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Teacher Commitment to the Implementation of Ninth Grade Academies and Their Perceptions of School Leadership

Deborah Kindel

University of South Florida, djray@mail.usf.edu

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Teacher Commitment to the Implementation of Ninth Grade Academies and Their Perceptions of School Leadership

by

Deborah Kindel

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education Department of Educational Leadership & Policy Studies College of Education University of South Florida


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Keywords: School Reform, Organizational Change, Transformational Leadership, Transactional Leadership, School Accountability

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Dedication

This paper is dedicated to my children, Andrew, Breanne, and Matthew. You have been a constant source of inspiration to me. This endeavor represents one dream of mine, and you provided the light that guided my path to achieve it. You have made this journey a worthwhile endeavor.

To each of my children, may you envision possibilities and achieve your own dreams.

To my husband who was supportive of my commitment to this dream. You helped me maintain a sense of balance along the way.

Finally, this paper is dedicated to the memory of my parents who encouraged my dreams and were always so proud of my accomplishments.
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I also want to thank my fellow Tampa cohort members. I value the time that we shared and the encouragement you gave. In particular, to my study buddy, C.S.C., thank you for all of the support along this journey. I hope that each of you achieve your goals.

Finally, thank you to my family. Without your support, I could never have completed this journey. You never swayed in your belief that I could do this. Even during the times that this journey took my time away from family, you understood and cheered me on. I hope that I have lived up to your expectations because you have certainly lived up to mine.
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Abstract

This study examined the commitment of teachers to the implementation of ninth grade academies and their perceptions of school leadership during the reform process. Concern for successful high school completion prompted the redesign of ninth grade into a school-within-a-school format within a Florida school district. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to determine the type of commitment and form of leadership evident in this reform initiative along with the relationship between them. As a mindset for change, commitment was represented as affective, normative, and continuance. Leadership styles were delineated as transformational, transactional, and passive/avoidant along with related outcomes of effectiveness, satisfactions and extra effort. This study utilized an electronic survey with purposive sampling. Five questions concerning the type of commitment, the form of leadership and outcomes, and the correlation between commitment and leadership guided this research. Descriptive analysis of the responses from 105 teachers produced findings of both affective and normative commitment to change and evidence of transformational leadership as well as the contingent reward dimension of transactional leadership. Leadership outcomes of effectiveness, satisfaction, and extra effort were also expressed by teachers. The results validated the presence of affective and normative commitment of teachers responsible for reform efforts and indicated a relational influence between transformational and transactional leadership behaviors with these two forms of commitment to change. Current pressures
of accountability have channeled schools into models of continuous improvement. If schools are to enact lasting change, an understanding of commitment and leadership is needed to produce sustainable school reform.
Chapter One Introduction

Organization of Chapter One

Chapter One is organized into a background of the study, statement of the research problem, purpose of the study, methodology of the study, research questions, the conceptual framework, limitations of the study, the assumptions, definition of key terms, and concludes with a summary of the chapter and an overview of the chapters that follow.

Background of the Study. Since the 1960’s, organizational change has been a recurring area of interest in regard to the effect on organizational outcomes (Smylie & Evans, 2006). Fueling this interest has been different forces including public demands for school accountability, economic crises, social change, and global expansion (Murphy & Beck, 1994). Accountability in the form of the No Child Left Behind (2001) legislation provides a legal interest in the performance of schools while internal conceptions of accountability give rise to the responsibilities that school educators define for themselves in terms of the students that they serve. Subsequently, internal and external forms of accountability place pressure upon schools to strive for greater student success (Abelmann, Elmore, Even, Kenyon, & Marshall, 1999; Elmore, 2004; Englert, Fries, Goodwin, Martin-Glenn, and Michael, 2004; No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, sec.1001).

For high schools, the restructuring of large comprehensive organizations into smaller school-within-a-school units has attracted interest to improve the success of
students at the secondary level (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p. 643; Lachat, 2001; Lee & Burkam, 2003; USDOE, 2001). This conversion of high schools into smaller school designs presents a considerable difference in the work of secondary school educators. To accomplish such significant change, the literature supported both school leadership and individual commitment as critical elements of successful change (Fedor, Caldwell, & Herold, 2006; Geijsel, Sleegers, Leithwood, & Jantzi, 2003; Hallinger, 2003; Herold, Fedor, Caldwell, & Liu, 2008; Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006a; Leithwood, & Jantzi, 2006b). Consequently, the mutual relationship of these two elements contributes to the framework for strategic change in schools.

