit the specific school site was significant in the attaining positive results.

**Coherence making.** By studying myself in the context of my work I was also was able to transform my role as administrator from decision maker to the facilitator of forming consensus to make arrive at decisions. This required a certain amount of creating buy-in, coherence making and trust in myself as a leader and the teacher as educators. Originally I created buy-in for the intervention by sharing statistics that I had analyzed. These statistics illustrated the number of students being hospitalized and in need of mental health supports from either a school counselor, related service provider, or outside mental health professional. The information I shared allowed teachers and other staff to
see the reality of the SEL needs at the school and buy-in to the idea of the intervention.

This was a turning point for many who originally did not see the urgency in creating Tier 1 SEL interventions for all students. By creating buy-in, fostering relationships and building knowledge amongst my colleagues, I shifted the locus of control from an individual to the learning organization, my passion for providing the best in education for all students regardless of their needs has been rekindled.

I feel the school has made great strides in the area of providing SEL support under my facilitation but I know there is more work to do and that the school is not a static organization. As students change and grow so must the school and the school leader. As well as I think everything went during this first cycle of implementation I understand that there will always be room for improvement not only in the actually intervention but in the packaging and presentation of the intervention to all stakeholders; teachers, students, and parent. I need to be ready to continue my work and open to feedback as we head into the second semester of the year. Regardless of how challenged I felt at time I am glad that I have persisted in this effort. This disturbance/challenge to the status-quo may have ruffled some feathers at the beginning and still continues to ruffle a few but it was all for the good of the students and based on anonymous exit slips the majority of the teachers now see value in the intervention. The exit slips also showed interest form faculty in working to improve the program as we move forward next year, this is both exciting and encouraging to me. I am also thinking about including student voice to determine more specifically what their needs are. (journal entry, February, 2018)

I have come to realize that although while I was leading a team when developing this SEL intervention to provide for the needs of students, I did not purposefully include some very crucial voices, that of the students. While I had made suppositions and based decisions on information gathered from observations, personal understandings, anecdotal notes and student outcomes, both social emotional and academic I had neglected to verify these assumptions with those stakeholders at the heart of the issue. Throughout the work I came to realize that the students who benefited most were those who perhaps were not
struggling academically but were struggling with SEL issues and being very quiet about it because they were embarrassed and not aware of resources that might be available within the school setting.

Reflection and analyzing has led to the conclusion that my leadership transformed through this work as outlined by Fullan’s (2014) Theory of Change. Through this study I became aware of how *moral purpose* affects my authenticity as leader. While this work was not easy I determined that my commitment to the students demonstrated my moral purpose.

This has been tough, some teachers have felt that academic time with students has been taken away (although I know that is not true, that is the perception and a person’s perception can be their reality) others have felt uncomfortable in the realm of SEL. As a leader I acknowledged their feelings and concerns and was willing to adjust and work with these teachers. However, at the end of the day I did not lose sight of my goal or commitment to improve the availability and facilitation of Tier 1 SEL interventions for all ninth grade students. Believing in what you do is paramount for success but one also must be willing to work through tensions and address challenges in order for the work to take root and grow. These action demonstrate that I am doing the work with character and fidelity. (Critical Friend Interview, February, 2018)

Authentic leaders with moral purpose display character. Additionally, they are explicit about their want to make difference and use strategies that will mobilize a team to tackle tough problems such as addressing the SEL needs of all students and helping teachers understand the connection between social-emotional learning as it relates to academics.

I also confirmed the importance of *understanding change* as a leader. Change is not a checklist; rather it is complex process which involves dealing a shift in culture, dealing with resistance, and developing the capacity of stakeholders in order to create positive implementation and sustainability while at the same time being able to recognize
and appreciate the implementation dip that may occur.

Change is hard is all I can say, I never thought it was easy but I never expected other to want to do what is in the best interest of the students. I know that most teacher say they want what is in the best interest of the students but sometimes they need to come to understand what that best interest looks like in the context of the school they are working out. Creating this culture transformation was difficult as the school has undergone many fluctuations in recent year including; increased enrollment, change in demographic, and growth as well as change in staff. Working with the staff has taught me to deal with resistance in a positive way, appreciate differing opinions and ideas while maintaining focus even if it means challenging the power struggles and status-quo that exist in the organization. (Critical Friend Interview, February, 2018)

While understanding change is significant, I have also become critically aware of the importance of relationship building. As a leader, it is important for me to work on building relationships that assist the school in attaining the desired results.

