A Self-Study of the Relationships between My Leadership and the Promotion of a Supportive School Environment

Cory Overstreet

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

A SELF-STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN MY LEADERSHIP AND
THE PROMOTION OF A SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

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
CORY W. OVERSTREET

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
MAY 2020
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My formal educational journey is now complete as I have been a lifelong student enrolled in school almost my entire life since I was in preschool through undergraduate, two Master’s in Education programs, and a Doctoral program. I am ready for a break, but will never stop learning. There are many individuals that I have to thank for their support and guidance over the years.

My family was the foundation. Thank you to my parents, Susan Overstreet, and Robert and Julia Overstreet for your love, support, and encouragement. My grandmother, Rose Marie Overstreet, thank you for sparking my love of history and research through your conversations about our family genealogy. My grandparents, John and Mary Ann Miller for setting the example of how to be a good person. I will never forget the long conversation with grandpa John P. Miller while on a charter bus to see a Chicago Cubs game where he shared his life story with me, how his education open doors for him, and how he invoked the spirit that anything was possible if I stayed the course. I am blessed to have wonderful brothers, aunts, and uncles that have all inspired me to serve others. I appreciate how my wife’s family has accepted me into their own and have supported me in my journey.

In addition to support from friends and colleagues, I appreciate the early guidance and support from my Loyola professors Dr. Fine, Dr. Israel, and Dr. Sostek. Thank you to my mentor Dr. Coles for helping me through some troubling times early in my leadership
journey and to my former principal Denise Esposito for taking a chance on hiring me and keeping me motivated to complete my dissertation.

I will be forever grateful to Dr. Eilene Edejer who helped me get to the finish line as my Dissertation Chair, I cannot thank you enough. Thank you, Dr. Siobhan Cafferty, for helping me discover the topic of my self-study and serving on my committee. This research and the impact it had on me and my school community would not have been possible without your guidance. Thank you Dr. Tavis Jules for joining my committee late in the game and helping me push my thinking to create a sounder and structured self-study.

I appreciate the support from Chicago Public Schools through the creation of the Chicago Leadership Collaborative to help develop my leadership and enroll at Loyola and for understanding the critical importance of creating a Supportive School Environment.

Lastly, I could not have made it this far without my unbelievable superwoman partner in life and wife, Dr. Giselle Núñez. We shared with each other on our first date that our goal was to earn a doctorate and never stopped believing or working towards our dream. We have supported each other and made sacrifices the past sixteen years to make this a reality. To my children, Christian, Gabrielle, and Frances, I love you and you are my reason to always do better.
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ABSTRACT

There has been a recent focus in education on Social Emotional Learning, Restorative Justice, and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS). All of these areas are tied to creating a Supportive School Environment that will help students be successful. Chicago Public Schools created a Supportive School Certification process in 2017 and works closely with schools to help them achieve certification (Mathewson, 2017). As the fifth principal in the past ten years at J.P. Miller School, there has been a significant change in leadership styles, school visions, and allocation of resources. The school received the highest or second highest rating issued by Chicago Public Schools prior to my arrival as principal. From the outside, it would appear that the school was performing at a high level, however, an alarming undercurrent indicated by the University of Chicago’s 5 Essential Survey was that students rated the Support School Environment has “Neutral” for years leading to me becoming principal. Research shows that relationships are vital to students feeling welcome at a school, which informs their academic success and social emotional growth (CASEL, 2018). Creating a supportive school climate is imperative for a school principal to lead their school towards continuous improvement. This study has implications for school leaders who are working with all stakeholders to continuously improve educational opportunities and experiences for the students they serve. Through a self-study, the school principal used Sergiovanni and Blumer’s, “Leadership through Proposing” to guide the school community through
Chicago Public Schools’ Supportive School Certification to increase student academic performance and social emotional growth.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

As a teacher and school administrator in Chicago Public Schools (CPS) in my 16th year, I have personally witnessed the impact of trauma on students and the school environment. While working at a neighborhood high school on Chicago’s West Side, I found a student in their classroom in a state of shock after their friend had been shot and killed while walking to school. I had to bring him to our Dean’s office so he could be interviewed by police officers as the witness to the crime that occurred a block from his school. He had seen his friend shot right next to him, continued walking to school, and went to his classroom. This was the safest space for him at that time, but he never did return to school. Talking with students in the discipline office that were removed from class at the same school, it was not uncommon to hear them how immediate family members were incarcerated, involved in illegal activities, frequently moving residences, and just exposed to violence on a regular basis to the point that it was numbing. The trauma students were experiencing was preventing them from accessing school and frequently leading them to dropping out of school or receiving poor grades. As the third largest district in the United States with 371,000 students, CPS serves a diverse student population that is 46.7% Hispanic, 36.6% African American, and 10.5% White, with 76.6% of the entire student body considered economically disadvantaged (Chicago Public Schools, 2018). My years of experience include working in all areas of the city with
multiple demographics and grades including high school. I have worked in schools on academic probation for poor standardized test performance in some of the most crime-ridden and disenfranchised communities and also in high performing schools located in communities with the lowest crime rates in Chicago. One characteristic that they all have in common is students who have experienced traumatic events, which impacts their ability to succeed and feel safe in school.

In my teacher preparation training and administration preparation courses, trauma, Social Emotional Learning, and Restorative Practices were never discussed or considered as a key factor in a student’s ability to access and be successful in school. During my sixth year of teaching in 2009, I first heard the word trauma and its impact on the child’s brain was presented at a workshop. In response to a violent beating of a CPS student Derron Albert in 2009, the district received $260 million in stimulus money from the Federal Government, and $40 million of this was allocated to a new initiative called Culture of Calm (Vevea, 2011). Schools that were identified as needing violence prevention initiatives were awarded grants that included a Culture of Calm Coordinator to lead the anti-violence work at each school. As the Culture of Calm Coordinator at my school, I began to have conversations with teachers about the impact of trauma on children to help them understand the trigger and source of some of their student’s behavior and actions. I helped create one of the first Peace Rooms in CPS that implemented Restorative Practices. According to Umoja Student Development (2019), a Peace Room serves as a dedicated space or hub for Restorative Justice Practices to be offered to students and staff. From my perspective as a teacher and leader in CPS, the tragic death of Derron Albert was the catalyst for trauma informed practices, Social-
Emotional Learning, and Restorative Practices being supported and promoted within the district to create a Supportive School Environment.

CPS utilizes a School Quality Rating Policy (2017) to determine an annual school rating. I can attest to the tremendous pressure that principals have upon them to lead their school to achieve the highest possible rating—Level 1+. My school has been rated Level 1+ for three consecutive years, so there is additional pressure for me to maintain this high level of performance. In 2013, CPS closed 50 schools and almost all of them were considered low performing academic schools based on standardized test scores (Vevea, 2013). Schools selected for closure were also labeled as having low enrollment, and students who attended the schools were relocated to nearby schools with higher ratings. CPS schools are broken down into 19 networks that resemble mini-districts within the larger district. Each of these networks has a Network Chief that acts as a local superintendent. The Network Chief is responsible for evaluating each principal and providing support to their schools. Networks provide prioritized support that is often based on a school’s overall rating using CPS’s School Quality Rating Policy (SQRP).

Prospective and current parents view a school’s rating as the effectiveness of the school and use it to determine whether or not to enroll or transfer their child. Chicago has many options for students that include neighborhood public schools, selective enrollment schools, Charter Schools, and Private Schools. School perception can have an impact on the number of students enrolled in each school and on the local property values. A study by the Brookings Institute found that “across the 100 largest metropolitan areas, housing costs an average of 2.4 times as much, or nearly $11,000 more per year, near a high-scoring public school than near a low-scoring public school” (Rothwell, 2012). The
SQRP is rooted in detailed performance metrics through which schools receive points based on standardized test data, 5 Essential Survey results, and attendance (School Quality Rating, 2017). Schools are rated a Level 1+, Level 1, Level 2+, Level 2, or Level 3. Having below a Level 2+ rating puts a school on probation and can lead to serious repercussions. Repercussions in the past have included an entire school takeover by the district and possible school closure. As a result, all CPS schools are laser focused on improving and maintaining their levels. Having a high rating in CPS means that the students in the building are coming to school on a daily basis, growing academically from year to year, and the school is rating high on the 5 Essential Survey. Almost 60% of a K-8 grade school’s rating is based on the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) NWEA Reading and Math scores (Chicago Public Schools, 2017). The NWEA is an adaptive computerized Reading and Math assessment given to students in CPS at the end of each academic year to measure growth from spring to spring. Some schools opt to give the NWEA at the beginning and middle of the year to monitor growth and make adjustments in instruction to close any identified learning gaps. According to McTighe and Brown (2005), high stakes accountability measures tied to rigorous academic standards are not just a passing fad. They are part of the lifeblood of teaching and learning in the 21st century. What may work for certain learners, may not be what the other learners require to succeed (p. 243).

A small percentage of the SQRP is tied to the annual 5 Essential Survey. This survey is worth 10% percent of a school rating and focuses on Ambitious Instruction, Effective Leaders, Collaborative Teachers, Involved Families, and Supportive Environment. It was created by the University of Chicago and is used by almost 6,000
schools throughout the country with over five million students, teachers, and parents as respondents (University of Chicago, 2018). All public schools in the state of Illinois are required to take the survey. Students in grades six through eight take the survey along with school staff. The survey results are used by schools when planning annual school improvement goals and are a critical component of each school’s School Improvement Plan, which is required by the State of Illinois to be submitted every two years. The 5 Essential Survey is the only area of the CPS school rating in which the school environment is evaluated as part of its rating.

As a school leader I’ve reflected often and come to learn that the school environment is fundamentally crucial for setting students up for success. In a study by Allensworth and Hart (2018), including data from 100 Chicago Public Schools and interviews with principals and teachers from 12 schools, it was found that “a strong school climate is most important for achievement growth” (p. 2). It is therefore imperative that schools focus on creating a trauma-informed school environment in which all students can be successful. According to Paccione-Dyszlewski (2016), “schools can no longer be just a place where a child goes just to learn to read or write; they must focus equally on becoming an epicenter of social and emotional development” (p. 8). As a principal, a key element in the foundation for student success is a healthy and strong school environment.

Of the current J.P. Miller School student body, 18% identify as having a disability. The majority of students with a disability are included in the general education classroom. Hoover and Patton (2008) discuss the trend of placements for students with disabilities over a 40-year time span (i.e., the 1960s to the present). They concluded that,
although the debate over the practice of inclusion continues, “the placement of students with learning and behavior problems into inclusive settings will continue to increase” (p. 28). As a result, we have witnessed special education services progress from separate, segregated settings to resource rooms and then on to more inclusive learning environments in which the students have greater access to general education curriculum (p. 196).

The movement of students with behavior and learning needs into more inclusive classroom environments described by Hoover and Patton (2005) underscore the need for creating a supportive environment to help all students. This trend is having an impact on teaching and learning in all schools. Combined with the high stakes accountability movement in education, there is a potential serious problem of how to meet the needs of all students in the general education setting that needs to be addressed. As cited in Hoover and Patton, the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities states that multi-tiered instructional programming is a continuum of services provided to all learners, including those who are at-risk, within the general education system (p. 196). Hoover and Patton describe the three-tiered Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) as indicated in the chart below (pp. 196-197). Hoover and Patton also emphasize that “an effective three-tier model must be dynamic and fluid providing instructional programming across all three levels, rather than a static instructional service model separated by rigid boundaries between levels of instruction” (p. 197). Creating a Supportive School Environment must include meeting the needs of all students, not some or most.
Table 1

*Multi-Tiered Systems of Support*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tier</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>High-quality core instruction. Researched-based and systematic instruction in a challenging curriculum in general education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>High-quality targeted supplemental instruction. Targeted and focused interventions to supplement core instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>High-quality intensive intervention. Specialized interventions to meet significant needs, including various disability needs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Background to the Study**

J.P. Miller School is a neighborhood Chicago Public School serving students in Kindergarten through Eighth Grade on the far Southwest side of Chicago. There are approximately 275 students with one classroom per grade level. J.P. Miller is currently rated a Level 1+ rated school for the fourth consecutive year. At the beginning of the self-study, NWEA Reading attainment and growth scores have remained relatively consistent, while Math attainment and growth scores have seen a recent dip. The 5 Essential Survey indicates that the school is “Well Organized” for school improvement. There were significant gains from 2015 to 2016 in the areas of Ambitious Instruction, Effective Leaders, Collaborative Teachers, and Involved Families—all received a rating of “Very High.” There has been little to no growth, however, in the Supportive Environment category, which was rated as “Neutral.” A Supportive Environment focuses on whether a school is “safe, demanding, and supportive.”
J.P. Miller School has had five principals over the past 10 years, but there had been very little turnover of teaching staff until the start of the 2016-2017 school year. I became the Interim Principal of the school in July 2016 and was offered a four-year contract by the Local School Council in November 2016. I replaced a principal that had served in that role for four years and left to lead another neighborhood school in an adjacent community in Chicago. As a result of the previous principal leaving and previous high administrative turnover, many teachers left the school in the short period between the previous principal leaving and my arrival. Anecdotally, the constant change and the thought of starting over again with a new leader, drove the teacher turnover. In my first year as principal, over 50% of the general education teachers were new to the school, teaching a grade for the first time, or teaching a subject to a grade for the first time. This allowed me to quickly hire and build a team that was in line with my own set of core values. One of the challenges that I faced with all of these new hires was building relationships with the staff, students, and school community, so that I would be able to effectively lead the school towards educational excellence and continuous improvement.

When there is a change in any organization, transitions can be difficult for some to adjust to a new leader and their leadership style.

As a new principal at an established school with a history of high academic performance and a history of low ratings on the University of Chicago 5 Essential Survey’s Supportive Environment I needed a clear and researched based plan rooted in educational theory to assist me in creating change to create a more Supportive School Environment.
Problem Statement

The district data and ratings have shown, a significant area for improvement at J.P. Miller School is its “Supportive Environment” as measured by the 5 Essential Survey. University of Chicago’s 5 Essential Survey (2019) defines schools with a Supportive Environment as “safe, demanding, and supportive.” Key attributes of a Supportive Environment include “students feel safe in and around the school, they find teachers trust-worthy and responsive to their academic needs, all students’ value hard work, and teachers push all students toward high academic performance” (University of Chicago, 2019). Historically, the school has performed at a high academic level as measured by standardized test scores, however, the school’s Supportive Environment had been measured as “Neutral” for years while all other measured areas had been rated as “Strong” or “Very Strong.” A zero-tolerance practices discipline model had been in place in the district and school for some time and did not include Restorative Justice. There had been a lack of focus on relationships and understanding why students act out in class and an absence of any Social Emotional Learning curriculum. At the start of the 2016-2017 school year, local political officials revealed a plan to merge the school with another neighboring school due to low enrollment. The school started off the first day of school with only 12 registered kindergarten students. Parents had been transferring their kids out of J.P. Miller school and not enrolling primary age students due to the negative school culture and climate. One could say that the end of the school was on the horizon with the planned merger and the downward spiral that had occurred related to school culture and environment. A clear problem present at J.P. Miller School was the lack of a supportive
school environment as indicated by the 5 Essential Survey and evident in the decline in enrollment at the school that almost led to the school being merged with another school.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to examine and reflect on how my leadership and the promotion of a supportive school environment is related to Sergiovanni and Blumer’s Leadership through Purposing. I went on a listening tour when I became principal at J.P. Miller School, and a resonating theme shared by parents, teachers, and students was the presence of a negative school culture. School stakeholders shared with me that previous principals at the school utilized a zero tolerance discipline model and an authoritarian top down leadership style. Decisions were often made without stakeholder input and staff were not welcomed to provide feedback on leadership actions. Parents had withdrawn their children from the school and enrollment had declined to the point the local Alderman proposed merging the school with a neighboring school. Students on the 5 Essential Survey rated “Student-Teacher Trust” at a 42 out of 99 in 2016, the year before I became principal (University of Chicago, 2019). Historically, the relationships between students and teachers was one where there was a lack of student voice and choice. As a new principal coming into an environment with a deeply rooted culture of not focusing on developing a supportive school environment, I understood that change would not be easy.

To help guide this change with my school community, I led the school through CPS’ Supportive School Certification. To help provide the “why” to reach the hearts and minds of all stakeholders I used Sergiovanni and Blumer’s Leadership through Purposing. Utilizing Leadership through Purposing provided me a framework within
which to reflect on the decisions, interactions, and communication that I have with all stakeholders throughout the supportive school certification process. This allowed me to look critically at the steps I took to make changes in my school through the lens of Sergiovanni and Blumer.

**Overview of Conceptual Framework**

There was a clear need for J.P. Miller School to create a Supportive School Environment based on the 5 Essential Data in order to meet the needs of all students, staff, and parents. In order to help reach this goal, I led the school through Chicago Public Schools’ Supportive School Certification process. This process was analyzed through the conceptual framework focused on Sergiovanni’s (1992), “Leadership through Purposing,” and Blumer’s (1989), “Leadership through Purposing Practices.”

Sergiovanni (1992) explains Leadership through Purposing in *Moral Leadership: Getting into the heart of school improvement*:

> We must be able to give reasons for what we do, not only to others but ourselves. And we must be able to see the connection between why we do what we do and some larger purpose. If we can’t see the connection, then maybe were doing the wrong thing. Purposing involves both the vision of school leaders and the covenant that the school shares. The notion of vision is widely accepted, but the effect of purposing falls short if this is where it ends. A covenant provides the added dimension of values and moral authority, to make purposing count. (p. 73)
Sergiovanni (1984) also believes that an excellent school has a strong culture (p. 10). An excellent school has core values that a leader enriches through purposing (p. 10). He goes further to say,

teachers, parents, and students need answers to some basic questions: what is the school about? What is important here? What do we believe in? Why do we function the way we do? How are we unique? How do I fit into the scheme of things?” (p. 10)

Leadership through purposing creates the core values and makes them part of the fabric of the school. (p. 10). I used Sergiovanni’s (1992), Leadership through Purposing as my guide towards CPS’ Supportive School Certification process. At every opportunity when speaking with students, staff, parents, and community I used sharing the vision of becoming a Certified Supportive School and why we need to work as a team to accomplish this goal. I believe Leadership through Purposing is necessary because the school is rated at the highest possible level by Chicago Public Schools, implementing change can be challenging when everything appears to be running smoothly.

Irwin Blumer, former Superintendent of Newton Public Schools also believed in the importance of Leadership though Purposing as central to school improvement.

Blumer (1989) laid out six key practices when using purposing as central tenants. He said that “the role of a leader is to share what she/he stands for and communicate that successfully to others.” Leadership by Purposing consists of the following practices (see Table 2). Blumer’s Leadership by Purposing Practices will be used to help guide me through the Supportive School Certification process. As I journal and reflect, I
categorized and aligned the decisions, interactions, and communication with stakeholders with Blumer’s six practices.