The complexity of change in schools. Effecting strategic change in schools necessitates the understanding that change is not an event but is a multivariate and dynamic process (Fullan, 2007; Hall & Hord, 2006). At any stage of the process, changes to the work of individuals within the school may prompt concerns on the part of those touched by areas of change. Alterations to the instructional norms that typify teachers’ daily work or concern for the impact of change on students’ learning can spark questions in some teachers’ minds regarding calls for new initiatives (Hall & Hord, 2001). Thus, commitment to the strategic implementation of new practices may be derailed by the individuals on the frontline of reform efforts.

Bolman and Deal (2003) underscored the importance of the human resources aspect of the organization in their four frame analysis of leadership. Operating from a human resource frame, school leaders can develop a critical mass for achieving change goals. Gaining the commitment and buy-in of teachers is integral to school reform. In the absence of attention to individuals’ roles in change, new initiatives may fail to acquire
the glue that binds the efforts of both school leaders and teachers in the work for school reform.

**The importance of reform for ninth grade.** Reform of the modern high school has drawn attention in the literature in regard to its size and comprehensive nature. Reduction of the larger organization into smaller units has been proposed by some as an antidote to the complexity of the larger school structure (, Lachat, 2001; Owen, Cooper, & Brown, 2002; USDOE, 2001). Baker, Derrer, Davis, Dinklage-Travis, Linder, & Nicholson (2001, p. 407) posited that “schools are not neutral stages upon which students enact academic behavior. They are active, dynamic settings that configure and constrain opportunities for student success.” Evidence of improved academic and social outcomes in smaller schools reaffirmed the importance of paring down the large high school setting (Baker et al., 2001; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Lachat, 2001; Lee & Burkam, 2003; USDOE, 2001). One prominent suggestion in the literature pertained to the redesign of ninth grade into a separate academy (Ilg & Massucci, 2003; Oxley, 2005; Patterson, Beltyukova, Berman, & Francis, 2007). Essential to creating significant change in the structure and practice of schools is the influence of the leadership directing those reform developments (Calabrese, 2002).

**The effect of leadership in reform.** Schoen and Fusarelli (2008) asserted that “today’s school leaders are faced with multiple calls for change, improvement, and reform” (p.1). Within the context of change, the literature emphasized the importance of the moral and transformational domains of leadership (Fullan, 2001; Geijsel et al., 2003; Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006a; Leithwood, & Jantzi, 2006b). According to Fullan (2001), the moral purpose of school leaders should be directed toward developing
supportive school conditions for both staff and students. In concert with moral intentions, Leithwood and Jantzi’s (2006b) conception of transformational leadership depicts leaders who inspire teachers to a new vision of schooling, attend to individual needs of teachers in this effort, and provide intellectual stimulation for learning new methods. Contrasting the largely idealist perspective of transformational leaders, the transactional form of leadership is more attuned to maximizing individual task performance. Associated rewards or sanctions attached to this performance contribute to the level of motivation to comply with work expectations (Bass, 1997). While these forms of leadership differ in their orientation to followers, each may emerge in relation to the commitment of individual efforts for change.

The effect of teacher commitment in reform. Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) described commitment to change as a personal mindset regarding actions that are directed toward successful implementation of new initiatives. However, not all individuals within an organization will exhibit the same type of commitment to the implementation of change. These researchers differentiated commitment in three ways: continuance commitment, normative commitment, and affective commitment. Individuals that comply with change from a stance of continuance commitment engage in new initiatives from the fear that failure to do so will bring reprisals. Normative commitment presents a sense of professional obligation for change while affective commitment embraces the values and purpose of reform initiatives. Continuance commitment may suffice for nominal compliance with change directives whereas normative commitment as well as affective commitment raises the level of conscientious engagement in change. Moreover, the latter form was considered the most advantageous in advancing the ideals of
organizational change. In examining the interactive nature of commitment and leadership, Leithwood, Jantzi, and Fernandez (1994) proposed that commitment to change may be more prone to the influence of leadership than other forms of commitment.