Acknowledging the self-confidence necessary to challenge the power structures in my school and consider what is best for students when working to build relationships is fundamental. As a leader I developed more clarity and understanding regarding the importance of relationships in making change.

I met with the counselor [redacted] today and they want to be involved in my implementation. This is someone who I have never had a bad relationship with but we really have not worked together on a lot of initiatives. After to talking to this person I have come to realize that we are on the same page when it comes to addressing the SEL needs of students and this is someone I can look to for support. I was not aware of our common goals because we tended to work in separation from each other. This is evidence that I need to engage n more conversations that will make me more aware of other passions and we can work together towards common goals. (journal entry, August, 2017)

Persistence in investigating ways to build relationships to positively affect change within the context of my work in order to be responsive to the particular needs of the teachers and students at my school will now be a focus of my work. When looking to be
responsive to the needs of the school I have found that the knowledge sharing and creation is significant.

Knowledge is more than just the information we are given. A leader must understand that in order for information to become knowledge and of value to a school it must be looked at in social context of the situation (Fullan, 2001). Through this study I have learned that in the past “off-the-shelf” interventions were attempted to address SEL issues at the site but were unsuccessful because the data being looked at was not looked at in the context of the specific school. While there are similarities in schools it is essential that leaders turn their information to knowledge by studying the data in the context of their specific situation.

Finally, I have to acknowledge that coherence making is a critical attribute for a leader to demonstrate. Leading this change provided me the opportunity to listen and learn from others and in doing so I was able to make sense of what sometimes appeared to be chaos.

Acknowledging this chaos allowed me to lead the team toward innovative ideas and methods to address social-emotional learning for all students and implement the Tier 1 supports for ninth grade students.

Summary

This study allowed me to pursue the development of my leadership to better understand building g capacity of teachers while helping students and teachers make meaning of social-emotional learning (SEL) needs of high school students. This study was a self-study that began in summer of 2017. This self-study consisted of a reflective
journal entries, reflection on the analysis of content of meeting agendas, meeting minutes, classroom observations, student outcomes and critical friend interviews. This study assisted in revealing to me a deeper understanding of how my leadership has developed continuously since I entered the job as a school administrator and has been transformed over the course of this study. The study allowed me to have the resolution and the self-confidence to rethink what good leadership looks like and to challenge power struggles and the status-quo to ensure the SEL needs of students are met. I am now more aware of being able to question myself, my decisions and discovering the attributes of exemplary leadership within myself.

I hope to continue to consider ways transform my leadership to be more responsive to the needs of students and teachers. Throughout this progression, I learned that I can still perform as an effective educational leader regardless of uncertainties and reservations that I feel about my efficacy as leader. Additionally, I have come to the realization regardless of how many years I spent working in in schools as an educator and leader I can always evolve and transform my professional practice to best provide for the needs of my learning organization. This is a characteristic of working in the field educational leadership that distinguishes one as life-long learners with a sense of finding purpose. Working in the context of my job as an administrator on this SEL intervention has challenged me to question and rethink the purpose of school leadership and the traits of an effective leader.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview
This chapter will afford the reader a summary key points and highlights revealed by the self-study. A discussion of findings from Chapter IV and suggestions for school leadership practice as it relates to social-emotional learning. Recommendations for future development of social-emotional interventions and teacher training will also be discussed.

Study Highlights
This self-study was unique in that its purpose was to determine what strategies and interventions would specifically assist an administrator in targeting the social-emotional and academic needs of students at a selective enrollment high school. According to CASEL (2017), addressing the SEL needs of students is inherent to the process of coordinating a framework for schools to promote the social, emotional academic learning in unison. The interventions addressed in this self-study were to provide a model in which SEL is integrated as part of school wide activities. The self-study approach used is methodology in which the researcher studies themselves in relationship to their work with others (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009). While we do not expect that teachers and educators to engage in formal self-study practices such as this study it is critical to the educational leadership profession that school leaders and
educators continue to focus on their professional growth for the benefit of all students. The reflective process of self-study is an influential means in one’s professional development journey. In this self-study I used Fullan’s (2014) Theory of Change as I attempted to explore how my own leadership decisions and practices have promoted the implementation of Tier 1 social-emotional learning supports for ninth grade students in my school, specifically through the facilitation of initiative.

