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Teacher's Perception of their Principal's Leadership Style and the Effects on Student Achievement in Improving and non-improving schools

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Teacher’s Perception of their Principal’s Leadership Style and the Effects on Student Achievement in Improving and Non-improving Schools

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education
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Key words: Principalship, teacher-focused, situational leadership theory, school culture

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Dedication

This paper is dedicated to my husband, Rick, and my children, Tyler Malone and Christina May. Our family is the heartbeat of my soul. You have nurtured me and supported me through the pursuit of this goal with patience, and perseverance.

To my husband, I thank you for walking beside me and believing in me as I strived to meet my own expectations. Your support, patience, and friendship made this accomplishment possible.

To my son, whose heart is as big as my love for him. Your future is yours to create by believing in yourself and taking action toward reaching your goals. Remember, a goal is a dream with a deadline.

To my daughter, whose beautiful spirit is captured in her sweet look at life. Your journey has only begun. The world needs to know your wisdom and perspective. All is possible; just take one step forward each day.
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Table of Contents

List of Tables .............................................................................................................................. iv
List of Figures .............................................................................................................................. vi
Abstract ......................................................................................................................................... vii
Chapter One Introduction ........................................................................................................ 1
  Background of the Study ........................................................................................................... 2
  The school Leader’s Role in Student Achievement ................................................................. 2
  The importance of Teacher-Focused Leadership ..................................................................... 2
  Conceptual Framework of the Study ....................................................................................... 3
Statement of the Research Problem ............................................................................................ 4
Purpose of the Study ..................................................................................................................... 6
Research Questions ..................................................................................................................... 7
Methodology of the Study ........................................................................................................... 9
Data Gathering Instruments ......................................................................................................... 11
Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations of the Study ...................................................... 13
  Assumptions ............................................................................................................................ 13
  Delimitations ........................................................................................................................... 13
  Limitations .............................................................................................................................. 14
Definition of Key Terms ............................................................................................................ 14
Significance of the Study ............................................................................................................ 17
Organization of the Study ........................................................................................................... 18

Chapter Two Literature Review ................................................................................................ 19
  Purpose .................................................................................................................................. 19
  Conceptual Framework .......................................................................................................... 21
  Administrative Leadership Styles within Situational Leadership Theory ................................ 22
    Situational Leadership Theory ............................................................................................. 23
    Transformational Leadership Style ..................................................................................... 25
    Transactional Leadership Style ........................................................................................... 29
  Building School Capacity through Leadership Styles ......................................................... 32
    Elements of Teacher-Focused Principal Behaviors that Build Teacher Capacity ................. 35
    School Capacity and Teacher Capacity ............................................................................. 36
    Principal Role Modeling to Build School Capacity ............................................................ 38
    Leadership Decisions and Building School Capacity ......................................................... 40
# Leadership Style and School Capacity impacts Student Learning Gains

- Leadership Styles and Student Learning Gains ........................................ 43
- School Capacity and Student Learning Gains ........................................ 45
- The Elements of School Capacity and Student Learning Gains ............ 47

**Conclusion** ........................................................................................................ 51

Chapter Three Research Method ........................................................................ 55

- **Problem and Purpose of the Study** ......................................................... 55
- **Research Questions** .................................................................................. 56
- **Research Population** .................................................................................. 57
- **Design of the Study** ................................................................................... 62
- **Design of the Instrument** .......................................................................... 66
  - Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire *(5x-Short)* .................................. 69
  - Validation of the Multiple Leadership Questionnaire *(5x-Short)* .......... 72
  - Validation of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test .................. 77
- **Pilot Study** .................................................................................................. 79
- **Research Variables** ..................................................................................... 83
- **Data Collection Procedures** ..................................................................... 84
- **Data Analysis** .............................................................................................. 85
- **Role of the Researcher and Ethical Considerations** ............................... 89
- **Summary** ..................................................................................................... 90

Chapter Four Research Results ........................................................................ 91

- **Descriptive Statistics** ............................................................................... 91
- **Leadership Styles in Improving and Non-improving Schools** ............. 94
- **Leadership Style and Student Achievement in Improving and Non-improving Schools** ................................................. 96
- **Transformational, Transactional, and Passive Avoidant Leader Subscales and Student Achievement** ............................................. 98
- **Teacher Demographics and their Perception of Leadership Styles** .... 102
- **Behaviors of Leaders as Perceived by Teachers** .................................. 107
- **Emerging Themes** ..................................................................................... 108
  - Principal Role Modeling Theme ................................................................. 110
  - School Culture Theme .............................................................................. 112
  - Leadership Decisions Theme ................................................................. 114
- **Leadership Outcomes and Principal Leadership Style** ...................... 115
- **Summary of Results** ............................................................................... 119

Chapter 5 Summary and Discussion .................................................................. 122

- **Purpose of the Study** ................................................................................ 123
Research Questions ................................................................. 123
Context of the Study ................................................................ 124
Discussion of the Findings ...................................................... 126
  Leadership Styles and Improving and Non-improving Schools..... 126
  Principal Leadership Styles and Student Achievement............... 130
  Principal Leadership Style...................................................... 131
  Transformational .................................................................... 132
  Transactional ......................................................................... 133
  Passive-avoidant..................................................................... 134
  Demographic Variables and Leadership Styles.......................... 135
Teacher Perspectives on Leadership Behaviors ......................... 135
  Principal Role Modeling......................................................... 135
  Building School Capacity....................................................... 137
  Leadership Decisions............................................................. 138
Leadership Styles and Leadership Outcomes ............................ 138
Limitations of the Study ............................................................ 140
Implications for Future Research ............................................ 142
Conclusion .............................................................................. 143

References .............................................................................. 149
Appendices ............................................................................. 166
  Appendix A: Sample MLQ Items and 5-Point Likert Scale .......... 167
  Appendix B: Eliminated School Samples and Qualified School
    Samples ........................................................................... 168
  Appendix C: Email to Teachers with Survey Monkey Link ........ 168
  Appendix D: Demographic Survey - Professional Descriptions for
    2010-2011 ........................................................................ 171
  Appendix E: Teacher Responses to Open-Response Questions .... 172

About The Author .................................................................... 1
List of Tables

Table 1: Identifying 16 Sample Schools ................................................................. 60
Table 2: Population Response of the Study Sample .............................................. 61
Table 3: Summary of Instruments: MLQ (5x-Short) and FCAT ............................ 68
Table 4: Types of Questions for Grade Level on the Florida Comprehensive
Assessment Test ....................................................................................................... 76
Table 5: Bass & Avolio’s MLQ, Pilot and Researcher’s Study: Means, Standard
Deviation, and Reliabilities ..................................................................................... 81
Table 6: Summary Research Questions and Data Analysis ...................................... 87
Table 7: Descriptive Statistics for Teacher Perception of Principal Leadership
Styles (N=143) ........................................................................................................ 93
Table 8: Independent t-test results for Transformational Leadership Style of the
Principal in Improving and Non-improving schools (N=143) ............................ 95
Table 9: Independent t-test results for Transactional Leadership Style of
Principals in Improving and Non-improving schools (N=143) ......................... 96
Table 10: Independent t-test results for Passive Avoidant Leadership Style of
Principals in Improving and Non-improving schools (N=143) ......................... 96
Table 11: Regression Explaining Effect on Achievement Outcomes by Leadership
Styles and Improvement Status of Schools (N=143) ........................................ 98
Table 12: Transformational Leadership Style subscales and Improvement status as
Predictors of Student Achievement (N = 143) ....................................................... 100
Table 13: Transactional Leadership Style Subscales and Improvement Status as
Predictors of Student Achievement (N = 143) ....................................................... 101
Table 14: Passive Avoidant Leadership Style Subscales and Improvement Status
as Predictors of Student Achievement (N = 143) .................................................... 102
Table 15: Demographic Characteristics of Teacher Respondents .........................104

Table 16: Multiple Regression Explaining Transformational Leadership Style and Demographics for School Improvement Status (N = 143) ........................................105

Table 17: Multiple Regression Explaining Transactional Leadership Style and Demographics for School Improvement Status (N = 143) ........................................106

Table 18: Multiple Regression Explaining Passive Avoidant Leadership Style and Demographics for School Improvement Status (N = 143) ........................................107

Table 19: Survey Responses to Open-Ended Question (N = 143) .............................110

Table 20: Frequency and Percentage Distribution for Leadership Outcomes ..........117

Table 21: Mean, Median, Mode, and Standard Deviation for Leadership Outcomes ..................................................................................................................................117

Table 22: Correlations between Leadership Subscales (N= 143) ...............................119
List of Figures

Figure 1. Leadership Style, School Capacity and Student Achievement Conceptual Framework ........................................................................................................22
Abstract

Teachers’ perceptions of their school leaders influence student achievement in their schools. The extent of this influence is examined in this study. This quantitative study examined teachers’ perceptions of the leadership style of their principals as transformational, transactional or passive-avoidant in improving and non-improving schools in relation to student achievement. The study population was a purposeful sample of 143 teachers in 16 schools in one school district. Leadership behaviors, as perceived by the teachers, were measured using the Multi-factor Leadership Questionnaire. Student achievement was measured with the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test results for each school using three years of results. Independent t-test, multiple regressions, and an open-ended question were used to analyze the research questions.

The study found that teachers in improving and non-improving schools had minimal differences in how they perceived their principals’ leadership styles. All three leadership styles were statistically significant predictors of student achievement. School status was not significant in predicting student achievement indicating no difference in student achievement between improving and non-improving schools. Transactional leadership had a negative relationship while transformational and passive-avoidant leadership style had a positive relationship with student achievement.
Regression analysis of the MLQ subscales for each leadership style as perceived by the teachers and the school status with student achievement found that transformational subscale intellectual stimulation and school status had a statistically significant positive relationship with student achievement. Likewise, the transactional subscale management by exception-active was a significant predictor with student achievement but had a negative relationship. Passive avoidant style also had a positive relationship with student achievement.

Teacher demographics of gender, age, years as a teacher, years at current school, and level of school (elementary, middle, high) were examined in relation to perceived leadership style and school status. Multiple regression analysis found that only years at current school that was significant in how they perceived their principal’s transformational or passive avoidant leadership style. No demographic variables were significant for transactional style or school status.

Overall, teachers were satisfied with the principal’s leadership style and effectiveness. Teachers most often cited school culture as having an influence on student achievement in both improving and non-improving schools.

Limitations of the study included self-reported teacher perceptions of principal leadership style from 16 schools in one school district which limits generalizability; no controls for teacher classroom performance and no verification of respondents actually observing principal behaviors; time of year survey was given; and, the use of one
instrument to measure leadership style may not reflect the actual leadership style of the principal.
Chapter One

Introduction

Chapter One presents the overview of the study. The areas addressed in the chapter are the conceptual framework, statement of the research problem, purpose of the study, research questions, methodology of the study, data gathering instruments, assumptions, and definition of key terms. The chapter concludes with the significance of the study and the organization of the chapters that follow.

Background of the Study.

Federal education initiatives are holding each state accountable for the education of all children through close monitoring of individual student data at the district and school level. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) amends the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to include requirements for states to meet Adequate Yearly Progress objectives and performance standards set by federal policy (No Child Left Behind Act, Public Law 107-110, 2001, Baker, Betebenner & Linn, 2002). This pervasive accountability system places statewide student testing results as one of the final determinations of school improvement efforts. It is only with a shift in the focus from a managerial style of school leadership to a teacher-focused style of leadership that school improvement will increase and student achievement will rise (Bredson, 2005, Lazaridou, 2006).
The school leader’s role in student achievement. The actions of school leaders impact school capacity and may either enhance or diminish student achievement. School capacity is defined as the collective power of a school staff to raise student achievement (King & Youngs, 2002). The effective educational leader is one who has the ability to develop a school’s capacity to enhance student learning through the motivation of teachers, staff and students (Daley, Guarino & Santibanez, 2006). Such leadership is determined by the followers, not the leaders (Bhindi, Hansen, Rall, Riley, & Smith, 2008). Therefore, it may be claimed that student achievement is effected by the teacher’s perception of school leadership.

The importance of teacher-focused leadership. School administrators who build school capacity through an effective leadership style may influence student achievement through teachers (Christie, Thompson, & Whiteley, 2009). The school leader must have or be able to develop the capacity to work with staff to focus on curriculum, instruction and student learning gains (Fullen, 2001). The perception of the school administrator is often as a person who manages a school and not as a person who is an instructional leader. The leader’s daily activities and decisions reflect the pervasive focus and style of the school’s leadership (Noonan & Walker, 2008). A teacher-focused leader works toward the development of school capacity which builds upon positive teacher capacity with the end results increasing student achievement.

The outcome of a student’s education as evidenced through test scores is often determined by the focus and effectiveness of a school’s leadership (Leithwood, 2005 &
The educational leader’s role is to hire and motivate teachers to raise student learning gains (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993, Janzi & Leithwood, 1996). Students reveal their ability to learn through their measured achievement, attendance, and participation in school activities. However, it is the students’ perception of their teachers that sets the daily learning process in motion. Further, it is the teacher’s perception of how they are valued and supported by their school’s leadership that often has an influence on their daily decisions to motivate students (Bandura, 2003, Demir, 2008).

**Conceptual framework of the study.** Authentic leadership is defined by followers, not the leaders (Bhindi, Hansen, Rall, Riley, & Smith, 2008). This study used a postpositivist philosophical paradigm to support the use of situational leadership theory as the conceptual framework. Postpositivism philosophy helps define the elusiveness of leadership by suggesting the teacher’s realities are based on their personal experiences (Knipp & Mackenzie, 2006). This philosophical paradigm supports the need for leaders to know how teachers define their leadership within the school culture.

Postpositivism is the lens used to view situational leadership. This theory provides the researcher with a critical realism which allows for principals to use their independent reality that is based on a multiple of measures they apply in their everyday situations when making leadership decisions (Trochim, 2008). Effective leadership is determined by the selection of the leadership style in daily leadership decisions. Educational leaders have multiple roles which require the freedom of choice, or adaptability of their own behaviors (Blanchard & Hershey, 2001). As a result, student learning gains may react to
school capacity as influenced by the teacher-focused leadership decisions within the conceptual framework of situational leadership theory.

**Statement of the Research Problem**

This study's research problem examined how school leadership style, as perceived by teachers, impacted student achievement. The leadership styles of principals are interpreted and defined through their teachers. It is assumed that principal leadership behaviors influence teacher engagement with students which results in a measured impact on student performance. The framework of situational leadership theory maintains that leaders have the opportunity to select the style which positively influences their effective practices, role modeling and high expectations to enhance school improvement (Blase & Blase, 1999).

Does a principal’s leadership style as perceived by teachers as transactional, transformational, or passive-avoidant impact school capacity and ultimately student achievement? As a result of their decisions, effective school leaders develop an environment that builds or destroys school capacity. School capacity is raised through the administrative role modeling of effective practices and consistent teacher-focused decisions that ultimately impacts student learning gains (Demir & Kamile, 2008). Consequently, the improvement of teacher capacity directly relates to the selected style when a teacher witnesses a leader’s belief system that supports them professionally (Barnett, Craven & Marsh, 2005).
There is a knowledge gap in education research studies on teacher-focused leadership styles that affect student achievement. To help close this gap, the variables of this study identified the principal’s of leadership styles, as perceived by their teachers, the status of schools as improving or non-improving, and the school’s student achievement. A close model to this study was a similar 2008 study completed by international authors, Koford, Krejsler, and Moos who conducted multiple studies on transactional leadership that found leadership drives student learning gains when leaders are aware of their impact on teacher self-efficacy (2008). Bredson’s research supported that school leadership must seek to increase teacher capacity due to the accelerated accountability for increased student achievement created by the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act (2005).

Leithwood, a leading researcher on transformational leadership, advocated the need for additional research on the impact of leadership style on student achievement. Leithwood conducted studies which found transformational and transactional styles of leadership encourage staff collaboration, teacher improvement, and a higher teacher perception of leadership which impacts the overall school culture. This author espoused that the most powerful strategy to drive teacher actions is principal visibility while carrying out actions toward increasing student achievement (Leithwood, 1992, 2005 & 2008). Hence, this study offers supplementary and expanded research on the examination of the leadership style of the principal, as perceived by the teachers in improving and non-improving schools on student achievement.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between leadership styles as perceived by teachers as determined by the MLQ (5x-Short) survey (Bass & Avolio, 2004) and the school’s student achievement data on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). The variables of the study were determined by the research questions reflecting the purpose of the study: principal’s leadership style, status of the schools as either improving or non-improving and student achievement. These variables were determined based on the conviction that principals do not have a direct impact on student achievement since they are not responsible for instructing students. Principals affect student achievement through teachers. The premise of this research was that the principal’s leadership behaviors influenced teachers who, in turn, are directly responsible for student achievement. Therefore, teacher perception of leadership behaviors and school performance on FCAT may identify effective leadership styles and behaviors that influence student achievement.

This study sought to contribute to the research that examines a principal’s leadership style and its influence on student academic performance. Situational leadership has been prominent in previous research and contributed to the study’s framework. For example, Blase and Blase (1999) found that leaders have the opportunity to select the style that positively influences effective practices, role modeling and their high expectations as instructional leaders who enhance school improvement.
Additionally, improving schools exhibit a culture with a focus on student achievement, good communication, and high expectations of teachers and students (Bruner, 1997).

Research literature substantiates the study and presents a pattern of support for additional research due to knowledge gaps (Blanchard & Hersey, 1979; Halinger & Beck, 1998, 2005; Lazaridou, 2006). Few existing studies established a link between the impact of leadership decisions on teachers and student achievement. Research on educational leadership is extensive. However, current studies fail to concentrate on specifically teacher-focused leadership styles that effect student achievement through the building of school capacity. This study attempted to identify the relationship between the style of school leadership, as perceived by the teachers in improving and non-improving schools, and the effect on student achievement.

The current demand for increased school accountability to raise student achievement has added pressure on school leaders to change from a managerial leader to an instructional leader. As a result, the importance of demonstrating a leadership style that positively influences school improvement is paramount to their success. This study serves to contribute to the foundation of knowledge and understanding of how leadership styles influence teachers and ultimately student achievement.

Research Questions
Is there a relationship between the leadership style of a principal as perceived by their teachers and student test scores? The research questions were developed in accordance with the purpose of the study and the statement of the research problem.

1. How do teachers in improving and non-improving schools perceive the leadership styles of their school principals?

2. What is the relationship between transformational, transactional, and passive-avoidant leadership styles of the school principal as perceived by their teachers and improving and non-improving schools defined by the achievement of students as measured by the FCAT over a three year period?

3. What is the relationship between the school principal’s leadership style as perceived by their teachers on the five transformational, three transactional and one passive-avoidant leadership subscales and student achievement in improving and non-improving schools to the FCAT?

4. What is the relationship of teacher gender, age, years of experience as a teacher, and years of experience at their current school to their perception of the principal’s leadership style in improving and non-improving schools?

5. What are the behaviors of school principals that influence student achievement as perceived by the teachers? Teachers are asked “What are the behaviors of your principal that engage teachers and improve student performance?”

6. How do teachers perceive the leadership styles of their school principals as leadership outcomes of satisfaction, effectiveness, and extra effort?
Methodology of the Study

This study examined the relationship between school leadership as perceived by teachers, student achievement, and the demographics of teacher gender, years of experience in education, and years experience at their current school. The principal’s leadership style was determined by their teachers as measured by the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (5x Short) survey (Avolio & Bass, 2004) (Appendix A) and correlated with the school’s student achievement data as measured by the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). The demographic data was collected with the MLQ (5x Short) survey. In addition, an open-ended question asked teachers to describe the principal’s behaviors that supported their work in increasing student achievement.

The purposeful sample consisted of sixteen schools selected from a pool of qualifying elementary, middle and high schools in one school district. Nontraditional schools were removed from the sample to ensure a comparative sample. The schools not included were designated as charter, private, detention and specialty centers. Overall, twenty percent of the elementary, middle and high schools in the district were included in the study. The sample of schools generated sufficient data to determine the answer to the research questions with rich descriptions (Kemper et al., 2003; Huberman & Miles, 1994) and increased the descriptive validity and interpretive validity (Maxwell, 1992). Statistical inferences about a population can be made from information obtained from a single sample drawn from a population (Saldanha & Thompson, 2002).
To meet the purpose of the study and answer the research questions, the school samples were divided by school improvement status: improving or non-improving. Improving and non-improving schools were selected by school level and matched with similar demographics and size to obtain the needed numbers and ensure a comparative sample. An improving school was defined as having a 1% increase for each of the three consecutive years used in the study for their FCAT Reading and Mathematics scores. A non-improving school had less than a 1% increase for each of the three consecutive years used in the study for their FCAT Reading and Mathematics scores. The score increase and decrease percentages were based on the FCAT’s scoring scale from 1 to 5 with student non-passing scores of a 1 or 2 and passing scores of a 3, 4 or 5.

The MLQ survey, plus five additional questions developed by the researcher, was emailed to 865 teachers at the 16 sample schools (Appendix B). If an individual survey had less than 50% completion the survey was eliminated. The final number of surveys used was 143.

A nonexperimental descriptive and correlational research design was used in this study to determine the relationship of the teacher perception of school leadership and student achievement in improving and non-improving schools. The data analysis relied upon the tools of both descriptive and correlational research designs. A detailed numerical and graphical summary of the survey data was provided through the use of these two research methods. An examination of the variables of leadership style, school improvement status and student achievement provided for an analysis of the relationship
between them in order to provide a richer description of how perceived leadership style influences student performance.

**Data Gathering Instruments**

This study used the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaires (5x-Short) Rater Form as the measurement tool to determine the leadership styles of principals as perceived by their teachers. The transformational, transactional, and passive-avoidant leadership styles are identified through the selection of a sequence of questions designed to define the leader’s style (Antonakis, Avolio, and Sivasubramaniam, 2003). The three leadership styles and nine subscales are defined and measured with the MLQ survey through a Likert-type scale.

On the MLQ the first leadership style, transformational leadership, has five subscales and describes a leader who motivates followers to excel based on their original level of confidence towards accomplishing desired outcomes. The transformational leadership subscales address the perceived influences, behaviors, motivational abilities, and support of teachers by the principal. The 5 subscales are: idealized influence (attributed), idealized influence (behavior), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.