**Statement of the Research Problem**

This study addressed school leadership styles and teacher commitment to change as perceived by teachers during the implementation of ninth grade as a school-within-a-school. The work of school leaders is multidimensional and fraught with internal and external pressures for improving the performance of all students. External accountability under the federal legislation of NCLB requires that schools focus on the achievement of all students. Each year, schools are evaluated according to their annual yearly progress (AYP) in reading and math at each grade level from third through tenth as well as for writing and science in fourth, eighth, and tenth grades. High schools must also contend with a federal requirement for annual improvements in their graduation rates. Calculation of these rates is based upon the initial entry into high school with added emphasis by the state on the timely completion of low performing ninth grade students. As these requirements filter down to the local level, individual school structures and practices may become subject to review for their effectiveness in achieving requisite standards.

Under these prevailing circumstances for improvement, a central Florida school district initiated the implementation of a school-within-a-school design for ninth grade as a primary strategy to improve the achievement outcomes of high school students. Fourteen high schools redesigned their freshman level into the school-within-a-school
format which was referred to as a ninth grade or freshman academy. Even though some high schools in the district initiated ninth grade academies in anticipation of a district policy, the school year 2009-2010 was established for district-wide implementation.

Although externally defined expectations for change may follow down a hierarchal path from leaders to teachers, an internal commitment to these new processes may not develop accordingly. An educational environment that places considerable emphasis on continuous improvement compels a closer attention to the place that educators hold in this process. While leadership has considerable influence on the plight of change, an equally important condition arises through the commitment of teachers to support new initiatives (Conner, 1992; Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002; Klein & Sorra, 1996). Hence, an examination of leadership and teacher commitment within the context of school reform offers a broader picture of the relational positions of educators responsible for successful change.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to describe teachers’ commitment to change and to determine perceptions of school leadership style in connection with a proffered model of transformational leadership during the implementation of ninth grade reform. In the development of school change a concern exists for the type of leadership and the teacher commitment that may be necessary for the success of reform efforts. Research on transformational leadership and follower’s commitment to change in the United States has been largely examined in non-educational settings while school-based studies have been primarily conducted outside the United States. In both areas of research, a cross-section of multiple types of reform was investigated. In contrast, this study delineated
high school reform into one change initiative across multiple school sites within the same school district.

School leadership has been depicted as a prominent force in the success of school reform efforts. White-Smith and White (2009) encouraged researchers to “continue examining the patterns of complexity with regards to school change and leadership” (p. 278). Advancing these investigations will assist practitioners in developing effective approaches to making change in schools. In a similar vein, the commitment of teachers to new initiatives has been purported to be a necessary condition for successful implementation (Fedor et al., 2006; Herold et al., 2008; Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002; Zimmerman, 2006).

Given the pressures of accountability in high schools, change has become a familiar refrain written across the pages of many high school’s improvement plans. Through the prevailing responsibility for leaving no child behind, issues of accountability for the achievement of all students may surface as principal targets of change. This study served to add to the foundation of knowledge regarding how leadership and teacher commitment to change unfold and the relationship between them. Given the significance of leaders and teachers in school reform, a deeper understanding of their actions and commitment to undertaking new initiatives may assist in understanding the process of successful school change.

Methodology of the Study

This study was designed to describe and explain school leadership style and teacher commitment to change as perceived by teachers during the implementation of a school-within-a-school in the form of ninth grade academies. Ninth grade teachers in
fourteen high schools in a Florida school district comprised a purposive sample for this research data. A web based survey was provided to teachers in the district who are currently employed or have previously taught in a ninth grade academy in the district.

Participating ninth grade teachers were asked to indicate their commitment to academy implementation and provide perceptions of the school leadership at the helm of those schools experiencing this reform. Leadership characteristics as well as outcomes pertaining to leadership effectiveness, employee satisfaction and extra effort were explored as components of the study. The data analysis relied upon the tools of both descriptive and correlational research designs. These two methods enabled the researcher to compile a detailed numerical and graphical summary of the survey data and to examine the association between them in order to provide a richer description of leadership and commitment during school reform.