The original Tier 1-SEL intervention that my self-study was based on was originated in the summer of 2016 before the 2016-2017 school year and went through many variations throughout the action research cycle up until the first semester of 2017-2018 school year. Many lessons were learned, areas of growth identified and success celebrated as a result of my facilitation of the implementation of the Tier 1 SEL intervention. Reflection upon the development and implementation of the intervention revealed success in developing teacher understanding of the connection between social-emotional and academic learning need of students. Examination of the reflections revealed success in changing the culture of the school as it relates to addressing the social emotional learning needs of students and providing the student with the appropriate tiered supports and interventions. Additionally, the implementation of the Tier 1 intervention indicated increased teacher capacity. This was evident by reflections on the observations of collaboration among faculty and staff in addressing the social emotional learning needs of students. While it should be noted that there was success; teachers were receptive to professional development, collaboration around the intervention, and a decrease in students visiting counselors for SEL issues were all observed, there is still work to do in
the arena of addressing and supporting the SEL needs of students at a selective enrollment high school.

The insight of a school leader actively engaging in self-study work for the purpose of professional growth and development as well as school improvement can reveal valuable insights. Understandably the findings offered may be distinctively characteristic to this specific school setting and the individuals involved, the study can still provide awareness and perspective to school leaders addressing comparable needs within their own learning organization. The perspective presented in this self-study denotes a viewpoint that is not easily found in the existing research.

**Discussion of Findings**

Fullan (2014) presents a framework in his Models of Change Theory of components of leadership that influence positive change. Using these five components:

1. Moral Purpose
2. Understanding change
3. Relationship building
4. Knowledge Creations and Sharing
5. Coherence Making

Three central areas of concentration developed. First, I was able to systematically observe my leadership and my role in a learning organization. Specifically, using the processes of self-study to assist me in facilitating change successfully or in some instances un成功fully. This ultimately facilitated and continues to assist me to be a better educational leader. Second, I employed the use of a critical friend interviews to
eliminate my bias and better understand the experiences of leading a participatory action research team in order to successfully facilitate the implementation and execution of a Tier 1 intervention. Third, observation of student outcomes and teacher participation provided me with feedback to reflect upon my development as a leader.

Some of the main themes that arose in Chapter IV were centered on the ideas of transformation of school culture and challenging the power struggles that exist. These themes were the most relevant as they represent the similarities and differences between my own reactions to implementing Tier 1 SEL interventions and the reactions of faculty to implementing SEL interventions for students. Despite being stakeholders in the same learning community it was interesting to me that I found myself struggling with opinions of others with certain issues and gaining awareness of particular aspects of addressing social-emotional learning and how it impacts the culture at my school and my professional practice.

Transformation of School Culture

The Tier 1 SEL for ninth grade students at the site was envisioned as an intervention which would deliver a universal social-emotional intervention which address the SEL learning needs of all students and also improve academic outcomes for students. According to the literature, there is an urgent need in schools for the educational professionals to learn more about the role of behavior, social skills, and character in improving academic achievement (Eccles, 2004; Meece et al., 2006). The school leader is responsible for providing the faculty a means to meet the social-emotional learning needs of students as well as providing them with the training to do so. According to Handler et
al. (2007), the leader has a responsibility to provide professional learning opportunities and training from external consultants, in-house experts, or district level staff with ability and competency in capacities where the team needs support and development. Success of the implementation relies on being able to assemble a cohort of dedicated faculty who maintain leadership and trustworthiness amongst their fellow colleagues. By providing these opportunities to faculty the leader can promote a transformation of culture.

Transformation of a culture requires intentional planning from leaders. While some of the more specific pieces of the Tier 1 SEL intervention program may not have been successful or sustainable, there was an overall change in culture that was more supportive of students. Fullan’s (2014) components of leadership; specifically, Relationship Building and Knowledge Creation and Sharing states that leaders pursuing change must remember that development of the individuals is not adequate. As I observed if only a portion of the teachers are on board and trained in an intervention the success is limited. The leadership must work to build a collective capacity within the faculty. By facilitating collaboration among team members for this intervention the culture has transformed to a more cooperative and culture which leads to sustainability and accomplishment.