The next leadership style assessed on the MLQ, transactional, describes leaders who work within the structure of an organization to identify the skills of followers to assign roles and responsibility to achieve the desired outcomes. The achieved outcomes
are a result of this leader negotiating with followers in an exchange relationship of rewards for compliance (Bass, 1985). The three transactional subscales measure the leader's perceived exchange of ideas with followers, criticism and negative reinforcement when correcting, and monitoring for immediate feedback or when standards are not being met. The three subscales are contingent reward, management by exception (active) and management by exception (passive).

The final leadership style is passive avoidant. One subscale identified as “passive avoidant,” reflects a leader who chooses to delay or not make decisions and abdicates responsibilities to others. This leader provides little feedback and pursues little change in their environment. This style is generally recognized as the least effective in the literature.

In addition, the MLQ includes three outcome factors: extra effort, effectiveness, and satisfaction (Avolio et al., 1999, Bass, 1990, 1998). There are three questions for Extra, four questions for Effectiveness and two questions for Satisfaction. Each of these factors reflects the resultant effects of leadership decisions as perceived the follower.

Data published in from the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) for the 2008, 2009, and 2010 school years was accessed to determine the school improvement status of each sample school. This criterion-referenced test measures the achievement of third through eleventh graders based on the Sunshine State Standard benchmarks in mathematics, reading, science, and writing.
Lastly, the survey instrument included items identifying the teacher’s demographics. These items aided the researcher in the analysis of correlations that may have affected the teacher’s perceptions of their principal’s leadership style. The survey included items regarding the teacher’s years at the present school, years as a classroom teacher, gender, and age.

Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations of the Study

Assumptions. It is assumed the participants in the study completed the questionnaire as a volunteer with honesty and without bias. Teachers from each school were volunteer participants in the study. Additionally, it was assumed the participants understood the questions used in the surveys and that they were a representative sample of their school population. It is also assumed the survey respondents had observed the leadership behaviors of principals in schools. The last assumption is that the instruments were appropriate measures of the styles of leadership and student achievement. There was the possibility of a negative bias by the teachers.

Delimitations. Leadership style data collection in this study was restricted to one instrument: the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ 5x-short) with additional demographic data of the participants. The study’s targeted sample was selected based on access to the target population, cost of surveys for the researcher and time allotted to complete the study. The study was limited to the findings derived from the survey instruments. The student achievement outcomes were limited to the FCAT scores in
reading and math for a three year period. To determine broader achievement outcomes it would be necessary to administer multiple tests throughout a student’s academic career. Such longitudinal research was beyond the scope of this study.

Limitations. This study relied upon the teachers perceptions of their principal’s leadership style. The teachers may be limited by their understanding of the scope of the principal’s duties. How the sample teachers gained their teaching certifications was not reported. Their path toward certification may have influenced the teacher’s perceptions of their school leaders. Further, it is a limitation that the perceived style of the school leader was an accurate perception of all the teachers within the school. The researcher investigated the leadership styles of principals in one district out of sixty-seven in the state. Inferences from the results limit generalizability to that school district. The district was under corrective action by the State of Florida at the time the study was carried out. All schools in the district are under the Differentiated Accountability Matrix (DAM) established by the Florida Department of Education in the prevent, correct or intervene categories. The decisions made by school leaders may have been influenced by the school’s DAM category which places mandatory school district and state interventions and accountability structures within the school. Lastly, sampled schools were limited to only traditional public schools.

Definition of Key Terms

The following terms are defined for the purpose of this study:
Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP): AYP indicates the minimum percentage of students who must be proficient in reading and mathematics for a school to meet the federal standards for the year based on NCLB.

Elementary School: Schools with grades from Pre-K or Kindergarten through grade 5.

Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT): The FCAT is given annually to students in language arts, math, science and social science and used to determine school and student achievement.

High School: Schools with grades from ninth to twelfth.

Leadership Style: A process in which an individual influences the thoughts and actions of another’s behavior (Northouse, 2007; Yukl, 2002).

Middle School: Schools with grades from 6 through eighth.

Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ): A survey instrument used to gather quantitative data through the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire. This instrument provides feedback based on the self-perception of the school leaders as well as how followers rate their leaders (Avolio & Bass, 1995). There are 3 leadership constructs and 9 subscales in this MLQ instrument.

Passive-avoidant Leadership: A leadership style in the MLQ instrument that refers to the passive and reactive forms of leadership.

Positivism Philosophical Paradigm: The postpositivism philosophical paradigm supports the use of situational leadership theory in the conceptual framework of this review to help
define the elusiveness of leadership. Postpositivism philosophy suggests teacher realities are based on their personal experiences (Knipe & Mackenzie, 2006).

*Principal:* This term was used interchangeably with *administrator* to refer to the leader of the elementary, middle and high school.

*School Capacity:* The collective influence of a school staff, including teachers and support personnel, to improve student performance (King & Youngs, 2002).

*Situational Leadership Theory:* This theory provides the leader with a combination of leadership styles which establishes a myriad of tools from which to select depending on the current situation. Situational leadership theory presents the principal with the tools to proceed in the best interest of the school that is focused on teacher effectiveness (Blase & Blase, 1999).

*Student Achievement:* Achievement is defined by a predetermined scale that indicates the cut-off point established to determine the passing or failing on an individual student assessment. This study used the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test and its scale of achievement.

*Student Learning Gain:* An increase or decrease in an individual student’s baseline test data from one school year to the next determines the measurement of student learning gains.

*Teacher-focused Leadership:* The author defines teacher-focused leadership as the decisions and actions of school-based leaders who in directing their organization and curricular decisions, impact the effect of teacher capacity on student learning gains.
Teacher Capacity: Teacher capacity is defined as the teacher’s belief in their own ability to raise student learning gains as influenced by their administrators (Bredson, 2005).

Transactional Leadership Style: A transactional leader communicates specific standards of conformity while monitoring for deviance and rewarding compliance (Avolio, Bass, Berson, & Jung, 2003). A review of the literature studying transactional leadership reveals frequent comparisons to transformational leadership (Burns, 2003). Transactional leadership style promotes followers to recognize what needs to be done and gives them the authority to complete tasks thereby enhancing their self-efficacy.

Transformational Leadership Style: A transformational leader motivates and educates subordinates toward making decisions without interaction with supervisors. Followers experience a higher level of self-efficacy when experiencing such transformational leadership (Barnett, Marsh, Craven, 2005). The transformational leader develops a widely shared vision with the school and builds a consensus regarding school goals and expectations, provides individualized support and intellectual stimulation within a collaborative culture (Fernandez, Jantzi, & Leithwood, 1993)

Significance of the Study

This study was designed to examine the influence of leadership style on student achievement as perceived by teachers. The body of research was supplemented with data reporting the impact of leadership style on school capacity and student learning gains. Teacher variables of gender, age, experience as a teacher and experience under the current school principal were examined. Programs for the professional development of
seated principals and courses for aspiring principals may include curriculum that enhances the leadership style effect on student achievement.

**Organization of the Study**

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter One introduced the study and presented the reason for the research and the research questions of the study. Chapter Two introduces the relevant literature regarding leadership styles and student learning gains. Chapter Three describes the methodology used to investigate how leadership styles influence teachers and ultimately student achievement. Chapter Four lists the data and outlines the findings and the analysis of the data. Chapter Five provides a summary of the results and discusses the significance of the data while providing recommendations for future studies on how leadership styles influence student achievement.
Chapter Two

Literature Review

Over the past decade school-based leadership accountability has assumed increased importance. The principal’s role as a school manager has shifted toward a direct responsibility for classroom results as measured by student academic improvement. In turn, school leaders are obligated to positively influence the school’s capacity to raise student learning gains. It is this paradigm shift that generates a school wide need to focus on school improvement. Teachers experience direct contact with students and control over content and the climate of the classroom (King & Newmann, 2001). Consequently, administrators must seek methods to raise student achievement by building school capacity through their leadership influence.

Purpose

It is the purpose of this chapter to review the literature exploring the effects of leadership styles on school capacity and the impact on student learning gains. The conceptual framework is seen through the lens of situational leadership theory and transformational and transactional leadership styles. Newmann, King and Youngs (2000) define school capacity as the collective power of a school staff to increase student
learning gains. Teacher capacity is defined as the teacher’s belief in their own ability to raise student learning gains as influenced by their administrators (Bredson, 2005).

For the purpose of this research study, teacher-focused leadership is defined as the decisions and actions of school-based leaders who in directing their organization and curricular decisions, impact the effect of teacher capacity on student learning gains. The researcher contends that school leaders select leadership styles to carry out school directives. The style of leadership influences school capacity. Teachers react to leadership styles through the decisions they make in the classroom. An effective school leader selects the leadership style that positively influences school capacity to ultimately increase student learning gains.

The content of this literature review is the examination of the relationship between leadership style, school capacity and student achievement. An analysis of the literature discusses the relationship between transformational and transactional leadership styles and the school’s reaction to the style. The review then examines how principals build school capacity through organizational decisions and actions. Lastly, the elements of principal behaviors that build school capacity to advance student learning gains are studied. These elements include the school culture, principal role modeling and leadership decisions.
Conceptual Framework

The postpositivism philosophical paradigm supports the use of situational leadership theory in the conceptual framework of this review to help define the elusiveness of leadership. Postpositivism philosophy suggests teacher realities are based on their personal experiences (Knipp & Mackenzie, 2006). Situational leadership theory is part of the conceptual framework as seen through the lens of postpositivism. This philosophical paradigm supports the need for leaders to know how teachers define reality in the school culture. Authentic leadership is determined by the followers, not the leaders (Bhindi, Hansen, Rall, Riley, & Smith, 2008). With this knowledge, a school leader can take actions to impact school capacity which in turn, may result in student learning gains.

What follows is research on situational leadership theory as applied to transformational and transactional leadership styles. Effective leadership is determined by the selection of the leadership style appropriate to the needs of the followers. School capacity is impacted by the style of leadership. Student learning gains are a result of school capacity, teacher capacity and teacher-focused leadership within the conceptual framework of situational leadership theory.
The framework illustrates the importance of the situational leadership theory in relation to student learning gains and leadership styles. School organizations are productive when leaders exercise a greater level of adaptability in school leadership decisions (Wang, 2001). Leaders utilize transformational or transactional leadership styles to manage mediating variables in the educational settings. Educational administrators have multiplicity roles which require a mode of adaptability of leadership behaviors (Blanchard & Hershey, 2001). Principals’ leadership decisions impact school capacity and thereby indirectly effect student learning gains.

行政领导风格与情境领导理论

Figure 1. Leadership Style, School Capacity and Student Achievement Conceptual Framework
The administrative role is essential in improving student learning gains through leadership style and school capacity. As reported in the literature, school leadership drives student learning gains while purposely providing society with independent and enlightened adults (Moos, Krejsler & Koford, 2008). Lazaridou (2006) found leadership strategies directing improvement must be relevant to the school culture and addressed through appropriate leadership actions. The literature reviewed within the conceptual framework of situational leadership theory explored studies of administrative behaviors within two leadership styles: transformational and transactional leadership styles. Each style is presented as it relates to a teacher-focused principal’s decisions that recognize school capacity and its effect on student learning gains.

**Situational leadership theory.** In this section a review of the synthesis of leadership styles defined as situational theory was conducted to illustrate the flexibility of the principal’s choices. The use of a combination of leadership styles creates a myriad of tools for the leader. Situational leadership theory presents the principal with the transformational and transactional tools to proceed in the best interest of the school that is focused on teacher effectiveness (Blase & Blase, 1999). Teacher relationships with administrators are of low consideration until an internal change is implemented which requires authoritative monitoring and accountability (Blanchard & Hersey, 1979). As purveyors of situational leadership, Blanchard & Hersey depict situational leadership as less dependent on the level of management and more dependent on the maturity of the teachers supervised.
On the contrary, the acceptance of leadership behavior flexibility that coincides with the situation is accepted as a theory, yet countered as a practice due to the dependence on the maturity of the subordinate. A study of Blanchard & Hersey’s research reveals their prescriptive model of measurement of leadership style is conceptually ambiguous. It does not accurately measure the correlation between the maturity of the subordinate and the task-relevant maturity of high performance initiated by the leadership (Graeff, 1983).

Teacher perception of school leadership as researched by Blase and Blase is determined by the situation presented. Their 1999 qualitative study focused on the analysis of the administrative leadership styles as related to teacher perception. Their pragmatic presentation of analytical data leads the reader toward an understanding of the role of the principal in a teacher-focused school environment. This study of more than 800 teachers throughout the United States found the situational strategies used by principals often reveal exemplary instructional leadership (Blase & Blase, 1999). Their open-ended questionnaire provided a platform for teachers to express details of their opinions on how a principal’s actions helped or hindered their professional goals.

Hallinger and Heck presented a caution present in situational leadership theory through their findings in a meta-analysis of 42 studies. Only after the principal establishes a culture of accountability and control, should the level of engagement change toward the transfer of leadership (Hallinger & Heck, 1998). Nevertheless, the authors found no
positive results in a school leaders push for increasing student achievement without seeking to improve teacher capacity.

Within leadership literature the laissez-faire leadership style is the least effective style of leadership when comparing it with transformational and transactional leadership styles (Barnett, Marsh, Craven, 2005). The avoidance or delaying of important decisions coupled with the attitude of acceptance of no change defines a laissez-faire leader (Avolio & Bass, 2005). Laissez-faire leadership style predictably held the most negative effect on the teachers’ perceptions of global satisfaction of leadership. Teachers have a desire to be led by their school leaders (Barnett, Marsh, Craven, 2005). Teachers who are abandoned to teach independently without knowledge or accountability to the school’s mission experience a negative perception of their leader. Glover (2007) encourages the capitalization of strategies to actively engage teachers and to avoid a laissez-faire attitude through active listening, respect, the suspension of assumptions, and relating personal truths.

**Transformational leadership style.** This section of the literature review examined transformational leadership in relation to school capacity and student learning gains. The transformational leadership style produces an outcome that defines the management culture. As the originator of transformational leadership, Burns reported there was not a central leadership concept even with the abundance of relevant literature. Generalizations are only possible through the study of humanistic psychology (Burns, 1978). In transformational leadership, the leader motivates and educates subordinates
toward making decisions without interaction with supervisors. Followers experience a higher level of self-efficacy when experiencing such transformational leadership (Barnett, Craven & Marsh, 2005).

Leithwood’s research reported that transformational leaders pursue three goals: helping staff collaborate, encouraging teachers’ improvement, and helping staff solve problems effectively. Such practices were complementary to the leader’s vision and the teachers’ talents and are essential to conduct a school’s daily operations (Leithwood, 1992). As a contrary response, Leithwood’s suggestions for improving school leadership have resulted in little evidence of improving leadership quality. However, Stewart finds Leithwood’s research has expanded the knowledge base within our epistemological views and emerging paradigms. (Stewart, 2006)

In an attempt to develop a theoretical account of how a teacher’s perception of transformational leadership is formed, Janzi and Leithwood conducted a viable five-year qualitative study with over 3,000 participants. These authors found being seen as a leader is as important as making leadership decisions. The leader exhibits leadership characteristics with their everyday behaviors and practices (Burke, 2009). More importantly, the study found that want-to-be leaders should model leadership traits to gain leadership credibility and influence teacher perceptions of their leadership capability (Janzi & Leithwood, 1996).

The state of education’s accountability system influences the emergence of shared leadership. Principals who actively listened to their followers to gain different
perspectives of school improvement were significantly more successful due to collaboration. Demir and Kamile (2008) collected data from 218 teachers in Edirne, Turkey and used a five-point Likert scale to quantitatively measure the teacher’s perception of transformational leadership, collective efficacy, self-efficacy and collaboration climate. The findings suggested transformational leadership contributes to teachers’ self-efficacy (Demir & Kamile, 2008).

The supportive literature in the previous paragraphs is contradicted by studies indicating transformational leadership cannot stand on its own without a blend of effective instructional leadership. Teachers in productive schools have leaders who insist their decisions have an educational meaning. Such focus on teacher and student success allows the principal to model a positive attitude to teachers prior to implementing transformational leadership (Marks & Printy, 2003). A national quantitative study of teachers in 24 nationally selected restructured schools found that the transformational leader insisted on higher levels of commitment from the teachers and developed a culture and organization toward school improvement (Marks & Printy, 2003).

Leithwood (1992) argued transformational leadership starts a collaborative practice but defeats the need for a principal to be an instructional leadership. The author claimed school leaders needed to focus on the delegation of power to make the most changes in student achievement (Leithwood, 1992). Such group organization and collaboration builds school capacity.
Marks and Printy counter Leithwood’s research and declared that transformational leadership was necessary for schools in need of improvement and reform. The authors declared there are few studies which empirically study how transformational leadership and instructional leadership overlap to raise student learning gains. Teacher-focused instructional leadership is necessary in schools to present a collaborative and trusting environment. Teachers exhibit more professionalism and commitment to the organization if the leadership duties are shared (Marks & Printy, 2003, Burke, 2009).

Student learning gains are the final result of the leadership style. A review of the literature on the effects of transformational leadership on student learning gains found this style created an innovative staff, but no increase in student achievement. The findings indicated transformational leadership decisions look different than transactional decisions and have an indirect impact on student achievement outcomes (Hallinger & Heck, 1998). This qualitative meta-analysis of 40 published articles between 1980 and 1995 found no universal paradigms for examining the leadership’s organizational behaviors within a school. The studies were selected based on their inclusion of the examination of the principal’s beliefs and included a measurement of school achievement data. However, a more current quantitative analysis of the types of leadership within three high-poverty urban elementary schools in New York State, explores the ramifications of transformational leadership on their school test scores. The achievement scores improved after the outgoing principals were replaced with principals who
incorporated a form of transformational as well as transactional leadership styles. Each principal modeled high expectations. Transactional leadership led to limited empowerment of the staff to make decisions to improve student achievement (Brooks, Giles, Jacobson, Johnson, Ylimaki, 2007).

As a warning to leaders, Leithwood and Mascall’s 2008 study focused on this risk of creating a transformational style of leadership that negatively influences student learning gains. These authors exposed the arguments against a style relating to an unrealistic need to coordinate active teacher-leaders. Transformational leadership style can lead to hints of anarchy from teachers. The unrealistic time demands on over-worked teachers who accept the collective responsibilities of leadership may eventually lead to negative perceptions of administration and negative self-efficacy (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008).

As a caution, Barnett, Craven and Marsh (2005) advised that distributive or transformational leadership style is welcome within a school but only as a limited strategy closely followed by the more traditional hierarchal leadership. The end result of the leadership style preferred by teachers is transactional. These authors theorized that teachers respond most favorably to the principal’s personalized attention and less to a transformational style of leadership (Barnett, Craven & Marsh, 2005).

**Transactional leadership style.** Transactional leadership style takes place when a leader communicates specific standards of conformity while monitoring for deviance and rewarding compliance (Avolio, Bass, Berson, & Jung, 2003). A review of the
literature studying transactional leadership reveals frequent comparisons to transformational leadership (Burns, 2003). Transactional leadership style promotes followers to recognize what needs to be done and gives them the authority to complete tasks thereby enhancing their self-efficacy. Leithwood (1992) cautioned that though transactional leadership builds school capacity, it does not have the critical push of transformational leadership to make extreme school improvements.

A more recent study, with students as subjects, researched transactional leadership as it applied to collaborations between students and teachers. The transactional style created a more effective learning environment for students as they explored the influence and impact on combining school personnel and students in leadership roles. The 2,570 written samples were gathered from teachers and students at 90 elementary and secondary schools over a three-year period. Data were collected through websites and analyzed using a path-analytic technique. The results provided a viable quantitative data set that determined the impact of transactional leadership opportunities within a school raise and student achievement (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008).

Two foundational themes claim positive teacher response to transactional leadership style. The first theme provides teachers with consistent and frequent opportunities to reflect on their experiences in the classroom. The findings from a qualitative study of more than 800 teachers surveyed through an open-ended questionnaire indicated principals who built up their teachers’ reflective behaviors found the instructional staff reported a high degree of self-efficacy, sense of security, and self
motivation (Blase & Blase, 1999). The second theme found positive results from teachers who were provided constant professional growth activities. Such collegial interaction with respect to better teaching methods, data exploration, and implementing action research created a positive professional growth atmosphere within the school. Additionally, the study found the second theme also helped encourage reflective teacher behavior and higher self-efficacy (Blase & Blase, 1999).

Furthermore, a 2007 study claimed the use of transactional leadership is necessary due to the demands of the No Child Left Behind Act for accountability. School capacity is even more important due to the excessive administrative responsibilities that have led to more collective site-based management (Brooks, Giles Jacobson, Johnson, & Ylimaki, 2007). Leadership pressures are leveraged into using staff with expertise on school improvement and program implementation.

Regardless of the demands of the No Child Left Behind Act, school leaders frequently lack the instructional knowledge of content and pedagogy to assist teachers and provide a transactional leadership environment. There is a daily balancing act diverting the principal’s attention from the management of the school. These administrative issues often distract the leader from creating a system to lead others in areas of curriculum and pedagogy (Stewart, 2006)

This section of the literature review addressed transformational and transactional leadership styles through the lens of situational leadership theory. The introduction defined transformational and transactional leadership styles as the types of decisions
made by school-based leaders who seek to positively impact school capacity and student learning gains. The following sections review the literature to analyze how leadership style influences the success of a school through the elements of leadership that build school capacity.

**Building School Capacity through Leadership Styles**

The past decade of accountability accelerated by No Child Left Behind (2001) has held educational leaders responsible for school improvement strategies directed toward improving student learning gains. School leaders are called upon to use school-based decision making to increase student learning gains through school capacity (Bredeson, 2005, Burke, 2009). The question is how can teacher-focused school leaders raise student learning outcomes through the building of teacher capacity as well as school capacity?