Table 2

*Leadership by Purposing* (Blumer, 1989)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership by Purposing Practice</th>
<th>Elements</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Say it</td>
<td>Define the core values. Communicate them clearly and often to inside and outside constituents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Model it</td>
<td>Act on these core values. When it comes time to make tough choices and trade-offs, make it clear that the core values drive the final decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Organize for it</td>
<td>Put in resources to support the core values. Organize incentives and rewards for organizational units and personnel whose actions exemplify a commitment to core values. Ensure that the core values permeate all of the arenas in the system such as classroom routines, cafeteria, playground, faculty meetings, student council, traditions and ceremonies, grouping practices, posters and slogans, curriculum, models of teaching and lesson structures, spontaneous personal contact.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Support it</td>
<td>Provide additional resources to the areas that promote core values. When undergoing retrenchment, cut other areas before jeopardizing programs and practices that reflect the core values. The most important things get cut last.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Enforce it and commend practices that exemplify core values</td>
<td>Embody core values in personnel evaluations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Express outrage when practices violate the core values.</td>
<td>Outrage is a powerful form of communication. Outrage tells people what is important.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Significance of the Study

Chicago Public Schools, the third largest district in the United States, created a Supportive School Certification in 2017. The heart of this certification is demonstrating that as a school you have increased Social Emotional Learning, Restorative Justice, and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS). In order to obtain this certification, there must be documented evidence in key areas over the course of a school year. This initiative has the potential to be used as a model to other districts across the country. However, because research by a school leader who worked with their school community to achieve this certification does not exist, this current self-study can act as a blueprint for the success of other leaders working to achieve a certified Supportive School. This self-study will help reveal and demystify the steps a school leader needs to make in the creation of a Supportive School Environment. It will expose the impact of using Leadership through Purposing.

Research Questions

To achieve a clear-cut focus in the implementation of the steps to achieving a Supportive School Environment, specific questions have been developed. These research questions are derived from the previous literature, including Freire (1970), who states, “to surmount the situation of oppression, people must first critically recognize its causes, so that through transforming action they can create a new situation, one that makes it possible the pursuit of fuller humanity” (p. 47). In addition, McTighe and Brown (2005) firmly believe that:

teachers must continuously revisit what they are doing and how they are going to do it to ensure that every learner maximizes his or her potential. Twenty-first
century learning communities are not factories built on assembly-line principals: They are places where shared goals are met by individuals and teams working together to capitalize on the talents and strengths of every member of that community. (p. 243)

Recognizing that J.P. Miller School does have a group of students who fall into Freire’s category of the “oppressed,” all stakeholders must work collaboratively to meet all students’ needs. A self-study of the relationship between my leadership and the promotion of a Supportive School Environment was used to address the following research questions:

1) How does my leadership style using “Leadership through Purposing” impact creating a Supportive School Environment?

2) How has my leadership and creation of a Supportive School Environment relate to student academic performance?

3) How has reflecting on my experience in creating a supportive school environment impacted my leadership style?

The first research question explores how my leadership style impacts the creation of a Supportive School Environment. Elmore (2000) argues that instructional improvement “requires continuous learning that is both an individual and social activity” (p. 20). As a new leader in a school used to leadership turnover, my leadership style will have an impact on J.P. Miller School. There is the potential for a positive impact that increases student achievement while also closing achievement gaps. While this self-study is for the benefit of the students, I also want to reflect on my growth as a leader while
striving for a Supportive School Environment and share my experience with other school leaders interested in better supported students, staff, parents, and the community.

**Definition of Key Terms**

Compassionate School – Wolpow, Johnson, Hertel, and Kincaid (2016) define a Compassionate School as one in which

staff and students learn to be aware of the challenges faced by others. They respond to the physical, emotional, and social challenges faced by students and families by offering support to remove barriers to learning. They do not judge the situations or responses to others. They seek to understand and support. (p. xiv)

Distributed Leadership – According to Elmore (2000), Distributed Leadership is rooted in the belief that “in any organized system, people typically specialize, or develop particular competencies, which are related to their predispositions, interests, aptitudes, prior knowledge, skills, and specialized roles” (p. 14). Distributed Leadership then recognizes that there are multiple experts in the organization, and leadership should be dispersed to the experts because “some principals and teachers are simply better at doing some things than others” (p. 14).

Diverse Learners – According to Piazza, Rao, and Protacio (2015), Diverse Learners are “students with learning disabilities as those with a significant difficulty in language acquisition, listening, speaking, reading (word-recognition skills and comprehension), and writing” (p. 2).

Individual Education Plan (IEP) – As cited in Kurth and Mastergeorge (2010), Drasgow, Yell, and Robinson (2001) state that
for all students receiving special education services, whether included in general education or instructed in special education settings, special education teams are required to develop student Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for all students receiving special education services. The IEP must contain several key components, including (a) a description of what kind of special education program a student will receive, (b) what related services a school district will provide to the student with disabilities, and (c) measurable annual goals and objectives. (p. 147)

Leadership Inquiry – Uiterwijk-Luijk, Krüger, Zijlstra, and Volman (2017) describe Leadership Inquiry as “having a mindset in which the leader always wants to know more and understand and using data effectively to inform decisions” (p. 494).

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support – As cited by Hoover and Patton (2005), the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities state that “multi-tiered instructional programming is a continuum of services provided to all learners, including those who are at-risk, within the general education system” (p. 196).

Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) – According to NWEA (2016), “our research-based, computerized assessments help educators answer a crucial question: Are my students learning? By delivering precise, real-time information about every student’s learning triumphs and challenges.” Chicago Public Schools uses the NWEA Reading and Math for students in Kindergarten through 8th Grade. Student NWEA data is used to rate schools, teachers, and principals.

Peace Circles – Ashley and Burke (2009) describe Peace Circles as:
Circles, or peacemaking circles, bring people together to talk about issues and resolve conflict. A trained facilitator, often called the “circle keeper,” encourages willing participants to share information, points of view, and personal feelings. The facilitator may use a talking piece, an object that allows the person in possession the opportunity to speak without interruption. Others in the circle are encouraged to remain silent and listen to what is being shared. By offering opportunities for safe and open communication, circles help resolve conflict, strengthen relationships between participants, emphasize respect and understanding, and empower all parties involved. Circle facilitators, with the permission of school administrators, can also invite family and community members to participate. (p. 14)

Reflective Practice – Wieringa (2011) uses Schön’s book, *The Reflective Practitioner* (1983), to describe Reflective Practice as “not only looking back as reflection…but recognizing the importance of practitioners’ special kind of knowing,” and it also allows “how we, real people, solve problems in the real world and how we simultaneously apply and create our knowledge in the process” (p. 168).

Restorative Justice – According to Ashley and Burke’s (2009), *Implementing Restorative Justice: A Guide for Schools*, published by the State of Illinois and the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, “restorative justice is a philosophy based on a set of principles that guide the response to conflict and harm. These principles are based on practices that have been used for centuries in indigenous cultures and religious groups” (p. 6). The guide states that restorative justice’s three main goals are:
• Accountability. Restorative justice strategies provide opportunities for wrongdoers to be accountable to those they have harmed, and enable them to repair the harm they caused to the extent possible.

• Community safety. Restorative justice recognizes the need to keep the community safe through strategies that build relationships and empower the community to take responsibility for the well-being of its members.

• Competency development. Restorative justice seeks to increase the pro-social skills of those who have harmed others, address underlying factors that lead youth to engage in delinquent behavior, and build on strengths in each young person. (p. 6)

Self-Study – Hamilton and Pinnegar (2013) define self-study as:

self-initiated and focused, centers on the improvement of the profession in general and practice more specifically, is interactive, usually uses qualitative research strategies, and uses an exemplar-based system to tackle issues of trustworthiness and authenticity. Consequently, this methodology supports researchers in understanding their work, questioning the possibilities of practice, and exploring practices so that more can be learned by future practitioners. (p. 75)

Self-study is focused more on gaining knowledge about how one’s identity impacts and is impacted by one’s practice. Improvement may be both personal and professional.

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) – According to CASEL (2018),

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show
empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

Supportive School Environment – Chicago Public Schools defines an Exemplary Supportive School Environment as one where the “school has demonstrated a strong commitment to social and emotional learning (SEL) and robust systems that ensure a supportive learning environment for all students. The school is implementing best practices to promote SEL for all students, and the environment is highly consistent with all areas of the CPS School Climate Standards” (2019).

Trauma – According to Wolpow and colleagues (2016), trauma is “an umbrella term denoting the inability of an individual or community to respond in a healthy way (physically, emotionally, and/or mentally) to acute or chronic stress. Trauma occurs when stress compromises the health and welfare of a person and his/her community” (p. xiv).

Trauma Informed School – The Treatment and Services Adaption Center (2019) believes that in a trauma-informed school, the adults in the school community are prepared to recognize and respond to those who have been impacted by traumatic stress. Those adults include administrators, teachers, staff, parents, and law enforcement. In addition, students are provided with clear expectations and communication strategies to guide them through stressful situations. The goal is to not only provide tools to cope with extreme situations but to create an underlying culture of respect and support.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter will present a review of the literature that addresses the social and emotional needs of students in schools through creating a Supportive School Environment. Pine (2009) states that “the ultimate goal of self-study is reform—the systematic and substantive transformation of teacher education through sustained inquiry” (p. 60). The research methodologies of Self-Study and Action Research will be analyzed and defined so that their unique and interwoven intricacies can be unpacked and understood. The background of how trauma impacts students, along with the history of Social Emotional Learning (SEL), Compassionate Schools, and Restorative Justice Practices, will also be reviewed.

The research on developing culture and leadership style in the implementation of change will be reviewed to help facilitate the reform that will be undertaken in this self-study. The purpose of this review is to provide an understanding of the previous research, the history and components that make up a Supportive School Environment, and to provide a foundation of leadership change theory. This review will also serve as a rationale for the reasons a Supportive School Environment is essential and as the focus for my self-study research questions:
1) How does my leadership style using “Leadership through Purposing” impact creating a Supportive School Environment?

2) How has my leadership and creation of a Supportive School Environment relate to student academic performance?

3) How has reflecting on my experience in creating a supportive school environment impacted my leadership style?

**Impact of Trauma on Students**

While student trauma has always existed, acknowledging and dealing with it in schools was not a priority until very recently. According to Marcus (2014):

the prevalence of trauma in American society was not well documented until as recently as the late 1990s. The first revelation of its impact on children came in a 1997 study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which found that two-thirds of the 17,000 people surveyed had suffered at least one adverse childhood experience of some kind, including witnessing domestic violence, being sexually or physically abused, or having a parent who used illegal drugs or was in prison. (p. 5)

Trauma events are defined as “incidents that are perceived as terrifying, shocking, sudden, or that potentially pose a threat to one’s life, safety, or personal integrity” (Black, Woodworth, Tremblay, & Carpenter, 2012, p. 192).

The ways in which trauma is experienced and its impact is unique to the individual (Wiest-Stevenson & Lee, 2016). The common responses include traumatic responses, posttraumatic stress responses, and PTSD (Black et al., 2012). Some of these symptoms manifest as variations in anger, depression, increased startled responses, etc.
These symptoms can often be misdiagnosed if one is not assessed through a trauma informed lens. Students who are experiencing trauma are often mislabeled with disabilities, such as attention deficit, oppositional-defiant disorder, and others. Burke, Hellman, Scott, Weems, and Carrion (2011) found that, in a study of 701 participants, children who are exposed to four or more traumas are 32 times more likely to be labeled as learning disabled (p. 498). In order to combat the impact of trauma on children and young adults, parents, schools, and communities must work together to develop a supportive environment (p. 498). Wiest-Stevenson and Lee (2016) lay out the roles of school administration and school teachers:

- **Role of Administration:** Foster a safe and secure environment, educating teachers and support staff regarding the growing needs of students impacted by trauma.
- **Role of Teachers:** Identifying students, coping techniques and relaxation skills, creating a warm and friendly environment, and a culture of community. (p. 500)

Reiterating the importance of dealing with trauma, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA, 2018) states that when a human service program takes the step to become trauma informed, every part of the organization, management, and service delivery system is assessed and potentially modified to include a basic understanding of how trauma affects the life of an individual seeking services.

Demonstrating the effectiveness of trauma-informed schools is Sibinga, Webb, Ghazarian, and Ellen’s (2015) study of two Baltimore schools that developed a mindfulness-based stress reduction program. The studies showed convincing evidence
that high-quality school-based MBSR instruction for youth in urban public schools is feasible, acceptable, and leads to improvements in psychological symptoms, coping, and posttraumatic stress symptoms; and improvements in these domains may ultimately reduce the negative impact of stress and trauma experienced in childhood and adolescence and lead to significant positive shifts, when imagined over the life course (p. 6).

**Social Emotional Learning and Compassionate School Background**

Schools have traditionally focused on academics, but parents, educators, and society at large have long agreed that, when students graduate from high school, they should be independent, socially skilled, well-rounded young citizens who are ready to responsively navigate their own personal and professional pathways into early adulthood (Greenberg et al., 2003). Students spend most of their days in schools, therefore, it makes sense to teach Social Emotional Learning within the school setting. Socially and emotionally competent children tend to be better integrated into the school and classroom context and can focus on the academic tasks provided to them, compared with children who struggle socially and emotionally (Elias & Haynes, 2008). CASEL (2018) has identified five core intrapersonal, interpersonal and cognitive competences for which a school should strive:

1. **Self-awareness** involves the ability to identify and evaluate one’s own emotions, thoughts, and their influences on evaluation. It includes evaluating strengths and challenges in one’s self, and being aware of one’s own goals and values. High levels of self-awareness require evaluation and how thoughts, feelings and actions are interconnected.
2. *Self-management* entails the ability to regulate one’s emotions, thoughts and behaviors effectively, including stress management, impulse control, motivating oneself, and work towards achieving personal and academic goals.

3. *Social awareness* is the ability to take the perspective of others—including those who come from a different background and culture, to empathize with others, understand social and ethical norms, and to valuation resources and supports in family, school, and community.

4. *Relationship skills* provide children with the tools to form and maintain positive and healthy relationships, communicate clearly, listen actively, cooperate, negotiate constructively during conflict, and to offer and seek help when needed.

5. *Responsible decision-making skills* equip children with the ability to make constructive and respectful choices about their own behavior and social interactions, taking into account safety concerns, ethical standards, social and behavioural norms, consequences, and the wellbeing of self and others.

In addition, Jones, Greenberg, and Crowley (2015) discuss how the growing body of literature and research demonstrate the importance of noncognitive skills in development, which should motivate policymakers and program developers to focus on improving these skills in young children (p. 2289). When these issues are ignored, there can be adverse effects on the life of the developing child, including, the future likelihood of committing crimes, which is greatly influenced by noncognitive processes in development, such as externalizing behavior, social empathy, and effectively regulating emotions (p. 2283). However, predicting future success in the workplace is less accurate
when using just IQ or test scores than they are when non-cognitive characteristics, such as self-discipline, academic motivation, and interpersonal skills, are factored in (p. 2283).

The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAEP) published their once per decade survey in 2018. This survey measures nation trends in education and is an excellent source for understanding what is considered important or urgent for the average public-school principal over time. In the report:

One of the questions asked of principals was: during your tenure as a principal up to and including the last 3 years, how has your level of involvement as a principal changed with respect to the following areas? The 2018 survey asked respondents to identify the degree to which their level of involvement in 27 different areas had changed over the previous 3 years. (Fuller et al., 2018)

The results are listed in Table 3.

It is interesting to note that student mental health issues had the largest increase over the past decade at 41.9%, and student social-emotional well-being had the fourth largest increase at 32%. Mental health issues rated higher than personal evaluations and the use of assessment data in instruction. Both of them rated higher than dealing with the effects of student assessment scores on the school’s accountability or accreditation result. Principals and schools across the country are all focusing on these two elements more than they have in the past. They may have figured out that, without supporting mental health issues and having strong socio-emotional support, teaching and learning is difficult to achieve. Another question asked as part of the survey was: “What amount of time do you spend on the following activities?” According the NAEP survey (2018), principals reported:
There were five areas that at least 25% of respondents identified as among their top five time expenditures. These five areas are interaction with students (46.1%), supervision of faculty and staff (32.3%), informal interactions with teachers (28.5%), addressing socioemotional needs of students (27.7%), and discipline and student management issues (25.8%).

Table 3

*National Association of Elementary School Principals (2018)*

All of the top five responses involved interactions with students and staff. However, their compliance measures were not in the top five and addressing the
socioemotional needs of students was the fourth highest response as far as time spent by the elementary school principal.

The NAEP Survey (Fuller et al., 2018) also asked the question: “To what extent is each of the items currently or potentially (within the next year) a concern in the school for which you are now responsible?” The number one concern listed by principals in 2018 was the increase in the number of students with socioemotional problems. By comparison, in the last survey conducted in 2008, socioemotional problems did not even show up in the top ten list of concerns of principals.

Table 4


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>% of principals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase in the numbers of students with emotional problems</td>
<td>73.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student mental health issues</td>
<td>65.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students not performing to their level of potential</td>
<td>62.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing a continuum of services for students who are at risk</td>
<td>61.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student assessment</td>
<td>57.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student poverty</td>
<td>56.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional practices</td>
<td>55.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher performance/effectiveness</td>
<td>55.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional development of staff</td>
<td>55.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fragmentation of principal’s time</td>
<td>53.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management of student behavior</td>
<td>52.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial resources</td>
<td>50.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative (TLPI) of Massachusetts and Advocates for Children and Harvard Law School published *Helping Traumatized Children Learn* (Volume Two) in 2013. This researched book provides a roadmap for
schools and districts to become trauma sensitive learning environments (Cole, Eisner, Gregory, & Ristuccia, 2013). According to the TLPI, there are six attributes of a Trauma-Sensitive School (2013):

1. Leadership and staff share an understanding of trauma’s impacts on learning and the need for a school wide approach.
2. The school supports all students to feel safe physically, socially, emotionally, and academically.
3. The school addresses students’ needs in holistic ways, taking into account their relationships, self-regulation, academic competence, and physical and emotional well-being.
4. The school explicitly connects students to school community and provides multiple opportunities to practice newly developing skills.
5. The school embraces teamwork and staff share responsibility for all students.
6. Leadership and staff anticipate and adapt to the ever-changing needs of students.

These six attributes are meant to act together, not in isolation, and provide the school or district with guiding questions and opportunities for reflection in their journey to becoming a Trauma-Sensitive School (2013).