Being more collaborative was something that characterized a change in my professional practice as I became more aware of the authority in, and necessity for, exhibiting the beliefs I promoted and practicing what I preached. Additionally it was important to demonstrate persistent attention and focus on the areas I considered important for the students at the school and where I had the capacity to facilitate change.
Fullan (2010) and Collins (2001) articulate this type of relentless focus as being critical to effective leadership.

Currently at the school there is a whole school intervention to address the social-emotional learning needs of all students. This program has developed out the Tier 1 intervention that was implemented during the process of this study. Additionally, bi-weekly professional development is now dedicated to addressing social-emotional learning need and relationship building in the school community. This practice of dedicating teacher professional development time to SEL allows teacher to receive training and share ideas related to the relationship of social-emotional learning and student outcomes. The dedicated universal Tier-1 intervention that all students participate in provides opportunity for students to become connected to the school community and build relationships outside of the academic arena. This is important to our students as many experience much academic pressure both from themselves and families that they need the time to engage in activities that allow them to address the social-emotional needs without the pressure of a grade being attached to it. This SEL and relationship building time provides students an opportunity to express what is on their mind and provides teachers an opportunity to learn about their students on a non-academic playing field.

Furthermore, I have found by modeling and being open about my Moral Purpose I am able to support faculty in the goal of making a difference in the lives of students, they can see I am obligated to improving social-emotional learning for all students regardless of background and ensuring that the gap between students is narrowed. By being
transparent as a leader, I allow and provide opportunity for teachers to see that I want to address the issues observed to make difference for all students. I know this cannot be achieved without employing strategies that will make a difference in my learning organization as it relates to the connection between social-emotional and academic learning. I also witnessed that the moral purpose in others and their commitment to great schools for all students has been awakened through his process. The culture shift that has happened is that the teachers see the value in the collective capacity of a school to make change happen. The teachers see that value of this collective capacity when see the impact on student outcomes both academic and social-emotional. This building of collective capacity leads to sustainable and growth even after a school leader may move on. Leaders must be intentional and purposeful in their behaviors as they seek to transform culture.

Relentlessly modeling the change you want to see in your behavior is essential for transforming culture. As Kouzes and Posner (2012) suggest, leaders must have an unswerving and consistent message and also maintain focus on the core priorities they see as a need in the school. I worked to do this in my regular workday by having regular teams meeting where the social-emotional needs of the team members were considered and teachers were allowed the space and time to share thought and ideas based on teacher and student feedback.

Working in the dynamic environment of a school makes it difficult to conclude how much of the transformation of the school culture is a product of the Tier-1 SEL intervention. However, the process of self-study has given me the opportunity to focus on
aspects of my leadership. I have become more intentional and purposeful in the way I approach situations with students, teachers and the larger school community. I have become more understanding in my response to teachers who may not originally buy-in to initiative we are working towards in the school. An example of this is a teacher who did not want to lead the Tier 1 intervention for her groups. I took the time to speak with the teacher and reflect on our conversation. I surmised that not wanting to participate was in part the consequence of an underlying issue of feeling uncomfortable. I knew that as a leader I needed to acknowledge the feeling of uncomfortableness but at the same time making sure the intervention was being delivered appropriately to all students. I worked with the teacher by pairing them with a peer mentor and offered additional opportunity for professional development. The result was that the teacher participated and worked to increase their capacity in the area of social-emotional learning. The teacher also volunteered to fine tune and develop the universal SEL intervention for the following year. They now felt appropriately prepared to participate and more importantly that their beliefs were valued and included in the greater school community.