School leadership has a direct effect on teacher behavior and classroom practices (Alt, Beltranena, & Hoachlander, 2001). The effects of school leadership on student learning gains were studied in a quantitative meta-analysis on 37 research studies published between 1986 and 1996. The authors found an association between individual leadership behaviors and the school culture. The study found a negative relationship when principals focused only on student learning gains and not in conjunction with teacher improvement. This positive reciprocal relationship between teachers and administrators effected student achievement (Bosker, Kruger, & Witziers, 2003).
Leaders build teacher capacity by involving teachers in school improvement decisions. To link teacher empowerment with school capacity, Marks and Louis (1999) gathered data for a mixed-methods study from 24 schools equally distributed between elementary, middle and high schools that were under mandated restructuring. Their survey of 910 teachers reported that empowerment is a factor in the determination of a school’s capacity for organizational learning which ultimately affects student learning gains. Through an analysis using a hierarchical linear model, these findings encourage a collaborative decision-making body that determines school-wide actions on school improvement (Marks & Louis, 1999).

School success through school capacity involves leadership decisions that include teachers in the process of problem-solving. The schools in which teachers collaborate in problem-solving to aid student success have an influence on student outcomes and how teachers meet student needs (King & Newmann, 2001). An international study explored the problem-solving school culture presented in the leadership interactions with teachers. The study published case-studies of eight different countries and determined school systems that include teacher input can impact student achievement. A successful leader creates the problem-solving school culture that reflects a school-wide belief system in the school goals (Koford, Krejsler & Moos, 2008).

Building school capacity is a challenge in an era of the standardization of curriculum and student testing. Teachers are individually accountable for higher student achievement with fewer resources (Burke, 2009). A four year longitudinal qualitative
study of two urban secondary schools reported the negative impact of educational mandates on teachers who were asked to produce higher learning gains without an increase in resources. The participants reported that innovative schools who raise teacher activism build school capacity by reaching out to defeat unwanted standardization (Giles, 2007). The author advised leaders to build school capacity through teacher collaboration and empowerment that challenged the outside influences of school practices driven by standardized tests.

Blase and Blase (2002) provided an argument for the importance of principals to gain the trust of their teachers to build school capacity. Their qualitative study of ten principals and 50 teachers used a grounded theory method to focus on leadership’s mistreatment of staff in an attempt to garner school success. Their findings stressed the importance of the principal’s role in creating a culture for open, honest, and reflective exchanges between leaders and teachers (Blase & Blase, 2002). Further support for a “trust” component in effective leadership was researched in a qualitative study of 25 Canadian principals, hand-selected by their superintendents, to determine the value of personal interactions with principals. It is worth noting that the authors concluded that a principal can only raise the trust and openness of their school by achieving trust outside ordinary school conversations. These exchanges include sharing information related to family, travel, and other personal issues (Kutsyuruba, Noonan, & Walker 2008). The teacher-focused leader can create a trusting work culture by enhancing the school’s capacity to meet the needs of their students.
As indicated in this section of the literature review, research frequently focused on the impact of school-based leadership decisions that affect school capacity and student learning gains. Good leadership advances beyond knowing the actions to take in raising student achievement and toward knowing when and why to take action. This balance of leadership indicated when and why a leader should take action and that a leader should make a change while still protecting the schools culture and vision (Marzano, McNulty, & Waters, 2003). The next section of this review explores the principal decision making that builds school capacity with the inclusion of the elements of school culture, leadership role modeling, and leadership decisions.

**Elements of teacher-focused principal behaviors that build teacher capacity.**

There is broad perspective that principals have a powerful influence on teacher actions and student academic achievement (Darling-Hammond, Davis, LaPointe, and Meyerson, 2005). The first element that builds teacher capacity through teacher-focused leadership is the establishment of a positive school culture. School leaders are responsible for creating a work culture without roadblocks to student engagement and without interference in the building of teacher capacity (Bason & Frase, 2004). Second, the modeling of expectations by school leadership builds teacher capacity (Brooks, Giles, Jacobson, Johnson, Yimaki, 2007). The last element builds teacher capacity through the impact of the teacher’s perception of leadership decisions (Noonan & Walker, 2008, O’Donnell & White, 2005).
School capacity and teacher capacity. School leaders are the driving force of sustainable education reforms (Fullan, 2002). School capacity is the first element of building teacher capacity through leadership style. Principals who make teacher support, and not authority, a center of their campus culture build leadership capacity among the instructional staff resulting in eventual student learning gains (Williams, 2006). There must be a link between a common purpose of educators and principal decisions to avoid the “managerialism” stress on procedures and not students (Bush, 2007, p. 393). An improving school with quality leadership exhibit traits that include good communication, high expectations of staff and students, plus a focus on raising student achievement (Bruner, 1997).

A culture of leadership support influences school capacity. School culture is not accidental, but intentionally developed by the leadership (Smith, 2008). Four strategies for influencing school capacity were found as a result of a focus-group and interview study designed to examine the teacher perceptions of school policies. Using a nested case study design of multi-levels, the principals in the study identified four effective strategies. First, the staff was appreciated through an award ceremony. Second, a hospitality committee honored the birthday and significant event of each staff member. Third, classroom management systems were created to give student discipline to the administrative team. Last, teachers were given common planning times to integrate instruction. This qualitative study found that teachers met leadership expectations when they perceived that they worked in a culture of support and value (Rice & Roelike, 2008).
Teachers in a culture established by a teacher-focused leader participate in the school wide decisions as expected under a transactional style of leadership. The Director of the Center for Teacher Leadership at Virginia Commonwealth at the University School of Education, Terry Dozier, recommended consulting with teachers on school issues. Culture building started with the inclusion of teacher experts in training as well as the process of school improvement (Dozier, 2007). Both administrators and teachers need to see themselves as learners to create a culture that is likely to create the best choices for students (LSS, 2002).

The literature suggested that teachers perceive their leaders as supportive when they are given opportunities to collaborate. Through a mixed-methods case study design involving two years of data collection, Camacho and Eilers (2007) found links between the principal’s leadership style and the school’s involvement in collaborative learning. Professional learning communities created a culture of trust by offering a chance to consult with other teachers. These purposeful meetings were most effective when there was an established routine of collaborative discussion (Huebner, 2009). Conversely, teachers who considered themselves abused by the administration had a low overall involvement in collaborative opportunities (Blase & Blase, 2002).

A controversial finding from a quantitative mixed-methods study of 52 schools in Australia found that a visionary leadership style of principals had no statistically significant relation to building a positive school culture. Their results implied that the vision of a principal is less significant than each teacher’s opinion of their leader. The
authors found that teachers want a leader who validated their efforts and cared about them as individuals. The teachers wanted their principal present and confident in decision making when important issues arise (Barnett, Craven & Marsh, 2002).

**Principal role modeling to build school capacity.** As the second element of building school capacity through leadership style, recent studies explored the impact of professional role modeling. Fulelan (2001) claims principals who affect change see the big picture and model energy, enthusiasm, and hope. Leadership role modeling provides staff and students with motivation to continue to support leadership initiatives (Alt, Beltranena & Hoachlander, 2001). A 2007 research study involving case studies conducted at the University of Buffalo, State University of New York, found student achievement scores improved as a result of the arrival of new principals at 3 elementary schools. Each leader built school capacity by making decisions that produced immediate change based on a transformational leadership style. The findings suggested each leader focused on safe learning environments, high behavior and attitude expectations, and accountability. Role modeling was an important component in building capacity and making these changes (Brooks, Giles, Jacobson, Johnson, Yimaki, 2007).

Principals are committed to raising school improvement through their actions (Leithwood and Riehl, 2005). A principal’s daily actions impact staff perspectives of the school’s leadership. A study found the modeling of effective actions that reflected instructional leadership knowledge had an influence on the teachers overall perspective of the school culture. This qualitative study included the perceptions of over 800 teachers
and how their school leadership influenced their classroom instruction as enhancing or diminishing school improvement (Blase & Blase, 1999).

In a study of 8 countries that participated in the International Successful School Principal Project (ISSPP), the authors found a tight system creates a tendency for principals to focus on “telling.” Leaders with less structured accountability systems and active participation in every day school functions focus on the power of “selling” (Koford, Krejsler & Moos, 2008). The modeling of leadership expectations was supported in the ISSPP quantitative study using a thematic cross-cutting text analysis to suggest the need for a loosely structured accountability system. Little logic is present in holding teachers accountable for elements they cannot control or for leaders to give direction without communicating and monitoring an effective accountability system (Ingersoll, 2007).

Leadership consistency impacts the effects of leadership role modeling. A study exploring the relationship between leadership styles and school climate in 31 elementary schools found that leaders who consistently modeled their directives improved school climate. However, this study was limited to small schools in rural settings and the self-assessments completed by the principals did not relate to the teacher’s analysis of principal competency. The study referred to this lack of consistency in leadership as a “blind spot” in management. Any inconsistency among discipline procedures, communication or delegated projects is noticed immediately by teachers (Daugherty, Kelley, Thornton, 2005).
Leadership decisions and building school capacity. As the third element of building school capacity through leadership style, this section reviews literature which ties leadership choices with the leadership styles within the framework of school capacity. The focus is primarily on studies and articles related to the teachers’ reactions to the principals’ leadership choices. Success in motivating teachers depends on how leaders gauge the magnitude of their requests and if they can adapt their leadership strategies appropriately (Marzano, McNulty & Waters, 2003, Gray & Ross 2006).

Teacher self-efficacy within the school culture has a direct relationship to the principal’s actions. The type of leadership which leads to high teacher self-efficacy was studied in a mixed methods design by the SELF Research Centre in Sydney, Australia. The quantitative phase of the study surveyed 458 secondary teachers and 49 principals at 52 schools throughout New South Wales. It was evaluated through a multilevel modeling analysis to determine the relationship between principal leadership styles and teacher self-efficacy. The results gathered from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire and the School Learning Environment Questionnaire determined that between transformational and transactional leadership styles, it was the transactional style that had the most positive effect on teacher self-efficacy. The researchers found the teachers wanted to be led by a principal who affirms their belief system and supports them professionally (Barnett, Craven & Marsh 2005).

The qualitative phase of the study found that of the 52 schools surveyed, teacher capacity was centered on the leadership’s acknowledgement of teacher opinions and
efforts. The teachers indicated their highest displeasure with extrinsic factors, such as an increasing workload, pacing of the curriculum, and low public views of the education profession. The authors concluded that the teachers’ perception of their leadership was based on the principal’s individualized considerations and not the principal’s visionary directives (Barnett, Craven & Marsh 2005). School leaders who are aware that teacher self-efficacy is positively impacted by a feeling of partnership will include teachers in a variety of decision making. Such transactional leadership supports the acknowledgement of teacher opinions and allows teachers to be involved in the decisions that affect their professional (Koford, Krejsler & Moos, 2008).

A meta-analysis of linkage research helped school leaders define the importance of the teacher in a school as opposed to the importance of student achievement. This business-oriented study reported that linkage research emphasizes the importance of the internal string of day to day business decisions as opposed to the importance of the end product. Organizations with the highest positive outcomes supported workers throughout the decision making process. Similar practices are applicable by principals in the support of teachers sustaining high self-efficacy. The authors noted that such internalization of this model calls for reflection on the communication systems within the work environment as well as an open culture of attitudes created by the management (Brooks, Dietz, Pugh & Wiley 2002).

Teacher resources include time, administrative information, teaching assignment, duty assignment, acknowledgement, and materials. Effective principals, like experts in
business-related fields, take time to distribute resources through a pragmatic process that is perceived as equitable (Lazaridou, 2006). School leaders who align their resource priorities through a teacher-focused lens know which policies, practices, resources, and incentives to promote among their staff to raise overall school capacity.

A study addressing the principal’s selection of teacher models to drive their instructional leadership programs suggested teachers thought such practices were detrimental to teachers and school culture. This 2008 article reported how teacher leaders contradicted the school hierarchy and caused stress within a school. The study explored teacher views on how establishing their identity as a teacher leader forces them into working outside their contracted duties. The study found the school capacity and core goals impacted the positive or negative outcome of how teacher leaders improved the school system (Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2008).

Principal actions perceived as negative toward teachers resulted in a lower quality of instruction and a lack of student engagement. Blase and Blase (2002) surveyed 50 teachers in a qualitative study that reported their feelings as paranoid, stressful, insecure, and fearful due to principal actions. This negative perception of the leadership caused harmful outcomes in the professional and personal lives of staff. Curiously, the research found the teachers suffering the most professional abuse were the most competent veteran teachers. The authors surmised the administration may have felt threatened by the advanced teachers’ curriculum knowledge (Blase & Blase, 2002).
A principal’s leadership style is a powerful agent of change that influences school capacity and impacts student learning gains (Marks & Printy, 2003). The studies included in this section of the literature review provide evidence of critical principal decisions made by the principals who build school capacity through the inclusion of the three elements of school culture, leadership role modeling, and leadership decisions. The following literature explores the ultimate impact of leadership style and school capacity on student learning gains.

**Leadership Style and School Capacity impacts Student Learning Gains**

Leadership style correlates with teacher absences in determining a leader’s impact on student learning gains. The results of a recent study indicated schools with weak leadership had a negative school capacity, teachers with low self-efficacy, and lower student achievement. Electronic data was gathered and analyzed from 106 schools over 4 years from 130,747 absences taken by 5,189 teachers in the northern states. Absences that were discretionary, or optional, comprised of fifty-six percent of the total absences. The author found teacher-focused actions improved the accountability of the staff and led to higher students’ learning gains. Miller (2008) recommended effective principals implement local policies to dissuade absences and reward exemplary attendance.

Higher teacher perceptions of principal leadership lead to higher student achievement according to a quantitative correlational Pennsylvania study of 325 randomly selected middle school educators. Hallinger’s Principal Instructional
Management Scale (1987) assessed the teacher and principal responses related to the importance of the school mission, management of pedagogy, and the promotion of a learning environment. The study found a significant relationship between how teachers perceive a principal’s promotion of the school learning climate and student learning gains in math and reading (O’Donnell & White, 2008).

The teachers’ perception of their leader’s desire to create a positive school culture can lead to high student learning gains (Rice & Roelike, 2008). This qualitative nested case study design of Rice and Roelike (2008) explored teacher perceptions of leadership decisions as influenced by the mandates required through the No Child Left Behind Act. The small sample of 111 veteran teachers in three states reported that their school leadership should hold all teachers accountable for their classroom actions regardless of national policy. Additionally, the teachers recommended that incentives to excel should come from within the school and not from the national or the district level (Rice & Roelike, 2008). Such opinions support the actions of an effective selection of leadership style as opposed to depending on a district, state or national program to increase student achievement.

Student learning gains are lowered when the quality of instruction collapses from the teachers’ perception of mistreatment from school leaders who are not teacher-focused. A study using a mixed-methods design of fifty teachers found poor leadership caused emotional low self-efficacy self-doubt, insecurity, fear, dread and paranoia. The non teacher-focused leadership in these schools was described as autocratic and
tyrannical with an overt, directive style. The data reported principals employed a wide variety of actions against targeted teachers ranging from innuendos to extreme aggression (Blase & Blase, 2002).

**Leadership styles and student learning gains.** Leadership style was strongly correlated with student learning gains through a style of integrated or transactional leadership (Marks & Printy, 2003). Teachers benefited from a distribution of power that gives them a voice in school wide decisions (Ingersoll, 2007). Marks and Printy (2003) used a mixed-method designed study of 910 teacher surveys from 24 schools with multiple grade levels and found that student achievement was at its highest when quality pedagogy resulted from integrated leadership. These authors claim that sharing leadership responsibilities enhanced student achievement and caused less burnout in the principalship (Marks & Printy, 2003). Actual actions of the principal with the teachers were not explored.

Leithwood and Mascall’s (2008) quantitative study found collective or transactional leadership has an impact on student learning gains. Schools with high student achievement experienced a higher degree of leadership roles of teachers, parents and students. The authors analyzed 2,570 teacher surveys from 90 schools to find motivation was highest when administration shares leadership roles with teachers who give input on school improvement. On the contrary, this phenomenon could be dependent on a variable other than collective leadership. The authors found students with high achievement may experience more active parents throughout their school years in
addition to their willingness to participate in school leadership opportunities (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008).

A leader’s attempt at transformational or transactional leadership can cause a negative impact on teachers and student achievement. In a three-year quantitative study of 2,570 teachers in 90 elementary and secondary schools the teachers were promised, but noticed few changes toward, shared school leadership. The data was analyzed using a path-analytic technique which provided data indicating teachers viewed the promise of shared leadership as rhetoric and not a reality when their leaders seek the appearance of change more than actually changing (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008). The results of this study were unfortunate because schools are conveniently set up for collaboration with interconnected committees, grade level and cross-grade level teaming opportunities and shared planning time. Principals have access to meet their teacher’s collaborative needs to make quality conversations possible which could lead to student learning gains (Koford, Krejsler & Moos, 2008).

A leadership style that includes daily visibility and frequent direct teacher contact impacts the motivation of teachers and students and builds school capacity. A quantitative study using a stratified random sampling procedure to select 180 schools in nine states focused on the teacher’s perception of the leadership and the flexible conditions of a school. Teacher responses to the survey were analyzed using Pearson product correlations, standard multiple regression, hierarchical multiple regression, and a t-test. The results indicated the extent of these perceptions determined the willingness of
the teacher to be led by their principal (Janzi & Leithwood, 1996). Janzi and Leithwood (1996) found three implications as a result of their study. First, the most powerful strategy to drive teacher actions was principal visibility while carrying out actions toward increasing student achievement. Second, opportunities to directly lead individual teachers must be set up to encourage high self-efficacy relationships. Last, policies which require the movement of school leaders from school to school inhibit the creation of relationships needed to influence school success (Janzi & Leithwood, 1996).

**School capacity and student learning gains.** School capacity has been defined as the staff’s belief in their own ability to raise student learning gains as influenced by their administrators. Many studies have been designed to explore how teacher and other staff perceptions affect student learning gains. One such study by Wayne Hoy and Anita Woolfolk (1993) examined the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and school capacity. Their findings from 179 teachers in 37 schools in New Jersey indicated school capacity positively influences student achievement only when teachers perceive themselves as supported by the administration. The authors warned that principals need to protect the teachers from demands outside their schools, such as unreasonable district expectations (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993).

School leaders can have a negative impact on student learning gains if they miscalculate the magnitude of their requests on teachers. Leaders were ineffective when they inaccurately identified the need for changes to improve student achievement. These results were from a meta-analysis conducted through McREL using a balanced leadership
framework to determine the negative and positive impact of leadership decisions on student achievement (Marzano, McNulty & Waters, 2003). Thirty years of research studies were compiled to determine the effect of leadership practices on student learning gains. The authors criticized the lack of large sample sizes within the published studies and the limited quantitative data as theoretical without the needed empirical evidence to produce practical guidance for leadership improvement (Marzano, McNulty & Waters, 2003).

The measurement of teacher-efficacy and student learning gains are subjective. Hoy, Hoy and Tschannen-Moren, (1998) found that three decades of teacher-efficacy research presented limitations in its use as a measurement for leadership and student success. Efficacy is altered with the introduction of novel tasks, a change of environment, and self-perception. The measurement of teacher self-efficacy is influenced by the years of experience, peer attitudes and forced changes in teacher assignments or curriculum. The authors determined only a longitudinal teacher self-efficacy study is viable (Hoy, Hoy & Tschannen-Moren, 1998).

**The elements of school capacity and student learning gains.** As illustrated in this review’s conceptual framework, student learning gains are impacted by school capacity through the elements of school culture, principal role modeling, and leadership decisions. Brady (2008) found that administrative actions or inactions indirectly impacted student learning gains, while teachers had a direct impact on student learning gains. In an attempt to develop a model of effective school culture, Brady (2008) conducted an
analysis of literature and found school cultures are influenced by a framework of the leader’s communicated vision and mission. Good schools depend on the creation of a culture where teachers have the capacity needed to change their actions to improve student achievement (Alsaker, Kallestad & Olweus, 1998).

School capacity is created by a principal who monitors his or her actions to insure student learning gains. A random voluntary sample of 100 teachers with less than ten years of classroom experience was surveyed to determine the possible reason for leaving the teaching profession. Two-thirds of the teachers agreed that a lack of professional respect would cause them to exit the classroom (Inman & Marlow, 2004). Observant principals canvass their campuses for teacher dissent and seek to create the culture needed for positive changes that increase student learning gains. Leaders should encourage a career ladder by using their professional insight of the individual teacher’s intrinsic motivation for a change in assignment, entrance into leadership, or even retirement (Hardman, 2006).

The principal’s ability to encourage teachers to reflect on their own abilities is a contributing factor to higher student achievement. A qualitative study limited to middle schools conducted by O’Donnell and White (2005) included 75 principals and 250 teachers. These authors found that principals who helped teachers identify their own weaknesses related to the learning environment increased their students’ achievement. Principals in schools with high poverty who modeled and repeated high expectations experienced high student learning gains (O’Donnell & White, 2005).
An effective leader impacts student learning gains by making decisions that encourage school capacity through a collaborative school environment. Goddard, Hoy, and Woolfolk (2004) reported that collective teacher efficacy provided opportunities for a positive impact on student learning gains after studying both teachers and students in 47 elementary schools. Their data revealed a positive correlation between student achievement and schools with a positive collective teacher efficacy (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk, 2004). Achievement rises when teachers believe they are part of a competent staff with the ability to overcome educational obstacles. School leaders model positive behavior with their frequency of classroom visits, campus visibility, relevant evaluations and opportunities for leadership (Basom & Frase, 2004, Louis & Wahlstrom, 2008).

Hallinger and Heck (1998) conducted a meta-analysis of empirical research articles published between 1980 and 1995 to explore the impact of principal decisions on student learning gains. The thematic cross-cutting text analysis found case studies revealed schools as independent communities with contrived value structures and culture. Their findings indicated a principal must adapt to the condition of a school by making changes over time that address student outcomes and staff morale. The authors found flexibility was important in a leader’s decision to increase student achievement by changing curriculum and pedagogy (Hallinger & Heck, 1998).

A discrepancy was found in the values and teaching practices of teachers when they were asked to judge the management practices of their principals (MacBeath & Pedder, 2008). The study included 1,397 teachers in primary and 17 in secondary
schools in England who revealed they did not submit to the administration changes even if they agreed with the value of a school’s vision. The authors proposed a good articulation between school policy changes and nationally-based mandates would provide an understanding and consistency in school changes (MacBeath & Pedder, 2008). The studies reinforce the need for a leadership style that creates a positive school capacity and accountability within teacher expectations.