**Research Questions**

In accordance with the purpose of the study and statement of the research problem, the following questions guided this study.

1. How do teachers perceive themselves in terms of affective, continuance, or normative types of commitment to change in the implementation of ninth grade as a school-within-a-school?

2. What are teachers’ perceptions of the school leadership style in the implementation of ninth grade as a school-within-a-school?

3. What is the correlation between commitment to change and school leadership styles in the implementation of ninth grade as a school-within-a-school?
4. What is the correlation between commitment to change and subscales of school leadership styles in the implementation of ninth grade as a school-within-a-school?

5. To what extent are the leadership outcomes of satisfaction, effectiveness, and extra effort evidenced by teachers in the implementation of ninth grade as a school-within-a-school?

Conceptual Framework

Organizational change theory was employed as the conceptual foundation in this examination of school leadership and teacher commitment during the implementation of ninth grade reform. Hall and Hord (2006) purported change to be a complex and interactive process. To support this conceptualization of change, Hall and Hord (1987) drew upon a Concerns-Based Adoption Model of change which acknowledged the individual participant as integral to the interactions guiding successful change initiatives. This model was constructed around three primary elements, the change facilitator, a resource system, and innovation users, to form an interrelated system for change. With two components of the system devoted to individual contributions to change, this model assigned considerable significance to the human side of reform efforts.

In setting forth a number of principles to consider in the work for change, Hall and Hord (2006) contended that “an organization does not change until the individuals within it change” (p. 7) and “administrator leadership is essential to long-term change success” (p.10). As the pivotal element in this model, the change leader holds responsibility for utilizing appropriate resources for change initiatives as well as mobilizing innovation users to engage in new initiatives. For change to be successful, the
perceptions of teachers must be understood by themselves and by leaders (Hall & Hord, 1987, p. 8). Given that those in leadership positions typically assume a pivotal role in the commencement of new initiatives, school leaders must be in tune with teachers’ mindset regarding change. This study attended to the human framework of change without regard to the material resource element. Thus, the perceived leadership style and subsequent connection to teachers’ commitment to a school reform effort were explored through the lens of change theory to gain a fuller understanding of the process.

The role of leadership has been noted as critical to successful school change (Yu, Leithwood, & Jantzi, 2002). Bass (1997) noted that optimal leaders exhibit both transactional and transformational dimensions in their actions. Bass (1997) further contended that the transactional leader maintains organizational functions while the transformational leader reconfigures the structure of the organization. Leithwood and colleagues expounded on this conception of leadership by describing four dimensions of transformational leadership as setting direction, developing people, redesigning the organization, and employing an aggregate of managerial functions (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006a, p. 181). Leadership is thus conceptualized as a set of practices and behaviors. Such a framework provides a filter to analyze and interpret leadership actions. Brown and Lord (2001) stated that leadership is defined by “the behaviors, traits, and characteristics of leaders as they are interpreted by observers” (p. 182). Consequently, the impact of leadership on organizational change lies in the interpretation and perception of those who have assumed positions of followers in this endeavor.

In conjunction with school leadership, teachers are immersed in the daily work of schools with change typically directed toward redefining aspects of this work.
Perceptions of change may impose conflicts for teachers in their professional pedagogies, personal goals, or established norms (Datnow & Castellano, 2000). One element for consideration in the endeavors for improvement is the commitment that teachers direct toward school reform goals. Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) asserted that teacher commitment ensues through one of three avenues: the desire to support initiatives due to the potential benefits of that change for the school (affective); a feeling of obligation to support the change (normative); or a fear of sanctions for failing to put forth effort for the change (continuance). While the literature suggested that the first avenue may produce greater efforts on the part of followers and potentially a higher level of successful implementation, there is limited research to support this connection.

Limitations and Delimitation of the Study

Limitations. This study relied upon the perceptions of teachers for research data on leadership behaviors. However, the self-perceptions of school leaders were not incorporated into the study to correlate with teacher responses. Although different levels of leadership may exist within districts and schools, this study’s focus was limited to school principals.

The conceptualization of commitment to change was not widely examined in the literature. In particular, there were few studies on teachers’ commitment to change. This condition served to limit the availability of background research. In addition, the reported data from this research was restricted by the self-reporting format that was used to identify the level of teacher commitment and perceived school leadership style.