The authors of Helping Traumatized Children Learn also provide a Flexible Framework for schools to have at the forefront of their vision while changing the culture of the school to become trauma-sensitive (Cole et al., 2013). The Flexible Framework ensures that all of the components are present so that all dimensions of the school are working together to create a trauma-sensitive school:
1. Leadership by school and district administrators to create the infrastructure and culture to promote trauma-sensitive school environments.

2. Professional development and skill building for all school staff, including leaders, in areas that enhance the school’s capacity to create supportive school environments.

3. Access to resources and services, such as mental health and other resources, that help students participate fully in the school community and help adults create a whole-school environment that engages all students.

4. Academic and non-academic strategies that enable all students to learn.

5. Policies, procedures, and protocols that sustain the critical elements of a trauma-sensitive school.

6. Collaboration with families that actively engages them in all aspects of their children’s education, helps them feel welcome at school, and understands the important roles they play.

The authors point out that the path to creating a trauma-sensitive school will vary with each school, but as long as the Flexible Framework is used as a guide, it will ensure that all stakeholders and elements of the school are working together to support the culture shift of creating a trauma-sensitive school.

*Helping Traumatized Children Learn* (Cole et al., 2013) also offers a detailed process for creating a Trauma-Sensitive School (see Table 5). Changing the culture and ways of educating and supporting each individual child can be challenging. The authors created the 4 Step Process to help schools make the shift with urgency and to have a plan
in place to overcome any obstacles along the way while everyone works together and resources are aligned to the common goal.

Table 5

Creating a Trauma-Sensitive School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Implementation Steps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Why do we feel an urgency to become a Trauma-Sensitive School?           | Sharing learning and a sense of urgency  
Growing a collation  
Engaging leadership  
Establishing a steering committee  
Reaching out to the district                                               |
| How do we know we are ready to create a Trauma-Sensitive Action Plan?    | Engaging the whole staff in shared learning  
Surveying the staff  
Identifying staff’s trauma-sensitive priorities for action  
Assessing staff’s readiness to become a trauma-sensitive school            |
| What actions will address staff priorities and help us become a Trauma-Sensitive School? | Identifying trauma-sensitive action steps to address staff’s priorities  
Developing a school-wide Action Plan  
Planning for assessment                                                      |
| How do we know we are becoming a Trauma-Sensitive School?                | Evaluation outcomes of the Action Plan  
Assessing progress towards whole-school trauma-sensitivity  
Sustaining the school wide trauma-sensitive learning community              |

There is also a 246-page handbook, *The Heart of Learning and Teaching: Compassion, Resilience, and Academic Success* that can be used “by those schools wishing to adopt a compassionate approach to learning and teaching” (Wolpow et al., 2016). Co-authored by the “staff from the Student Engagement and Support section of OSPI and the Woodring College of Education at Western Washington University in
Bellingham,” this handbook, originally published in 2009 and then updated in 2016, includes 10 Principles of a Compassionate School:

1. Focus on culture and climate in the school community
2. Train and support all staff regarding trauma and learning
3. Encourage and sustain open and regular communication for all
4. Develop a strengths-based approach in working with students and peers
5. Ensure discipline policies are both compassionate and effective (restorative practices)
6. Weave compassionate strategies into school improvement planning
7. Provided tiered support for all students based on what they need
8. Create flexible accommodations for diverse learners
9. Provide access, voice, and ownership for staff, students, and community
10. Use data to identify vulnerable students and determine outcomes and strategies for continuous quality improvement

The handbook is available as a free download on the State of Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction’s website and is indicative of a strong focus on SEL and creating Trauma-Sensitive Schools throughout the United States. The authors describe the handbook’s purpose as

to inform, validate, and strengthen the collective work of educators to support students whose learning is adversely affected by chronic stress and trauma. This handbook provides information about trauma and learning, self-care, classroom strategies, and building parent and community partnerships that work. (Wolpow et al., 2016)
It also offers concrete plans and strategies that schools and districts can use to become Trauma-Sensitive and improve their SEL toward better supported students.

The State of Illinois was the first state to adopt Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Standards in 2004 (Gordon, Mulhall, Shaw, & Weissberg, 2011). The SEL standards include three goals that also indicate overall performance descriptors for the 1-5 and 6-12 grade bands. Gordon et al. share that they are specific statements of the knowledge and skills students should know and be able to do within a goal. The standards define the learning needed to achieve the goals, but are designed to be general enough to apply to learning across the entire age range from school entry through high school graduation. (p. 73)

The early adoption of the SEL Standards by the State of Illinois has made the state a national leader in SEL learning, and many districts within the state are recognized as being models for other districts in the country to follow (2013). As a principal in Illinois, the establishment of SEL has assisted in the creation of a Supportive School Environment. Chicago Public Schools has dedicated resources and formed a SEL Department to help schools become more supportive that also includes a Supportive School Certification distinction that is displayed on a school’s CPS homepage.
Table 6

State of Illinois Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Performance Descriptor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Develop Self-awareness and Self-Management Skills to Achieve School and Life Success. | 1a: Identify and Manage One’s Emotions and Behavior.  
1b: Recognize Personal Qualities and External Supports.  
1c: Demonstrate Skills Related to Achieving Personal and Academic Goals. |
| Use Social-awareness And Interpersonal Skills to Establish and Maintain Positive Relationships. | 2a: Recognize the Feelings and Perspectives of Others.  
2b: Recognize Individual and Group Similarities and Differences.  
2c: Use Communication and Social Skills to Interact Effectively with Others.  
2d: Demonstrate an Ability to Prevent, Manage, And Resolve Interpersonal Conflicts in Constructive Ways. |
| Demonstrate Decision-making Skills and Responsible Behaviors in Personal, School, And Community Contexts. | 3a: Consider Ethical, Safety, And Societal Factors in Making Decisions.  
3b: Apply Decision-making Skills to Deal Responsibly with Daily Academic and Social Situations.  
3c: Contribute to The Well-being of One’s School and Community. |

Chicago Public Schools (CPS) has demonstrated a commitment to Social Emotional Learning for a number of years. As reported by Mathewson (2017):

the CPS Office of Social and Emotional Learning provides training and coaching to school leaders as well as teachers, and the district offers incentives to schools pursuing a Supportive Schools Certification. The district increased spending on SEL resources from $8.4 million in 2013 to $11.2 million in 2016. (p. 1)
Each Network in CPS has a dedicated Social Emotional Learning Specialists that works directly with schools to help improve SEL Instruction and increase Restorative Justice Practices. This can include conducting Professional Development at the school site to help teachers and staff understand the impact of trauma on students and how to incorporate SEL into academic instruction. Mathewson also shares that out-of-school suspensions are down 67% to 8 students per 100 and the graduation rate has soared 16.6%, reaching 73.5% last year. Expulsions are down 74% and police notifications are down 39%, two more statistics administrators attribute, at least in part, to the focus on social emotional learning. Nearly 200 of the district’s 650 schools have earned a designation under the Supportive Schools Certification program. (p. 2)

With CPS focusing on providing alternative consequences for student behavior infractions and the necessary training and support, schools are seeing a reduction in out of school suspensions and expulsions. Mathewson goes on to further state that Chicago has become a national leader in SEL, helped along by the state of Illinois’ work on a social emotional learning curriculum. The state was the first in the nation to pass standards for social emotional learning and CPS capitalized on that work.

CPS had created a three-year Vision in 2016. One of the components of the Vision is to create a Safe and Supportive Environment (2016). CPS’s vision for a Safe and Supportive Environment states:

Students learn best when they feel safe, both physically and emotionally. We must ensure that every student feels welcomed, supported and respected in school by
both peers and adults. Students also learn more when they have the opportunity to develop social and emotional skills, such as managing frustration, building relationships and making responsible decisions. Those skills are needed to persist with a tough math problem, collaborate on a group project, and to set goals for college and career.

The Vision includes three strategies that will help schools create a more Safe and Supportive Environment (2016) (see Table 7). One of the strategy components is for schools to become eligible for Supportive School Certification on their annual school progress report. The Supportive Schools Certification recognizes CPS schools that have demonstrated a commitment to promoting social, emotional, and academic success for all students. This certification, displayed on the CPS school report card, indicates the extent to which a school is implementing a multi-tiered system of support to create safe, supportive learning environments and promote social and emotional skills (CPS, 2017). This distinction is broken down into four categories (see Table 8).
Table 7

*Chicago Public Schools Safe and Supportive Environment Vision*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Strategy Components</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Establish School-Based Leadership Team Dedicated to Improving School Climate</td>
<td>At every school, a team of staff, students, families and community members will work together to promote a positive school culture, using the CPS Climate Standards as a guide. Teams will analyze school data, identify strengths and weaknesses, generate solutions, lead their implementation and evaluate results. Schools that develop strong school climate practices are eligible for Supportive School Certification on their school progress report.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrate the Teaching of Social-Emotional Skills with All Subject Areas</td>
<td>Every school will create a plan for teaching social-emotional skills that integrates state standards for social-emotional learning into all academic areas. That might include coaching students to overcome frustration with a challenging assignment or to collaborate effectively with peers on a project. Some schools may also choose to adopt research-based instructional programs that explicitly teach social and emotional skills. Students who need more assistance will be supported interventions that meet their social and emotional needs (refer to the MTSS section for more information).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guide Schools to Adopt “Restorative Practices” to Improve Student Discipline</td>
<td>A restorative approach to discipline explores the root cause of student behavior and then guides young people to understand how their actions affect others and to make amends. Taking time to identify the causes of misbehavior can also lead to changes in school practice, such as better supervision. CPS schools that adopted restorative approaches to discipline have seen a significant reduction in student suspension and expulsion since the 2011-2012 school year, with suspensions falling by 67 percent and expulsions dropping by 82 percent. The CPS Office of Safety and Security and the Office of Social and Emotional Learning will continue providing training and coaching to ensure all schools adopt restorative approaches to discipline</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 8

*Chicago Public Schools Supportive School Certification Levels*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Certification Level</th>
<th>Attributes and Requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exemplary</td>
<td>This school has demonstrated a strong commitment to social and emotional learning (SEL) and robust systems that ensure a supportive learning environment for all students. The school is implementing best practices to promote SEL for all students, and the environment is highly consistent with all areas of the CPS School Climate Standards. Requirements: Report the above criteria on the School Climate Self-Assessment AND provide evidence as requested by the Office of Social and Emotional Learning AND participate in a half-day site visit that demonstrates an exemplary supportive learning environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Established</td>
<td>This school has shown evidence of a clear commitment to social and emotional learning (SEL) and school-wide systems that foster a supportive environment. The school has established a School Climate or SEL Leadership team, provided SEL-related training for staff, and is devoting time and resources to create an environment that supports SEL for all students. This may include embedding SEL in their school improvement plan, engaging families and community partners, allocating time for SEL in the master schedule, or providing targeted and intensive SEL services for students who need additional support. Requirements: Report the above criteria on the School Climate Self-Assessment AND provide evidence as requested by the Office of Social and Emotional Learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerging</td>
<td>This school has begun developing systems to support social and emotional learning (SEL). The school reports that they have embraced SEL as part of their vision, have established a team that leads climate and SEL development, and are beginning to adopt best practices to create a learning environment that supports SEL for all students. Requirements: Report the above criteria on the School Climate Self-Assessment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coming Soon</td>
<td>This school has not yet submitted documentation for the Supportive Schools Certification.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Schools wishing to apply for Supportive School Certification must complete a School Climate Self-Assessment followed by a full application demonstrating evidence in six areas (CPS, 2017) (see Table 9).

Table 9

*Chicago Public Schools Supportive School Certification Indicators and Evidence*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Standard of Evidences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continuous Improvement Work Plan (CIWP) includes a school climate goal</td>
<td>At least one of the Priority Strategies in the school’s 2016-2018 CIWP focuses on positive school climate and culture. The milestones described in the plan include universal (i.e. aimed at all students) SEL-related strategies. All students at all grade levels receive SEL instruction every week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All students at all grade levels receive SEL instruction every week.</td>
<td>Every student at every grade level receives 30 minutes of SEL instruction per week, either through time allocated in the master schedule or integration into lesson plans and instructional practices. Note: SEL-focused Advisory, Morning Meeting, Talking Circles, and implementation of SEL curriculum all meet this indicator. Schools meeting this indicator through integration into academic content must demonstrate that integration occurs in classes that all students take every semester. All staff receive ongoing professional development related to SEL.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All staff members participate in some form of SEL-related professional development each school year.</td>
<td>All staff receive ongoing professional development related to SEL. All teachers participate in at least 3 SEL-related professional learning opportunities each school year. Note: Teacher team meetings during the school day that focus on SEL topics meet this indicator, as long as all teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a system for managing referrals and connecting students to interventions and restorative practices.</td>
<td>The school has a system for managing referrals and implements a range of interventions for students who need targeted and/or intensive SEL support (Tier 2 and Tier 3).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school provides at least 3 specific interventions for students who require SEL-related support beyond Tier 1. The school routinely collects data on students’ social and emotional skills, mindsets, and/or perceptions of school and uses these data for continuous improvement.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School collects universal data (i.e. either all students provide data or all teachers provide data about all their students) on student SEL skills, attitudes/mindsets, and/or perceptions of school climate.</td>
<td>The school generates reports or otherwise organizes data for analysis and decision-making. Note: Data that all schools are required to collect (e.g. behavior infractions, My Voice My School), do not meet this requirement. Schools may use self-created surveys to gather data. The school collaborates with community partners to support students’ social and emotional development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school collaborates with community partners to support students’ social and emotional development</td>
<td>School has at least two partnerships with community- based organizations that contribute to the social and emotional development of students, provide SEL-related services to students and/or families, or provide SEL-related professional development for staff.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to be recognized as an Established Supportive School, there must be clear evidence in four out of the six areas. In order to be considered for a site visit that determines Exemplary Supportive School status, the school must have clear evidence in all six of the areas. The final determination will result in a “school badge” on their annual school progress report and district recognition (CPS, 2017).
Restorative Justice Background

Students need to be in school to learn and be successful. It can be argued that most young people make mistakes, but it is essential for adults to help them learn from their mistakes and provide them supports so that they do not have repeat offences. If a young person is just issued harsh consequences without any supports, the root of the problem is not addressed and this could lead them down a dangerous path with little opportunity to grow and become successful. The most recent statistics available from the U.S. Department of Education indicate that, in the 2011-2012 school year and of the 49 million students enrolled in public schools, 3.5 million students were suspended in school, another 3.5 million students were suspended out of school, and 130,000 were expelled (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). According to Payne and Welch (2018), much of this exclusionary discipline has been the result of government-mandated zero tolerance policies that were developed in the wake of high profile school-based offences such as the shooting at Columbine High School in 1999 (p. 225). Schools are now responding to student violations, including minor ones, as if they are criminal infractions, with various punishments and banishments that can be likened to those experienced in the criminal justice system (Giroux, 2003). Marcus (2014) makes the point that U.S. schools suspend more than 3.3 million students annually, according to the National Education Policy Center, 95% for reasons other than using drugs or carrying weapons (p. 6).

With the increase of out of school suspensions and students of color being suspended at a much higher rate and for lesser infractions that White students, the State of Illinois passed SB100 in 2015. Some of the key provisions and safeguards for students in SB100 include:
Among the many possible disciplinary interventions and consequences available to school officials, school exclusions, such as out of school suspensions and expulsions, are the most serious. School officials shall limit the number of and duration of expulsions and suspensions to the greatest extent possible, and it is recommended that they use them only for legitimate educational purposes. To ensure that students are not excluded from school unnecessarily, it is recommended that school officials consider forms of non-exclusionary discipline prior to using out of school suspensions or expulsions. Unless otherwise required by federal law or this Code, school boards may not institute zero-tolerance policies by which school administrators are required to suspend or expel students for particular behaviors.

- Out of school suspensions of 3 days or less may be used only if the student’s continuing presence in school would pose a threat to school safety or a disruption to other students’ learning opportunities.
- Out of school suspensions of longer than 3 days, expulsions, and disciplinary removals to alternative schools may be used only if other appropriate and available behavioral and disciplinary interventions have been exhausted.
- School officials shall make all reasonable efforts to resolve such threats, address such disruptions, and minimize the length of student exclusions to the greatest extent possible.
- School districts shall make reasonable efforts to provide ongoing professional development to teachers, administrators, school board members, school resource officers, and staff on the adverse consequences of school exclusion.
and justice-system involvement, effective classroom management strategies, culturally responsive discipline, and developmentally appropriate discipline methods that promote positive and healthy school climates.

SB100 has completely altered the ways in which schools in Illinois approach discipline and the consequences given to students. I have been a school administrator in Illinois since 2010. Having been a school administrator in Illinois since 2010, I have worked on both sides of SB100 and can personally speak to a school administrator’s approaches discipline. Prior to SB100, students could be suspended for up to ten days with minute oversite, without any fruitful appeal routes, and there were no alternatives to suspensions outside of in school suspension. Zero Tolerance policies were the norm that could include punitive out of school suspensions for infractions as vague as disrespect or disrupting the school environment. In fact, a continuously problematic student would often be issued the maximum number of suspension days as a way to remove them from the school. Pre-SB100 no effort was made to understand the potential reasons behind certain behaviors or to help the problematic students re-enter the school on a path toward success. At times suspended students would never be seen again at the school. Problematic students had little to no support. As an example, a principal for whom I worked as a teacher would often suspend a student for 10 days, let them return, and suspend them for another 10 days when they walked back through the school doors. There was very little database documentation in the early 2000’s, so this kind of unsupportive behavior on the part of administrators went unnoticed. A 10- or 20-day suspension was essentially a death sentence for a student’s grade school life, which meant never being able to graduate from high school in four years. SB100 effectively put an end
Research has shown many promising outcomes in schools that use a restorative justice rather than a punitive approach to student violations, including reduced recidivism and higher academic achievement (Gardella, 2015; Morrison & Vaandering, 2012). Zehr (2002) suggests that a restorative justice approach “moves school discipline away from ‘offend, suspend, and reoffend’ by instead engaging in dialogue that helps people to understand why the incident occurred, how to resolve the conflict, and to teach alternatives to violence and aggression” (p. 5). Within the restorative justice model, student misbehavior is viewed as a violation of a relationship, either between the offender and a victim or between the offender and the overall school community. Rather than punishing students for wrongdoings, a restorative justice approach works with these students, helping them understand how their behavior impacts others (McCluskey et al., 2008). Specific techniques that exemplify restorative goals include: restorative circles, during which all members take turns speaking and listening in a safe environment; student conferences that include those who have been harmed and those who have done the harming; and peer mediation, which allows students to guide other students through a restorative process (p. 227).