Conclusion

As this review has illustrated, a positive correlation was supported between a leadership style, school capacity and student learning gains. The research selected represented a sample of the research available to define impact of leadership and its effectiveness through transformational and transactional leadership styles within the framework of situational leadership theory. Research revealed the importance of utilizing the style of leadership which most directly influences school capacity and student achievement.

Both the conceptual and empirical literature supported the theory that school capacity that has teachers with high self-efficacy who perceive their leader as teacher-focused experience higher student learning gains. As the researchers noted, principals’ actions within their schools are an important part of the many dimensions effecting student achievement. Open communication and the protection of the teacher’s trust in
their administration built school capacity (Caltabiano, Graham, Timms, 2006, Glover, 2007, Noonan & Walker, 2008.). Actions by trusted principals are visibility, stabilization, and delegation of responsibilities (Louis, Mayrowetz, Murphy & Smylie, 2007).

As supported by the literature, a leader’s style impacts the professional choices of teachers and a school’s learning gains (Daley, Guarino & Santibanez, 2006). The culture established by school leaders presents teachers with perceptions of leadership that can be measured through their choice to stay at a school and work toward meeting the needs of their students (Kelly, 2004). Teachers may support leadership decisions they find objectionable if their leader is perceived as ethically righteous (Noonan & Walker, 2008).

Effective leadership includes positive instructional suggestions including the encouragement of reflection and experimental classroom techniques (Blase & Blase, 1999). The social cognitive theory of self-efficacy that leads to a positive teacher capacity was defined as the teachers’ belief in their own abilities as either self-enhancing or self-debilitating (Bandura, 2003). Albert Bandura (2003) claimed that reflection is an impetus for motivation and perseverance through life’s difficulties and choices. School capacity impacts student achievement when teachers learn self-reflection strategies (Huebner, 2009). Leaders must use a variety of tools to promote teacher reflection and opportunities to build on professional knowledge that results in a positive school culture (Blase & Blase, 1999, Lazaridou, 2006).

Within situational leadership theory the leadership styles of the principal, whether transformational or transactional, directly influence school capacity. As this review has
illustrated, teachers are the pivotal factor in orchestrating change toward student achievement (Demir, 2008). Hoy and Woolfolk (1993) concisely presented the premise of this research study in their findings indicating that leaders impact a teacher’s belief in their own ability to teach students through a supportive administration (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993). The self-efficacy of teachers’ impacts student achievement. The studies examined through situational leadership theory suggested that principals arrive at their positions with different styles of leadership. The literature suggested leaders need training and information on how to conduct research to facilitate more effective decision making (Christie, Thompson, Whitely, 2009). The flexibility of leadership decisions plus principal training on how to make the best research-based decisions provides opportunities to raise student learning gains through their actions. There is a movement toward a more uniform model of school leadership that is designed to improve student learning gains (Kofod, Krejsler & Moos, 2008).

Present and future criteria will define effective school-based leadership as related to the policy demands of the No Child Left Behind Act. Consequently, the high stakes testing required to measure student learning gains will continue to drive principal decisions (Johnson & Johnson, 2006). The pressing goal of frequent measurable academic gains brings out the motivational strategies of leaders to entice teachers to follow directives. However, school leaders should only implement mandates while protecting school capacity (Burke, 2009).
Chapter Three

Research Method

Chapter Three introduces the methodology used to investigate the potential relationship between school principal leadership style, student achievement and teacher demographic variables. This study utilized data collected through surveys and the Florida Department of Education databases. The chapter is organized into the following sections: the problem and purpose of the study, research questions, research population, design of the study, design of the instruments, validity and reliability of the instruments, data collection, data analysis, limitations and delimitations of the study, role of the researcher and ethical considerations and summary.

Problem and Purpose of the Study

The review of literature on school leadership decisions revealed extensive evidence of the critical impact of school capacity on student achievement (Blase & Blase, 1999; Koford, et al, 2008, Lazaridou, 2006). School leaders use different styles of leadership to make decisions that may influence the success of their teachers who in turn influence student achievement (Barnett, et al; Avolio & Bass, 2005; Blase & Blase, 1999). More research is needed to explore the school wide impact of leadership style on
student achievement test results (Demir & Kamile, 2008; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Stewart, 2006).

In addition, current pressures to produce higher test scores for every student as demanded by the federal evaluation of schools have necessitated a study on effective leadership styles. While a plethora of research is available on education leadership, the examination of the relationship between the leadership styles of school principals and their students’ academic performance has not been fully explored. Teacher demographics including gender, age, years of experience as a teacher and years at their current school were included as variables. The purpose of this study was to identify the relationship between the teachers’ perception of their principal’s leadership styles and student achievement in improving and non-improving schools.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this dissertation study. The research questions were developed based on the objectives of the research and previously published literature.

1. How do teachers perceive the leadership styles of their school principal in improving and non-improving schools?

2. What is the relationship between transformational, transactional, and passive-avoidant leadership styles of the school principal as perceived by their teachers
and improving and non-improving schools as defined by the achievement of
students as measured by the FCAT over a three year period.

3. What is the relationship between the school principal’s leadership style as perceived by
their teachers on the five transformational, three transactional and one
passive-avoidant leadership scale and student achievement in the improving and
non-improving schools to the FCAT?

4. What is the relationship of teacher gender, age, years of experience as a teacher, and
years of experience at their current school to their perception of the principal’s
leadership style in improving and non-improving schools?

5. What are the behaviors of school principals that influence student achievement as
perceived by the teachers? Teachers are asked “What principal behaviors
influence teachers and student achievement?”

6. How do teachers perceive the leadership styles of their school principals as leadership
outcomes of satisfaction, effectiveness, and extra effort?

Research Population

The school district had 602,095 residents in its 1,797 square miles at the time of
the study. The district demographics are 75% white, 12.8% black and 17.7% Hispanic.
The percent of residents holding a bachelor’s degree are 18% with 82% graduating from
high school. The median per household income is $41,913 (US Census, 2011). At the
time of the study, the sample school district had 93,000 students and over 12,000
employees. This centrally located Florida school district had a 63% poverty rate and a 74.7% graduation rate in 2009 (FDOE). A purposeful sampling method was utilized to determine the research participants. The researcher was able to identify the participants that were the best qualified to provide the information needed for the intended purpose of the study with this method of sampling (Creswell, 2005; Fraenkel & Wallen, 1990).

The selected schools represented a convenience sample since the researcher is employed in the same district. The first criteria used to determine the purposeful sample: 1) The school was in existence for the three school years of the study. 2) The school had the same principal for the three years of the study. 3) The school had three years of FCAT test data. 4) The school must not be a charter, combination, private, or alternative school (Appendix B). This selection process identified 58 qualifying schools prior to the second elimination based on improvement status criteria.

Following the purpose of the study, each qualified school was then divided into groups of elementary, middle, and high schools and then into subgroups of improving and non-improving schools (Table 1). The criterion for defining a school as improving and non-improving was based on the Florida school grading model for 2009-2010 (FDOE, Grading Public Schools, 2009). To be designated as an improving school, the school must have a 1% growth in either FCAT Reading or Mathematics within three years. A non-improving school is defined as having less than a 1% increase in FCAT Reading or Mathematics over a three year period. The data was gathered for each school for academic years 2007, 2008 and 2009.
The last criteria used to determine the research sample was to select the schools based on their similar school size and poverty level. There were four qualified improving elementary schools and all were used as sample schools. Out of the 36 qualified non-improving elementary schools, four were selected as sample schools based on their similarity in size and poverty level to the four improving elementary schools (Table 1).

Of the 11 qualified middle schools, to gain three improving and three non-improving middle schools an additional computation had to take place. Elementary and high schools had the required amount of sample schools based on the 50 percent or more of lowest 25 percent of readers making learning gains. The middle school aggregate did not differentiate between the improving and non-improving schools. All middle schools reached the 50 percent or more students making gains in reading and math for the sample years. An additional ranking was computed: the percent making reading plus the percent making math gains for the sample years were added and ranked. The top three were used as improving schools. The bottom 3 schools were used as non-improving schools.

Out of the six qualified high schools, the researcher’s formula identified one high school as improving. The non-improving high school was selected out of the six qualified schools based on a similar size of student population and student poverty rate. The improving high school had 1,860 students and a 56% poverty rate. The non-improving school had 2,090 students and a 58% poverty rate. The size and poverty rate of the other five non-improving high schools had a larger margin of difference from the improving
high school. A total of 16 schools with 865 total teachers were surveyed for the study and were selected based on their size and poverty level (Table 1).

Table 1

*Identifying 16 Sample Schools*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Level</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Size of Student Population</th>
<th>Poverty Rate by %</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Improving</td>
<td>Non-improving</td>
<td>Improving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>552</td>
<td>392</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>562</td>
<td>656</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>539</td>
<td>444</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>646</td>
<td>590</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>944</td>
<td>840</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>651</td>
<td>836</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>804</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1860</td>
<td>2090</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Demographics taken from 2009-2010 school year.*
The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire Rater Form 5x-Short (MLQ) survey was emailed to 865 teachers at the 16 sample schools (Appendix B). The survey received a response rate of 16.5% (Table 2). If an individual survey had less than 50% completion the survey was eliminated. The final number of surveys used was 143 (16.5%).

Table 2

*Population Response of the Study Sample*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of School</th>
<th>Improving or Non-improving</th>
<th># of Schools Surveyed</th>
<th># of Teachers Surveyed</th>
<th>% of Teachers responding to the survey (N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Improving</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>18% (32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>Non-improving</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>20% (34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>Improving</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>27% (38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-improving</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>23% (40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>Improving</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>34% (35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-improving</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>20% (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>865</td>
<td>23% (198)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: 143 total surveys were used in the analysis following the removal of partial surveys.*
Design of the Study

This research study is an exploratory, nonexperimental, correlational study (Mertens, 2005) that examined the relationship between the principal’s leadership style and the student achievement in improving and non-improving schools in one school district. The classification of the study as nonexperimental is due to the inability of the researcher to control any factors influencing the responders, in addition to only having the capability to uncover the relationships between the variables (McMillan, 2004). The correlational design allows the exploration of relationships between the variables of the study (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1990). These design models were utilized to provided for an in depth analysis.

The design of this study utilized a quantitative survey instrument to collect data from teachers to identify their perception of the leadership style of their principal. This electronic survey was selected for the advantages of rapid response, anonymity, and the ease of data aggregation and analysis (Dillman & Schaefer, 1998). Disadvantages were curtailed by emailing a web link to the surveys through the school district's electronic mail system. The email invitation to complete the survey was then opened by teachers using their district issued computers (Appendix C). Teacher confidentiality was kept through the identification of the school only and not the individual teacher on the returned surveys.

Survey research was first accepted by researchers during World War II as a data gathering procedure for the social sciences that combined interviewing, sampling and
content analysis (Withey, 1953). Both paper based and electronic survey research allows participants to freely express opinions without fear of reprisal (Roche, 1999). However, statisticians warned that electronic surveys are under the same requirements to include valid questions relevant to the research goals, strategies and situation (Zatz, 2004).

The research community has increased the use of electronic surveys as computers become more accessible to the general population. The growing comfort level of internet users provides researchers with an efficient alternative medium of data collection. A recent study analyzing the buying practices of 416 customers with 60% using paper surveys and 40% using online surveys found online surveys had notably fewer missing responses (Boyer, Calantone, Jackson & Olson 2010).

In a 2001 study exploring the effectiveness of electronic surveys versus paper surveys, researchers found their subjects responded more accurately to the electronic survey. The 60% of the 1,000 customers surveyed were provided with a traditional paper survey. The remaining respondents received a disc to open and respond to questions on their own computers. Boyer, Jackson and Olson (2001) found their response rate improved by carefully targeting the sample, including a clarifying purpose, making the survey simple to complete, and following up with participants. The authors also found the written responses to open-ended questions were longer and easier to read.

Drawbacks to online surveys can be found in technical incompatibility with the some of the target population’s software. The return rates may decrease due to concerns with a lack of confidentiality and computer comfort levels (Baker, Reynolds, & Woods,
2007). A limited requirement of technical ability is necessary and electronic surveys are more likely to experience technical problems than written surveys (SurveyMonkey, 2010). The assurance of anonymity may encourage the honesty of respondents (Zatz, 2004). Web surveys on a secure server with a link embedded into emails with a written promise of confidentiality will increase trust (Zatz, 2004). Boyer, et.al recommends the researcher target and control for this factor to make the respondent comfortable with the electronic medium (2001).

Studies exploring the most effective use of electronic surveys found the timing of the survey distribution is important. In a study of over 30,000 manufacturing firms, Faught (2004) found sending the email survey in the early morning and late afternoon provided busy managers with a more relaxed opportunity to respond. As a result of this research, the researcher sent the surveys for this study on a Wednesday morning as recommended in Faught’s study (2004).

Schools in the study were selected from each group (improving and non-improving) and subgroup (high, middle, elementary) until the sample needed to obtain the required effect size was reached (Table 1). A total of 104 schools were eliminated to acquire the 16 schools needed for the sample study. The sample size was determined as adequate based on the consideration of the alpha level, effect size and power. Adequate power for the study was determined by conducting an a priori power analysis using Cohen’s PowerPrimer table. The sample size with a power value 0.08 is statistically recommended for educational research (Cohen, 1992). The sample size was large enough
to conduct a multiple regression analysis on the research questions to determine the relationships between the independent and dependent variable.

The original research plan for determining the criteria for schools to be designated as an improving and non-improving school was altered to include a higher number of schools for the sample. The researcher wanted to determine if a school was high or low based on a 1% gain or loss for each of the three years of test data. However using these criteria for Reading or Mathematics, there were zero elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school designated as high achieving in the school district in the study.

The researcher changed the criteria for the study to determine if a school was improving based on a 1% gain for the time span of three years. Consequently, a school could drop a percentage or more in the first or second year and still be considered improving if they raised a percentage or more in Reading or Math by the third year of the study. With these criteria the potential numbers of improving schools were 4 elementary schools, 8 middle schools and 1 high school (Table 1).

The validity of the study results are threatened by missing data which may lead to a misinterpretation of the data and erroneous conclusions (Tannenbaum, 2010). One method of avoiding missing data is to eliminate incomplete surveys which lead to a reduced sample size. Surveys with more than 50 percent of the survey missing were eliminated. For the remaining surveys with less missing data an alternate solution was used to estimate the missing data by plugging the group mean into the missing data sets.
(Borg, Gall, & Gall, 2007). The method used to address missing data to avoid statistical discrepancies was the multiple imputations (MI) as recommended by Tannenbaum (2010). The MI is statistically effective with more adaptability than the listwise deletion which removes the entire record from the sample and pairwise deletion which removes groups or cases of missing data. Steps were taken through the survey directions to avoid missing data. Each teacher was asked to review the entire survey for skipped questions or pages following the completion.

**Design of the Instrument**

The instrument in this study was a survey designed to measure the teacher’s perception of their principal’s leadership style and provide teacher demographic data. Leadership styles were examined within defined leadership behaviors on the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (5x-short) and characterized as transformational, transactional, and passive avoidant (Avolio, Bass, and Jung, 2004). This 45 item instrument had four questions added to provide the researcher with the teacher demographics (Appendix D) that may influence perceptions of leadership styles (Table 3). Lastly, one open-ended question was included in the survey to provide an opportunity for teachers to include information not asked in the survey. As illustrated in Table 3, the instrument had a total of 50 survey items that provided an aggregate of the principal’s leadership style as perceived by the teachers in each school.
Following the purpose of the study, student achievement data for each school was taken from the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test that is published by the Florida Department of Education. This existing data from the state’s standardized assessment was selected for this study as a representation of school performance (Bhindi, Hansen, Rall, Riley, & Smith, 2008, King & Youngs, 2002). Each public school student in grades 3, 8 and 10 take the FCAT.
Table 3

*Summary of Instruments: MLQ (5x-Short) and FCAT.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MLQ (5x-Short) Instrument</th>
<th>Leadership Subscale</th>
<th>Reliability</th>
<th>Number of Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transformational</td>
<td>Idealized Influence (attributed)</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Idealized Influence (behavior)</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inspirational motivation</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intellectual stimulation</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individualized consideration</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transactional</td>
<td>Contingent reward</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Management by exception (active)</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Management by exception (passive)</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive-Avoidant Leadership</td>
<td>Laissez-Faire</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes of Leadership</td>
<td>Extra Effort total</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Effectiveness total</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Satisfaction total</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographic Survey</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open-ended Question</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FCAT Instrument</td>
<td>Reading and Mathematics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Levels 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 in grades 3, 8, 10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: The total number of MLQ survey items is 45. (Reliabilities of MLQ, Avolio & Bass, 2004).*
Multifactor leadership questionnaire (5x-Short). The MLQ was selected to measure the leadership styles due to its broad acceptance as a reliable instrument by researchers (Metcalf & Metcalfe, 2001). This instrument measures the leader’s use of the three leadership styles: transformational, transactional and passive-avoidant. The copyrighted MLQ was used in its entirety after being purchased from Mind Garden, Inc. This instrument was developed by Bernard Bass in 1985 with the last revision with Bruce Avolio in 2004.

The MLQ is a 45-item instrument containing nine leadership subscales: idealized influence (attributed), idealized influence (behavior), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, contingent reward, management-by-exception (active), management-by-exception (passive), and laissez-faire measures (Avolio, 1999, Avolio & Bass, 2004, Bass, 1990, Rowold, 2005). The nine leadership subscales in the MLQ (5x-short) are divided by five transformational, three transactional and one laissez-faire or passive-avoidant leadership style. The MLQ manual estimates a fifteen minute completion time for respondents.

The transformational leadership style scores resulted from averaging the scores from 20 survey items encompassing five subscales. The first two subscales measured the influence the leader has on followers as Idealized Influence (Attributed) or Idealized Influence (Behavior) (Barnett, Craven, Marsh, 2005). This leadership style shares successes and rewards with followers while serving as a role model (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Bass and Avolio (2004) defined leaders with Idealized Attributes as instilling
pride in others, displaying power with confidence and putting the group’s good above their own. The authors consider leaders with Idealized Behaviors as sharing values while establishing a sense of mission defined conveyed by the consideration of ethical decisions (Avolio & Bass, 2004).

Inspirational Motivation reflects the third scale of transformational leadership and defines the leader who motivates followers by providing a compelling mission that encourages them to achieve. The fourth subscale, Intellectual Stimulation, gives the follower freedom to solve problems in a safe environment. Individualized Consideration is the last subscale and characterizes the leader as a coach who mentors followers by encouraging them to meet their personal challenges.

Transactional leadership style scores resulted from averaging the scores from the 12 items involved in the three subscales. Contingent Reward characterizes leadership that offers recognition and rewards for goals that are achieved. The second subscale is into Management-by-Exception (Active) and the last is Management-by-Exception (Passive). These management styles define acceptable subordinate behavior. The “active” Management-by-Exception leader monitors the accountability system closely and punishes those who do not meet the prescribed criteria. The “passive” Management-by-Exception defines the leader who does not clarify expectations or standards but waits for unacceptable performance and corrects the follower (MLQ Manual, 2004).

The last subscale with the remaining four survey items measures the leadership style of passive-avoidant or laissez-faire leadership. This leader does not have the
characteristics found in either transformation or transactional leadership styles. The passive-avoidant leader is absent, avoids responsibilities and clarifying questions, and fails to make important decisions (Avolio & Bass, 2004; Bass & Riggio, 2006).

The MLQ includes three outcome factors: extra effort, effectiveness, and satisfaction (Avolio et al., 1999, Bass, 1990, 1998). Each of these factors reflects the resultant effects of leadership decisions as perceived the follower. The three questions for Extra Effort reflect a leader who heightens the desire for others to succeed. The four questions for Effectiveness define a leader who is effective in meeting organizational requirements and represents their group to a higher authority. The two questions for Satisfaction reflect the leader who uses methods of leadership that are satisfying to the followers.

The MLQ uses a 5-point Likert-type scale from 0 (Not at all) to 4 (Frequently, if not always). The scoring of the MLQ used an average of the Likert-type scores on each of the nine leadership subscales. There were four items for each of the nine leadership subscales. The overall score for the principals as perceived by their teachers in improving and non-improving schools was identified based on summing the scores of each leadership scale and outcome scale, then dividing by the number of items on the scale to find the mean of each scale.

The leadership styles of the principals in the study were identified based on the overall mean of the leadership subscale items on the MLQ. All teachers in the sample schools were sent the surveys. The MLQ scoring key was provided to the researcher as
part of the instrument manual. The score for each of the 9 scale items was computed by averaging the results of the 4 survey questions for each of the 9 subscales (Table 3). Each subscale had a score ranging from 0 to 4 as indicated by the participant’s selection on the Likert-type scale (MLQ Manual). The inclusion of only three representative survey questions was included in the appendix due to copyright restrictions (Appendix A).

The open-ended question, added by the researcher, was the final item on the survey. This question provided the teachers with an opportunity to expand on their perceptions of their school leader. The question was: What principal behaviors influence teachers and student achievement? These data were entered into a Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet. The data sheet included the level of the school, the improvement status of the school and the responses from each person surveyed (Appendix B). The responses were coded and analyzed based on the themes to clarify findings and produce predictable responses (Creswell, 2007).

Three readings of the open-ended responses assured the fidelity of the data. The first reading analyzed the responses for completeness to verify their usability in the study. The second reading was to obtain a central sense of the participant views of the principals’ behaviors that support the study. The third reading narrowed the focus of the responses, identified the themes and broke down the data into manageable segments for comparisons, contrasts, and categories (Schwandt, 1997).

Validation of the multiple leadership questionnaire (5x-Short). Validity is defined as “the judgment of the appropriateness of a measure for the specific inferences
Reliability is defined as how consistent the scores are from one administration to the next (McMillan, 2004). The validation process for the MLQ has occurred over the past 20 years of revisions, enhancements and trials (Rowold, 2005). Conger and Kanungo (1994) raised concerns regarding the validity of the original MLQ instrument. As a result, the reliability and validity have been strengthened through multiple revisions and refinements (Northouse, 2004).