[Redacted] asked to come to my office for a meeting regarding the SEL intervention, I was uneasy about the meeting but knew that I had to take the time to address the concerns. [Redacted] shared with me that they did not feel equipped or prepared to do what I was asking them to do, they had said they tried and felt they failed miserably and how could this possibly be of any benefit to the students. After some discussion it became apparent that the teacher felt vulnerable and uncomfortable. This particular teacher is normally an excellent teacher and always get positive outcome from their students. I listened and was empathetic to the situation, offering help and extra training. The teacher really wanted to support students in all aspects of their leaning but didn’t have the same confidence in SEL as they did in teaching their content area. They were determined to tell me that they did not want to participate in this interventions. However, after much discussion the teacher realized the intentional work on SEL with their student could have significant impact on academic and post-secondary
outcomes. The teacher and I both acknowledge that trying something new can scary and change can be intimidating to all of us but if we approach change and struggle through the uncomfortableness we can grow as individuals and a learning community. (journal entry, October, 2017)

**Challenging Power Struggles**

At the culmination of the self-study, another theme that was evident to me was the powers struggles between different members of the learning community. As in any organization there are the prominent outspoken leaders that many members will look to but I noticed that it was sometimes difficult for other members to see themselves as leaders. Especially when they had the past experience and results of positive impact on student outcomes to demonstrate expertise in the area of social-emotional learning. This is a real struggle for learning organizations, it is critical that all voices are heard when working to initiate change in a school, even if there is disagreement. Great ideas and success can develop from healthy tension or differing opinions. Since the school is very academically rigorous and competitive, it is usually the teachers that are determined and passionate about the content they teach who step forward as leaders while those who are seen as more “touchy-feely” usually provide individual SEL support as they see fit for students but do not voice their concerns to the larger audience.

When I asked a particular teacher who I knew was vested in the importance of meeting social-emotional learning needs of students, they were at first hesitant. They explained to me that their hesitation with identifying as a leader was related to the perception other faculty members had about the rigor of the content and classes they taught. I was able to empathize with the teacher because when I first came to the this school as an administrator I was not thought of as “smart enough” or being able to
understand the need of academically gifted students. I originally struggled to see myself as a leader in this environment. However, I overcame that struggle by realizing that if I lead with moral purpose I would emerge as a leader capable of making change and developing others.

In order to overcome the power struggles and develop others a leader must exercise coherence making in their day to day work. The study highlights the importance of being able to study one’s self the context of their work. Specifically, during this course of this study transformed my role as administrator from decision maker to the facilitator of forming consensus to overcome power struggles and make change for the benefit of all students. This requires a certain amount of coherence making and trust in yourself as a leader. By creating buy-in, fostering relationships and building knowledge amongst my colleagues I shifted the locus of control from an individual to the learning organization, my passion for providing the best in education for all students regardless of their needs has been rekindled. The process of doing this allowed for the power struggles amongst stakeholders to be overcome to provide what is best for students.

I have learned the importance of Fullan’s (2014) five components of leadership that affect positive change however, I still have so much to learn. There are days I question my ability to be seen an instructional leader among my colleagues. Regardless of these doubts, I have succeeded in positioning myself as a leader in advocating for what is best for all students and developing an understanding among colleagues about meeting the social-emotional needs of all students and showing the connection between social-emotional learning needs and academic outcome. I know that if I keep the best
interest of the students at the forefront of my work and decision making processes my ability educational leader with continue to develop and improve. There is still work to be done in developing SEL interventions that fit the context of my school. However, as a school who has started to transform the culture and challenge the power struggles within the school I have gained momentum and positioned myself to enact more significant change. As I have brought to light the importance of meeting the SEL needs of students in the school, the students have also found that the SEL intervention helped change the way they see themselves; they are not a test score or a GPA they a person with value to add to their community. Giving the students authentic social-emotional learning experiences allowed them to transform the way in which they regarded themselves and how they sensed they were perceived by others in the community.

**Recommendations for Research**

Self-study is intrinsically restrictive in generalizability. However, this study can still provide a launching pad for research including both implementing social-emotional interventions and the area of leadership development.

The first recommendation for future exploration is to encourage other school leaders to participate in this form of inquiry. I would argue that this type of investigation is difficult to conduct single-handedly. This type of work should be done with a professional learning community. I believe that as school leaders and researchers we need to depend on each other for support and professional development. School leaders working together as a community of researchers would offer support and provide more opportunity for meaningful feedback from colleague in both similar and different
The second recommendation for future exploration concerns teacher training and development surrounding social-emotional learning interventions and meeting the social-emotional needs of students in a school setting. As a result of this work I have identified these as being deficits for many teachers as well as limited resource for intentional SEL resources implemented at the Tier 1 universal level. Design and implementation of any program is a critical piece for success. Also, it is imperative that this development and training include teachers learning how to accommodate the SEL of students in the general education classroom. There should be training on how to modify work to meet the needs of Tiered students needing SEL support. As was evident at the research site it is also critical to afford teachers professional development on a paradigm shift for supporting high performing students with SEL challenges.