Delimitations. Leadership was represented in the literature as a multi-dimensional position. Even though different views of school leadership could have been
considered, the transformational, transactional and passive avoidant forms of leadership formed the parameters of this investigation. While ninth grade teachers may have experiences with other types of school change, the scope of this study was confined to ninth grade academy implementation. The boundaries of this study were further confined to ninth grade academies within a single school district. The presence of potential influences on teacher commitment other than leadership dimensions were considered to be outside the consideration of this study.

Assumptions of the Study

In this study, the following were assumed.

1. The opinions expressed were those given by the participants.
2. The participants responded to the survey items honestly and to the best of their ability.

Definition of Key Terms

The purpose of this study was to describe and explain school leadership style and teachers’ commitment to change as perceived by selected ninth grade teachers during the implementation of a school-within-a-school for ninth grade. In providing clarity to the purpose of this research, the necessity emerged to define the terms used throughout this study.

Comprehensive High School: A type of high school that is departmentalized with a differentiated curriculum.

External Accountability: External accountability refers to policy or mandates for actions that emanate from sources outside the local school.
**Freshman or Ninth Grade Academy:** A school-within-a-school format that serves to separate the ninth grade level in the high school.

**Internal Accountability:** Internal accountability represents a set of common values and expectations within the local school as to what is important in the education of students.

**School Leader:** The term refers to the principal or assistant principals in a school.

**School-within-a-School:** A school design which results in students being assigned to small learning communities within the school to reduce the size of schools.

**Summary of the Introduction**

A national interest in school accountability has brought the evaluation of schools under public scrutiny. The academic and social issues of ninth grade students have been described in the literature as a particular concern for high schools. One proposed remedy to these concerns has been the redesign of ninth grade into a school-within-a-school format. The process of reform is complex and challenging and places demands upon both school leaders and teachers. Moral and transformational orientations were presented in the literature as important in guiding the reform of schools. Complementary to the endeavors of leadership for successful change is the commitment of teachers to engage in prospective reform efforts. This study was directed toward investigating leadership style and teacher commitment to change and the relationship that may exist between the two during the reform of ninth grade.

**Organization of the Study**

This study of school leadership and teacher commitment to change is organized into five chapters. Chapter One introduces the study and presents the problem and
research questions. Chapter Two presents the relevant literature regarding the evolving role of school leader, dimensions of leadership in school reform, relevant commitment to school reform, a school-within-a-school reform model, and issues of sustaining reform implementation. Chapter Three describes the methods used to investigate leadership and teacher commitment to the change. Chapter Four presents the results and the analysis of the data. Chapter Five provides a summary of findings, a discussion, limitations, and implications for practitioners and for future research in leadership and teacher commitment to school improvement efforts.
Chapter Two Literature Review

Organization of Chapter Two

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature on leadership and teacher commitment to change within the mediating boundaries of accountability and school reform. The ensuing review was guided by the following comprehensive question: What type of school leadership and level of teacher commitment to change are important for ninth grade reform? This review was developed around the conceptual framework of organizational change theory. While the spark for change may emerge from internal or external sources, organizational change is reflective of individual commitment. Espoused as a process rather than a singular event, organizational change relies upon the roles and behaviors of individuals who participate in change efforts.

In schools, both school leaders and teachers occupy significant positions in navigating through the process of change. Substantial attention has been given to the transformational aspects of leadership including setting direction, developing people, and redesigning the organization. In complement to leadership, the level of commitment that teachers direct toward change may influence their underlying response to reform efforts such as redefining the large nature of high school. Hence, embracing change constitutes a professional responsibility for educators striving to improve the outcomes of schools.
Rationale for School Change

Under the daily demands of managing schools, leaders are often called upon to formulate internal mechanisms for change. Forces for change operate through internal and external expectations for the performance of students. External accountability in the form of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) places political and monetary pressure on schools to adhere to a common set of regulatory standards. In contrast to a uniform set of federal accountability requirements, internal accountability systems operate through the local school conceptions of responsibility for student success. At the secondary level, ninth grade has been portrayed as a critical point of influence on students’ success and as a target of potential high school reform.