**Leadership Developing Culture**

A recent mixed methods study by Allensworth and Hart (2018) through the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research found that,
schools with the highest learning gains had principals who promoted a strong school climate by empowering and coordinating the work of teachers and school staff around shared goals. Improvements in school climate set up all teachers and students to be successful. (p. 4)

They also found that “schools with strong learning gains” had five common elements in action:

1. School staff held each other accountable for the success of all students in the school.
2. Staff members at multiple levels continually examine student data of various types.
3. Adults that believe in having high expectations for students’ behavior and academic outcomes.
4. Expectations are consistent.
5. Systems of student support are universal and opt-out instead of opt-in. (p. 2)

In recent years the role of the principal has been seen as the instructional leader of the building. In order for high quality instruction and learning to occur, there must be a strong culture of support in the school, beginning with the leaders, as evidenced in Allensworth and Hart’s (2018) study.

Leah Shafer recently discussed the elements of a good school culture in her blog for the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Shafer (2018) explains how school culture is “shaped by five interwoven elements, each of which have the power to influence”:

1. Fundamental beliefs and assumptions, or the things that people at your school consider to be true. For example: “All students have the potential to succeed,” or “Teaching is a team sport.”
2. Shared values, or the judgments people at your school make about those belief and assumptions—whether they are right or wrong, good or bad, just or unjust. For example: “It’s wrong that some of our kindergarteners may not receive the same opportunity to graduate from a four-year college,” or “The right thing is for our teachers to be collaborating with colleagues every step of the way.”

3. Norms, or how members believe they should act and behave, or what they think is expected of them. For example: “We should talk often and early to parents of young students about what it will take for their children to attend college.” “We all should be present and engaged at our weekly grade-level meetings.”

4. Patterns and behaviors, or the way people actually act and behave in your school. For example: There are regularly-scheduled parent engagement nights around college; there is active participation at weekly team curriculum meetings. (But in a weak culture, these patterns and behaviors can be different than the norms.)

5. Tangible evidence, or the physical, visual, auditory, or other sensory signs that demonstrate the behaviors of the people in your school. For example: Prominently displayed posters showcasing the district’s college enrollment, or a full parking lot an hour before school begins on the mornings when curriculum teams meet.

One can see some of the overlapping similarities between the University of Chicago and The Harvard Graduate School of Education around high expectations,
consistency, and the belief that all students are capable of achieving success. Shafer (2018) also states that in a “strong culture, there are many, overlapping, and cohesive interactions among all members of the organization”:

- Beliefs, values, and actions will spread the farthest and be tightly reinforced when everyone is communicating with everyone else. In a strong school culture, leaders communicate directly with teachers, administrators, counselors, and families, who also all communicate directly with each other.
- A culture is weaker when communications are limited and there are fewer connections. For example, if certain teachers never hear directly from their principal, an administrator is continually excluded from communications, or any groups of staff members are operating in isolation from others, it will be difficult for messages about shared beliefs and commitments to spread.

Both of these reports find that schools with a strong culture have principals who are leading the charge to get all stakeholders involved and empower them to make a positive change.

**Leadership Style in Change Implementation**

There is growing body of research and support across the country for schools to become trauma sensitive. All of the literature cites the school principal as the key lever in creating a supportive school culture, which ultimately increases student achievement. Walkey and Cox (2013) warn that “a challenge of implementing trauma informed schools is the perception of being ‘soft,’ there is a need to provide the background and research to staff so that they can understand the impact of trauma on a child” (p. 124). This is one challenge that can present itself to the school principal who is trying to implement change
in their building. Peterson and Deal (1998) define school culture as “the underground stream of norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and rituals that has built up over time as people work together, solve problems, and confront challenge “(p. 28). They claim that “strong cultures are places with a shared sense of what is important, a shared ethos of caring and concern, and a shared commitment to helping students learn” (p. 29) and that the school leaders play a key role in creating a strong culture. Specifically, they write that school leaders  

sculpt culture through communicating core values. They read the culture to understand the deeper meanings embedded before trying to reshape it, they uncover and articulate core values, and they work to fashion a positive context by communicating the core values and shared purpose on a pervasive and deep level. (p. 30)

Peterson and Deal (1998) have also come up with six ways that school leaders can shape school culture:

1. They communicate core values in what they say and do
2. They honor and recognize those who have worked to serve students and the purpose of the school
3. They observe rituals and traditions to support the school’s heart and soul
4. They recognize heroes and heroines and the work these exemplars accomplish
5. They eloquently speak of the deeper mission of the school
6. They celebrate the accomplishments of the staff, the students, and the community. (p. 30)
A common theme seen throughout the literature is that school leaders must be clear communicators of their vision, have a plan, be consistent, and provide support to all stakeholders so that they are fully engaged in the process.

Making the shift to a trauma-sensitive school is no doubt a major one for some educators because it requires them to go beyond traditional teaching. Many veteran teachers might not have had any exposure to SEL in their teacher training programs and are accustomed to the way that they have been teaching for decades. Change requires taking risks into the new and unknown. Tony Wagner writes in detail about teachers and their resistance to progressive change. Wagner (2001) believes that leaders must ask “what motivates adults to want to do new and sometimes very difficult things” (p. 379). He also describes three of the most common factors that contribute to teachers’ resistance to change, which are:

- Risk Aversion: Many teachers go into education because of the high degree of order, security and stability with few opportunities for problem solving and original thinking. School districts often reward teachers based on compliance rather than creativity and initiative.
- Craft Expertise: Education has traditionally been a craftsman trade and giving up teaching all units would be like telling them to cut out a part of what makes them unique as a human.
- Autonomy and Isolation: Isolated from the outside world and the rapid urgency that occurs and the changes that are happening that are impacting the students they are teaching. (p. 379)
It is essential that stakeholders feel as though they are a part of the change. Wagner discusses how staff need to do more than buy in to the vision—they need to take ownership of the vision. In order to accomplish ownership over buying in, Wagner lays out the S-U-R-U Approach:

- Shared vision of the goals and learning, good teaching, and assessment
- Understanding the urgent need for change
- Relationships based on mutual respect and trust
- Engagement strategies that create commitment rather than compliance. (p. 379)

Wagner’s views share many similarities with Sergiovanni’s (1992), *Moral Leadership*. Sergiovanni writes about Leadership through Purposing, explaining that purposing involves both the vision of the school leaders and the covenant that they school shares. The notion of vision is widely accepted, but the effect of purposing falls short if this is where it ends. A covenant provides the added dimension of values and moral authority, to make purposing count. (p. 73)

Sergiovanni also shares:

school administrators should strive to become leaders of leaders. As leaders of leaders, they work hard to build up the capacities of teachers and others, so that direct leadership will no longer be needed. This is achieved through team building, leadership development, shared decision making, and striving to establish the value of collegiality. (p. 123)

Tackling the monumental task of creating a trauma-sensitive school cannot be done in isolation or by the school principal alone. Taking into account the value of giving
purpose and becoming the leader of leaders would make the journey smoother and allow others to take ownership of, rather than just buying into, the change.

Sergiovanni also discusses the importance of servant leadership, by saying:

where the principal need no longer be the “headmaster” or “instructional leader,” pretending to know all, one who consumes lists from above and transmits them to those below. The more crucial role of the principal is as the head learner, engaging in the most important enterprise of the schoolhouse—experiencing, displaying, modeling, and celebrating. (pp. 125-126)

To help create an authentic sense of ownership, Sergiovanni (1992) also shares that leaders should focus on power over and power to. The servant leader recognizes that “power over emphasizes controlling what people do, when they do it, and how they do it. Power to views power as a source of energy for achieving shared goals and purposes” (p. 133). Servant leadership and giving power to, seem to be an effective fit for a school leader who is trying to create a trauma-sensitive supportive school environment.

Fullan (2010) has added to the conversation by providing many strategies for leaders as they create reform changes in their school or district. He goes into detail about seven “Big Ideas for Whole-System Reform”:

1. All children can learn
2. A small number of key priorities
3. Resolute leadership/stay on message
4. Collective capacity
5. Strategies with precision
6. Intelligent accountability
7. All means all. (p. 4)

It is interesting to note the many similarities between Fullan’s big ideas and the characteristics needed to create a trauma-sensitive and supportive school environment. Several of these notions can be seen in the CPS Vision and criteria for becoming a Certified Supportive School, including that (1) all students are capable of learning, (2) the focus should be on the message/vision, (3) all stakeholders should be involved in the ownership, and (4) the leader should put forth a clear strategy.

In summary, there is a wealth of research on educational leadership related to change implementation and the growing understanding that there is a clear need for schools to have a supportive environment. The research also reveals that schools with strong cultures of supporting students have higher achievement than schools that do not have a strong culture of supporting students. A recent mixed methods study by Allensworth and Hart (2018) through the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research found that, “schools with the highest learning gains had principals who promoted a strong school climate by empowering and coordinating the work of teachers and school staff around shared goals. Improvements in school climate set up all teachers and students to be successful” (p. 4). The number one concern listed by principals in 2018 on the NEAP Survey (Fuller et al., 2018) was the increase in the number of students with socioemotional problems. By comparison, in the last survey conducted in 2008, socioemotional problems did not even show up in the top ten list of concerns of principals. Chicago Public Schools is a leader in supporting schools to make the shift to have a Supportive School Environment through their certification process and creation of the Office of Social Emotional Learning (OSEL).
While there is extensive research on the need for a Supportive School Environment and the positive impact it has on a school culture and academics, there is a void in the research of how a school leader was able to use a leadership framework to create change in their school to become more supportive to help increase student achievement. As a leader, I can easily find research demonstrating that I need to have a supportive environment, however, I could not find examples of other leaders “doing the work” and providing examples of how they were able to create a supportive environment. I hope to be able to contribute to the body of research of creating a supportive school environment through my self-study of trying to create one in a Chicago Public School (CPS) using Sergiovanni and Blumer’s Leadership through Purposing to apply for CPS’ Supportive School Certification.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

According to Stringer (2014), “the processes of self-study are enriched by researchers who contribute to the lives of the groups with whom they work” (p. 95). As the principal of a school, it is my duty to meet the needs of all students, staff, and stakeholders, to care for all, and to lead the school through a continuous cycle of improvement. Education is a relationship business, and those who serve students and communities in schools must have a better understanding of the potential negative impact of trauma and punitive measures on students.

The goal is for J.P. Miller School to be recognized as an Established Supportive School by Chicago Public Schools. In order to reach this goal, all staff members will need to be active participants in the process, students and staff will need to be engaged in restorative and Social-Emotional Learning practices, and external partnerships will need to be formed to move the work forward at the school. I reflected on my experiences through detailed, persistent observational notes through the lens of Sergiovanni and Blumer’s Leadership through Purposing. The 5 Essential Survey data is essential in measuring relationship growth, and the End of Year NWEA Reading and Math data measures student growth from Spring to Spring. All of these data sources helped me
critique and reflect on my experiences and the success of creating a Supportive School Environment.

**Research Questions**

Through conversation, observations, and data analysis in my first year serving as a principal, it became clear to me that my school needed to move toward a more supportive school environment in order to more effectively support all stakeholders. To help me facilitate this shift, grow as a leader, and provide insight for other school leaders, this self-study focused on the following research questions:

1) How does my leadership style using “Leadership through Purposing” impact creating a Supportive School Environment?

2) How has my leadership and creation of a Supportive School Environment relate to student academic performance?

3) How has reflecting on my experience in creating a supportive school environment impacted my leadership style?

**Self-Study: Rationale for Design**

The research methodology of self-study is a challenging one to fully define or pinpoint when reviewing the literature. It is a relatively new form of research that is primarily used by teachers or teacher preparation programs. In all of the reviewed literature, there was no mention of education leaders using Self-Study to improve their practices. Pinnegar (1998) highlights “the fact that self-study is a methodology for studying professional practice and that there is no one way, or correct way, of doing self-study” (p. 15). This lack of concreteness contributes to the many different definitions and
the oft equating of Self-Study and Action Research as the same. One aim of this literature review was to distinguish the two facets.

Lunenberg, Zwart, and Korthagen (2010) describe the development of Self-Study research that has come out of the traditional teacher education programs over the past 40 years. These programs include “theory to practice” and “telling it like it is.” Both of these practices have proven to be ineffective. The shift in teacher education programs includes more practice-based approaches that embrace reflecting on their own practices and becoming reflective practitioners. I completed my teacher preparation program at the turn of the 21st century and can attest to both of the methods of “theory to practice” and “telling it like it is.” While these concepts laid a foundation of theory and allowed for professors to share their “battle stories” and “best practices,” they did not allow me to dive into my own practices by identifying problems, brainstorm causes, taking action, and reflecting upon my actions and outcomes toward self-improvement.

Lunenberg and Samaras (2011) believe that, “Self-Study research is related, yet distinct, from earlier paradigms of practitioner inquiry largely because of its emphasis on the researcher studying his/her role within, and not outside, the practice” (p. 841). Another key aspect of self-study is that it is “distinct from practitioner research because the focus on the ‘I’ and with audience as critical in shaping and refining one’s work” (p. 842). Hoban, Butler, and Lesslie (2007) have found that,

using a research methodology such as Self-Study can help teachers to better understand themselves as learners and thus help them understand and manage the dynamic processes of teacher learning to sustain professional development and improve the quality of children’s learning. (p. 49).
Self-study is rooted in the work of John Dewey and Donald Schön, who both wrote about the importance of reflection and inquiry. According to Willower (1994), Dewey believed that:

reflection is good because it is a process that creates growth and is an aspect of growth. Reflection not only enables us to reconstruct the problematic into the determinate, but also to reconstruct the problematic so as to produce an outcome with breadth of meaning, richness, and growth. Reflection is a singular means to growth since it is a mark of educative progress and maturity. (p. 2)

In other words, self-study should result in growth and a positive change with the identified problem. Willower (1994) also shares that Dewey’s Theory of Inquiry includes the quality of “self-correction.” In order to reach this standard, the researcher in a self-study must “be willing to accept occasional discomfort and to trust the process and take the time to figure things out or to try another path” (Lunenberg & Samaras, 2011, p. 846). Wieringa (2011) shares that Donald Schön believed that the world is governed not by academic, formal knowledge, but by knowing in action and reflection in action. Their knowing in action is revealed by everyday routines in actions and thinking about what they are doing while doing it is the process of reflection in action. (p. 168) Wieringa breaks it down even further by stating that “reflection in action is about ‘finding your groove’ and reflection on action is when you look back on what you do after the situation when new insights, although can be very useful, can no longer have any influence” (p. 169). He comments on the importance of the Reflective Practitioner because “in real life, problems are usually not so well defined that they can be solved by the straightforward
application of academic knowledge” (p. 168). According to Pine (2009), there are four indicators of the quality of a self-study:

1. Thorough description of the context, data collection, and analysis.
2. Thoughtful problemization of the researcher and their practice.
3. Indications for how the study changed the researcher’s practice.
4. Description of how it might contribute to the knowledge base for teaching.

Lunenberg and Samaras (2011) also express the importance of the researcher being transparent and systematic, saying, “transparent means the researcher is open, honest, and reflective about his or her work and being systematic means having a plan and schedule to show their work to others” (p. 847).

Lunenberg et al. (2010) warn of some potential traps to avoid and best practices to follow when embarking upon a Self-Study. They share that, while teacher educators are often “experienced professionals, but in regard to research they are novices. There is a need for the teacher educator starting a Self-Study to have the courage to expose themselves and become vulnerable” (p. 1286). Lunenberg et al. also discuss how during their study there was a friction between studying personal aspects of one’s own practice and the idea of going public with the results. They observed a tendency of drifting away from the problem due to challenges of putting and keeping the self in the study. (p. 1287)

To maintain the spirit of the Self-Study, it is critical to “focus on the ‘I’ and reflection” (p. 1281). Other pitfalls of conducting a Self-Study are that the researcher might become overly personal, psycho-analytic, or “self-involved,” and forget to use systematic data
collection and analysis processes. Otherwise, it’s storytelling and will not adequately connect to other teacher education research, which leaves it existing in a void.

Loughran (2007) offers key attributes as a guide when reporting a self-study. He says that a self-study report, in making clear what the focus is, why it matters, and how it was conducted, also needs to show how seeing beyond the self has been developed and implemented because being personally involved in the experiences can limit one’s ability to recognize oneself as a living contradiction and therefore impact the self-study. (p. 15)

He goes on to say, “quality self-study is evident when it demonstrates that it is disciplined and systematic inquiry, values professional learning as a research outcome and aims to develop and better articulate a knowledge of practice” (p. 19). When it comes to the data analysis component of the Self-Study, Loughran says that “the researcher must demonstrate a concern for rigorous data gathering and analysis, transparency in methods, and an ability to develop knowledge that extends beyond the individual and into the teacher education community more generally” (p. 13). Using the lens of Leadership through Purposing provided the theory, foundation, and structure for the research and data analysis.

**Research Design and Justification of the Design**

In this Self-Study Design, I used quantitative and qualitative data from multiple sources. According to Dewey (1933), “the real challenge of intellectual education is the transformation of more or less causal curiosity and sporadic suggestion into attitudes of alert, cautious, and thorough inquiry” (p. 181). As a veteran school leader, I am
frequently looking for solutions to problems and look for the solution in the latest best practice. We implement the treatment and move on or get easily distracted with the myriad of “noises”—deadlines, demands, and daily routines. Rarely do we take the time to carefully investigate through inquiry and reflect upon the moves we make when implementing school improvement initiatives. Conducting a Self-Study allowed me to engage in this reflective inquiry while creating a Supportive School Environment.

Data Analysis

My theoretical framework is rooted in Thomas Sergiovanni’s (1989), Moral Leadership and Irwin Blumer’s Leadership by Purposing. Asking teachers to take on new roles is never an easy task. I used the theories of Sergiovanni and Blumer as a framework to help me create meaningful change. Sergiovanni (1992) discusses the necessity of creating a purpose for doing the work and “striving to be a leader of leaders” (p. 123). To stay focused and rooted in educational theory, I aligned all collected data to the six practices of Leadership through Purposing. Sergiovanni believes that the principal need no longer be the “headmaster” or “instructional leader,” pretending to know all, one who consumes lists from above and transmits them to those below. The more crucial role of the principal is as head learner, engaging in the most important enterprise of the schoolhouse—experiencing, displaying, modeling, and celebrating what it is hoped and expected that teachers and pupils will do. The school as learning community provides an ideal setting for joining the practice of the “leader of leaders” to servant leadership. (pp. 125-126)

Through this lens, I will be working with teachers to make this shift in roles and deciding on the exact plan of action. With Sergiovanni’s (1992) structure in mind, I will
approach the implementation of the self-study into a learning community in which I, as the leader, am learning along with the teachers through Leadership through purposing. Blumer (1989) describes leadership through purposing through six practices:

1. Say it
2. Model it
3. Organize for it
4. Support it
5. Enforce it and commend practices that exemplify core values
6. Express outrage when practices violate the core values. (p. 74)

Throughout the self-study, I aligned leadership moves and decisions in my journal to each of Blumer’s six practices as a structured guide while moving towards leading the school to creating a Supportive School Environment. I created a spreadsheet with column headers for each of the six practices. After reviewing each entry, I coded the entry as it relates to each of the six practices and sorted them to reveal how I was able to use each of the six practices. If there were any entries or themes that did not fit into one of the six leadership practices, I created a new category based on any potentially discovered theme.