The validation process of the MLQ indicates both factorial and convergent validity, internal consistency, test-retest-reliability, and interrater agreement (Fox, 2009). The factor analysis of multiple studies has supported the construct validity of the instrument (Yuki, 2006). Confirmatory Factory Analysis (CFA) has been used to validate the MLQ. Pallant (2004) defines CFA as the practice of reducing a large set of variables to a smaller set of factors or components. The scales of the transformational and transactional leadership styles have been analyzed through the CFA process to determine the Comparative Fit Index (CFI = >. 95, RMSEA = < .05) for the MLQ (Holahan, Medsker & Williams & 1994).

Additional studies have tested the reliability and validity of the MLQ. The construct validity of the MLQ was established by Antonakis’s (2001) review of 18 independent studies through convergent, divergent and criterion that used raters in multiple organizations in the United States. Structural validity of the MLQ was supported by Armstrong and Muenjohn (2008) who concluded through their examination of various
organizations in England and Thailand that the MLQ was successful in adequately portraying the full leadership factor constructs of transformational leadership.

Education research conducted by Eshbach and Henderson (2010) found the MLQ was valid in determining the relationship between the leadership style of first year elementary principals and the relationship of the organizational climate of the school. Barnett and McCormick conducted a similar 2004 study with 373 teachers in elementary, middle school and high school in Australia and their results suggested a relationship between leadership style as defined by the MLQ and the school learning culture. The confirmatory factor analysis identified the three leadership constructs and leadership variables: vision, individual concern, and passive leadership (Barnett & McCormick, 2004). The authors found empirical evidence to support the dimensions of transformational leadership and transactional leadership were consistent with Bass and Avolio’s research (Barnett & McCormick, 2004, Bass & Avolio, 1997).

MLQ authors, Bernard Bass and Bruce Avolio (2000), have continued to establish the instrument’s validity and reliability. They report their reliabilities for each subscale to range from .74 to .91 (Table 3). The MLQ has used 14 samples for a total of 3,786 respondents to validate and cross-validate the instrument (Avolio & Bass, 2000). The construct validation process has also been documented for the instrument. Factor Analysis of numerous studies has supported the construct validity of the MLQ. The MLQ manual reports the instrument’s use by education, business and military personnel in more than 300 research programs and master’s and doctoral theses. The subscale
reliabilities were generally high and exceeded the standard for internal consistency recommended in literature.

Criticism of the MLQ cites the lack of discriminate validity due to the factor structure not replicated in every case of empirical research (Hunt, 1991). Carless (1998) found the MLQ more accurate for a single higher order model then for a multi-factor model in her sampling of 1440 from a single organization. Pillai, Scandura and Tejeda, (2001) agreed with this finding based on their study of over 1300 samples gathered through multiple organizations. Their research resulted in the recommendation of reducing the MLQ to only 27 items with a limitation of the transactional components of the survey to a three-item subscale for factor analysis.

**Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test**

The results of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) for each school in the sample were obtained from the Florida Department of Education and were used as a measure of student achievement in each school. This criterion-reference test measures the achievement of third through eleventh graders based on the Sunshine State Standard benchmarks in mathematics, reading, science, and writing. With limited exceptions, all public school students in Florida are required to take the FCAT and pass the Reading and Mathematics tests to graduate from high school.

The FCAT questions and performance tasks are designed to promote thinking and problem-solving skills that correspond with the complexities of the Sunshine State Standard assessed. The FCAT instrument consists of mostly multiple choice questions
that require a bubbled response within a grid of answers. Reading, mathematics, and science questions require a short answer response (FDOE, 2007). The FCAT writing test requires students in grades 4, 8, and 10 to respond in essay form within a boxed perimeter in their test booklet. Table 4 illustrates the types of questions used on the FCAT by grade level.

Table 4

*Types of Questions for Grade Level on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item Format</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Mathematics</th>
<th>Science</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>4, 8, 10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Choice</td>
<td>3-10</td>
<td>3-10</td>
<td>5, 8, 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gridded Response</td>
<td></td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>8, 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Response</td>
<td>4, 8, 10</td>
<td></td>
<td>5, 8, 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended Response</td>
<td>4, 8, 10</td>
<td></td>
<td>5, 8, 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(FDOE, 2007).

Florida school districts, schools and individual students receive FCAT scores based on achievement level. Students taking the FCAT in grades 3, 8 and 10 receive achievement level scores in Reading and in Mathematics with the highest at a level five
and the lowest at a level one. Florida defines a level three in Reading and Mathematics as the passing score indicating the student is performing at grade-level (FDOE, 2010).

For the purpose of this study, the student achievement scores utilized for the study were the FCAT results for students in both Reading and Mathematics in grades 3, 8 and 10 were utilized. An aggregate of each sample school’s FCAT reading and mathematics percentages for 2007, 2008, and 2009 were used in this study to identify improving and non-improving schools. The current FCAT data for 2010-11 was used to answer the research question for needed current data for comparison.

**Validation of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test.** The Florida Department of Education (2009) reported that the validity and reliability of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test were checked through a series of statistical analyses performed after field testing, test construction and operational testing. Items not meeting established criteria are rejected or excluded from the calculation of student scores. A variety of statistical indicators were used to determine the difficulty of the item, likelihood of success, estimated gains in guessing, identity bias, measure reliability, and verification of achievement level classification accuracy and consistency.  

FCAT achievement levels are identified as 1 through 5 with a level 1 and 2 indicating the student is performing below their current grade level. Achievement levels 3, 4 and 5 indicate the student has tested at or above their current grade level. The classification consistency and accuracy of the grade levels are based on the determination of the equitable difficulty level of the forms of the test. There are three types of accuracy
and consistency measures present in the development of the FCAT: overall, conditional-on-level, and by cut point. The student’s performance is tested against a parallel test form and against a statistically modeled alternate to determine consistency (FDOE, 2005). Accuracy is determined by examining the agreement between the statistically constructed true score and an actual student performance.

Reliability measures ensure the FCAT provides a consistent measurement of a student’s knowledge. The ratio between the variation of a student’s true achievement and the variation of observed test scores are subject to error. A high reliability helps researchers generalize results for other populations. However, trends on state tests are not always reliable as indicators of student learning (Linn, 2000). Reliability indicators reviewed on FCAT statistical characteristics are conditional standard error of measurement, marginal reliability, and Cronbach’s alpha (FCAT Assessment & Accountability, 2004).

The purpose of reliability measures is to determine if a test provides consistent measurement that can be generalized from one time to another. The FCAT reliability uses four kinds of reliability coefficients: internal consistency, test-retest reliability, inter-rater reliability, and reliability of classifications. The coefficient for the four types of reliability is represented from zero to one, with zero representing a lack of reliability and inconsistent scores (FLDOE, 2007). The reliability measures for the FCAT exceed .90 for the concurrent validity estimates that range from .70 to .81 (FL DEPT of EDU 2004).
Pilot Study

To assess the validity and reliability of the MLQ instrument for use in this research, a pilot study was conducted with the addition of demographics and an open-ended question. A convenience sample of ten teachers was taken from one school in the district based on their availability and willingness to volunteer for the pilot study. Participants received the survey through a link on an email. An interview with the participants determined the amount of time needed to complete the survey, the clarity of the directions and questions and if the open ended question was effectively worded. Additionally, the first test determined if the hyper link to the survey operated correctly and if the cover letter and the demographic survey directions were clear. A second test was given to the same teachers after 10 days to compute the test-retest reliability since the previous test.

The pilot study added to the reliability of study as compared in the MLQ reliability (Table 5). Following the first administration, modifications were made on the survey to identify the principal as the leader to be rated and correcting a numerical error on the demographic survey. Test and retest reliability was completed by giving the same measure to the same teachers after 10 days.

Cronbach’s alpha was computed to determine the internal consistency of the measurement of the leadership scales and subscales from the pilot study sample (Table 3). Reliability estimates were computed for the survey items used to measure each subscale as suggested by Bass and Avolio (2004). Overall, the reliability coefficients for
the variables in this sample were similar to those reported by Bass and Avolio (2004).

The pilot test results (Table 5) indicated the survey is reliable except for Management by Exception- Active with a reliability of .56 for the test and retest. The data taken from the pilot study were not used in the final study but was compiled and analyzed to aid the researcher in the organization of the final study.
Table 5

Bass & Avolio’s MLQ, Pilot and Researcher’s Study: Means, Standard Deviation, and Reliabilities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MLQ Leadership Style</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Reliability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MLQ Pilot</td>
<td>MLQ Author</td>
<td>MLQ Pilot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRANSFORMATIONAL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealized Influence (Attributed)</td>
<td>2.56 2.9 2.76</td>
<td>.84 1.39 1.10</td>
<td>.86 .97 .88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealized Influence (Behavior)</td>
<td>2.64 3.13 3.0</td>
<td>.85 .91 .94</td>
<td>.87 .88 .86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspirational Motivation</td>
<td>2.64 2.98 3.0</td>
<td>.87 1.10 .95</td>
<td>.91 .91 .89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Stimulation</td>
<td>2.51 2.68 2.40</td>
<td>.86 1.38 1.03</td>
<td>.91 .96 .87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRANSACTIONAL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualized Consideration</td>
<td>2.66 2.6 2.60</td>
<td>.93 1.08 1.90</td>
<td>.90 .82 .80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contingent Reward</td>
<td>2.20 2.7 2.82</td>
<td>.89 1.29 .95</td>
<td>.87 .91 .84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management by Exception (Active)</td>
<td>1.75 1.48 1.60</td>
<td>.77 .66 .81</td>
<td>.74 .56 .61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management by Exception (Passive)</td>
<td>1.11 1.05 1.42</td>
<td>.82 1.14 .91</td>
<td>.82 .85 .61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PASSIVE-AVOIDANT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive-Avoidant</td>
<td>.89 .95 .86</td>
<td>.74 1.16 .92</td>
<td>.83 .94 .82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: MLQ N = 2,080 (Source: Avolio et al., 1995). Pilot Study N = 10. Author’s Study N = 143
Following the collection of the data for the study, Cronbach’s alpha coefficients for the nine subscales were completed to measure the internal consistency of the study as compared to those of the Bass and Avolio’s MLQ instrument (2004). The reliability of the 9 factor leadership subscales were measured by Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficient \( (\alpha) \). A Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficient score at or above .70 indicates each item is closely related to the other item (Nunnally, 1978). Simply, a higher Cronbach’s alpha score implies a higher reliability for that leadership style scale. The reliability for the subscales of the leadership styles in the MLQ for this study was between .61 and .89 (Table 5). Seven out of nine subscales have the reliability over .80. These reliability scores indicate that the leadership style subscales in the MLQ were consistent with the reliably scores reported by the authors of the MLQ (Table 5). Avolio and Bass (2004) report that the higher the score, the greater the specific leadership behavior or outcome.

Teachers answered the survey questions within a range on the Likert-type scale from not at all = 0; once in awhile = 1; sometimes = 2; fairly often = 3; and frequently if not always = 4. The leadership behavior subscales had score ranging from a mean of 0.95 to 2.98. This indicated the teachers perceived their principals as using each of the leadership behaviors but in varying degrees. To increase the internal validity potential the confounding variables are controlled by limiting the response selections presented in the survey. Participants could only select from available responses. Options for not answering the questions with “none of the above” or “not relevant” were not included.
Research Variables

Dependent variables measure any change as a result of the influence of the independent variable. Independent variables measure what is manipulated by the researcher through experimental methods to discover the relationship with the dependent variable. The first research question measured the relationship between the principal’s leadership style in improving and non-improving schools. The dependent variable was the leadership style as transformational, transactional or passive-avoidant. The independent variable for research question one was the performance level of the school defined as improving or non-improving.

Research questions two and three had dependent variables that were a composite measure of student achievement results in Reading and Mathematics on the FCAT for each school over a three year period. This study used the student achievement test results as the outcome data to measure the relationship to the teacher perceived leadership styles of school leadership in building school capacity (King & Youngs, 2002). The independent variables for questions two and three were the teacher perceived leadership styles of their principals as defined as transformational, transactional and passive-avoidant.

The fourth research question measured the change of the dependent variable, leadership style, when influenced by multiple independent variables identifying the teachers taking the survey: gender, age, years of teaching experience, and years at the current school. The last research question measured the effect of the leadership styles on
the leadership outcomes of satisfaction, effectiveness and extra effort. The dependent variable was the leadership style and the independent variables were the leadership outcomes.

Leadership research identifies potential confounding variables in role clarity, staff cooperation and cohesiveness, organization and delegation of assignments, resources and support services, and external influences. There was no instrument to measure these confounding variables in this study. The magnitude of the influence of these variables can be enhanced in schools with stressful environments regardless of the performance level of the school (Yuki, 2006).

Data Collection Procedures

The instruments used to collect the data on leadership style were the MLQ and a demographic survey that addressed gender, age, years of teaching experience, and years at the current school. School reading and math archival data from the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test was accessed through the Florida Department of Education website for each school in the study. The publishers and copyright holders of the MLQ survey granted permission to use the instrument in this study. The school district procedure for conducting research was followed by submitting the application outlining the study to the Assessment, Accountability and Evaluation (AAE) department. The researcher provided the district with assurances their policies and procedures would be followed. The university Institutional Review Board (IRB) procedures for permission
to conduct the survey in the schools as part of a graduate dissertation were followed prior to and during the implementation of the study.

An email was sent to the teachers at the sample schools with the embedded survey link to the MLQ survey through SurveyMonkey. The email included the nature of the study and directions for completing the questionnaire (Appendix C). The survey cover letter informed the teachers that the school district and the university had granted permission to conduct the survey and their individual privacy was protected.

For the electronic survey administered by the researcher, the teachers at the sample schools were given two weeks for submission. The expedient electronic surveys provided anonymity, convenience to the participant and reduce the fear of reprisal (Portney & Watkins, 2000). Each teacher received the original email invitation, a reminder email after one week and a final encouraging email the last day of the two-week completion window. The study needed a total of 16 sample schools with a balance of improving and non-improving schools represented at each level (elementary, middle, high).

**Data Analysis**

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the numeric data to understand and explain the results (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 2002). Hopkins described quantitative research as having a goal to determine the relationship between an independent variable and a dependent variable or outcome variable of a population (2007). Inferential statistics
were used to study the relationship between the leadership style and student achievement. A regression analysis was used to determine if there was a relationship between the variable of leadership styles and scales, and the variable of student assessments on the FCAT over a three year period.

The quantitative survey results provided data to analyze based on the study’s research questions. The questions were analyzed to determine the prevalence of the leadership style for each improving and non-improving school. Each of the nine dimensional scales had an average of the four questionnaire items linked to the dimension. The data from the MLQ Rater Form was compiled and reported by Survey Monkey, the demographic survey and improving and non-improving schools data was compiled and entered into a Microsoft Office Excel 2007 spreadsheet. The data was imported into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) analysis software version 19 for disaggregation and analysis. The bivariate numerical data gathered was organized in a scatter plot to determine trends in the relationship between the two variables (Rumsey, 2003). The association between the two variables was reported to determine if the outcome variable is predictable.

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data as the method needed to tabulate, depict and describe sets of data (Glass & Hopkins, 1996). Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the demographic variables and were presented in tabular form. The MLQ included five subscales for transformational leadership, three subscales for transactional leadership and one scale for passive-avoidant. This data was correlated with
the FCAT scores from the spring of the school years from 2007 to 2009. The descriptive statistics for these variables included a measure of central tendency (i.e. mean) and measures of variability (i.e. standard deviation).

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary Research Questions and Data Analysis.</th>
<th>Method of Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research Question</strong></td>
<td><strong>Method of Analysis</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Do teachers perceive the leadership styles of their school principals differently between improving and non-improving schools? | Independent $t$-tests  
Dependent Variable = transformational, transactional, pass-avoidant leadership styles  
Independent Variable = performance level |
| What is the relationship between the leadership style of the school principal as perceived by their teachers and the achievement of their students as measured by the FCAT over a three year period in improving and non-improving schools to the FCAT? | Multiple regression analysis:  
Dependent Variable = FCAT  
Independent Variable = transformational, transactional, pass-avoidant leadership styles |
| What is the relationship between the school principal’s leadership style as perceived by their teachers on the five transformational, three transactional and one passive-avoidant leadership scale and student achievement in the improving and non-improving schools to the FCAT? | Multiple regression  
Dependent Variable = FCAT  
Independent Variable = transformational subscales, transactional subscales, pass-avoidant subscales |
| What is the relationship of teacher gender, age, years of experience as a teacher, and years of experience at their current school to their perception of the principal's leadership style in improving and non-improving schools? | Use 3 multiple regressions:  
Dependent variable = transformational, transactional, passive-avoidant  
Independent Variables =  
1. Gender & age (categorical variable)  
2. Years as a teacher (continuous variable)  
3. Years at current school (continuous variable) |
| What are the behaviors of school principals that influence student achievement as perceived by the teachers? Teachers are asked “What are the behaviors of your principal that engage teachers and improve student performance?” | Use thematic coding for trends |
| How do teachers perceive the leadership styles of their school principals as leadership outcomes of satisfaction, effectiveness, and extra effort? | Independent $t$-test  
Dependent Variable = Leadership Styles  
Independent Variable = Leadership Outcomes |
Regression models include the influence of these demographic variables on the leadership styles. Multiple regressions were used to determine the correlation between the criterion variable and a combination of two or more predictor variables for the research questions (Borg, Gall & Gal, 1996). Tables were produced to reveal the frequency of selection for each item through the SPSS software. The mean, median and mode were also calculated through the SPSS program. The results of this sampling provided the researcher with data from a sample population to address the research questions.

Statistical significance was tested by the independent t-tests and multiple regressions. The MLQ used a Likert-type scale from zero to four to measure leadership styles. The FCAT used a scale from one to five to measure student achievement. The open-ended question responses were analyzed to answer the fifth research question (Table 7). The teacher’s answers to the open response question were compared to the quantitative survey data to produce a correlation between leadership styles and student learning gains (Appendix E). This data analysis provided the researcher with an opportunity to interpret the research findings. Transferability of the findings was supported by the effective collection and analysis of the data.

The responses generated from the open-ended question were coded and divided into themes to clarify findings and produce predictable responses as recommended in Creswell’s (2007) process of qualitative data analysis. Each theme was a result of the findings and effectively illustrates the style of leadership within the situational leadership framework. To maintain the fidelity of the teacher’s responses, the researcher read the
responses once for completeness to verify their usability in the study. The subsequent readings identified the themes and broke down the data into manageable segments for comparisons, contrasts, and categories (Schwandt, 1997).

The data gathered for the study was checked for accuracy prior to analysis. To avoid inaccurate data, the researcher defined ranges, formats and data type. Standard procedures were used for checking for data that is out-of-range, missing and or received in an incorrect format (DeMatteo, Festinger, Marczyk, 2005). Great care was taken to impute missing values that would skew the statistical results.

Role of the Researcher and Ethical Considerations

The completion of the questionnaires was voluntary and anonymous. All precautions were taken to ensure the privacy of the participants. The instruments were administered with care to account for all communication electronic and written. All participants were assured of ethical treatment through their voluntary consent to complete the survey. The risks associated with the participation in the study were minimal and participants were advised that they may withdraw from the survey at any time. The data gathering, analysis and reporting involved no deception. Permission to survey the participants with the MLQ (5x-Short) was given by the school district and the university.

The researcher is an assistant principal in the sample school district. The pilot study was conducted in the researcher’s school but the data and the school was not used in the final research study. The electronic communication identified the researcher as a
university doctoral student and not an employee of the school district. The researcher was not present during the survey administration. No risks to the participants were identified in this study since participation was anonymous and voluntary.

The researcher followed the eIRB guidelines for the University of South Florida involving all research participants. The data gathered from participants was available for review and will remain protected for five years after the completion of the study. Following this date, all participant data will be destroyed to ensure the privacy of all participants.

Summary

This chapter explained the methodology used to address the research questions that examined if there is a relationship between the teachers’ perceived leadership style of the principal and student learning. The research focused on the problem of determining if student achievement is effected positively or negatively by leadership style. The building of school capacity through an effective leadership style will increase student achievement (Christie, Thompson, & Whiteley, 2009). The purpose of this study was to examine how situational leadership choices influence students and their teachers. Chapter Four presents the results of the research through the data analysis.
Chapter Four

Research Results

Chapter four reports the results of the survey and describes the statistical analysis of the resulting data. The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between leadership styles as perceived by teachers and the school’s student achievement data. The first part of the chapter reintroduces each research question and reports the statistical outcomes from the data collection. The analyses of the data include independent \( t \)-tests, multiple regressions, and thematic coding. The results of the leadership style survey are presented with the statistical analysis of the resulting correlations with student achievement. This chapter concludes with a summary of the chapter and the findings of the research study.

Descriptive Statistics

Mean scores of the nine leadership subscales measured by the teacher’s perception of their principals on the MLQ are presented in Table 8. The mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum score, as well as the skewness and kurtosis are presented for each leadership subscale for improving and non-improving schools. Improving schools are identified with having a one-percent increase in student
achievement in 2007, 2008, and 2009. Non-improving schools have less than a one-percent increase in student achievement over the same 3 years.

The teachers in improving and non-improving schools identified transformational leadership style subscales with similar means. Among the five transformational subscales, idealized influence-behavior and inspirational motivation had the highest means for improving and non-improving schools. In contrast, the individualized consideration subscale had the lowest score for the improving and non-improving schools with the separation of the mean at .05 between improving and non-improving schools. Intellectual stimulation had the second lowest mean with a separation of .02 between the improving and non-improving schools.