Although the focus of change is on school improvement, a troubling problem arises when superficial modifications are made in accordance with enacted policies without authentic changes to the underlying core processes of schools (Datnow & Stringfield, 2000). In reality, schools that undergo multiple reform initiatives may experience little inward change in their assumptions and responsibilities concerning student performance. Even though prevailing expectations exist for the high achievement of all students, the conventional ways of schools may not serve all children equally thus contributing to the impetus for change in traditional practices (Tye, 2000). Multiple measures of high school success, including student performance on state assessments, high school graduation, and postsecondary readiness, merge into a complex set of responsibilities for secondary school educators.

In accordance with demands for improving the performance of students, the importance of school leadership is well documented in the literature (Dantley, 2003;
Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006a; Starratt 1991). The accountability for improving the performance of secondary school students and the corresponding graduation rates has contributed to a trend for high school reform. Whether engaged in small or large-scale reform, school leadership should be knowledgeable about the process of change and capable of gaining commitment from others for new initiatives (Datnow & Stringfield, 2000). A review of the literature on innovation revealed the importance of the cyclical nature of the process and the role of leadership (Fullan, 2007; Goodson, 2001; Hall & Hord, 2001; Hord, 1987).

In conjunction with leadership’s competence for change, successful implementation is also contingent upon the commitment of followers for alternative practices (Herscovitch & Myer, 2002). Although organizational commitment occupies one aspect of consideration for successful change, a different view was explored to identify the supportive attitude specific to the conditions of change. Often noted as a “loosely coupled” system, the structure of conventional schools reflects a measure of latitude in how teachers carry out the work in their classrooms. Changing this work becomes problematic without the commitment of teachers to embrace new ways of doing things.

For secondary schools, the literature expressed considerable support for changing the comprehensive nature of high schools (Lachat, 2001; Lee & Ready, 2007; Owen et al., 2002; USDOE, 2001). Thus, the shopping mall concept of high school may no longer be adequate for the accountability demands of improving the performance of all students. Considerable emphasis was placed upon ninth grade as a critical point for students’ success in high school. A school-within-a-school innovation in the form of ninth grade
academies has received considerable attention for the potential of improving both the academic and social aspects of schooling for secondary students. Considering the related issues of underachievement and dropping out of high school, the reconstruction of ninth grade holds a prominent position in high school reform (Fulk, 2003; Neild, Stoner-Eby, & Furstenberg, 2008; Patterson, Beltyukova et al., 2007). At the forefront of redefining the conventional high school design is the multifaceted position of school leader who must step into the role of director of change.

The Evolving Role of School Leadership

The conception of school leadership is not easily defined. The work of school leaders is generally understood to be contextually based and embedded within social relationships (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005). Leithwood and Riehl (2005) purported that school leadership can be summarized as “the work of mobilizing and influencing others to articulate and achieve the school’s shared intentions and goals” (p. 14). Generally, the role of school leader has been grounded in the basic practices of building vision and defining directions, developing personnel, creating school culture, and managing instructional practices (Day, 2007). However, if the work of school leaders is coupled to improving schools, then directing change emerges as a central theme in the routine work of school leadership (Calabrese, 2002; Elmore, 2004; Foster, 2005; Fullan, 1993). Razik and Swanson (2001) contended that “leadership is not definitive but elusive and constantly changing, reflecting an ever-changing society and world” (Razik & Swanson, 2001, p. 61). Subsequently, the role of school leader has continued to evolve as the complexity of the educational terrain has changed. An increasingly multifarious environment requires that school leaders think beyond simple improvements to the
existing school structure but “to re-conceptualize it and change it in some significant ways” (White-Smith & White, 2009, p. 277).

In pursuit of such change, school leaders are often faced with multiple demands for accountability from political, professional, and market arenas. At the forefront of the pressures for accountability is the NCLB legislation of 2001 that provides formal oversight of the annual performance of all students. As a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), this federal legislation has established a prescribed set of standards and guidelines for the accountability of states and districts. Schools and, subsequently, school leaders have been charged with the responsibility of documenting their students’ progress in achieving federal proficiency standards as set forth by NCLB requirements. The ensuing environment places pressure upon school leaders for producing expected student outcomes.