As a model for aligning my moves to the six practices, I used Perry (2019) who aligned her journal reflections with Sergiovanni’s (1992) head, hand, and heart of Moral Leadership. Perry (2019) also discovered themes that could be used with “pre-determined and emerging codes” and I used model to guide me when aligning entries with the six predetermined practices and any potential emerging moves that did not fit neatly into one of the six practices.
To help create a supportive school environment and answer my three research questions, I used distributive leadership to apply for Chicago Public Schools Supportive School Certification. The submitted application documenting the strategies, professional development, interventions, and partnerships acts as evidence for each of the six required indicators are listed in the charts below. The process of applying for Supportive School Certification allowed for a rich and diverse set of data to be collected. The collected data will be analyzed and triangulated for validity.

**Triangulation and Validity**

A self-study must be disciplined and rigorous in design. Stringer (2014) believes that there are four essential components in a study:

- **Credibility**—the plausibility and integrity of a study.
- **Transferability**—the possibility of the outcomes of the study to other contexts.
- **Dependability**—research procedures that are clearly defined and open to scrutiny.
- **Confirmability**—evidence that the procedures described actually took place.

(p. 92)

In order to maintain credibility, I adhered to Stringer’s process of “persistent observation” when the researcher “consciously observe events, activities, and the context over a period of time” and enhance credibility through the triangulation of multiple sources of information (p. 93). This included “consciously observing and taking note of events” based on what is “actually happening, rather than from memory” (p. 93). This was documented through personal journaling and reflections throughout the study, along
with the use of quantitative data found in the 5 Essential Survey, School Quality Rating Report, and End of Year NWEA data.

To ensure transferability, I was sure to “carefully explore the possibility that the outcomes” of my study “may be relevant elsewhere” (Stringer, 2014, p. 94). This self-study was designed so that I could help others apply my outcomes to their situation, even if our schools differ at the local level. Dependability was met by adhering to a “systematic research process” that was documented and through “providing a detailed description of the procedures that have been followed” throughout the study (p. 94). Finally, confirmability was met by creating an “audit trail that enables the observer to view the data collected, instruments, field notes, journals, or other artifacts related to the study” (p. 94).

Pine (2009) recommends that data be triangulated by “studying the research question form at least three separate pieces of data and three points of view” (p. 255). He goes on to recommend the use of five different data sources. For this particular study I used at least three data sources for each of my research questions. Pine says that once the data is collected, it is critical to ask the following questions:

- What story or stories do the data tell?
- What meanings can be found as a result of the data analysis?
- What have you learned about your teaching practices?
- What have you learned about student learning?
- What effect has the research had on you as an educator and person?
- What changes have you made in your teaching approaches?
- Does the data analysis confirm or disconfirm the effectiveness of the action or intervention you planned and implemented?
- As your research question been answered, or have more questions emerged?
- What are the implications of your study for improving the teaching practices of colleagues?
- Were there unexpected findings?
- What new questions would you ask for future studies? (p. 259)

Pine, however, does warn against “overgeneralizing the findings or adding an opinion that is not supported by data” (p. 260). To remain focused on the research questions, I used the data triangulation in Table 10 and Figure 1 below. The triangulation of data increases the validity and rigor of research. I used the data sources, coupled with Pine’s guiding questions of data analysis to answer my research questions, develop recommendations, and write a summary.

I aligned each of my journal entries into one of the six Sergiovanni and Blumer’s Leadership through Purposing practices. To help strengthen my validity and verify that my alignment is sound I used a professional peer. I randomly selected three journal entries and asked my professional peer “if you were to categorize these three entries according to the six Leadership through Purposing practices, which practice would you align them with?” My professional peer categorized each of the three selected entries into the same category that I had aligned them with. This additional layer served as a source of validation of my coding alignment.
### Self-Study Data Validity and Triangulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How does my leadership style impact creating a compassionate school?</td>
<td>Journaling and reflections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summary of Supportive School Certification application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summary and reflection of 5 Essential Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reflections on Observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has my leading and nurturing a Supportive School Environment impacted student academic performance?</td>
<td>Journaling and reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reflections on NWEA End of Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NWEA Reading and Math scores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reflections on 5 Essential Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summary of reflections on CPS School Quality Rating Performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal summary of On Track Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal summary of Student Discipline Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How has reflecting on my experience in creating a supportive school environment impacted my leadership style and role as a school leader?</td>
<td>Journaling and reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reflections on Supportive School Certification application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reflections on 5 Essential Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reflections of Observations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Herr and Anderson (2015) state, “researcher positionality is important in all research. Essentially, your positionality as a researcher means asking the question, who am I in relation to my participants and my setting?” (p. 37). As the principal of J.P. Miller School conducting my Self-Study within the school, I am considered as an “insider, who
is a researcher that is studying their own self or practice” as it relates to positionality (Herr and Anderson, p. 40). As the researcher, I was careful to use the framework of Sergiovanni and Blumer to stay objective as an observer rather than an “insider committed to the success of the actions under the study” (p. 42). As a white male principal leading a school that is majority African-American with an almost entirely female teaching staff, I recognize that I am in a position of power. Herr and Anderson (2015) share that Schon (1983) “used the notion of reflective practitioner to describe those practitioners who “learn to learn” about their practice and therefore become better practitioners” (p. 43). Recognizing my position of power within the school while focused on “learning to learn” helped me grow as a school leader while being aware of my positionality.

According to Calabrese (2012), “research integrity is essential, acknowledging bias and error may mitigate how some interpret the importance of the study; yet, the acknowledgement of any bias and/or error increases the researcher’s credibility and integrity” (p. 43). In other words, it is essential for the researcher to acknowledge their blind spots and potential biases. Since this is a self-study on creating a Supportive School Environment, I needed to recognize some of my own traumatic experiences that have impacted my education. For example, my parents divorced while I was in middle school, and I was subjected to frequent bullying behaviors during that time as well. I could only dream of what my own experiences as a public-school student could have been during that difficult period if my school had had a Supportive School Environment. My personal experience has led me to my current position and outlook and is one of the reasons why I
am passionate about this research. I am in a position and want to help my students and the school community be supported and successful.

As a framework toward keeping this study valid, I followed Pine’s (2009) process validity, public validity, social justice validity, and values validity. Process validity uses triangulation of data, a careful design study, and research that is natural (p. 87). Public validity is making the process public, which entails keeping up a dialogue about and making this study accessible to staff, parents, community, and students. This kind of accountability occurred through LSC Principal Reports, during teacher team meetings, school Open House, school assemblies, and speaking at local community meetings. This study is rooted in social justice, and I hope that the creation of a Supportive School Environment will empower my school community and other schools to have a more caring and just school culture. Finally, I adhered to values validity by sharing my own personal motivations for creating a Supportive School Environment and included the values of social justice throughout the study.

**Summary**

It is essential for schools to create a Supportive School Environment to better support the needs of all students. Through this Self-Study, I strived for social justice reform to improve the educational experiences and performance of my students through the lens of Sergiovanni and Blumer’s Leadership through Purposing. As the principal of J.P. Miller School, it is my responsibility to lead my staff and provide the resources and training for them to better support their students. This study is significant because of its focus on reforming a school by creating a Supportive School Environment through examining the following research questions:
1) How does my leadership style using “Leadership through Purposing” impact creating a Supportive School Environment?

2) How has my leadership and creation of a Supportive School Environment relate to student academic performance?

3) How has reflecting on my experience in creating a supportive school environment impacted my leadership style?
CHAPTER IV
RESULTS

Overview of Study

The purpose of the study was to examine and reflect on how my leadership and the promotion of a supportive school environment is related to Sergiovanni and Blumer’s Leadership through Purposing. I went on a listening tour when I became principal at J.P. Miller School, and a resonating theme shared by parents, teachers, and students was the presence of a negative school culture. School stakeholders shared with me that previous principals at the school utilized a zero tolerance discipline model and an authoritarian top down leadership style. Decisions were often made without stakeholder input and staff were not welcomed to provide feedback on leadership actions. Parents had withdrawn their children from the school and enrollment had declined to the point the local Alderman proposed merging the school with a neighboring school. Students on the 5 Essential Survey rated “Student-Teacher Trust” at a 42 out of 99 in 2016, the year before I became principal (University of Chicago, 2019). Historically, the relationships between students and teachers was one where there was a lack of student voice and choice. As a new principal coming into an environment with a deeply rooted culture of not focusing on developing a supportive school environment, I understood that change would not be easy.
To help guide this change with my school community, I led the school through CPS’ Supportive School Certification. To help provide the “why” to reach the hearts and minds of all stakeholders I used Sergiovanni and Blumer’s Leadership through Purposing. Utilizing Leadership through Purposing provided me a framework within which to reflect on the decisions, interactions, and communication that I have with all stakeholders throughout the supportive school certification process. This allowed me to look critically at the steps I took to make changes in my school through the lens of Sergiovanni and Blumer focused on examining the following research questions:

1) How does my leadership style using “Leadership through Purposing” impact creating a Supportive School Environment?

2) How has my leadership and creation of a Supportive School Environment relate to student academic performance?

3) How has reflecting on my experience in creating a supportive school environment impacted my leadership style?

Organization of Results

Chapter IV presents the results of this study. Stringer (2014) believes that “the task of the research facilitator during the reflection and analysis phase of the research process is to interpret and render understandable the problematic experiences being considered” (p. 137). The results will be presented in two sections. The first is aligned to Research Question One and contains the moves that I made to led the school to achieve Chicago Public School’s Supportive School Certification as captured through journaling and reflection through the lens of Sergiovanni and Blumer’s Leadership through Purposing, data from the University of Chicago 5 Essential Survey, and the Supportive
School Certification Application that was submitted at the end of the 2017-2018 school year. The second section is aligned to Research Question Two and contains NWEA Reading and Math data, Chicago Public Schools On-Track data, and the schools response to discipline data. At the conclusion of each section, I will share out my findings that the reviewed data provided me support in answering the aligned Research Question. My third Research Question is rooted in reflection and will be discussed in Chapter V.

Methodology Summary

Stringer (2014) argues that the “research facilitator must establish a stance that is perceived as legitimate and nonthreatening by all major stakeholding groups and take into consideration the three essential elements of agenda, stance, and position” (pp. 81-82). The element of agenda is to “inform people of your purpose” (p. 81). This was accomplished through Sergiovanni and Blumer’s Leadership through Purposing as I spoke to all stakeholders during teacher team meetings, student assemblies, Local School Council meetings, parent events, and community events. The element of stance is tied to being “neutral and nonthreatening” and “presenting yourself as skilled, supportive, resourceful, and approachable” (p. 82). Using Sergiovanni and Blumer’s Leadership through Purposing allowed me to remain focused on modeling and organizing with my stakeholders. I worked with stakeholders through the change by commending practices that exemplify the core values. My position in the school is of a white male principal at school with a majority African-American student body. It was critical that I took a neutral position on my status and was also aware of my position of authority as the leader. Using Sergiovanni and Blumer’s Leadership through Purposing aided me in being neutral and
using a clear purpose rooted in core values as a catalyst and support for necessary change to create a Supportive School Environment.

The study began over the summer in preparation for the 2017-2018 school year and concluded at the end of the 2018-2019 school year. The data gathered included journaling and reflections throughout the two school years and end of year data collected by Chicago Public Schools that includes University of Chicago 5 Essential Survey, NWEA Reading and Math data, Chicago Public Schools On-Track data, and the schools response to discipline data.

**Population, Sample, and Participation**

This self-study was focused on a Kindergarten through 8th grade neighborhood Chicago Public School. J.P. Miller is a brick two story building constructed in 1937 that has an adjacent modular building that was built in 2001 due to the lack of classroom space that exists in the main building. It is located on a city block with a large park in the North Beverly neighborhood of Chicago. J.P. Miller is 90% African American, 5% White, and 3% Hispanic. The school has a 38% low income rate, and 17% of the students are classified as Diverse Learners. There is one class per grade, and all students are programmed into a general education homeroom. The staff at J.P. Miller School includes: nine general education teachers, five diverse learner teachers, one gym teacher, one art teacher, one Spanish teacher, eight Special Education Classroom Assistants, one school counselor/case manager of Diverse Learners, one International Baccalaureate Coordinator, one School Support Leader, one school clerk, one dining room manager, one custodian, and one school principal.
J.P. Miller School recently achieved a Level 1+ rating for the fourth consecutive year and was recognized as a Top 25 Elementary School by Chicago Magazine at the start of the 2019-2020 school year. We began taking a Restorative Justice approach at J.P. Miller when I became principal in July 2016. Prior to then, the school did not have a Restorative Justice focus and any supports provided were purely academic, not robust or aligned with the school’s priorities.

The self-study is focused on my reflections and experiences as the principal of J.P. Miller School. There were no chosen participants or other human subjects in the self-study. The entire school community that includes students, staff, parents, and community members were a part of the process to become a Supportive School Environment and the impact on these stakeholders will be analyzed using my three research questions.

Results

Section One

The first section of the results will focus on my journaling and reflections from 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years, data from the University of Chicago 5 Essential Survey, and the Supportive School Certification evidence that was submitted for certification at the end of the 2017-2018 school year. My journaling and reflections will be presented as they related to each of the Six Leadership practices as described by Sergiovanni and Blumer’s Leadership through Purposing. As I reviewed my journal and reflections, I carefully categorized each one using one of the Six Leadership through Purposing practices. There were a few reflections that did not fit into one of the six practices, so I created a seventh category that was labeled as a “key antidote.”
The number of entries coded for each leadership practice and key antidote were noted in Table 11.

**Table 11**

*Leadership Practice Entries*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Practice</th>
<th>Number of Coded Entries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Say it</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model it</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organize for it</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support it</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enforce it and commend practices that exemplify core values</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Express outrage when practices violate the core values</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key antidote</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first leadership practice to be reviewed is “Say it” and I recorded 13 entries that I identified as meeting this practice. I found that this practice was heavily concentrated in the first six months of the study as I was laying the foundation for the need to make a change and lead the school towards achieving Supportive School Certification. Actions that I took under this practice include:
### Table 12

**Say It**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Define the core values. Communicate them clearly and often to inside and outside constituents. (Sample Entries)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I shared my rationale to the entire staff for wanting to bring trauma informed training to the school and apply for Supportive School Certification during the back to school professional development week to start the 2017-2018 school year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I shared the Restorative Practices, Peace Circles, trauma informed training, 2nd Step Curriculum, and Supportive School Certification during a Coffee and Conversations with parents at the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year, with my Public Relations Committee, Local School Council, my Leadership Team, Prospective Parent Open House and the student back to school assembly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was invited to speak at a Beverly Improvement Association with the local Alderman to share out what was happening at my school. One key focus of my presentation was our goal of creating a Supportive School Environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A local community organization reached out to me to highlight key school initiatives and I was quoted in the Beverly Area Community Association monthly publication that we are trying to create a Supportive School Environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>While accompanying my wife on a research visit at the National University of Colombia in Bogota, I shared with professors at dinner that my school was focused on creating a Supportive School Environment. I was asked to meet with a cohort of professors on campus to share out the work being done at my school as it was related to similar areas of concern for them in Colombia.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While communicating the core values and need for creating a Supportive School Environment at my school, I found that it created a ripple effect that brought additional resources to the school to help support the work and it helped to alert others outside of my school about the need to support students in this manner. While speaking at the Beverly Improvement Association Meeting, I was able to speak to about 25 members of the community that normally do not have access to my school including the local Alderman. One person in attendance was a journalist for the Beverly Area Planning
Association who then followed up with me to share out what was happening at the school to be included in their monthly publication allow me to expand my ability to “Say it” to a larger community audience.

We hold a Prospective Parent Open House for families interested in enrolling at the school. I shared at the 2017-2018 Open House the work we were doing to achieve Supportive School Certification. One parent at the Open House emailed me the next week to let me know that she is a local pastor and her church has a focus on Peace Circles and Restorative Justice. She wanted to meet to create a partnership to help bring resources to the school. After meeting with her, she invited me to send students to her Summer Peace Camp and her Peace Team came to my school to teach our Junior High school students about Peace Circles. She also connected me with a local retired judge that was looking to implement an eight week course at a local school centered on Restorative Practices and a Mock Trial. The course is now in its second year working with our 7th grade students that culminates with a class field trip to the Daley Center in Chicago to observe a trial and a luncheon at the Chicago Bar Association.

The second leadership practice is “Model it” and I found that this was one of the least documented entries of the six practices. When becoming principal at J.P. Miller School, I immediately was told by parents that they were concerned about a punitive culture at the school. One of the key components of a Supportive School Environment is utilizing Restorative Practices and having a strong Social Emotional Learning component. Two incidents occurred during the 2017-2018 school year that could have led to an Out of School Suspension and potentially involvement of the Chicago Police Department. As the principal, I oversee all discipline matters, investigations, and
assigned consequences at the school while providing due process to the students involved in the incidents. In order for the school to become more supportive of students, I needed to model this when handling behavior incidents. I participated in all trainings to help “Model it” that included Trauma Informed training, Second Step, Calm Classroom.

There were two incidents that I reflected upon in my journals that stood out as key examples of “Modeling it.” The first incident involved an 8th grade and a 7th grade student that were engaged in a physical altercation during recess that resulted in no injuries. The incident included punching and the exchange of profanity by both students. Using the Chicago Public Schools Student Code of Conduct, I could have issued an Out of School Suspension, In School Suspension, detentions. And or Restorative Conversations. After speaking with both students and seeing that this was an isolated incident and the students had not been involved in any previous physical altercations I decided to use Restorative Conversations. Both students agreed to participate in a Peace Circle with myself and the school counselor. During the Peace Circle, all participants explained how they were currently feeling, what they did, what they could have done differently, and what they will do going forward. The students hugged it out and never had an altercation going forward. One of the student’s moms came to my office and broke down in tears. She shared that the previous principal “would never had done this for her son and it meant so much to her I cared enough about K.T. that I would take the time to help him.” I reported in my journal that this exchange “gave me the chills” and “validated the work that I was set on doing at the school.”