Additionally, as I reflect on my own teacher and administrative training I recognize that I did not receive much formal pre-service education to prepare me to be able build and implement social-emotional interventions at the universal level. I did understand that my work and my decisions should be based on what is in the best interest of all children/students; but not necessarily knowing how to make this happen in relation to social-emotional learning needs in conjunction with academic learning needs.

Finally, in the future, I would like to form a community of school leaders, teachers, related-service providers (RSPs) and students to work together as researchers to investigate the best ways to address the social-emotional needs of adolescents in the high school setting. Throughout this study, I informally experienced students, teachers and the situations.
RSPs acting as my critical friends as I worked to implement a Tier 1 SEL intervention that had substance and significance for all students. Ideally, I would like to be given the opportunity to obtain thoughtful and significant feedback from students regarding their SEL experiences in the school and classroom and their input on how to increase the efficacy of SEL interventions in the school.

While the personal leadership journey revealed through this self-study is specific to me and my experience I believe it can offer insight to other school leaders. This study provides understandings and awareness to how leaders can be effective in creating change, and transforming culture in response to a need they identify in their learning organization. The reflective process of self-study provided me with opportunity to understand how and why I make the decision I make to create the change and transform culture. As a school leader it is not often that I have the time reflect upon my practice at this level of depth. I recognize that the practice of reflection on our own practice leads to more successful leadership. This type of learning should continue even as the formal self-study commences.

**Limitations and Biases**

While MTSS is a universal topic that needs to be addressed in all schools this study had limitations because of the context. The study was conducted by me as a leader of a selective enrollment high school with a diverse selective population. The researcher understood that all students need differentiation and have learning differences. However, the issues presented at a high school that has a test-in policy may be different from the strategies and issues that other schools may be encountering. There are concerns
associated with self-study because the work is so very specific to one context as well as being very personal to the researcher.

However, as LaBoskey (2004) notes, the objective of self-study is trustworthiness achieved by the consideration to detail and the comprehensive explanation of the process and why the process was executed in the chosen manner.

Additionally, I realize that my excitement and openness about the work involved in my self-study may create a bias in the interpretations and observation of the data. In an effort to eliminate some of this bias I engaged in reflections and dialogue with a critical friend. As a researcher studying my educational leadership actions it is critical for me to be cognizant of my conflicting roles in the school. As I worked as leader in the context of the study and I wanted positive change to happen, I had to continually confirm I was performing effectively as both a researcher and a school leader.
Semi-Structured Interview Questions

A critical friend will ask the following questions including follow up questions when appropriate. These interviews will be recorded and then transcribed for data analysis.

1. Tell me about the planned intervention so far.
2. What are the faculty perceptions of the intervention? Positive? Negative?
3. What challenges or have you experienced?
4. What positive outcome or success have you experienced?
5. How are these challenges and success different from what you expected?
6. What would you have done differently so far if you could go back and change?
7. Have you observed any changes in your faculty? If so, what?
8. Have you observed any changes in your students? If so, what?
9. What have you learned about yourself as a leader?
10. What changes have you noticed in your leadership?
11. How do you feel this intervention is affecting the school culture?
APPENDIX B

CONSULTANCY PROTOCOL
Consultancy Protocol

The Consultancy Protocol was developed by Gene Thompson-Grove, Paula Evans and Faith Dunne as part of the Coalition of Essential Schools’ National Re-Learning Faculty Program, and further adapted and revised as part of work of NSRF.

A Consultancy is a structured process for helping an individual or a team think more expansively about a particular, concrete dilemma.