Contingent reward was the transactional leadership style subscale with the highest mean for improving and non-improving schools. This subscale also had the least variance of the mean between the improving (2.80) and the non-improving (2.84) schools. There was a larger mean variance between the management by exception-active subscale with the improving schools and the non-improving schools. In addition, the management by exception-passive had a .15 difference with the non-improving schools experiencing a higher mean than the improving schools. Overall, the lowest mean scores came from the teachers who identified their principals as having a passive-avoidant leadership style in both improving and non-improving schools (Table 7).
Table 7

Descriptive Statistics for Teacher Perception of Principal Leadership Styles \((N=143)\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Scales and Subscales</th>
<th>School Status</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>Std Error</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TRANSFORMATIONAL SUBSCALES</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealized Influence - Attributed</td>
<td>Improving</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>-0.70</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>-0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-improving</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>-0.90</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>-0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealized Influence - Behavior</td>
<td>Improving</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>-0.80</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-improving</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>-1.10</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspirational Motivation</td>
<td>Improving</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>-0.78</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>-0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-improving</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>-1.04</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Stimulation</td>
<td>Improving</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>-0.32</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>-0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-improving</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>-0.50</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>-0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualized Consideration</td>
<td>Improving</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>-0.50</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>-0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-improving</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>-0.34</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>-0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TRANSACTIONAL SUBSCALES</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contingent Reward</td>
<td>Improving</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>-0.79</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-improving</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>-0.83</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management by Exception - Active</td>
<td>Improving</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>-0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-improving</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management by Exception - Passive</td>
<td>Improving</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>-0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-improving</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>-0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PASSIVE-AVOIDANT SUBSCALES</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive-Avoidant</td>
<td>Improving</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-improving</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Scale: 0 = not at all, 1 = once in a while, 2 = sometimes, 3 = fairly often, 4=frequently, if not always.*
Leadership Styles in Improving and Non-improving Schools

The first research question ascertained whether there was a significant difference in how teachers perceive the leadership styles of their school principals differently between improving and non-improving schools. To answer this question the data were analyzed using an independent $t$-test to measure the differences between the principal’s leadership styles, as transformational, transactional and passive avoidant, and the schools performance level classified as improving and non-improving. The Bonferroni procedure was used to control for a type I error due to the 3 $t$-tests ($\alpha = .017$).

The transformational leadership style of the principal in improving schools had a mean of 2.67, while the non-improving school had a mean of 2.66 (Table 8). The independent transformational $t$-test indicated that there was no statistically significant difference in the teacher’s perception of their principal’s transformational leadership style between improving and non-improving schools, $t (141) = -.21, p = .83$. This indicated there was a minimal mean difference between the improving schools and non-improving schools with teacher perceptions of transformational leadership style of the principals. In addition, the effect size of .03 was small between the improving and non-improving schools with transformational leaders.
Table 8

*Independent t-test results for Transformational Leadership Style of the Principal in Improving and Non-improving schools (N=143)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Style Scale</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Min MLQ Score</th>
<th>Max MLQ Score</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TRANSFORMATIONAL SCALE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>-21</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-improving</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td></td>
<td>(ns)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Two-tailed test, α = 0.017*

The transactional leadership style of principals in improving schools had a mean of 1.95, while the non-improving school had a mean of 2.05 (Table 9). There was no statistically significant difference of the teacher’s perception of the principal’s transactional leadership style between improving and non-improving schools, $t (141) = 1.38, p = .085$. The effect size was .22. The non-significant results of the teacher’s perception of the principal’s transactional leadership style between improving and non-improving schools may have been the result from the lack of large sample size.
Table 9

*Independent t-test results for Transactional Leadership Style of Principals in Improving and Non-improving schools (N=143)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Style Scale</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Min MLQ Score</th>
<th>Max MLQ Score</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TRANSACTIONAL SCALE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>0.085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-improving</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>(ns)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Two-tailed test, α = 0.017*

As shown in Table 10, the passive-avoidant leader in improving schools had a mean of .85, while the non-improving schools had a mean of .86. There was no statistically significant difference of the teacher’s perception of the principal’s passive avoidant style between improving and non-improving schools, $t(141) = .39$, $p = .35$.

The effect size of .07 was minimal between the improving and non-improving schools for passive avoidant leadership style.

Table 10

*Independent t-test results for Passive Avoidant Leadership Style of Principals in Improving and Non-improving schools (N=143)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Style Scale</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Min MLQ Score</th>
<th>Max MLQ Score</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PASSIVE-AVOIDANT SCALE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-improving</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>(ns)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Two-tailed test, α = 0.017*

**Leadership Style and Student Achievement in Improving and Non-improving Schools**
Research question number two sought to understand the relationship between the leadership style of the school principal as perceived by their teachers and the achievement of their students in improving and non-improving schools. To adequately answer this question a multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the amount of variance of student achievement that can be accounted for by the principal’s leadership style and school’s status as improving or non-improving. To explore which leadership styles could be predictive of student achievement, a multiple regression analysis revealed that the model was statistically significant in predicting the student achievement, \( F(4, 138) = 4.91, p < .001 \). The \( R^2 \) was 0.13 and an adjusted \( R^2 \) was 0.10, indicating that 10% of the variance in the student achievement was accounted for by leadership styles and school status in the regression model.

Table 11 shows that transformational, transactional and passive avoidant leadership styles were statistically significant predictors of student achievement. However, school status was not significant \( (p = 0.17) \) indicating that there was no difference of student achievement between improving and non-improving schools. Among the three leadership styles, transformational and passive-avoidant had a positive relationship \((\beta = 0.25 \text{ and } \beta = 0.37, \text{ respectively})\). In contrast, transactional had a negative relationship \((\beta = -0.30)\).
An important consideration when conducting multiple regressions is multicollinearity that occurs when a high correlation exists between two or more predictor variables (Lomax, 2007). The multicollinearity checks did not reveal significant violations. Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values did not suggest multicollinearity with the values ranging from 1.02 to 2.34.

**Transformational, Transactional, and Passive Avoidant Leader Subscales and Student Achievement**

Research question three addressed the relationship between the principal’s leadership style as perceived by their teachers on the five transformational, three transactional and one passive-avoidant leadership subscales and student achievement as measured by the FCAT in the improving and non-improving schools. A multiple regression analysis was conducted for each set of leadership subscales to examine the
relationship of the teacher’s perceptions of their principal’s leadership style and the school’s status as improving or non-improving with student achievement.

The regression analysis demonstrated that there was a significant relation between the transformational subscales and school status and student achievement, $F (6,136) = 2.22, p < 0.01$. The $R^2$ was .09 and the adjusted $R^2$ was .05, indicating that 5% of the variance in student achievement was accounted for by the transformational leadership styles and school status in the regression model. In terms of relationships of the transformational subscales and school status with student achievement, intellectual stimulation and school status had a significant relationship with student achievement, $t = 2.50, p < .05$ and $t = 2.70, p < .05$, respectively. Both intellectual stimulation and school status had positive relationship with student achievement ($\beta = 0.42$ and $\beta = 0.18$, respectively).
Table 12

*Transformational Leadership Style subscales and Improvement status as Predictors of Student Achievement (N = 143)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Idealized Influence Attributed</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
<td>-0.81</td>
<td>0.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealized Influence Behavior</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>-0.35</td>
<td>-1.75</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspirational Motivation</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Stimulation</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>0.02*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Consideration</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>-0.21</td>
<td>-1.16</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving and Non-improving</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>0.03*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: * statistically significant

The regression analysis showed that there was a significant relation of student achievement with a linear combination of the transactional subscales and school status, $F (4, 138) = 3.70, p < 0.01$. The $R^2$ was .10 and the adjusted $R^2$ was .07, indicating that 7% of the variance in student achievement was accounted for by transactional leadership styles and school status in the regression model. Table 13 shows that Management by Exception-Active subscale was a statistically significant predictor of student achievement ($t = -3.28, p = .001$). Management by exception-active had a negative relationship with student achievement ($β = -0.29$).
Table 13

**Transactional Leadership Style Subscales and Improvement Status as Predictors of Student Achievement (N = 143)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contingent Reward</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management by Exception -</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management by Exception -</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.29</td>
<td>-3.28</td>
<td>0.001*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving and Non-improving</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: * statistically significant

For passive avoidant leadership style, overall regression analysis showed a significant result, $F (2, 140) = 3.70, p < 0.05$. The finding indicated that there was a significant relation of student achievement with a linear combination of the passive avoidant leadership style and school status. The $R^2$ was .05 and the adjusted $R^2$ was .034, indicating that only 3% of the variance in student achievement were accounted for by the passive avoidant leadership style and school status. Table 15 shows the passive-avoidant subscale was a statistically significant predictor of student achievement ($t = 2.03, p < .05$). There was a positive relation between the passive-avoidant leadership and student achievement ($\beta = 0.17$).
Table 14

Passive Avoidant Leadership Style Subscales and Improvement Status as Predictors of Student Achievement (N = 143)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Passive-Avoidant</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>0.04*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving and Non-improving</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Significance after Bonferroni correction for Passive-Avoidant Leadership was α = .02.

As a whole, the overall regression model for the transformational, transactional and passive avoidant leadership style subscales and school improvement status regressed on student achievement was significant. The data revealed that student achievement could be predicted by the leadership style subscales.

Teacher Demographics and their Perception of Leadership Styles

Research question number four ascertained if there was a relationship between teacher gender, age, years of experience as a teacher, and years of experience at their current school to their perception of the principal’s leadership style in improving and non-improving schools. To explain the influence of these demographic variables on the principal’s leadership styles in improving and non-improving schools, a multiple regression was conducted.
As shown in Table 15, the demographic characteristics of the respondents were predominately female (80.4%). The majority of the teachers reported their ages between 51 and 60 years old (29.4%). The average teacher had over 16 years of experience (40.6%) years of experience with an average of 3 to 6 years at their current school (35.7%).
Table 15

Demographic Characteristics of Teacher Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>80.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>51-60</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>61+</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years as a teacher</td>
<td>0-4 years</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5-10 years</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>28.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16+ years</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>40.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years at current school</td>
<td>0-2 years</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3-6 years</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>35.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7-9 years</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10+ years</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary Schools</td>
<td>Improving</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-improving</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Schools</td>
<td>Improving</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-improving</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Schools</td>
<td>Improving</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-improving</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Totals do not equal 100% or N = 143 due to non-responses in demographic variable.

To explain the influence of the teacher’s demographic variables on their perception of the leadership styles of the principals, a multiple regression was conducted on the demographic variables and school status on transformational, transactional, and passive
avoidant leadership styles. Table 16 shows that the teacher’s demographic variable of “years in current school” was the only variable that was significant ($t = -1.17, p < 0.05$), indicating that the years in the current school of the teacher had a significant impact on how they perceived their principal’s leadership style as transformational. However, the overall linear combination of predictors was not significant in predicting teachers’ perceptions of their principals’ leadership style as transformational, $F (5,136) = 1.34, p = .25$. The $R^2$ was .05 and the adjusted $R^2$ was .02. The four remaining predictors were not significant.

Table 16

*Multiple Regression Explaining Transformational Leadership Style and Demographics for School Improvement Status (N = 143)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>15.31</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>6.94</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in current school</td>
<td>-1.05</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>-0.24</td>
<td>-1.17</td>
<td>0.03*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years as a teacher</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-0.40</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>-0.39</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving &amp; Non-improving</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: * statistically significant

None of the teachers’ demographic variables and school status was a significant predictor for teachers’ perceptions of their principals’ transaction leadership style (all the
p-values greater than .05). Similarly, the overall linear combination of predictors was not significant in predicting teachers’ perceptions of their principals’ leadership style as transactional, \( F (5, 136) = 1.04, p = .39 \). The \( R^2 \) was .037 and the adjusted \( R^2 \) was 0.01 (Table 17).

Table 17

Multiple Regression Explaining Transactional Leadership Style and Demographics for School Improvement Status (\( N = 143 \))

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>( \beta )</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>7.13</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>11.38</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in current school</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years as a teacher</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>-0.63</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-0.47</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
<td>-1.67</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving &amp; Non-improving</td>
<td>-0.34</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>-1.49</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The variable “years in current school” was a significant indicator in predicting the passive-avoidant leadership styles of their principals (\( t = 2.62, p < .05 \) and \( \beta = .28 \)). However, the overall linear combination of predictors was not significant in predicting teachers’ perceptions of their principals’ passive-avoidant leadership style, \( F (5, 136) = 1.81, p = .12 \). The \( R^2 \) was .06 and the adjusted \( R^2 \) was .03. The three remaining demographic predictors and school status were not significant (Table 18).

Table 18
The participants who answered at least half of the items from the subscales (N = 143) were included in the analysis. Initially, the teachers who had 0-2 years in the school were to be taken from the sample. However, the MLQ was designed to measure the individual perceptions of the leader. References indicating the length of interaction were not relevant to the validity of the instrument as reported by the authors of the MLQ survey instrument (Bass & Avolio, 2004). Consequently, all participants were included in the sample because they were exposed to the leadership style of the principal throughout the school year. Perceptions of the school principal were for the current year and accomplished the purposes of the research study.

**Behaviors of Leaders as Perceived by Teachers**
Research question five explored the behaviors of school principals that influence student achievement as perceived by the teachers. The teachers were asked “What principal behaviors influence teachers and student achievement?” As related in Chapter Three, a Microsoft Excel database divided the responses by theme, school level and improving and non-improving schools. The response analysis found emerging themes to clarify findings and produce predictable responses (Creswell, 2007). Each theme represented the findings and effectively illustrated the style of leadership within the situational leadership framework. To maintain the fidelity of the teachers' open-ended responses, the researcher analyzed the responses by reading the answers initially for completeness to verify their usability in the study. Subsequent readings narrowed the focus of the responses, identified the themes and broke down the data into manageable segments for comparisons, contrasts, and categories (Schwandt, 1997).

**Emerging Themes**

The researcher color coded the responses by common cues found in the responses. Three themes emerged from the teacher’s beliefs about principal leadership style: principal role modeling, school culture, and leadership decisions (Table 19). The framework used to identify and define the themes consisted of an assessment of the teacher responses describing how their leader influences student achievement through principal role modeling, school culture, or leadership decisions. Overall, teachers selected school culture as the theme having the most significant impact on student achievement in
both improving and non-improving schools. All comments from participants can be found in Appendix E.
Table 19

*Survey Responses to Open-Ended Question (N = 143)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of School</th>
<th>Improvement Status</th>
<th># of Teachers Responding to Surveys</th>
<th># of Teachers Responding to Open-End Question</th>
<th>Themes: % of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Principal Role Modeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>School Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Leadership Decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Improving</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-improving</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>Improving</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-improving</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>Improving</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-improving</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td>143</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Principal Role Modeling Theme.**

The teacher responses in each school that were coded as the theme of Principal Role Modeling were separated by school level and by improving and non-improving schools. Role modeling is the commitment of a principal to display the positive daily
actions that impact staff perspectives of the school’s leadership (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005). An aggregate of the responses to the question “What principal behaviors influence teachers and student achievement?” produced the percentage of the teacher responses identified as the theme by school and by level.

The improving elementary schools had no teacher responses coded as Principal Role Modeling. The non-improving elementary schools had 25% of their teachers report that Principal Role Modeling influenced them and student achievement. A teacher responded with “she challenges me to think beyond the surface. She expects me to have depth of knowledge in my profession and will do what she has to do to get me that knowledge if I don't have it.”

The improving middle schools experienced a 17% response from their teachers reflecting the theme. A survey response from a teacher in an improving school indicated “She is very positive and sets a good example. She has high standards and expectations.” The non-improving middle schools had 30% of their teachers respond to the question indicating that Principal Role Modeling impacted their teaching. A teacher from a non-improving middle school wrote: “She is accessible to teachers and visits classrooms regularly.”

Of the three school levels, the high schools had the least difference between improving and non-improving schools for the Principal Role Modeling theme. Twenty-five percent of the improving high school teachers reported comments supportive of this theme. A teacher at the improving school wrote “Our principal has a strong sense of
purpose and inspires us to do the same.” The teachers at the non-improving high schools reported Principal Role Modeling as influential on their teaching at a rate of 30%. A teacher from a non-improving high school responded: “She shows how she wants us to teach, she is an excellent role model.”

School culture theme. The teacher responses in each school that were coded under the theme of school culture were separated by school level and by improving and non-improving schools. Effective school leaders create a work culture without roadblocks to student engagement and without interference in the building of teacher capacity (Bason & Frase, 2004). A positive school culture is built through teacher-focused leaders who build teacher capacity. School culture had the highest percentage of teachers indicating that this theme had an impact on their teaching when answering the open-response question.

The improving elementary schools had 85% of their teacher responses coded as indicating school culture had an impact on their teaching and student achievement as seen in Table 20. This was the highest percent reported for the three themes, the three school levels and between the improving and non-improving schools. A teacher from an improving elementary school indicated her leader provided a positive school culture: “She encourages us to believe that we may be the only person that tells a child they are loved and that we may be the only motivation that they have. We have to remain a positive force in all children’s lives.” Another teacher in an improving elementary school responded: “She is approachable and responds quickly to legitimate concern voice by
staff member, parents, and students.” The non-improving elementary schools had 41% of their teachers report that school culture influenced their teaching and student achievement. A teacher in a non-improving school wrote: “(Our Principal) is always positive and complimentary towards the faculty in emails and demeanor. She's always complimentary towards the students and supports teachers to the parents.”

The non-improving middle schools had 50% of their teachers respond to the question indicating that school culture influenced their teaching. The improving middle schools experienced a 17% response from their teachers reflecting the theme. A teacher in a non-improving school stated about the principal that, “She has positive, friendly attitude. She seems to have the belief that we are all doing our job and are all capable of achieving student success.” A teacher from a non-improving middle school wrote: “He is an effective "coach" and is upbeat and positive.” Another teacher from a non-improving middle school acknowledged the teacher's responsibility as they wrote: “It's not the principal's responsibility to engage teachers to improve student performance. It is the teacher's role and personal responsibility.”

School culture was the highest reported theme by both the improving and non-improving high schools. The improving high school teachers reported a 41% rate for this theme. A teacher from an improving high school wrote, “She uses data, establishes relationships and builds community.” Another high school teacher from an improving school wrote, “Our principal has a strong sense of purpose and inspires us to do the same.” Thirty percent of teachers at the non-improving high schools reported School
Culture as impacting their teaching. A teacher from a non-improving high school commented that the principal “Addresses all and reminds all. Recognizes success and says thank you. For some people, he says good-bye and good luck.”

**Leadership decisions theme.** The improving elementary schools had 14% of their teacher responses coded as Leadership decisions (Table 20). Leaders make daily decisions that impact the motivation of teachers who constantly gauge the magnitude of their principal’s requests and whether or not to respect their decisions (Marzano, McNulty & Waters, 2003, Gray & Ross 2006). This theme had the smallest percentage of teacher responses among all school levels in both improving and non-improving schools. A teacher from an improving elementary school indicated on her survey: “Our principal is always on task and enthusiastic to direct attention to anything that will benefit the students in the long run.”

The non-improving elementary schools had 33% of their teachers report that leadership decisions made by the principal influenced their teaching environment. A teacher responded with “She is willing to go into the classroom and assist in teaching, such as she did before FCAT writing. She wants the best from everyone at all times. She is amazing with the kids. They respect her and are able to relate to her. She is someone who can listen to you without judgment and wants the best for the students, school and fellow teachers.”

The improving middle schools experienced a 66% response from their teachers reflecting the theme. This percent was the highest for all three levels of schools of both
improving and non-improving schools for this category. A teacher from an improving middle school responded to the open-ended survey question with, “She has strong leadership skills and says we are in this together.” The non-improving middle schools had 20% of their teachers respond to the question indicating that Leadership Decisions affected their teaching. One of the teachers in the 20% wrote: “Our principal is fair and objective when dealing with issues and encourages staff and students to work to their potential.” Another teacher from a non-improving middle school wrote, “Our principal is fair and objective when dealing with issues and encourages staff and students to work to their potential.”

The improving high school teachers reported a 33% rate for this theme. A teacher at the improving school wrote, “He is a motivator! He really assesses what needs to happen on campus for the good of the majority and does his best to follow through with his 'Vision' so we can be successful as a school.” The teachers at the non-improving high schools reported Leadership Decisions as influential on their teaching at a rate of 40%. A teacher from a non-improving high school wrote “Our principal engages in strong, decisive leadership and attempts to engage students on the basis of their potential success.” Another teacher from a non-improving high school expressed, “She engages in strong, decisive leadership and attempts to engage students on the basis of their potential success.”

**Leadership Outcomes and Principal Leadership Style**
Research question number six seeks to measure the leadership outcomes of job satisfaction, effectiveness, and extra effort evidenced by the teacher’s perceived leadership styles of their principals. Avolio and Bass (2004) define a successful outcome as one that pertains to the leader’s motivational influence on the follower’s effectiveness and extra efforts that lead to individual satisfaction. The survey instrument had three items for extra effort, four items for effectiveness and two items for satisfaction.

The largest frequency was reported for each leadership outcome on the Likert type scale as “frequency, if not always.” As related in Table 20, 45% of the teachers viewed the leadership of their principals with satisfaction. Effectiveness as an outcome of leadership was the next most frequent response with over 41% of the respondents. Teachers indicated their principals put forth an Extra Effort in their leadership with the lowest frequency and 33.6%.
Table 20

**Frequency and Percentage Distribution for Leadership Outcomes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>Once in a while</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Frequently, if not always</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>8 (5.6%)</td>
<td>11 (67%)</td>
<td>24 (16.8%)</td>
<td>35 (24.5%)</td>
<td>65 (45.5%)</td>
<td>143(100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>4 (2.8%)</td>
<td>12 (8.4%)</td>
<td>23 (16.1%)</td>
<td>41 (28.7%)</td>
<td>63 (41.1%)</td>
<td>143(100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra Effort</td>
<td>13 (9.1%)</td>
<td>15 (10.5%)</td>
<td>31 (21.7%)</td>
<td>36 (25.2%)</td>
<td>48 (33.6%)</td>
<td>143(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The leadership outcomes for mean and mode indicators were not supported by the frequency measures. The median and mode for all outcomes was “sometimes.” The mean of the scores indicated the leadership outcome effectiveness was higher (Table 21).

Table 21

**Mean, Median, Mode, and Standard Deviation for Leadership Outcomes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>Mdn</th>
<th>Mo</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra Effort</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* M=mean, Mdn=median, Mo=mode, SD=standard deviation, Min=minimum, and Max=maximum.

An analysis was conducted to determine the correlation between the three leadership styles and their nine subscales. As illustrated in Table 4, a Pearson’s Product-
moment Correlation Coefficient ($r$) was used to determine the correlation between each leadership subscale and the three outcomes of leadership.