The mission of educating all students to a prescribed set of federal standards requires that school leaders build capacity for collective change. In fulfilling a transformational role, leaders concentrate on the collective efforts of the school community (Marks & Printy, 2003). Bolman and Deal (2003) concurred with the importance of a cohesive internal commitment. “At a given moment, an organization’s structure represents its effort to align internal processes with the external environment, while simultaneously resolving an enduring set of organizational dilemmas….“(p. 92). Conflict with internal coherence and organizational expectations may occur in large comprehensive high schools as suggested by Debray, Parson, and Avila (2003). While personal attitudes may color members’ stances regarding organizational issues, school
leaders acknowledge differences and work to bridge the gap between individual concerns and the collective good of the organization (Calabrese, 2002).

Abelmann et al. (1999) described the effect of personal attitudes in spanning the divide between external and internal expectations of schools.

External accountability systems assume a world in which all schools are held to the same expectations for student performance. The world that school administrators and teachers see, however, is bounded by their particular settings, by their own conceptions of who they are, who they serve, what they expect of students, and what they think of as good teaching and learning (p. 1).

In the absence of a cohesive internal structure, accountability for student learning becomes an aggregate of individual judgments (Abelmann, et al., 1999). In schools that develop a mutual set of expectations, strong leadership exists with a clearly defined vision of learning for all students and teachers engaged together in developing school strategies to support this vision (Abelmann et al., 1999).

For organizational change, Kochan, Bredeson, and Riehl (2002) proposed that “the principal must become a transformative leader who reflects upon and engages in personal growth and development and facilitates the development of the faculty and staff” (p. 299). Through becoming a model learner, the principal extends value to individual change and personal growth. In so doing, leaders and other school members mutually construct new understandings and meanings. As noted by Leithwood (2007), educational leaders must be open minded to new ways and ideas and willing to engage with staff in considering new possibilities.
Rather than singular efforts, the interdependence of school leaders and teachers is a key factor in developing enduring organizational change (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Marks & Printy, 2003; Stein & Spillane, 2005). In leading change, contemporary leaders cannot rely on a hierarchal form of leadership. School leaders must function less as a supervisor of teacher competence and more as a facilitator of teacher development. Subsequently, a collaborative relationship develops that is built upon expertise and knowledge rather than formal position. A sense of collective responsibility and a shared focus on improvement contributes to teacher commitment, openness to innovation, and professional involvement (Stein & Spillane, 2005).

As stated by Calabrese (2002), “twenty-first century leaders, to survive and thrive, need to understand change and the change process to further the aims of the organization” (p. 22). Change unfolds in an organization as a process of interactional events (Fullan, 2007; Goodson, 2001; Hall & Hord, 2001; Hord, 1987). As developed by Hord (1987), the process of change is dependent upon the concerns and level of implementation of users. As a non-linear process, change is represented by six interactional phases or sub-processes: assessment of organizational needs; exploring options for new innovations; adoption of innovations; initiation of innovation use; implementation of innovations into regular practice; and institutionalization into the systemic structure of the organization (Hord, 1987). Even though well established in the literature as a standard for guiding change, Hord’s process of change was criticized as too broad and deficient in providing specific actions for change facilitators to negotiate difficulties in the implementation phase (Anderson, 1997). Although in agreement with the conceptual foundation of Hord’s model, Fullan (2007) streamlined the process into a three component model of
initiation, implementation, and institutionalization with each of Hord’s beginning elements subsumed under initiation.

Both Hord and Fullan’s models acknowledged the centrality of leadership in facilitating the pathway for school reform. Navigation through this process requires a responsive leader who assesses, intervenes, and monitors the progress of an innovation within the organization (Hall & Hord, 1987, p.16; Hall & Hord, 2001). Hall and Hord (2001) stated that “there are varied approaches to leadership, and different people lead in different ways. Further, there are patterns and similarities among those leaders who do make a difference and among those who do not make a difference”(p. 127). Leaders who endeavor to make a difference in their schools often take on the important role of change facilitator.