The second incident that I recorded under “Model it” involved a group of students that had entered the building during the day on a warm Saturday that triggered the school
alarm system. The Chicago Police Department went to the school and noted that it was “all clear” and there was nobody at the school. I reviewed the video cameras on Monday morning and identified the students that had entered a door code, went inside the building, and then quickly ran out of the building. The Chicago Public Schools Student Code of Conduct would allow me to use an Out of School Suspension, In School Suspension, detentions, filing a police report for unlawful entry, and or Restorative Conversations. When I interviewed the students they all immediately admitted to entering the building. They also shared that they had been playing on the playground and one of the girls had to “really use the washroom.” A younger student had observed a contracted recess monitor enter their door code and he had memorized the code. This student offered to let her in the building so she could use the washroom rather than go behind a bush and the closest public washroom or their house was blocks away. Once they had entered the building the alarm went off and they ran off. After listening to the student accounts of the incident, I determined that their intent was not to cause any harm. I notified their parents and participated in a Peace Circle with the students and the school counselor in which we all shared how we were feeling, what actions of all participants, what they could have done differently, and what they will do going forward. The parents of the students involved all expressed their appreciation of my approach and understanding that a disciplinary consequence was not warranted, however, many staff members were not happy with my and thought that I was being weak. I had to explain to two staff members individually the purpose of my decision and that this decision was consistent with my core values of creating a Supportive School Environment.
The third leadership practice is to “Organize for it” and I recorded nine entries that I identified as meeting this practice. The actions that I took identified as “Organizing for it” include:

Table 13

*Organize for It*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Put in resources to support the core values. (Sample Entries)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I included a standing Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)/Trauma Informed/Second Step item on each Teacher Team Meeting during the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I used personal funds to attend an Emotionally Intelligent Principal class to improve my own ability to become more supportive and then I debriefed my learnings and takeaways with my Leadership Team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I implemented a standing agenda line at the start of each Monday Leadership Team meeting to share out what we did over the weekend to try and build more team unity and cohesion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I implemented a standing agenda line at the start of each Teacher Team Meeting, Instructional Leadership Team meeting, and MTSS Meeting called “Connections”. Connections is a question such as “What are reading right now?” or “What was your favorite Halloween costume as a child?” that everyone at the meeting answers to help build more community and trust.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each year principals in Chicago Public Schools have to create a Leadership Development Plan (LDP) as part of their evaluation conducted by a Network Chief. The LDP must include 2-3 goals that will be monitored throughout the school year and then reflected on in an End of Year meeting with the Network Chief. One of my LDP goals for the 2017-2018 school year was to achieve Supportive School Certification.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A member of my Leadership Team identified the need to create an Equity Walk to identify how resources have been and are currently allocated so that all teachers have the tools needed for instruction and to support student learning. I allowed her to own the Equity Walk by using Distributive Leadership allowing others to take ownership of the process to create a Supportive School Environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I let the member of my Leadership Team lead the Equity Walk and share out the results and explain how the results of the exercise would help us make resource allocation decisions to bring a level baseline for all classrooms.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I visited two other schools that had achieved Supportive School Certification with a team to learn more about their practices and how we might be able to replicate and tweak them to work at J.P. Miller.

I wrote a grant to bring Second Step and Calm Classroom to J.P. Miller. The grant included all of the materials and professional development to implement the curriculum at no cost to the school.

The fourth leadership practice is to “Support it” and I recorded 14 entries that I identified as meeting this practice. Actions that I took identified as “Support it” include:

Table 14

Support It

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provide additional resources to the areas that promote core values. (Sample Entries)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In order to help my school with the Supportive School Certification application, I contacted the Network Social Emotional Learning lead to attend a Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) Team Meeting to identify needs and provide support to achieve certification.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I identified a lead teacher to work with to be the point person for the MTSS Team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I created a MTSS Interventionist position that allowed us to bring in a former teacher who had taken time off to be with her children that wanted to start working at a school again. This person started working with students that we had identified as needing additional academic support in addition to core classroom instruction. The MTSS lead teacher worked with classroom teachers to identify the students, create a schedule for the MTSS Interventionist, and the two of them met on a weekly basis to review student data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I allocated school funds to pay for substitutes so that a teacher and her Special Education Classroom Assistant could attend a two day Safety Care training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I arranged for a clinical psychologist to attend a day of Teacher Team meetings to present information on adult Social-Emotional Learning and Self-Care.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To help teachers create a more supportive environment for students, I allocated resources so that a pilot cohort of teachers could work with LEAP Innovations to bring Personalized Learning to the school. One of the key components of Personalized Learning is getting to know your students better and the experiences they have in the classroom.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To help teachers get a better understanding the experiences of students at the school have on a daily basis, we created a “Shadow a Student” day. This required teachers to have substitute teacher coverage so that they could shadow a student throughout a school day.

In order to help create classrooms that support student learning, teachers wanted to have less traditional student desks and seating in their rooms. I created a teacher “wish-list” document for teachers that allowed them to request collaborative seating that included standing desks, tables, stools, rugs, couches, and lap desks. We were able to use school funds to purchase these resources for teachers in the LEAP Pilot.

When it came to finalizing the Supportive School Certification application, I sensed that members of my team were overwhelmed with the end of the quarter grading, preparation, and standardized assessments. I met with the team and told them that I would take the lead to complete the application so that we could meet our goal and they would be able to focus on their primary responsibilities as classroom teachers.

At the conclusion of the Teacher Team Meetings focused on Adult SEL led by a clinical psychologist, my kindergarten teacher told me that “this was exactly what I needed” and she thanked me for recognizing the need for adult self-care. She shared with me that she was a certified yoga instructor and that was her outlet for self-care. She presented to me the idea of using a portion of a School Improvement Day when students were not in the building for adult SEL. She offered to lead the staff in yoga exercises. The school counselor was in the room with me and then said she could lead the staff in a Peace Circle to help demonstrate the practices we were using with students to resolve conflict and build community. School Improvement Days are often used for academic professional development, lesson and unit planning, and preparing for the next academic quarter. I took the idea to my Instructional Leadership Team and MTSS Team. They both loved the idea, so we used the upcoming School Improvement Day for Self-Care. I asked all staff members to come dressed in loose clothing and bring a yoga mat if they had one.
We had mats for physical education for those that needed one for the morning. The teacher led the entire staff including the custodians and dining room manager in yoga and then the counselor led a Peace Circle with the entire school staff. We did all of this in lieu of spending time on academic professional development.

The fifth leadership practice is to “Enforce it and commend practices that exemplify core values” and I recorded 12 entries that I identified as meeting this practice.

Actions that I took identified as “Enforce it” include:

Table 15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enforce It</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I created an interview team to hire a Special Education Classroom Assistant that would be working specifically with a student that displayed volatile behavior and his parent had shared multiple traumatic experiences that occurred early in his life that doctors believe was leading to his behavior. During interviews a member of the hiring team spoke about the need to de-escalate and identify triggers to meet the needs of the students. This was a complete shift in language from what I had experienced with this teacher who the year before was trying to explain to me that the student must listen to her and follow instructions because she was the teacher. After the interview I shared how happy I was to see her looking through a different lens to help support the student.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The same teacher would often times get combative with parents during a conference and would blame the parents for not teaching their child how to act in school. After going through the Trauma Informed Practices training and joining the MTSS Team to create a Supportive School Environment I noted a shift in her approach. In a conference with the same parent about her child’s behavior she led the meeting, described the systems and structures she had implemented to support the student, the different choices she would offer him to keep him engaged, and she created a Calm Corner for him to use to de-escalate and take a break if he felt his emotions were taking control in a negative manner. I almost could not believe what I was seeing and again had to load her with praise for how she was supporting the student and helping the parent feel more supported as well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>While making rounds in the building to classrooms I observed a teacher working with her second grade class on aggressive, assertive, and passive voice and how that impacts our interactions. Students were acting out skits to demonstrate each type of action.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Students were also sharing how they are at times and some concrete ways in which they could improve their actions in a playground situation. I shared with her how this experience made my day to see students learning about how to treat one another just like they would be learning about math or science.

After participating in the Equity Walk that was led and designed by a lead teacher I sent her a text sharing how awesome the experience was for me and thanked her for being brave enough to make this a priority. She thanked me for trusting her throughout the process.

I moved from leading the MTSS Team to becoming a participating member of the team. The team was now being led by a lead teacher that was creating the agenda, gathering the data, using a protocol, and are focused on student outcomes. The MTSS Interventionist shared with the team that she had worked at a number of schools and never seen a team so focused on the improvement of student achievement for those that struggle and typically fall through the cracks. I shared with them my excitement to see the growth and support they are each giving each other to help make an impact on students.

A group of 5th grade girls came to my office to share a conflict they were having. A male student their class had promised each of them $20 for their birthdays. They were upset because their birthdays had each passed and the student failed to give them $20. I felt that this could be resolved through a Peace Circle, but the counselor was at a meeting. I decided to conduct my own Peace Circle with the students that shared their frustration along with the student who had fallen short of his promise. This gave me the opportunity to enforce my own core values and build relationships with the students. At the conclusion of the Peace Circle, the conflict had been diffused and they all gave me a thumbs up later in the week to indicate they it was still going well.

A different group of 5th grade girls wrote me a note and put it in my mailbox. The note shared that they had gotten into a conflict with a male friend, were feeling sad, and they wanted a Peace Circle. After gathering the students and conducting a Peace Circle in our student lounge, it became clear that the male student was unaware that he had hurt his friends and apologized. I commended them all on handling the situation in a mature manner and also shared the experience at my Local School Council (LSC) meeting later in the evening. The boy’s mom was on the LSC and shared that her son had shared the experience with her when he came home from school. I praised his mom for her support and she did the same for helping her son and his friends work through a conflict.

During Teacher Team meetings I am sharing out examples and experiences that I see with teachers using Second Step and publicly praising them for using the Social Emotional Learning curriculum to support our students.
I detailed my experience during an informal observation with a first grade teacher. I went into the classroom expecting to see reading instruction, but was able to observe a reading lesson infused with Social Emotional Learning like I had never seen before at the school. The teacher was reading a book to her class about the characteristics of a friend. The teacher put on music and asked each student to find a friend and stand back to back. Once the music was turned off, they were to turn and talk with their friend to share what they look for in a friend using the vocabulary and lessons learned from the book that was read in class. The teacher did three rounds of this sharing using music as the transition. I wrote that I was “beaming” after the experience. I applauded the students and the teacher before I left the classroom, shared the experience with multiple staff and parents throughout the day, and at my LSC meeting. This was a clear indicator that Social-Emotional Learning was being infused into core subjects that was not present a few years ago.

The last leadership practice is to “Express outrage when practices violate the core values” and I recorded one entry that I identified as meeting this practice. This practice is one that Sergiovanni (1992) discusses as vital when necessary, however, in my experience in creating a Supportive School Environment there was not an incident that I felt like I needed to truly express outrage. The one incident that I noted was when I heard early on in 2017-2018 that it was going through the staff rumor mill that some were questioning my judgement with using disciplinary consequences. Specifically, there was some grumbling about me not suspending the students that had entered the school on a Saturday that set off the school alarm systems. In order to address the concerns that I heard was present, I went back to the “Say it” by giving purpose for my actions. During
Teacher Team Meetings I went step by step with all staff my decisions and rationale for not suspending the students. I shared with staff that I felt like a suspension in this case would not address the root of the issue, but a Peace Circle along with conversations with their parents would provide a better learning opportunity while supporting students. While this was not necessarily outrage, I focused on being clear and concise to reinforce my core belief that using a hammer to react positively with student behavior is not always the best way and that it is more supportive to use them as opportunities for teachable moments.

There were two entries that I did not feel fit any of the six Leadership Practices, so I coded them into a separate category titled “Key Antidotes” because I felt like they were important pieces of the creation of a Supportive School Environment. The first entry occurred after the Trauma Informed training at the onset of the 2017-2018 school year. In my experience working in many schools, it is not uncommon to have a teacher or teachers that hold influential power with their colleagues. This can go positively or negatively depending on the teacher, school, and situation. One teacher at my school that is veteran, well respected, and holds tremendous power was someone that I made special attention to observe. I witnessed this teacher sharing with another colleague that had missed the training due to an unexpected family emergency. I heard the teacher giving a positive summary of the training and that it was “phenomenal” along with that it was “something that she always believed in, but had never seen the research or experienced a professional development on the subject. She told the other teacher that this was “exactly what she needed” and that we needed to “keep it moving.”
The second entry was focused on the adult self-care session during the Teacher Institute Day at the end of the second quarter during the 2017-2018 school year. At the conclusion of the yoga exercise I had many staff members come to me with smiles thanking me and sharing that “this was awesome”. During the staff Peace Circle everyone shared how they were feeling at the moment. One teacher said she was sad because it was the anniversary of her mom’s death and the counselor leading the circle expressed that this honest open conversation was the purpose of the circle. We all had to write down one word that describes our outlook or feeling on what we bring to the school. Our school custodian said “love” and he thanked everyone for making him feel so welcome after only being at the school for about six months. A teacher who had struggled with seeing her students through a trauma informed lens shared that she was going to share what we were doing with her own child’s school because she wished they were taking the same approach. This was one of the proudest moments of my principalship and I took a picture of the group to post on Twitter. The picture was retweeted by “CPS Success” and liked by an influential Network Chief.

**University of Chicago 5 Essential Survey Data**

In the spring of each academic year, all junior high students in Chicago Public Schools take the University of Chicago 5 Essential Survey. The survey measures Ambitious Instruction, Effective Leaders, Collaborative Teachers, Involved Families, and Supportive Environment. The survey is also weighted as ten percent of a school’s rating. Historically, J.P. Miller’s 5 Essential Survey indicated that the school is “Well Organized” for school improvement. The areas of Ambitious Instruction, Effective Leaders, Collaborative Teachers, and Involved Families have all been rated as “Strong”
or “Very Strong” going back to 2014. There had been little to no growth, however, in the Supportive Environment category, which was rated as “Neutral” between 2014 and 2017. A Supportive Environment focuses on whether a school is “safe, demanding, and supportive” and includes the subcategories of Academic Personalism, Peer Support for Academic Work, Safety, and Student-Teacher Trust. According to the 5 Essential Survey (2019), J.P. Miller school’s Supportive Environment moved from “Neutral” to “Strong” at the end of the 2017-2018 school year and from “Strong” to “Very Strong” at the end of the 2018-2019 school year. The results of the 5 Essential Survey Supportive School Environment and sub-categories spanning the 2013-2014 to 2018-2019 school years are:

![Supportive School Environment](image)

*Figure 2. Supportive School Environment*
**Figure 3.** Academic Professionalism

Academic Personalism

Teachers connect with students in the classroom and support them in achieving academic goals

**Figure 4.** Peer Support for Academic Work

Peer Support for Academic Work

Students demonstrate behaviors that lead to academic achievement
Figure 5. Safety

Safety
Students feel safe in and around the school building, and while they travel to and from home

Figure 6. Student-Teacher Trust

Student-Teacher Trust
Students and teachers share a high level of mutual trust and respect

Figure 6. Student-Teacher Trust
This study started during the 2017-2018 school year and the need for a Supportive School Environment was rooted in the 5 Essential Survey data prior to the onset of the study. Over a two year period the rating gains as measured by the survey are:

**5 Essential Survey Increases from 2016-2017 to 2018-2019**

- Supportive School Environment: + 28
- Academic Personalism: + 17
- Peer Support for Academic Work: + 28
- Safety: + 24
- Student-Teacher Trust: + 42

It should be noted that the areas with the lowest pre scores, Supportive School Environment, Peer Support for Academic Work, and Student-Teacher had the largest increase over the course of the self-study.

**Supportive School Certification Application**

The next set of data is the application that was submitted to become a recognized Supportive School. Throughout the 2017-2018 school year, J.P. Miller focused on reaching this goal and had to demonstrate evidence within six indicators as prescribed by Chicago Public School’s Office of Social Emotional Learning (OSEL). The application with evidence was due prior to the Winter Break during the 2017-2018 school year. If the application included strong evidence as reviewed by the OSEL in five out of the six indicators, the school would be recognized as an “Established Supportive School”. If the application demonstrated strong evidence in all six of the indicators, the OSEL team would conduct a school visit to see it in person before recognizing the school as an “Exemplary Supportive School.” J.P. Miller School’s application as reviewed by the
OSEL team had strong evidence in five out of the six indicators and was recognized as an “Established Supportive School.” This distinction earned the school a certificate and an “Established Supportive School Certification” badge on the Chicago Public School info website designated for Miller. Each school has a school info page that describes demographic data, standardized testing data, attendance and behavioral data, 5 Essential Survey results, and On Track data. The site also allows each school to describe their school and access downloadable historical school reports.

The OSEL team shared that the application did not include a strong enough MTSS Referral System in indicator four. As the principal, I challenged this finding since it was simply a piece of paper that was absent and that as a small school we are able to drop what we are doing and may not have as sophisticated systems as a larger school with more resources or a high school. I shared that there should be some differentiation within the application for small schools, Kindergarten-8th grade schools, and high schools. I shared that within a district of over 500 schools there is sure to be some sort of variance in what being an “Exemplary Supportive School” may look and feel like. J.P. Miller's Supportive School Certification Indicator evidence is documented in the table below:
**Supportive School Evidence**

| Indicator 1: Continuous Improvement Work Plan (CIWP) includes a school climate goal |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| **Indicator Evidence**           | **Evidence Description**        |
| Screenshot of CIWP Area of Focus | One of the 3 Areas of Focus in the 2016-2018 J.P. Miller CIWP is MTSS. This also includes strategies and action steps related to MTSS/SEL. |

<p>| Indicator 2: All students at all grade levels receive SEL instruction every week |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <strong>Indicator Evidence</strong>           | <strong>Evidence Description</strong>        |
| Second Step                      | J.P. Miller was the recipient of the 2nd Step grant and all K-5 teachers received training by N10 SEL Specialist on August 30th. Our Master Schedule indicates that K-5 teachers are implementing Second Step one time a week for 30-40 minutes during Social Studies. There is also a picture of a teacher’s planner that includes Second Step |
| Morning Meeting                  | All K-8 grade level teachers either have Morning Meetings fully implemented or are in the implementation stages. This is reflected in our Master Schedule. We are beginning our February 2 Staff PD with a Morning Meeting and teachers sharing out how they conduct Morning Meetings. |
| Quarterly Naviance Counseling    | Our school counselor holds sessions for all students in grades 6-8 that includes individual goal setting and interest inventory. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Body Scans</th>
<th>Our school Social Worker pushes into classrooms to conduct Body Scans to help students calm down when needed.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PBIS</td>
<td>J.P. Miller students are Respectful, Responsible, Safe, and Kind. Students earn Miller Moola and can use Miller Moola to gain entrance to Quarterly PBIS Socials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pack Token Awards</td>
<td>We have Monthly Pack Token Awards for classrooms that are Respectful, Responsible, Safe, and Kind. Homerooms earn Pack Tokens when a class is demonstrating these Core Values.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Miller Moola Raffles</td>
<td>Students may enter Miller Moola into weekly raffles that the school counselor announces on Fridays.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace Circles</td>
<td>School Counselor attended a CPS SEL Peace Circle training in August. She conducts Peace Circles and Re-entry Circles when needed. Principal also participates in the Circles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student of the Month</td>
<td>Monthly Student of the Month are recognized with their pictures displayed, names in the newsletter, and a J.P. Miller Student of the Month T-Shirt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IB Learner Profile Announcements</td>
<td>Morning Announcements include IB Learner Profiles are focused on specific behaviors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily J.P. Miller Birthday Announcements</td>
<td>Daily J.P. Miller Birthday announcements are made to celebrate students and staff. Principal is collecting essays from students to formulate a Student Principal Advisory Committee made up of students from grades 5-8. Grades and behavior are not a criterion for being selected. The committee will meet monthly starting in February with the principal to discuss the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
cultural and climate at J.P. Miller with an effort to improve the environment for all.