Statistically significant correlations ($p < 0.01$) were found between the all five of the transformational leadership subscales (IIA, IIB, IM, IS, and IC) (Table 2). As expected, they were strongly correlated with each other ($r = .74$ to $.91$). There was one transactional scale, management by exception- active (MBEA) that did not have statistically significant results. There were no significant correlations between the three transactional leadership subscales (CR, MBEA and MBEP). There was a statistically significant correlation ($p < 0.01$) between the transactional leadership subscale of contingent reward (CR) and the five transformational leadership subscales. In addition, statistically significant correlations ($p < 0.01$) existed between passive-avoidant (PA) and the five transformational leadership subscales and one transactional leadership subscale of contingent reward (CR).
Table 22

*Correlations between Leadership Subscales (N= 143)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>IIA</th>
<th>IIB</th>
<th>IM</th>
<th>IS</th>
<th>IC</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>MBEA</th>
<th>MBEP</th>
<th>PA</th>
<th>EE</th>
<th>EFF</th>
<th>SAT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IIA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIB</td>
<td>.86**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IM</td>
<td>.91**</td>
<td>.90**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>IS</td>
<td>.89**</td>
<td>.76**</td>
<td>.84**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IC</td>
<td>.84**</td>
<td>.74**</td>
<td>.82**</td>
<td>.86**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CR</td>
<td>.87**</td>
<td>.79**</td>
<td>.89**</td>
<td>.85**</td>
<td>.84**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MBEA</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>- .04**</td>
<td>- .03**</td>
<td>.03**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MBEP</td>
<td>- .60**</td>
<td>- .49**</td>
<td>- .59**</td>
<td>- .54**</td>
<td>- .52**</td>
<td>- .53**</td>
<td>.20**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA</td>
<td>- .69**</td>
<td>- .61**</td>
<td>- .67**</td>
<td>- .61**</td>
<td>- .61**</td>
<td>- .62**</td>
<td>.09**</td>
<td>.74**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EE</td>
<td>.86**</td>
<td>.76**</td>
<td>.84**</td>
<td>.81**</td>
<td>.80**</td>
<td>.80**</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.56**</td>
<td>.63**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFF</td>
<td>.90**</td>
<td>.79**</td>
<td>.66**</td>
<td>.65**</td>
<td>.82**</td>
<td>.84**</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.55**</td>
<td>.68*</td>
<td>.88**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT</td>
<td>.91**</td>
<td>.80**</td>
<td>.85**</td>
<td>.85*</td>
<td>.84**</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.60**</td>
<td>.70**</td>
<td>.90**</td>
<td>.91**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: IIA=Idealized Influence Attributes, IIB=Idealized Influence Behaviors, IM=Inspirational Motivation, IS=Intellectual Stimulation, IC=Individualized Consideration, CR=Contingent Reward, MBEA=Management-by-exception: active, MBEP=Management-by-exception: PA=Passive-Avoidant, EE=Extra Effort, EFF=Effectiveness, SAT=Satisfaction, ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

**Summary of Results**

Chapter 4 examined the relationship between student achievement and principal leadership styles in one school district in Florida. The perceived leadership style of the principals’ was identified using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire survey. State assessment scores, and demographic data were also analyzed to determine their relationship to student achievement in improving and non-improving schools.

Correlational statistics were used with multiple regression analyses to examine these relationships.
The results indicated that teachers who perceived their principals as having a transformational, transactional or passive-avoidant leadership styles demonstrated a significant predictability of student achievement. However, these leadership styles were not significant in predicting a school’s status as improving or non-improving. The transformational and passive-avoidant leadership styles in this study had a positive relationship with student achievement. After further breakdown of the leadership styles into subscales, it was found that the transactional subscale of management-by-exception-active had a negative influence on student achievement. The transformational subscale of intellectual stimulation was statistically significant in predicting school improvement status.

The statistical correlations with the leadership outcomes of satisfaction, effectiveness, and extra effort found the transactional subscale of contingent reward had a positive influence with leaders who use the transformational leadership style. The leadership outcomes, as perceived by teachers, was seen as satisfying and effective some of the time. While 88% of the respondents indicated a level of “sometimes” to “frequently if not always” for their leader’s effectiveness, a comparable percentage of 84% perceived their leaders as putting forth extra effort for the schools. 68% of the respondents indicated their were often satisfied with their leadership. The teacher’s demographic variable of “years in current school” was the only variable that had a significant impact on how teachers perceived their principal’s leadership style as transformational.
Overall, the teachers selected School Culture (85% of elementary, 41% of high school, and 17% of middle school teachers) as the theme having the most significant impact on student achievement in improving and non-improving schools. Teacher’s indicated the leadership decisions theme (14% elementary teachers) had the least impact on student approval.

Chapter Four provided the researcher with information to allow for conclusions on the principal’s impact on student achievement. This data provides information for discussions and conclusions to be made on the relationship between principal leadership styles as perceived by teachers and student learning gains. Chapter Five will present conclusions, implications, and recommendations for future research.
Chapter 5

Summary and Discussion

As the literature suggested, the daily activities and decisions of a leader reflect the pervasive focus and culture of a school and its leadership (Noonan & Walker, 2008). Citizens outside the field of education often view school-based administrators as school managers and not as instructional leaders. Due to the increasing pressures of the data driven accountability that began with the inception of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, school leaders are taking a different path from the one taken by past educators. The waning educational funding and the increasing competition to receive grants through the private sector and the national Race To The Top initiatives have impacted how schools function. School leaders are shifting their focus from a managerial style of school leadership to a teacher-focused style to meet the challenges of increasing student achievement (Bredson, 2005, Lazaridou, 2006).

How does a leader change the focus of followers? By increasing human capacity, leaders have the ability to utilize personnel strengths and to excel in meeting the goals of the school. Furthermore, school capacity is increased through the collective power of a school staff to reach a common goal. For educators, the goal is universal and is simply defined as increasing student achievement. A teacher-focused leader develops school capacity thereby enhancing the teacher’s capacity to increase student achievement.
**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this research was to study how leadership styles impact student achievement. The researcher asked teachers to provide their perspective of their principals through an anonymous survey. Teachers from 16 schools received emails at their public school in one central Florida district. An aggregate of the teacher survey results was used to define principals’ leadership style in improving and non-improving schools. The trends from three years of the statewide FCAT assessment data were used to determine if a school was improving or not improving student achievement.

The relationship between principal leadership style and school student achievement was analyzed to answer the research questions. The empirical results from the study indicated there was a relationship between how teachers perceived principals leadership style and student achievement. The teacher’s gender, age, years of experience, and years with their current principal were studied to find the relation to their interpretation of the principal’s leadership style.

**Research Questions**

Consistent with the purpose of this study, the research questions that guided the investigation of the relationship between principal leadership styles and student achievement were:

1. How do teachers in improving and non-improving schools perceive the leadership styles of their school principals?
2. What is the relationship between the leadership style of the school principal as perceived by their teachers and the achievement of their students as measured by the FCAT over a three year period in improving and non-improving schools to the FCAT?

3. What is the relationship between the school principal’s leadership style as perceived by their teachers on the on the five transformational, three transactional and one passive-avoidant leadership scale and student achievement in improving and non-improving schools to the FCAT?

4. What is the relationship of teacher gender, age, years of experience as a teacher, and years of experience at their current school to their perception of the principal’s leadership style in improving and non-improving schools?

5. What are the behaviors of school principals that influence student achievement as perceived by the teachers? Teachers were asked “What are the behaviors of your principal that engage teachers and improve student performance?”

6. How do teachers perceive the leadership styles of their school principals as leadership outcomes of satisfaction, effectiveness, and extra effort?

Context of the Study

This study examined the relationship between the principal leadership styles, student achievement and teacher demographic variables in improving and non-improving
School leaders influence student achievement through the leadership styles they exhibit that influence their teachers (Barnett, et al; Avolio & Bass, 2005; Blase & Blase, 1999). The current federal and state demands to produce high student test scores have necessitated further study of effective leadership styles.

The study was conducted in a Florida school district with 93,000 students and over 12,000 employees. The school district is the 40th largest school district in the nation and the eighth largest school district in Florida. The district was under corrective action as identified by the Florida Department of Education through the No Child Left Behind criteria at the time of this study. The district poverty rate is 63% with a graduation rate of 74.7% in 2009 (FDOE).

In order to be included in the sample, the school had to be in existence for at least three school years with the same principal during that time. The school also had to have at least three years of FCAT test data and not be a charter, combination, private, or alternative school (Appendix B). This selection process identified 58 qualifying schools prior to the second elimination based on improvement status criteria.

This research study design was exploratory, nonexperimental and correlational that examined the relationship between the principal’s leadership style and the student achievement in improving and non-improving schools. The use of a commercially available quantitative survey instrument, the MLQ (5x-Short) collected data from teachers to identify their perceptions of the leadership style of their principal. The MLQ has been revised and validated for over 30 years and is used to investigate leadership
styles through educational, military, business, and other industries (Avolio & Bass, 2004). The state assessment test, FCAT, was utilized as the measure of student achievement. Purposeful sampling was used to qualify and select a total of 16 elementary, middle and high schools in the school district.

Discussion of the Findings

Leadership styles and improving and non-improving schools. The definition of an improving school has changed throughout the last half century. No longer is a principal responsible for determining what makes their school successful. A nationwide data-driven focus on school improvement has taken the reigns by defining school success through student test scores and other data within a complex system of differentiated accountability. This top–down accountability filters through the school districts and takes the form of pervasive district mandates for principals to bring up student test scores.

As the principal receives directives from the school districts and states, it is their responsibility to infuse the mandates within their schools. How principals respond to these mandates and implement needed changes is a reflection of their leadership styles. Brooks, et al (2002) found the internal string of day to day leadership decisions had a higher impact on the final product than direct mandates to improve from outside of the school.

Building school capacity to increase student test scores starts with teacher efficacy. Principal actions perceived as negative toward teachers may result in a lower
quality of instruction and a lack of student engagement. Teachers who feel stressed, paranoid, insecure or fearful may lack the self-efficacy necessary to contribute to school improvement. Effective principals take the time to communicate changes, answer questions and work toward a pragmatic system of allocating scarce resources to help teachers cope. Teachers who considered themselves abused by the administration had a low overall involvement in collaborative opportunities (Blase & Blase, 2002).

This study demonstrated that a principal’s leadership style may influence school capacity and student learning gains. As discussed in the literature review, leadership style drives the critical decisions that develop school capacity which can impact student achievement. O’Donnell & White (2008) found a significant relationship between how teachers perceive a principal’s decision making in regard to the school learning climate and student achievement. Further, the teachers’ perception of their leader’s desire to create a positive school culture may lead to high student learning gains (Rice & Roelike, 2008). Not surprisingly, teachers will use their talents and time to support new mandates designed to bring up test scores only if they feel supported by their principal.

This study found that transformational, transactional and passive-avoidant leadership styles were statistically significant predictors of student achievement; however, school status was not significant, indicating little difference in student achievement between improving and non-improving schools. This was not surprising since the school district was in corrective status.
Transformational leadership style had a significant relationship with school status and student achievement. Intellectual stimulation, a subscale of transformational leadership style, had positive relationships with school status and student achievement. To review, the transformational leader motivates and educates subordinates toward making decisions without interaction with supervisors. This leader delegates responsibilities with frequent inspections for compliance. The intellectual stimulation subscale describes a leader who is willing to help others think of new solutions to old problems. As with idealized influence and inspirational motivation, these leaders encourage the questioning of a belief system and assumptions when appropriate (Bass & Riggio, 2006). The intellectual stimulation subscale describes a leader who provides a school culture for followers that encourages alternative solutions and the freedom to use their own talents to solve problems. The teachers in this study also rated school culture as the highest of the three themes identified in the open-ended question on the survey. The teachers’ comments indicate they associate positive leadership behaviors with positive school culture and support the work of Alt, Beltranena, & Hoachlander (2001).

The transactional leadership style was also a significant predictor of student achievement. To review, the transactional leader is a “hands on” leader. This leader delegates responsibilities with frequent inspections for compliance. This research finding supports Leithwood (1992) who cautioned that transactional leadership builds school capacity but does not have the critical push of transformational leadership to instigate extreme school improvements. As reported in the literature review, teachers respond
positively to transactional leadership style if they are provided with frequent opportunities to reflect on classroom experiences and are provided with quality professional development (Marks & Printy, 2003).

Contingent reward, in this study, was the transactional leadership style subscale with the highest mean for improving and non-improving schools and the least variance of the mean. The transactional leader using contingent reward behaviors clarifies expectations and offers recognition and rewards when goals are achieved. Many of the participants in this study have had their teaching career under the NCLB reform act and its predecessors where contingent reward systems continue to be the norm.

The Management by Exception-Active subscale had a negative relationship with student achievement. Management by Exception-Active would be representative of a principal that specifies the standards for compliance and may punish followers for being out of compliance of set standards. Corrective action is taken as quickly as possible for deviances and mistakes. This type of leadership, where corrective action is taken in an expedient manner, may be viewed as more prevalent in today’s high stakes accountability era, particularly in schools in corrective action.

It is the researcher’s opinion that teachers are fearful of the constant state mandates and district directives. This insecurity may lead teachers to look to their leader for more direction than in previous years. It was supported in this study that principals may need to develop more skills in and different types of leadership behaviors in this climate of increased accountability.
Principal leadership styles and student achievement. The need for data to determine the effectiveness of a child’s education has taken on a new life through test scores for all ages. Students are tested upon entering kindergarten to record a baseline for future instruction or remediation, which ever fits the child’s academic abilities. This early definition of a student’s ability shadows them through their school years in a quest to create a homogeneous population of young scholars. The practice of using social promotion to advance students with their age group is now viewed as malpractice by some educators and most politicians. What is the cause of this societal push for quantitative proof of student achievement? The 2001 implementation of NCLB and 2010 implementation of Race to the Top tie dollars and other valuable educational resources to student achievement.

By starting with the end in mind, it is evident that student scores are directly influenced by their teachers. The principals serve in an indirect capacity in improving student achievement. School administrators are charged to improve the student performance in their school within a limited time. However, it is the teacher who directly influences the student performance of a school as they work with the students on a daily basis. Obviously influencing the actions of teachers is a vital component in raising test scores. How does a leader control the actions and decision made by a staff member in a closed classroom? Open communication and earning and maintaining the teacher’s trust in their administration will build school capacity (Caltabiano, Graham, Timms, 2006, Glover, 2007, Noonan & Walker, 2008).
The transactional leadership style subscales of contingent reward and management by exception-active were found to predict student achievement in both improving and non-improving schools as indicated by the regression correlation \( (r) \) score of .31. Considered a micro-managing option, transactional leaders promote followers to recognize what needs to be accomplished and gives them the authority to complete tasks thus enhancing their self-efficacy. Effective principals adapt to the condition of a school by making changes over time that address student outcomes and staff morale. Hallinger and Heck (1998) found flexibility is important in a leader’s decision to increase student achievement by changing curriculum and pedagogy. In the end, the principal has to create a school wide environment that provides him or her with the figurative x-ray glasses that see into classrooms and effectively guide teacher actions that raise student achievement.

**Principal leadership style.** Principals spend their days making multiple decisions on finance, law, curriculum, personnel, discipline and other areas. In fact, there is no routine a principal can follow to manage a school. Each decision is made in a fishbowl and judged by the principal’s staff, supervisors, students and community. The end result of their decisions and efforts are published in the form of student standardized test scores that represent each of the 180 days of instruction for that school year. As supported in the literature review, there are combinations of leadership styles that create a myriad of tools for the leader. Situational leadership provides the principal with the opportunity to select right choice for the school situation. As expressed in the last section, teachers are pivotal in raising test scores. Blanchard and Hersey (1979) stated that situational leadership is not
necessarily as important to the level of management as it is to the maturity level of the teacher.

In general, teachers have a desire to be led by their principals (Barnett, Craven & Marsh, 2005). The feeling of abandonment in an environment of merit pay and teacher cuts fosters insecurity and creates an atmosphere that can inhibit good teaching and effect student achievement. Further, teachers experience a negative perception of their leader if they feel abandoned to teach independently without knowledge or accountability to the school’s mission (Glover, 2007). School leaders have the responsibility to create a work environment conducive to raising student achievement or pay the price of published negative test results.

For this study, the leadership styles of the principals, as perceived by their teachers, were identified as transformational, transactional and passive-avoidant through the MLQ survey instrument. Each style had subgroups which provided further data to define the principal’s style. The following section provides the results of the research for each leadership style.

**Transformational.** An efficient system of management would involve training subordinates to make their own decisions based on the common goal of the group. This is the definition of transformational leadership. Interaction with supervisors is lessened by competent delegated authority. Although this leadership style increases a follower’s self-efficacy, straying off the leaders designated path is the risk. It is a dichotomous pull between a principal’s need to utilize a transformational leadership style to allow for the
time needed to meet the demands of the NCLB accountability and the transactional style which demands a constant monitoring of directives on how to increase student test scores.

As indicated in this study, the school leader frequently makes decisions that fall within a leadership style that has transformational leadership subscales defined by the MLQ survey instrument as: Idealized Influence (attributed), Idealized influence (behavior), Inspirational, Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individual Consideration. Not only were these factors identified on the MLQ but was indicated in the comments of the teachers in response to the open-ended question (Appendix E). The results of the study also indicated that principals who had leadership styles identified on the transformational subscale intellectual stimulation had influence on their improving and non-improving schools.

**Transactional.** Transactional leadership style has been identified as having the most significant impact on teachers and student achievement in this study. The subscales are Contingent Reward, Management by Exception – Passive, and Management by Exception – Active. Transactional leadership style was significant in relation to improving and non-improving schools. The subscale with the highest negative influence on leadership style and student achievement was Management by Exception – Active. The MLQ manual describes this subscale as a leader’s focus on monitoring task execution for any problems and correcting problems to maintain current performance levels.
The transactional leader is a front line, hands on leader. The style is not as comfortable for some leaders due to the time it takes to monitor leadership directives. Plus, there can be a discomfort between leaders and subordinates when there is a lack of leadership skill or knowledge to actively lead a school. This study made evident that contingent reward was dominate in non-improving schools. This subscale usually characterizes a frequently ineffective leadership style that offers recognition and rewards for goals that are achieved (Avolio & Bass, 2004). However in the context of this study, transactional leadership style had a positive relationship between both improving and non-improving schools and leadership style. This may not be surprising since teachers with less than fifteen years of experience have mainly worked in the NCLB era where the use rewards and punishments is the norm.

**Passive-avoidant.** The principal who does not participate in the daily decisions made in a school is defined as passive-avoidant. This leader works behind a desk and abdicates responsibility as the instructional leader of the school who supports teachers. This leader does not have the characteristics found in either transformation or transactional leadership styles. This type of leader is absent, avoids responsibilities and clarifying questions, and fails to make important decisions (Avolio & Bass, 2004; Bass & Riggio, 2006).

The results of this study indicated that principals in both improving and non-improving schools had a low percentage of passive-avoidant leadership characteristics. However, the data is not significant due to low effective size (.07). The passive-avoidant
or laissez-faire leadership style had only one subscale. This is not surprising as today’s school principals must act to improve their student achievement as called for in NCLB.

**Demographic variables and leadership styles.** The variables were years as a teacher, years at their current school their gender and age. According to this study, overall linear combination of predictors was not significant for years as a teacher, gender, age, and school status of their principals' leadership styles. Only one of the demographic variables, “years in current school,” was related to the teacher’s perception of the principal’s leadership style as transformational. The longer teachers were at their current school, the less likely they perceived their principal as a transformational leader.

The results of research question number four does not support the body of literature which reports teacher demographics impact their opinions of their leaders (Daugherty, Kelley, Thornton, 2005). The data in this study did not support age or gender as a factor in the perception of the principal’s leadership style. Consequently, the researcher believes a more expanded demographic survey questions may have yielded different results.

**Teacher perspectives on leadership behaviors**

**Principal role modeling.** A visitor to any school campus can feel the presence of an active principal. By watching the staff work and move throughout the campus it
becomes apparent that the principal has either been through the halls very recently or has never darkened the teacher’s doors. A principal is a role model for active student engagement or for apathy. As reported in the literature review, Fullan (2001) claimed principals who affect change see the big picture and model energy, enthusiasm, and hope. Leadership role modeling provides staff and students with motivation to continue to support leadership initiatives (Alt, Beltranena & Hoachlander, 2001).

The results of this study supported these assertions through the teacher responses to the open-ended survey question: “What are the behaviors of your principal that engage teachers and improve student performance?” The aggregate data from the non-improving elementary schools reported that 25% of their teachers indicated that Principal Role Modeling influenced them and student achievement. 30% of the teachers in non-improving middle and high schools indicated the role modeling of the principal was important. It is the researcher’s belief that the teachers in this study wanted their principal present and confident in decision making when important issues arise (Barnett, Craven & Marsh, 2002).

Interestingly, the teachers responding to the survey from improving schools did not have a large percentages in the area of Principal Role Modeling. It is the researcher’s opinion that the principal may have set a precedent of visibility on campus; therefore, teachers do not consider this action unique or noteworthy in their interpretation of how their principal actively raises student achievement. The literature review reported the first and most powerful strategy to drive teacher actions is principal visibility while carrying
out actions toward increasing student achievement. The second most powerful strategy is the principal’s direct lead of individual teachers to encourage high self-efficacy relationships (Janzi & Leithwood, 1996).

**Building school capacity.** Fullan (2002) stated that school leaders are the driving force of sustainable education reforms. Success starts with switching from a managerial style of leadership that stresses procedures and the implementation of past doctrine to a leadership style that embraces a common purpose to increase student achievement (Bush, 2007). The active and knowledgeable principal exemplifies the role of instructional leader. Teachers influence the school culture by working together on a principal-driven path toward increasing student achievement to make it possible to excel beyond a system built on top-down mandates.

The results of this study supported the literature and confirmed the importance of building school capacity that facilitates student achievement. Improving elementary schools had 85% of their teachers indicate positive school capacity or culture was the priority of their principal. This had the highest percentage reported for the three themes and the three school levels. The non-improving high schools had only 30% of the teachers that indicated school capacity was important. All other levels in non-improving and improving schools had higher percentages in this area. The results of this study indicated that the teachers are aware when their principal strives to build capacity or is apathetic to the needs of the school culture. To extend this point, the open-ended
question responses were written with more concrete examples and passionate claims for this theme than the other two themes: Principal Role Modeling and Leadership Decisions.