Time
Approximately 50 minutes

Roles
Presenter (whose work is being discussed by the group)
Facilitator (who sometimes participates, depending on the size of the group)

1. The presenter gives an overview of the dilemma with which s/he is struggling, and frames a question for the Consultancy group to consider. The framing of this question, as well as the quality of the presenter’s reflection on the dilemma being discussed, are key features of this protocol. If the presenter has brought student work, educator work, or other “artifacts,” there is a pause here to silently examine the work/documents. The focus of the group’s conversation is on the dilemma. (5-10 minutes)

2. The Consultancy group asks clarifying questions of the presenter — that is, questions that have brief, factual answers. (5 minutes)

3. The group asks probing questions of the presenter. These questions should be worded so that they help the presenter clarify and expand his/her thinking about the dilemma presented to the Consultancy group. The goal here is for the presenter to learn more about the question s/he framed or to do some analysis of the dilemma presented. The presenter may respond to the group’s questions, but there is no discussion by the Consultancy group of the presenter’s responses. At the end of the ten minutes, the facilitator asks the presenter to re-state his/her question for the group. (10 minutes)

4. The group talks with each other about the dilemma presented. (15 minutes)
   Possible questions to frame the discussion:
   What did we hear?
   What didn’t we hear that they think might be relevant?
   What assumptions seem to be operating?
   What questions does the dilemma raise for us?
   What do we think about the dilemma?
   What might we do or try if faced with a similar dilemma? What have we done in similar situations?

Protocols are most powerful and effective when used within an ongoing professional learning community such as a Critical Friends Group® and facilitated by a skilled coach. To learn more about professional learning communities and seminars for new or experienced coaches, please visit the National School Reform Faculty website at www.nsrfharmony.org.
APPENDIX C

SELF-STUDY DATA PROTOCOLS JOURNAL PROMPTS
Journal Prompts

This is list of possible prompts that will be used when I journal and write my reflections on my development as school leader as work to support the implementation and development of an intervention to assist in the support of social-emotional and academic needs of students at a selective enrollment high school.

1. Why do I personally believe that social-emotional learning is important and relevant to student in high school?

2. What was my perception of the quality of the social emotional learning supports that were currently provided for students at the school?

3. What changes have noticed in the faculty through the process of implanting a universal Tier-1 support for ninth grade students?

4. What were my initial reactions to how the intervention was perceived by other stakeholders in the school?

5. What changes have I noticed in the faculty through the process of working to develop and implement an SEL support?

6. What changes have I noticed in myself through the process of working to develop and implement an SEL support?

7. When did I feel successful/discouraged in my leadership as I worked to educate faculty and implement SEL supports for students?

8. How have I demonstrated moral purpose as I worked to engage faculty in the process of providing SEL supports for students?

9. How have demonstrated building relationships as I evolved as leader through the implementation of SEL Tier 1 supports?

10. How am I learning to understand change and make coherence of the results when implanting a change in a learning organization?

11. How well am I building my knowledge as leader and my institutional knowledge to allow me to better facilitate change as a school leader?
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VITA

Therese Plunkett was raised in the suburbs of Chicago. She attended Marquette University and earned her Bachelors of Science degree in Biomedical Engineering. Therese then went on to earn a Master’s Degree form DePaul University with a focus on Secondary Mathematics Education. Before graduating, Therese completed her student teaching at Romeoville High School in Romeoville, Illinois. There she developed a passion and commitment for collaborative and inclusive teaching of mathematics for students at all levels.

Therese began teaching Physics and Chemistry at Good Counsel High School in Chicago, from there she taught went on to teach math and science in the gifted program at Hubert Humphrey Middle in Bolingbrook, Illinois. After that she began an 18 year tenure at Sullivan High School in Chicago Public Schools. While at Sullivan High School she also served as Math Department chair, Course team leader, Athletic Director and facilitator of the Instructional Leadership team. As Therese began to take on more and more of a leadership role in her school her enthusiasm for administration was born.

She pursued her administrative certification and soon found herself serving as the Assistant Principal at Jones College Prep High School. After learning a vast amount about school leadership from her mentors she decided to pursue her Doctorate of Education in Administration and Supervision from Loyola University. Therese is currently an assistant principal at Jones College Prep High School where she is happily
working and dedicated to creating an outstanding educational program that focuses on the academic and social emotional learning needs of all students. Therese lives with her husband and two young daughters in Chicago where she enjoys a busy life and all that city of Chicago has to offer with her family and friends.
DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

The Dissertation submitted by Therese E. Plunkett has been read and approved by the following committee:

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