Indicator 3: All staff members participate in some form of SEL-related professional development each school year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator Evidence</th>
<th>Evidence Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trauma Informed Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Smith came to J.P. Miller for a 3-hour Trauma Informed Schools PD session August 30th. We had all J.P. Miller staff participate in the training. This training laid the foundation for our work this year to become an established supportive school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Step</td>
<td>Network 10 SEL Specialist came to J.P. Miller on August 30th to train all K-5 teachers on how to implement Second Step. J.P. Miller was the recipient of a Second Step grant that provided all new materials for teachers to begin implementing this school year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult SEL</td>
<td>Dr. Smith spend the day with us November 28. This included meeting with each grade level team to talk about adult SEL, follow up on Trauma informed schools, and to help staff recognize areas in their life that they can focus on, for staff to create an action plan, and for staff to help keep each other on target.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety Care Training</td>
<td>Diverse Learner teacher and Special Education Classroom Assistant attended 2 day CPS Safety Care Training on October 2 &amp; 3 and October 4 &amp; 5 to help with de-escalation and physical safety.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morning Meeting</td>
<td>J.P. Miller teachers will shared out Morning Meeting best practices to start the February 2 Teacher Institute Day. All teachers and SECAs will be included and</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Restorative Justice

Principal completed the application for the CPS Restorative Justice grant that was due January 26. The focus of the grant is to have Kellogg recess monitors trained in RJ practices.

J.P. Miller is in the process of bringing Restorative Justice training to the Junior High, staff, and parents through Bethlehem Lutheran Church.

Deans and Discipline Training

Counselor, and Special Education Classroom Assistant attended CPS Training in August.
IB Coordinator and Lead Teacher attended CPS Deans and Discipline Training on 1/22 and 1/29 to learn about cyberbullying, restorative approach, and the differences between misconducts and incidents.

Indicator 4: There is a system for managing referrals and connecting students to interventions and restorative practices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator Evidence</th>
<th>Evidence Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MTSS/SEL Team</td>
<td>Team comprised of General Education teachers, Diverse Learner teachers, and school administration meets every other Monday from 3-4pm to discuss students, analyze data, analyze interventions, and progress monitor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MTSS/SEL Referral System</td>
<td>One of the 3 Areas of Focus is MTSS. Also included in the screenshot are the strategies and action steps related to MTSS/SEL.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys Anger Coping Group</td>
<td>Our school Social Worker runs a weekly Boys Anger Coping Group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MTSS Google Classroom with intervention forms</td>
<td>MTSS Team Lead created a J.P. Miller MTSS/SEL Google classroom. Classroom was shared with all teachers and reviewed with teachers. Teachers use the classroom to refer students, access data, and access reflection/intervention forms.</td>
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<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referral Google Form</td>
<td>MTSS Team Lead created a Referral form using Google. This form allows us to streamline the process and keep an accurate record of the referrals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PBIS</td>
<td>J.P. Miller has a well-established PBIS system in place where students are Responsible, Respectful, Safe, and Kind. Signage is throughout the building. There is a back to school kick off with the whole school. The theme this year was “Man in the Mirror”. If you want to make a change, take a look at yourself and make the change. All classrooms were given a mirror and we danced to the Michael Jackson song. There are raffles, socials, dress down days, and lunch awards given based on the accumulation of Miller Moola and Pack Tokens. PBIS is coordinated by our counselor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace Circles</td>
<td>Last year we started doing Peace Circles at J.P. Miller. Our counselor attended a CPS Circle training in August and leads them. Principal also participates. Circles are conducted when there is peer to peer conflict. To date, we have been very successful with the circles and not had any repeat occurrences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Teacher Menu of Interventions</td>
<td>Classroom teachers at J.P. Miller use a multitude of interventions such as:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Check In Check Out</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Behavior Management Checklists

- Visual Signs
- Calm Corner
- Chimes to get class attention and transitions
- Break Cards
- How are you feeling charts
- Class Dojo
- Trampoline

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**Indicator 5:** School collects universal data (i.e. either all students provide data or all teachers provide data about all their students) on student SEL skills, attitudes/mindsets, and/or perceptions of school climate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator Evidence</th>
<th>Evidence Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Second Step Surveys</td>
<td>Second Step Surveys were administered to all K-8 students in December as a pre-test. Data will be shared with teachers, students, and parents. We will create an action plan based on results and administer a post test in April/May to monitor progress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Shadow Project</td>
<td>Teachers shadowed students for a ½ day in 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, and Junior High to gain a better understanding of their experiences through a normal school day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Dojo</td>
<td>Many teachers use Class Dojo to share behavior data and track over time. Class Dojo is used to also share positive data. Almost all of our parents are signed up and this is a direct line to communicate with parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MTSS/SEL Google Classroom</td>
<td>There are common behavior collection forms that are posted in the Google classroom for teachers to use. This has helped us stay consistent with our collection of data and tools used at the school.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Indicator 6: The school collaborates with community partners to support students’ social and emotional development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator Evidence</th>
<th>Evidence Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bethlehem Lutheran Church</td>
<td>We are partnering with Bethlehem Lutheran Church’s Peace Team to support our Restorative Justice practices. Members of their Peace Team will be coming to J.P. Miller to train teachers, students, and parents in Restorative Practices. J.P. Miller students attended a Peace Camp over Winter Break at the church. They offer a week-long Peace Camp in the summer that we fully expect a number of our students to attend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start With Hello</td>
<td>We partnered with “Start with Hello” to help reduce the number of students that are feeling isolated and to simply create a more welcoming and warm environment for all students, staff, and guests. This will include a member of the organization coming to present to students in an assembly, our student council creating posters, and teachers receiving training as well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEAP Innovations</td>
<td>J.P. Miller is in LEAP Innovations Cohort 5 for personalized learning. This spring a group of 6 teachers spanning grades 1-5, Junior High, Diverse Learners, and the principal are attending monthly meetings at 1871 Merchandise Mart to plan and prepare for personalized learning in 2018-2019. One of the four key components of personalized learning is getting to know your students. The teachers spend a day in January collaborating and learning about new strategies to implement to develop stronger relationships with their students. One of the strategies that we selected was to shadow students in the end of January/beginning of February to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We.org</td>
<td>understand student experiences at J.P. Miller so we can better meet their needs.</td>
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<td>---</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>J.P. Miller is a We School (We.org). We.org believes “anyone can make a difference. We believe in the democratization of impact. There are myriad ways to participate both through giving back and our daily choices. We believe in the inclusive nature of doing good and that anyone can apply their individual passion to a collective world-changing impact.” J.P. Miller has partnered with we.org to spread this message throughout the school, Beverly Community, City of Chicago, and Chicago Suburbs. In the fall, our 90 Junior High students decided to learn about the scarcity of water. They learned that in Kenyan villages school aged girls do not attend school because they have to walk up to 8 miles a day to get water. The students held a Water Walk to raise a goal of $1,000 to rehabilitate a well in a Kenyan village next to a school so that girls could attend school and get water. Our students smashed the goal by raising $3,200 and were featured in the Beverly Review, WGN, CBS, and the Daily Southtown. Students created Public Service Announcements on the scarcity of water, designed water filtration systems, and Prezis on water scarcity. All of this was done through the lens of being Kind to others and the power of We to make a difference in other people’s lives even across the globe. As a “thank you”, the Kenyan Boys Choir, who performed at President Obama’s 2009 Inauguration, performed for our students at J.P. Miller.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Question One Findings

How does my leadership style using “Leadership through Purposing” impact creating a Supportive School Environment?

My reflections and review of data led me to my conclusions. I began the purposing and sharing the need to create a Supportive School Environment at the start of the 2017-2018 school year. Throughout the entire process and in the following year, I was careful to make leadership moves using Sergiovanni and Blumer’s Leadership through Purposing. Sergiovanni (1992) shares that purposing “fell in importance as the managerial mystique strengthened, but today this is renewed respect for the power of purposing to provide both sense and meaning” (p. 72). He goes further to state that “principals and superintendents have special leadership responsibilities and it is up to them to establish followership as the basis of leadership in the school” (p. 72). The data demonstrates that the school had been performing at a high level and was even rated as a Level 1+ school prior to the study. I believe that to garner enough support with staff, students, parents, and community that using Leadership through Purposing was essential in the success becoming recognized as an “Established Supportive School.”

The highest recorded entries using the six practices of Leadership through Purposing were “Say it,” “Support it,” and “Enforce it.” As the principal, I was accustomed to trying to “Say it” with my staff, but I was not used to sharing the purpose with a larger audience of stakeholders and essentially creating talking points that were repeated with every group that I engaged. This allowed me to reach a larger audience, spread our core values, and bring in additional resources that might not have been possible had I only worked within the walls of my school. Speaking at community
organizations helped me spread the purpose of what we were doing at the school and it resulted in members in the community reaching out to me to create partnerships to help us on our journey of becoming more supportive. I was connected with a local retired judge that now teaches a Restorative Justice class at the school and with a local pastor that brought her Peace Team to the school to teach students about Peace Circles.

Focusing on “Support it” also forced me to allocate resources and try to fold everything we did as a school to be within the goal of creating a Supportive School Environment. This included the resources of money and time. As a principal and former teacher, there are many times when we are told by our superiors to do more or do different, but there are not the necessary resources made available to effectively make the change. Using Leadership through Purposing guided me to the recognition that if I wanted my school to change, then I would have to be supportive with all stakeholders to reach the goal.

Enforcing and commending practices is not an area that would have rated myself as a strong area prior to the study. In previous years as a principal and assistant principal, I recognize that I did not commend the practices that were observed in the school like I did while conducting the study. I was able to see firsthand the smiles on the faces of my staff when I recognized their work and utilization of practices we were incorporating to create a Supportive School Environment.

To further help me understand my moves aligned to Leadership through Purposing, I reflected on my entries to try and identify any trends or patterns. Through my reflections on my entries, I identified two practices that I recorded at a higher rate than the other four practices and they were Say It and Support It. These practices are
related to communication and providing additional resources. A strength that has been shared with me by peers, staff, and community members is my ability to communicate using facts to provide a rationale or purpose for my actions. It is interesting to note that an area of strength for me was also one of the most used practices that I used. As a former teacher and current administrator in Chicago Public Schools (CPS), I am very much aware of the need for resources in schools. As a principal in CPS, I make budgetary decisions and can allocate funds where I see they are needed. The review of my reflections during this self-study identified that I prioritized my need to Support It and that I had a school budget and resources to help support the shift to becoming a Supportive School Environment. Upon review of the six practices and my alignments, I was not able to identify any other unique trends or patterns.

The Supportive School 5 Essential data shows some tremendous growth in all categories once the study began and continued growth the year after we achieved Supportive School status. This would indicate that my leadership style using Leadership through Purposing had a positive impact in creating a Supportive School Environment. The Junior High students taking the survey did not have any new teachers working with them between the 2016-2017 school year and 2018-2019 school years, yet they recorded a stark reality in feeling more supportive and having stronger relationships with their teachers. All of the categories surveyed were ones that I was working directly and intentionally with staff, students, and community members to create a Supportive School Environment using Leadership through Purposing.
Section Two

The second section of results is aligned to Research Question Two and focused on NWEA Reading and Math data, Chicago Public Schools On-Track data, and the schools response to discipline data.

End of Year NWEA Math and Reading Data

Students in Chicago Public Schools take the annual End of Year NWEA assessment in Math and Reading. The NWEA scores are weighted as 65% of a school’s rating and includes attainment (at grade level) and growth (did a student meet a growth target based on the previous year’s score). The results of J.P. Millers NWEA Math and Reading for attainment and growth from the 2016-2017 school year through the 2018-2019 school year are:

Figure 7. NWEA Math Attainment
Figure 8. NWEA Math Growth

Figure 9. NWEA Reading Attainment
Over a two year period the NWEA scores for Math and Reading gains were:

**NWEA Math and Reading from 2016-2017 to 2018-2019**

- Math Attainment: + 9
- Math Growth: + 26
- Reading Attainment: + 2
- Reading Growth: - 6

It is critical to note the as a LEAP Personalized Learning Pilot the school had to select one subject as a focus for the implementation of Personalized Learning and the school selected math based on historical testing data. The foundation of Personalized Learning is creating a Learner Focused classroom in which teachers get to know each student on a more individualized level, provide academic and social-emotional support, and differentiate lessons based on student needs.
On-Track Data

Chicago Public Schools measures the percent of students in grades 3-8 that are On-Track. To be on On-Track, a student cannot have a D or F in Math or Reading and they must have 95% or above cumulative attendance for the year. On-Track data was not included as part of a school’s rating until the 2019-2020 school year, but the district expectation was the data was carefully monitored and interventions were implemented. On-Track data was reviewed at the monthly Network Principal meeting by the Network Chief and was reviewed during the end of year performance meeting with the Network Chief. The On-Track results at the end of the year for students in grades 3-8 from 2015-2016 to 2018-2019 are:

![Percent of On-Track Students at End of Year](image)

*Figure 11. Percent of On-Track Students at End of Year*

**Discipline Response Data**

When assigning consequences for student behavior, schools must use the Chicago Public Schools Student Code of Conduct. Consequences can be Out of School Suspensions, In School Suspensions, Detentions, and the use of Restorative Conversations. Restorative Conversations include the use of Peace Circle and the use of
Restorative Conversations is at the discretion of each individual school. J.P. Millers discipline response data utilizing Restorative Conversations from 2015-2016 through 2018-2019 years is:

Table: Restorative Conversations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015-2016</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016-2017</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017-2018</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018-2019</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Restorative Conversations used from 2016-2019 were all Peace Circles as prescribed by the principal or requested by students. I was not the principal in 2015-2016 and am not privy to what the nature of the Restorative Conversation recorded involved.

Research Question Two Findings

How has my leadership and creation of a Supportive School Environment relate to student academic performance?

My reflections on data collected solidified my conclusions that creating a Supportive School Environment had a positive impact on student academic performance. J.P. Miller has historically been a high performing Chicago Public School academically. The school has been rated a Level 1 or Level 1+ school since at least 2014. The End of Year NWEA Math and Reading data displayed growth in Math Attainment, Math Growth, and Reading Attainment from 2016-2017 to 2018-2019. There was an increase of 26 percentile points in Math Growth. There was a decrease in Reading Growth over the recorded period and this requires a deeper analysis by the schools Instructional
Leadership Team and teachers to uncover what may have caused the dip in Reading Growth while all other areas increased over time.

One of the partnerships that I created during the study was with LEAP Innovations to bring Personalized Learning through a pilot of teachers focused on math instruction. Teachers learned new instructional strategies, created flexible seating, and learner focused classrooms rooted in learning more about each individual student’s needs to help them grow. NWEA Math Growth had the largest growth with an increase of 26 percentile points over two years. There were no changes in teachers or curriculum, the only change was shifting to a more supportive approach with students through Personalized Learning.

Reflections on the school’s On-Track data, revealed that the number of students considered On-Track increased by 5% the first year during the Supportive School Certification application process and then decreased by four percentage points. On-Track data includes attendance in addition to Math and Reading grades. While the overall attendance percentage remained almost the same, it would be worth exploring if attendance had an impact on the On-Track regression from 2017-2018 to 2018-2019. On-Track is measured by not having a D or F in Reading and Math. It also would be interesting to see if there was a positive or negative change in the number of Cs, Bs, and As earned over time.

Chicago Magazine publishes an Annual “Best Public Schools” list in their September issue and for the first time my school was included in the list of 50 schools (2019). The school not only made the list, we were included in the Top 25 and were the #1 rated majority African-American neighborhood/non selective enrollment Chicago
Public School. Chicago Magazine uses PARCC Math and Reading data and overall score on the University of Chicago 5 Essential Survey (2019). The PARCC assessment is the annual Illinois state mandated assessment administered to all 3-8 grade students. The recognition given to the school by joining the list of schools was one that was celebrated by teachers, students, parents, and community members and can be attributed to the recent shift to creating a Supportive School Environment.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

This chapter presents reflections on research question three, summary of study highlights, implications for creating a Supportive School Environment, recommendations for future investigations, limitations of the study, and my final thoughts on the self-study.

My first research question focused on how does my leadership style using “Leadership through Purposing” impact creating a Supportive School Environment? The alignment of my journaling and reflection to Sergiovanni and Blumer’s Leadership through Purposing, data from the University of Chicago 5 Essential Survey, and the Supportive School Certification Application that was submitted at the end of the 2017-2018 school year helped me reveal findings related to my question. Leadership through Purposing helped me carefully and strategically make moves while leading my school community to have a more supportive environment. The school achieved Established Supportive School status and all supportive environment measures on the 5 Essential Survey increased between 17 and 42 points.

I reflected on NWEA Reading and Math data, Chicago Public Schools On-Track data, and the school’s response to discipline data to answer my second research question “how has my leadership and creation of a Supportive School Environment relate to
student academic performance?” The analysis of these data points revealed that during the period of the self-study NWEA Math Attainment grew by 9 percentile points and NWEA Math Growth increased by 26 percentile points. My school’s assessment scores and 5 Essential Survey scores had enough growth during the self-study for the school to be recognized for the first time in Chicago Magazine’s Best of Chicago Public Schools Top 25 list in 2019.

**Reflections on Research Question Three**

How has reflecting on my experience in creating a supportive school environment impacted my leadership style?

I was able to arrive to my conclusions because of the review and reflections of my personal journaling and data. My past experiences prior to the study include almost 20 years in education as a teacher, assistant principal, and principal. I had been in a school leadership position for eight years and had earned an M.Ed. in School Leadership from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, completed all of my Ed.D. coursework at Loyola University Chicago, and successfully passed the Illinois State Superintendent Licensure Exam. Throughout these experiences I had read too many to remember books on educational leadership theory and thought I understood my leadership style. Sergiovanni’s Moral Leadership (1992) had resonated with me for over a decade since reading it in an M.Ed course and I prided myself on being what Sergiovanni described as a “Servant Leader.” I had taken bits of pieces of what I had read and would use them to help me as a leader, but I had never truly made an explicit attempt to use a leadership framework to create change.
I posted the six Leadership through Purposing practices on the wall in front of my desk to help keep me focused and remind me to consider moves I was making and how they may fit into the practices in all areas of my work. During my Leadership Team meetings, I started referencing the practices and still do to help my team with the work they are doing with teams that they are leading. I can honestly say that these practices have become part of who I am and is now a part of my core when leading my school.