Leadership decisions. The plethora of leadership literature fosters successful change in business, as well as educational institutions. It is apparent that necessity drives invention. Education is no exception to being influenced by the latest leadership trends and ideas. The need for quantitative data to demonstrate student growth requires principals to make effective leadership decisions daily. A principal’s leadership style is a powerful agent of change that influences school capacity and impacts student learning gains (Marks & Printy, 2003). To succeed, a principal must be aware of and adapt to the culture of the school by making changes over time that address student outcomes and staff morale. Hallinger and Heck (1998) found flexibility was a key component in a leader’s decision to increase student achievement by changing curriculum and pedagogy.

Each of the school levels had inconsistent percentages of responses. It was found that improving elementary schools only had 14% of their teachers believe decision making was important. However, leadership decisions were found as important in 66% of teachers in improving middle schools and 33% in the improving high schools. This inconsistency may be attributed to the different levels of schools or to the improving schools’ principals not being as directive as perhaps the non-improving schools.

Leadership Styles and Leadership Outcomes
The principal’s leadership style outcomes were measures as perceived by the teachers’ satisfaction for their leader’s methods, their judgment of their leader’s effectiveness, and the extra efforts made to determine the best decision for the school. These outcome scales of effectiveness, satisfaction and extra effort provided the researcher with information on how the teachers viewed their principal’s ability to raise the awareness of the importance of achieving these valued outcomes (Bass & Avolio, 2004). Each of the outcomes was measured against the transformational leadership style of the principals (Avolio & Bass, 2004). Transformational leaders facilitate a change in their schools by working to shift the viewpoint of their staff toward what they consider meaningful learning and achievement.

The authors of the MLQ found the relationship between transformational and transactional leadership suggested transformational leaders used transactional styles only when needed to effect the satisfaction of workers (Avolio & Bass, 2004). The majority of teachers in the study gave their principals a frequency measurement of “often” for satisfaction, effectiveness and extra effort in their leadership outcomes.

The strongest correlation was between transformational factor of Idealized Influence Behaviors, satisfaction (.91) and effectiveness (.90). Avolio and Bass (2004) state Idealized Influence Behaviors include charismatic leadership vision and outgoing behaviors that inspire others to follow. These transformational leaders create a school culture with a permeating vision that consistently inspires teachers and other stakeholders.
throughout their school. This inspiration is said to lead to a more productive and positive school culture.

Conversely, the weakest correlation was between the transactional leadership style’s subscale, Management by Exception-Active and leadership extra effort (.006). Transactional leaders work within the school structure to assign roles and responsibilities to achieve the desired outcomes. Transactional leaders exhibiting extra effort demonstrate a heightened desire for others to succeed. These extra effort behaviors were not perceived by the teachers of their principals in this study.

**Limitations of the Study**

The limitations of this research study were discussed in Chapter 1. After completion of the research, there were additional limitations discovered through the data collection and analysis process. As previously noted, the study has limits on generalizability due to the use of only public schools from one school district. Private schools, alternative schools, and charter schools were not included in the research. Further, a non-randomized selection of the 16 schools served as a restriction of the study.

In addition, the following are also limitations to the current study:

- It was assumed the teachers self-reported the items in the questionnaire as a volunteer with honesty and without bias.
- The researcher had no manner in which to verify the accuracy of the responses.
- There were no controls for teacher performance in the classroom.
- How the sample teachers gained their teaching certifications was not sought in this study. The teacher’s path toward certification may have influenced their perceptions of their school leaders.

- The researcher could not verify the respondents had observed the leadership behaviors of principals in schools.

- The MLQ instrument is a perception of the styles of leadership of the principal and may not reflect the actual style of the principal. An additional instrument, a longitudinal study, or simply a retest within one school year would have generated more accurate results on the teacher’s perception of their principal.

An additional limitation was added following the data collection and analysis. The timing of the survey may have biased the teacher responses. The teachers were asked to complete the survey in the last month of their school year. Initially, the researcher espoused that this month would provide the teacher with a full year of exposure to the principal’s leadership style, thus resulting in a more accurate assessment. However, this time of year is fraught with low morale and an escaping attitude. The teacher’s outlook may have been skewed by their desire to leave for the summer.

Finally, the order of the survey questions used on the emailed survey may have compromised the study results. The respondents answered the majority of the first 30 questions. However, following this question, the percentage of teachers responding to the questions waned. The open-ended question was placed at the end of the survey. This
placement of a question that demanded more from the teacher than the selection of a number on the Likert-type scale may have affected the response rate.

**Implications for Future Research**

Future research is recommended based on the findings of this study.
1. Replicate this study through private and charter schools to obtain a broader sample of principal leadership styles.
2. Utilize more than one school district in a state. The random selection of districts in scattered geographic areas would add to the fidelity of the study. This action would provide for more accurate generalization of the findings.
3. Employ more than one Leadership Style survey instrument to verify and cross check the leadership styles as perceived by the teachers to obtain a more reliable picture of principal's leadership styles.
4. Add the principal’s self-rating responses to determine the relationship of the principal’s data to the teacher’s perceptions and more in depth demographic survey questions to add to the identification of the teacher.
5. Investigate the teacher’s last professional evaluation to determine bias. Depending on the evaluation method, the relationship between the teacher and the leader may be compromised. State law is requiring a strict qualitative evaluation method based on merit and student test scores. Additionally, a case study can determine the measure of the contamination of the teacher’s perception of their leader which may occur before or after the evaluation.
6. Investigate the socio-economic conditions and the size of the schools in the study to determine if the conditions effect the teacher’s perception of the principal’s leadership style.

7. Add the teacher’s teaching assignment and length of certification in their current field to create a “qualification” measure for the teacher to the current study design.

8. Replicate the study and add the student test scores for the individual teacher.

    Teachers may perform better for certain principals. Create a foundation or basis for measuring classroom data. Building a teacher measure, whether reflective or quantitative will provide a defined type of teacher and a relationship with the defined type of leader.

9. Add the principal’s demographic information such as years as a leader, awards and level of education to the current study design.

10. Conduct this study each year for ten years to determine trends in leadership style as related to state mandates.

11. Add the level of principal pay and teacher pay as compared to peers in school districts across the state to the study design.

**Conclusion**

This study explored how teacher perceptions of their principal's leadership style impacted student achievement. Raising student achievement is the ultimate goal of educators. Principals are hit with endless requests, demands, and data on how to bring up
their school’s achievement levels. In the end, the school leader can only control themselves. Principals have the potential to influence student achievement through their leadership decisions and the impact of those decisions on the teachers and ultimately the students.

Situational leadership theory provided a framework for this research by examining the teachers’ perception of the principals’ leadership style and its influence on school capacity and student achievement. School leaders have the capacity to select leadership styles that can positively or negatively influence the practices of their teachers. Leadership behavior influences student improvement through their teachers (Blase & Blase, 1999).

This study found that teacher perceptions of principals’ demonstrating transformational leadership characteristics identified on the MLQ was only by a small margin. For leaders in the improving schools, the subscale of Intellectual Stimulation had a positive relationship with student achievement. For leaders identified by their teachers as transformational leaders in the study and who demonstrated intellectual stimulation were found to have a positive effect on student achievement in both improving and non-improving schools. The leaders in the non-improving schools were observed by their followers to provide intellectual stimulation and exhibit inspirational motivation. However, it must be noted that the district under study has all of its Title I schools in Correct I or Correct II for the 2011 school year, meaning that none of the schools has made AYP. This was reflected in the low achievement criteria for selecting schools as
improving or non-improving. However, this indicates that teachers’ perceptions of principals in low performing schools exhibit some transformational behaviors, as well as transactional.

Transformational leaders are given the opportunity to lead a staff with a predetermined direction and frequent monitoring toward attainment of the school goals. Transformational leaders are effective and develop a strong since of loyalty from their teachers with their traits of high visibility, consistent role modeling, and good decision making.

As Leithwood’s research reports, transformational leaders pursue three goals: helping staff collaborate, encouraging teachers’ improvement, and helping staff solve problems effectively. Such practices were complementary to the leader’s vision and the teachers’ talents and are essential to conduct a school’s daily operations (Leithwood, 1992). Principals may note that modeling what they expect from their teachers is much more valuable than any incentive or professional development training. This study found the transformational leader who utilized intellectual stimulation had a positive influence on their teachers. Teachers are watching and judging school leaders based on their actions. This is a survival skill learned by veteran teachers who have been through years of new and improved teaching programs. Many are waiting to see if the principal is passionate and pushes the newest and greatest program or if their leader is simply checking the box of accountability for the district supervisors. This study supports school
leaders who, as perceived by their teachers, set the precedent for action through intellectual stimulation.

In contrast, Hallinger & Heck (1998) found through a meta-analysis of 40 published research articles that the effects of transformational leadership on student learning gains created an innovative staff, but no increase in student achievement. The findings indicated transformational leadership decisions look different than transactional decisions and have an indirect impact on student achievement outcomes (Hallinger & Heck, 1998). The unrealistic time demands on over-worked teachers who accept the collective responsibilities of the transformational leadership may eventually lead to negative perceptions of administration and negative self-efficacy (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008). This study illustrated how utilizing the transactional leadership style contingent reward subscale, a leader may offset the negativity with active leadership and positive reinforcement.

Due to the demands of the No Child Left Behind Act for accountability, school culture is even more important due to the excessive administrative responsibilities that have led to more collective site-based management (Brooks, Giles Jacobson, Johnson, & Ylimaki, 2007). These leadership pressures to lead and reward staff for successes in an increased accountability era create a need to leverage competent staff resources on school improvement and program implementation. In addition, the demands of the NCLB Act only exacerbate the problem of increasing student achievement through leaders who lack the instructional knowledge of content and pedagogy to assist teachers and provide a
transactional leadership environment. These intensifying expectations of teacher-focused leadership create a daily balancing act that diverts the less instructional-driven transformational principal’s attention from the other areas of management within a school (Stewart, 2006).

In this study, contingent reward in improving and non-improving schools, as indicated by the highest mean in transactional leadership style, may represent proactive leadership behaviors that link rewards for positive teacher effort through negotiation. The transactional leader communicates specific standards of conformity while monitoring for deviance and rewarding compliance (Avolio, Bass, Berson, & Jung, 2003). It may be that teachers are reacting to more accountability with increased expectations of monitored and prescriptive instructional practices in school districts such as the one in this study are working to meet the state standards and work their way out of corrective action.

Another key point is this study was designed to define a leadership style of the principal through perception of their followers. As Bhindi, et al (2008) points out, it is the teacher’s perception of how they are valued and supported by their leadership that has an influence on their daily decisions to motivate students. The concurrence of teacher support within a school and at the school district level will set the stage for positive student achievement.

Increasing student achievement in every school is not an unreachable goal. By supporting and listening to those who impact the students directly, measures of achievement may improve. It is a system of organized chaos through which state and
district politicians direct the business of schools. Educators are notorious for being nurturers and people pleasers.

This study supports the need for quality school district and state support that trains principal’s to build their repertoire of leadership styles to successfully build school capacity that supports effective teaching practices and increases student achievement. Optimistically, in this era of accountability such state and district leadership will value the resources of quality school leaders who demonstrate a positive impact on student achievement through teacher-focused leadership decisions.

““The conduct of schools, based upon a new order of conception, is so much more difficult than is the management of schools which walk the beaten path.””

John Dewey
References


Avolio, B. J. (1999). *Full leadership development: Building the vital forces in*


Reshaping the principalship: Insights from transformational reform efforts (pp. 77-98). Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press, Inc.


Appendices
Appendix A: Sample MLQ Items and 5-Point Likert Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Once in a while</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Fairly often</th>
<th>Frequently, If not always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Inspirational Motivation**

MLQ Item Number 9. Talks optimistically about the future

**Idealized Influence (Behavior)**

MLQ Item Number 6. Talks about their most important values and beliefs

**Contingent Reward**

MLQ Item Number 1. Provides me with assistance in exchange for their efforts.

**Management-by-exception (Active)**

MLQ Item Number 27. Directs my attention toward failures to meet standards.

**Laissez-faire**

MLQ Item Number 7. Is absent when needed.

**Appendix B: Eliminated School Samples and Qualified School Samples**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of School</th>
<th>Number Eliminated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Combination schools</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter schools</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative Schools</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal with 3 or less than 3 years at school</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School with 3 or less of data</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (some replications with 2 or more identifiers)</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of School Eliminated</th>
<th>Total Number of Schools Eliminated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Elementary</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Middle School</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total High School</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Schools Eliminated</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of School</th>
<th>Total Qualified Schools</th>
<th>Sample needed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>4/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total schools</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Appendix C: Email to Teachers with Survey Monkey Link**
Dear Teachers:

You are asked to participate in a University of South Florida graduate research study on school leadership and student achievement. This study will attempt to correlate the teacher’s view of a principal’s leadership style and student achievement. Your school will be part of a large pool of elementary, middle and high schools. You or your principal will not be identifiable.

Permission to distribute these surveys has be given by the Polk County School Board and the USF International Research Board.

Here is the focus of the study:

- It is noted that principals do not have a direct impact on student achievement since they are not responsible for instructing students.
- A premise of this research is that the principal leadership behaviors influence teachers who are directly responsible for student achievement.
- Principals affect student achievement through teachers. Therefore, teacher perception of leadership behaviors and school performance on FCAT may identify effective leadership styles and behaviors that influence student achievement.

The survey takes about 20 minutes. Your participation in the survey is voluntary although I encourage you to participate. You are free to withdraw from the survey at any time.

All research data collected is stored securely and confidentially. This is a federal law. Participation is anonymous and there are no indicators on any part of the survey that will reveal your identity. The only persons reviewing the data are the researcher, and the regulatory entity: USF Institutional Review Board (IRB). Permission has been granted by the USF IRB #Pro00003178.
At the completion of the study, a link will be provided to you for access to the documentation to assure you of your anonymity. Click the link = surveymonkey

Thank you for your time and opinions!

Brenda K. Hardman

USF Graduate Student
Appendix D: Demographic Survey - *Professional Descriptions for 2010-2011*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>Please circle one item.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>20-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years as a teacher</td>
<td>0-3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years at current school</td>
<td>0-3 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E: Teacher Responses to Open-Response Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Level</th>
<th>Teacher Responses by Improvement Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Improving Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Modeling</td>
<td>No responses.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| School Culture   | *She encourages us to believe that we may be the only person that tells a child they are loved and that we may be the only motivation that they have. We have to remain a positive force in all children’s lives.  
*She is approachable and responds quickly to legitimate concern voice by staff member, parents, and students.  
*Is encouraging and positive most of the time.  
*She is encouraging and tells us often how proud she is of us. She supports us and helps us to make the right choices.  
* I believe my principal is effective at conveying the point and managing paperwork.  
My principal is not a driving or motivating force in creating camaraderie, academic excellence or community  
*He understands the diversity of our title 1 school and helps to make our school a family type atmosphere.  
* If you don't like to work here, then leave.....  
* Communicates goals, to students and teachers. Shares with teachers his expectations as well as what we can expect in the near future  
* Providing continuous Professional Development in the areas needed to better meet the needs of our students  
* Lots of training.  
*Give praises for great scores. |
| Leadership Decisions | *Our principal acts as if each of us is her best teacher. She greets the students as if each of them is her favorite pupil, but she doesn't fail to let them know if they've acted in ways that disappoint her. I wish she had more control over things like out of zone students who cause problems but can't be returned, ESE parents who demand ridiculous amounts of attention for themselves and for their children and threaten to sue, and a curriculum sequence and timeline that often doesn't meet the needs of specific classrooms. I am proud to work at my school and I wish my principal had more autonomy to meet the needs of our students, because she always has the school's best interest at heart.  
*Attention to students  
* Always on task and enthusiastic to direct attention to anything that will benefit the students in the long run. |
| --- | --- |
| Non-improving Schools | *She challenges me to think beyond the surface. She expects me to have depth of knowledge in my profession and will do what she has to do to get me that knowledge if I don't have it.  
*The principal has a somewhat positive attitude and is ever present.  
*Positive attitude, high expectations for staff and students, appreciation for all that we do.  
*He is always positive and respects each and every employee individually. |
| Role Modeling | *Has finally provided materials/training to help in math. Historically, math is the area in which schools have the hardest time making AYP yet reading gets the majority of the focus.  
*She's always positive and complimentary towards the faculty in emails and demeanor. She is even tempered seldom moody. She’s easy to talk to and always available to talk to. She’s always complimentary towards the students and supports teachers to the parents.  
*It's not the principle's responsibility to engage teachers to improve student |
performance. It is the teacher's role and personal responsibility.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Decisions</th>
<th>Improving Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Positive attitude, approachable, considerate, soft spoken, caring, respectful, high expectations</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Unfortunately, I see very little in the way of effective leadership from my principal. It appears that she is marking time until retirement, with frequent absences, coming late and leaving early. She has obvious favorites on the staff who is allowed to dictate what they will do and will not do, while others are chastised for insignificant issues that she misconstrues as personal attacks.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>I think that our current AP is someone who would transition very well into our principal. She is someone who will work endlessly to solve problems when they occur. She is also willing to go into the classroom and assist in teaching, such as she did before FCAT writing. She wants the best from everyone at all times. She is amazing with the kids; they respect her and are able to relate to her. She is someone who can listen to you without judgment and wants the best for the students, school, and fellow teachers.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Middle School</strong></td>
<td><strong>Improving Schools</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Modeling</td>
<td><em>Leadership by example. If it isn’t broke don't fix it.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>She is very positive and sets a good example. She has high standards and expectations. She leads by example.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Culture</td>
<td><em>She knows LOTS OF THE STUDENT’S NAME and she is always in the lunch room with the students. She has a principal’s panel.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>None that I know. It seems like her and the teachers are on opposite teams.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Decisions</td>
<td><em>Strong leadership skills e.g. &quot;we are in this together&quot;</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>My principal enjoys the integration of student and staff ideas and activities.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Focuses on looking at the data and effective teaching practices.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Very familiar with the curriculum and current best practices. Asks them of the teachers and obviously knows what improves student performance.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Her attentiveness to staff and student needs and her approachable manner when</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. The principal always follows district mandates: LFS, STEM. 2. The principal makes sure that PLC are regularly included in staff development days. However if teachers do not really get the time to collaborate, and reflect and know the importance - then all the training, meetings, are not accomplishing the final goal which is to improve student learning.

* Respect for the teachers and what they do.
* Teacher training and encouragement of students

### Non-improving Schools

| Role Modeling | *Is highly visible in the classroom. Encourages both students and teachers.  
*Accessible to Teachers and visits classrooms regularly.  
* He's nice (sometimes) to the students and picks his 'favorite teachers' to allow to do anything while he bullies his least favorite teachers. He promises things to the students and then pulls out the promises at the last minute because 1 or 2 kids act out. |

| School Culture | *Positive, friendly attitude. Seems to have the belief that we are all doing our job and are all capable of achieving student success.  
*He is an effective "coach" and is upbeat and positive.  
*His open door policy works wonders for me. He is understanding, level-headed, always has a positive outlook no matter the situation, puts the needs of our students and their educational needs above all the rest, respects his faculty, and works very hard to make sure he is on top of everything that goes on in every single classroom every day.  
*I see my principal at least 3-5 times per week coming into my classroom to see what is going on; on the other hand, I have one AP that has not been in my classroom at all and one that only came in to do my evaluation.  
*Positive attitude blunt, doesn't beat around the bushes direct but private if needed tracks student performance and encourages students to do their best. expects the most out of staff and students. Instills a sense of pride in everyone.  
*Encouragement compliments and helping with ideas |
| Leadership Decisions | *Encourages teachers and students to do their best and don’t get discouraged if things don’t go as well as you may hope. Learn what you can from the results and continue to work at your craft.  
*Our principal is fair and objective when dealing with issues and encourages staff and students to work to their potential. |
| High School | Improving Schools |
| Role Modeling | *Use of data, establishes relationships and builds community  
*He is an inspirational speaker and coach. He says all the right things and does his best to act on his beliefs and vision.  
*Talking on the intercom.  
*Our principal has a strong sense of purpose and inspires us to do the same.  
*Just talking on the INTERCOM! |
| School Culture | *Not much these days. Micro manages & plays favorites.  
*Positive Motivation  
*He is positive, but fails to follow through with issues of student absences and discipline issues. He is a capable leader if he is surrounded by strong deans to handle discipline issues quickly and consistently. On many occasions a dean will be called for and no one will show up. Also...when a certain student should be sent to an alternative school setting, he/she will be seen back on campus in a 3-5 day period. He is too lenient with discipline because he is of the belief that a student will change behaviors taught over a lifetime because they are advised and then lightly sentenced for sometimes a serious infraction. This is not a safe school for students or staff. I have been told on numerous occasions that many fights here happen because the administration failed to follow through when students would report a threatening incident.  
*Positive accountability!  
*Encouragement, higher thinking questions |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-improving Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Role Modeling</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| *Inspiring and effective.*  
  *She shows how she wants us to teach, she is an excellent role model.*  
  *Encouraging, Optimistic, Reliable, Responsible, Trusts, Understands, Relates.* |
| **School Culture**     |
| *She stays off my back, and lets me help to make the school a great learning community.*  
  *Encourages you to try innovative ideas in engaging students and showcasing your efforts.*  
  *Addresses all. Reminds all. Recognizes success, says thank you for some people, and says good-bye and good luck.* |
| **Leadership Decisions** |
| *Encouragement positive reinforcements*  
  *Honest, straight forward, serious, down to earth.*  
  *Encouragement reinforcement for desired performance.*  
  *Engages in strong, decisive leadership and attempts to engage students on the basis of their potential success.* |
About The Author

Brenda Kay Hardman received a Bachelor’s of Arts Degree in Communications from the University of Arizona in 1985. She received her second Bachelor of Arts Degree in Social Sciences from Florida Southern College in 1997. She received her Masters of Education in Education Leadership from the University of South Florida in 2003.

At the beginning of her educational career, Ms. Hardman taught middle and high school courses in both charter and public schools including all academic levels from students with special needs to students in advanced placement. Her administration career started at the high school level where she served as an academic dean prior to acquiring an assistant principal position in 2008. During her administrative capacity she has pioneered new teacher programs, initiated workforce academies, written and co-authored several academic grants, planned and delivered multiple parent-student-teacher informational academic programs in addition to serving on district improvement committees.