My school has seen success in many areas over the past few years and I have been approached by my principal colleagues, LEAP Innovations, and the Archdiocese of Chicago to learn about the work we have done. Having a firm understanding through this self-study of Leadership through Purposing is allowing me to better tell my leadership story and the journey to create a Supportive School Environment. My leadership style has evolved from one rooted in a potpourri of leadership theory and catchy educational buzzwords at the start of the self-study to one that is grounded in Sergiovanni and Blumer’s Leadership through Purposing. I recognized that my position as a white male principal in a majority African-American student population and a majority female staff is one rooted historically as a position of power. To help minimize my position as one hinged on power with a top down approach, I was careful throughout in my reflections to create a collaborative approach to creating change through Sergiovanni and Blumer’s Leadership through Purposing.

**Study Highlights**

The purpose of the study is to examine and reflect on how my leadership and the promotion of a supportive school environment is related to Sergiovanni and Blumer’s Leadership through Purposing. This study is unique in that a recent mixed methods study
by Allensworth and Hart (2018) through the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research found that schools with the highest learning gains had principals who promoted a strong school climate by empowering and coordinating the work of teachers and school staff around shared goals. Improvements in school climate set up all teachers and students to be successful, (p. 4)

however, there is a lack of research of how a principal actually led their school to create a Supportive School Environment and achieved academic gains.

There was a clear need for my school to embrace a more Supportive School Environment to better support all students. To help guide this change with my school community, I led the school through CPS’ Supportive School Certification. To help provide the “why” to reach the hearts and minds of all stakeholders I used Sergiovanni and Blumer’s Leadership through Purposing. Utilizing Leadership through Purposing provided me a framework within which to reflect on the decisions, interactions, and communication that I have with all stakeholders throughout the supportive school certification process. This allowed me to look critically at the steps I took to make changes in my school through the lens of Sergiovanni and Blumer focused on examining the following research questions:

1) How does my leadership style using “Leadership through Purposing” impact creating a Supportive School Environment?

2) How has my leadership and creation of a Supportive School Environment relate to student academic performance?
3) How has reflecting on my experience in creating a supportive school environment impacted my leadership style?

When I first became the principal at J.P. Miller I would talk about Restorative Justice, Social Emotional Learning, and Trauma Informed with teachers and parents. This was often met with a look of confusion and lack of understanding of how this would work. Teachers and parents thought that it would lead to students running the school with zero accountability. Upon reflection, while I was talking about these educational buzzwords, I was missing the key element of purposing. I believe that stakeholders at my school did not understand the “why” we needed to be more supportive with students. I also was not providing any framework for what it would look like, how we would go about actually implementing change, or how I would be supporting the change.

Understanding the history of the school and the lack of a supportive environment, I was aware that implementing change would not be an easy task. There is more to schools than just academics and improving test scores. If a school leader is trying to reform and improve academics only, they will miss the opportunity to create a Supportive School Environment to the benefit of all students (University of Chicago, 2019). Our approaches have to change because, according to Elmore (2000):

Public schools and school systems, as they are presently constituted, are simply not led in ways that enable them to respond to the increasing demands they face under standards-based reform. Further, if schools, school systems, and their leaders respond to standards-based reforms the way they have responded to other attempts at broad scale reform of public education over the past century, they will fail massively and visibly. (p. 2)
Creating a supportive school environment was not going to happen by the principal telling everyone what changes would be implemented or tossing out the latest educational jargon that did not have true meaning to teachers. The shift in mindset was not going to become part of the fabric of the school if the principal made decisions from the office without engaging stakeholders and creating a plan that involved students, teachers, parents, and community members. In order to create sustainable and meaningful change to shift the school to a supportive school environment, I was going to have to reach the hearts and minds of all stakeholders. I needed to take a different approach to provide the “why” we are changing.

Chicago Public School’s Supportive School Certification provided me the roadmap for how I could create the environment using the six indicators and providing evidence of implementation. Sergiovanni and Blumer’s Leadership through Purposing provided me the framework to “make it happen” and for me to be able to reflect and grow as an educational leader. I am fortunate to work in a school district that had been focused on creating supportive environments in schools and had an established set of criteria that school needed to meet in order to be recognized as an Established Supportive School. CPS is supporting schools to make the shift through the Office of Social Emotional Learning that had a specialist designated for each Network to work with schools while they apply for certification. What was missing from the process was how can a school leader effectively implement change within their school community through a framework such as Leadership through Purposing?
Limitations

J.P. Miller School has a small homogenous student body and a small staff that may put forth data that does not transfer to all school settings. A strong academic history at the school with a supportive community likely contributed to the ability to make significant changes in a relatively short period of time. Principals often go into a school with a staff that was hired by previous administrators. The existing staff may not always share the same values and sense of urgency that the new principal brings with them. Due to retirements and the frequent change of principals prior to my arrival, there were a number of vacancies that I was able to fill with staff that I felt were in line with my vision. I have been able to hire over 50% of the current staff over the past three years and this most likely helped me with implementing the change at my school. All of the newly hired staff understood my expressed vision of creating a Supportive School Environment and demonstrated in their interviews that they believed in the need as well. This may not always be the case when a school leader is trying to implement change and undoubtedly will impact how quickly change can occur at the school due to a lack of resistance.

At the start of the 2016-2017 school year local officials announced a plan to merge my school with a neighboring school due to low enrollment. The announcement galvanized my school community to fight back and after partnering with the other school, the plan was dropped. Even though the plan was dropped, there was still the reality that our school was under enrolled and that families were not enrolling their children in their neighborhood school. There were also many families that had withdrawn their children due to them not feeling supported by my predecessor. The merger proposal created a sense of urgency that was dire, the school needed to do something different in order to
survive. It can be challenging for a principal to create a sense of urgency, especially when things appear to be going well. My situation may have afforded me a ripe opportunity to garner support quickly with little resistance.

Chicago Public Schools provided a set of indicators that a school must meet in order to be recognized as a Supportive School. The district also dedicated financial resources to support schools in their shift to become more supportive that also included a dedicated Social Emotional Learning staff member for each Network that could work directly with school teams. It may be challenging for a school to implement this change without the support provided by a district’s central office.

**Implications for Creating a Supportive School Environment**

Socially and emotionally competent children tend to be better integrated into the school and classroom context and can focus on the academic tasks provided to them, compared with children who struggle socially and emotionally (Elias & Haynes, 2008). The NAEP Survey (Fuller et al., 2018) asked the question: “To what extent is each of the items currently or potentially (within the next year) a concern in the school for which you are now responsible?” The number one concern listed by principals in 2018 was the increase in the number of students with socioemotional problems. By comparison, in the last survey conducted in 2008, socioemotional problems did not even show up in the top ten list of concerns of principals. Research has shown many promising outcomes in schools that use a restorative justice rather than a punitive approach to student violations, including reduced recidivism and higher academic achievement (Gardella, 2015; Morrison & Vaandering, 2012). Gordon et al. (2011) discuss how the State of Illinois recognized the need for Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and the early adoption of the
SEL Standards by the State of Illinois has made the state a national leader in SEL learning, and many districts within the state are recognized as being models for other districts in the country to follow. Mathewson (2007) reported that Chicago Public Schools increase spending on SEL resources from $8.4 million in 2013 to $11.2 million in 2016. Allensworth and Hart (2018) through the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research found that “schools with the highest learning gains had principals who promoted a strong school climate by empowering and coordinating the work of teachers and school staff around shared goals” (p. 4). All of this underscores that it is not a matter of “should” a principal focus on creating a Supportive School Environment, it is “how” can a principal begin to create or improve the environment at their school so they can better support students because it is an absolutely critical element to weave into the fabric of the school.

J.P. Miller school went from almost being merged with another school due to low enrollment to a school that has achieved four consecutive Level 1+ ratings, an increase in enrollment by 40 students distributed across all grade levels, having a “Very Strong” Supportive Environment as measured by the University of Chicago 5 Essential Survey, recognition by CPS as an “Established Supportive School”, demonstrated growth on the NWEA Math for Attainment and Growth, demonstrated growth on the NWEA Reading for Attainment, increased the use of Restorative Conversations as behavior incident consequence, and was recognized as a Top 25 Elementary School in Chicago by Chicago Magazine in 2019. These successes all occurred after this self-study began in the 2017-2018 school year when the school created a unified and intentional focus with supports to create a Supportive School Environment.
Walkey and Cox (2013) warn that “a challenge of implementing trauma informed schools is the perception of being ‘soft,’ there is a need to provide the background and research to staff so that they can understand the impact of trauma on a child” (p. 124). I struggled early at my school with trying to create change and introducing elements of a Supportive School Environment such as Restorative Practices. I knew from the data and conversations with stakeholders that the norm at the school was to assign a harsh consequence to send a message and punish the student for a wrongdoing. Much of this I believe is related to teacher’s experiences prior to SB100 and their own personal experiences as a student. I had the educational theory and training through my Ed.M. coursework and experience as an Assistant Principal, but I had never taken the time to pause and create a plan of action using a framework such as Sergiovanni and Blumer’s Leadership through Purposing.

Peterson and Deal (1998) define school culture as “the underground stream of norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and rituals that has built up over time as people work together, solve problems, and confront challenge “(p. 28). They claim that “strong cultures are places with a shared sense of what is important, a shared ethos of caring and concern, and a shared commitment to helping students learn” (p. 29). Using Leadership through Purposing, I was strategic with how I started off the 2017-2018 school year. There was a heavy focus on “Say it” and “Support it” during the back to school week of professional development. Sergiovanni (1992) defines “Support it” as “provide additional resources to the areas that promote core values. When undergoing retrenchment, cut other areas before jeopardizing programs and practices that reflect the core values. The most important things get cut last” (p. 74). The foundation for me to begin the journey of
creating a Supportive School Environment was for me to “Say it” by giving purpose using the school data and national research to my staff and to “Support it” by making this goal the priority at the start of the school year. In my experiences as a teacher and school leader, professional development prior to the start of the school year is usually focused on curriculum and instruction. The focus for my school that week was all around creating a Supportive School Environment. The largest portion of time used with staff was a four hour Trauma Informed training with a clinical psychologist and the second largest allotment of time was a two hour Second Step Social Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum training with the Network 10 SEL specialist. We did not spend any time discussing new instructional strategies or planning the course of instruction for the year. We went all in on how could we better understand and support students. We needed to create the elements of a strong shared culture as described by Peterson and Deal (1998) to set the foundation so that all students could be supported which would hopefully lead to an improved Supportive Environment and student academic achievement.

Using Leadership through Purposing as also provided me the foundation to respond to situations after the conclusion of the study that has strengthened my ability to work through challenging situations. The parent of a Junior High student recently came to see me because he was upset about how his daughter was being treated by peers she considered friends. The parent is a Police Chief in a nearby suburb that has received national attention for their restorative practices. He shook his head and smiled at me when I told him we were focused on creating a supportive school environment and said he knew all about Peace Circles working in his suburb. I took a pause and went right to Sergiovanni and Blumer’s Leadership through Purposing and began to share out the
practices of “Say it”, “Support it”, “Enforce it”, and how I will “Express outrage” if the values are being violated. At the end of our meeting he told me that he felt like we had a handle on the situation and thanked me for explaining what we are doing to support students. I believe that the experience of this self-study not only helped me lead my school to achieve some success at the conclusion of the study, it has helped me become a better leader going forward as a result.

**Recommendations for Future Investigations**

Stringer (2014) describes how participating in a self-study is different than traditional research. Usually, it is critical to “be as unobtrusive as possible in order to not influence the outcomes of their investigations” (p. 20). In a self-study, the researcher becomes a facilitator or consultant who acts as a catalyst to assist stakeholders to define their problems clearly and to monitor and support their activity as they work toward effective resolution of the issues that provide the focus of their investigations. (p. 20)

Two key elements of the Self-Study researcher are that they are “a catalyst” and their role is “not to impose but to stimulate people to change” (p. 5).

My participation in this self-study has afforded me the opportunity to pause and reflect on my journey the past two years. It has also made me consider additional questions that need to be asked and what others may be able to learn from my research. The most significant increases in data during the study were NWEA Math Growth and University of Chicago 5 Essential Survey’s Supportive Environment. We were a Pilot School for Personalized Learning focused on math and I would be curious to learn more about how Personalized Learning as a component of creating a Supportive School
Environment can impact student academic growth. Math growth was high, while reading growth went down. I wonder what, if any, correlation this had with teachers implementing Personalized Learning. Within the 5 Essential Survey, the school had large jumps in all areas:

- Supportive School Environment: + 28
- Academic Personalism: + 17
- Peer Support for Academic Work: + 28
- Safety: + 24
- Student-Teacher Trust: + 42

I would be interested in looking deeper into the impact of having strong student-teacher trust has on academics and if there is any variance in between classrooms with their growth and student-teacher trust ratings.

This study could be of value for a school leader looking to implement a change in their school’s environment. The study not only details the indicators of a Supportive School Environment, it also lays the leadership framework of Leadership through Purposing to help a school leader plan and execute their vision. In my review of the available literature, I was not able to identify a study conducted by a practicing school leader that used a framework and relevant research to create a Supportive School Environment that had a positive impact on academic achievement. It is my hope that my experience could help those that are seeking an authentic example of how this can be done in a school.
Final Thoughts

This study had significant implications for my leadership style and practice at J.P. Miller School. It provided me the opportunity to delve into the complexities of leading supportive learning environments and the impact on the student body. Participating in self-study provided me the opportunity to develop and grow my practice. As a school leader, I had not taken the time to pause and reflect to analyze my moves and impact when creating change. While the impact of trauma and having a strong supportive school environment has become more visible, there is a dearth of research on how to effectively transform a school community into a Supportive School Environment, which this study hopes to remedy.

My goal was, by researching myself through self-study, was for me to have a greater impact on my school, students, teachers, parents, and community. I hope that my reflections and findings can be used by other schools and leaders to help them in their journey in creating a Supportive School Environment. I have grown as a leader through this experience and am now able to transfer the utilization of Leadership through Purposing to all facets of my work as a school leader. I found myself to be a more effective leader and able to navigate the multiple facets of an organization when implementing change as a result of this experience. I continue to use the six practices related to maintaining a Supportive School Environment. While the data all indicates that there was a positive shift in the school environment and an increase in academic achievement, it is also my goal to maintain and further grow as a school, not to regress back to any previous habits or practices at the school. I will continue to use Leadership through Purposing to help freeze this change and to give purpose for our work.
Recently, my school has been sought out by other schools and districts to visit so they can learn the “secret sauce” at J.P. Miller. A comment that comes up with each school visit is that the kids and staff all look happy and are having fun while learning. Bryk, Gomez, Grunow, and LeMahieu (2017) state that “the first few weeks of a class are a critical period for student engagement. If students fear failure or sense they might not belong, they may withhold the effort necessary to succeed” (p. 109). Creating a Supportive School Environment should be every school leader’s priority even before they focus on academics. Students do well when they feel supported and a sense of belonging. My experience with this self-study using Leadership through Purposing helped me lead my school community through a change to create a more supportive school environment and as a result students feel a stronger support and demonstrated an increase in academic achievement.
APPENDIX A

JOURNAL CODING SPREADSHEET
### Say it:
Define the core values. Communicate them clearly and often to inside and outside constituents.

### Model it:
Act on these core values. When it comes time to make tough choices and trade-offs, make it clear that the core values drive the final decision.

### Organize for it:
Put in resources to support the core values. Organize incentives and rewards for organizational units and personnel whose actions exemplify a commitment to core values. Ensure that the core values permeate all of the arenas in the system such as classroom routines, cafeteria, playground, faculty meetings, student council, traditions.

### Support it:
Provide additional resources to the areas that promote core values. When undergoing retrenchment, cut other areas before jeopardizing programs and practices that reflect the core values. The most important things get cut last.

### Enforce it and commend practices that exemplify core values:
Embody core values in personnel 127valuation.

### Express outrage when practices violate the core values:
Outrage is a powerful form of communication. Outrage tells people what is important.

### Key Anecdote that does not fit one of the Six Leadership through Purposing Practices:

| Say it: Define the core values. Communicate them clearly and often to inside and outside constituents. |
| Model it: Act on these core values. When it comes time to make tough choices and trade-offs, make it clear that the core values drive the final decision. |
| Organize for it: Put in resources to support the core values. Organize incentives and rewards for organizational units and personnel whose actions exemplify a commitment to core values. Ensure that the core values permeate all of the arenas in the system such as classroom routines, cafeteria, playground, faculty meetings, student council, traditions. |
| Support it: Provide additional resources to the areas that promote core values. When undergoing retrenchment, cut other areas before jeopardizing programs and practices that reflect the core values. The most important things get cut last. |
| Enforce it and commend practices that exemplify core values: Embody core values in personnel 127valuation. |
| Express outrage when practices violate the core values: Outrage is a powerful form of communication. Outrage tells people what is important. |
| Key Anecdote that does not fit one of the Six Leadership through Purposing Practices |
and ceremonies, grouping practices, posters and slogans, curriculum, models of teaching and lesson structures, spontaneous personal contact.
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VITA

Cory Overstreet is originally from Champaign, Illinois and has served the students of Chicago Public Schools for the past 16 years as a high school social studies teacher, high school and elementary school assistant principal, and principal. He is currently in his fourth year as the principal of a CPS neighborhood public school serving Kindergarten through 8\textsuperscript{th} grade students. Under his leadership, the school has earned and maintained a Level 1+ school quality rating, was named an established supportive school by the CPS Office of Social-Emotional Learning, and is ranked among the top 25 CPS Schools by Chicago Magazine.

Cory is currently a Chicago Principal Fellow participating in executive leadership development at the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University that is selected for Chicago’s top public school principals. He has partnered with LEAP Innovations since 2017 to bring Personalized Learning for all students in Math and was recognized by LEAP as an Innovative Educator.

Before attending Loyola, he attended the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where he earned his Bachelor of Arts in History and Speech Communications (1998). Cory also earned his Master of Education in Curriculum & Instruction (2003) and School Leadership (2009) from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He is a member of the Jesuit Honor Society Alpha Sigma Nu (2017).
for his scholarship, loyalty, and service and holds an Illinois State Superintendent License.

He currently lives in the Beverly neighborhood of Chicago with his wife and fellow educator, Dr. Núñez, and three children. His two school aged children are CPS students at their neighborhood school.
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