Hall and Hord (2001) offered three approaches for the facilitator role. In the role of initiator of change, the school leader has a clearly defined vision of the school and high expectations for all aspects of the school. In accordance with the notion of the transformational leader, initiators place an emphasis on channeling others toward a different conception of school practice. Operating in the role of manager of change, a leader focuses on efficiency and proceeds cautiously with any new changes. The school leader who acts as a responder to change refrains from assuming the lead for change and relies on others for guidance and advice concerning new practices. While each change facilitator style provides a frame of reference for leadership behaviors, not all leaders will fit neatly into a single category and each may not engender commitment to change from others in the same manner (Hall & Hord, 2001). As leaders for change, facilitators set direction and create the spark for change (Hall & Hord, 2001; Hord, Stiegelbauer, & Hall,
Facilitation of change is not restricted to those in formal leadership positions but may be distributed to others within the school organization.

From the results of a Principal Teacher Interaction (PTI) Study conducted by the Development Center for Teacher Education at the University of Texas at Austin, Hord et al. (1984) reported on the collaborative nature of change. The study focused on the effect of leadership distributed among nine principals and nine support staff members in regards to the number of interactions with teachers during reform implementation. In reviewing the extent of collaborative interactions, results revealed that while the principal provided supporting structures for change, those who occupied shared roles of change facilitator also had significant influence in the change process (Hord et al., 1984). While progress monitoring and professional development activities were typically provided by the principal, individualized interactions at the classroom level were more prevalent for those sharing leadership activities. However, the merit of these findings was limited by the self-reporting format of data collection and the absence of descriptive or demographic information for participating schools or individuals.

In summary, the current distinction of being organizations of continuous improvement places school leaders in the position of change leaders. Contentions arising through accountability policies are not relegated to the back burner of concerns, but are viable issues that form the parameters for innovation. For contemporary models of school leadership, the role for change is woven throughout the complex framework of leadership. School leaders are charged with building a collective vision, developing individuals, and creating a culture for change.
While responsibility for improving schools may rest largely with the position of school leader, teachers hold equally important positions in contributing to change (Calabrese, 2002; Fullan, 2001). In building a cohesive attitude toward change, school leaders must promote an environment conducive to shared responsibility for school reform. Consequently, expectations for change serve to significantly influence the behaviors and responsibilities assumed by those leaders at the helm of schools engaged in reform efforts.

**Leadership in School Reform**

In light of the generally accepted notion that leadership is important for effective organizational performance, a logical assumption follows that leadership is also a critical component for successful change. While the success of innovation depends greatly on the implementers, the influence of leadership is critical for success (Yu et al., 2002). In the literature, the transformational dimension of leadership has been reported to be instrumental in navigating the process of change (Geijsel et al., 2003; Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006b).

**Transformational leadership.** During the past two decades, successful school reform has been largely linked to the effects of transformational leadership (Geijsel et al., 2003; Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006a; 2006b). This leadership form has been dubbed as a “powerful stimulant for improvement” (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinback, 1999, p. 37). Building upon the earlier model of leadership, Leithwood and Jantzi characterized transformational leadership under three broad categories that are further defined by nine components (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006b, p. 205).

- Setting Directions
• Building a school vision
  o Defining specific goals and priorities
  o Establishing high expectations

• Developing People
  o Promoting intellectual stimulation
  o Providing individualized support
  o Modeling appropriate practices and values

• Redesigning the Organization
  o Creating a collaborative school culture
  o Fostering participative decision-making
  o Developing community relationships

These components provide multiple dimensions that serve to transform followers to greater attainment of organizational goals. The transformative dimension of leadership has a high regard for emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term organizational development. Such leaders inspire others toward the collective good (Northouse, 2010).

Northouse (2010) described transformational leadership as a value-added approach in the development of organizational members. While the end goals of change may represent the expected outcomes of employee efforts, transformational leaders invest in and develop others to extend performance beyond the expected results. The characteristics of leaders who transform others have been delineated into four subsets of attributes and behaviors (Avolio & Bass, 2004; Northouse, 2010; Williams-Boyd, 2002). 

*Idealized Influence* denotes visionary leaders who have high moral and ethical standards and are respected and trusted by followers. *Inspirational Motivation* describes leaders
who inspire others to a shared vision and to achieve high expectations for the common good of the organization. *Intellectual Stimulation* characterizes leaders who promote creative and innovative thinking in others. *Individualized Consideration* represents leaders’ consideration of members’ personal needs and provision for a supportive organizational environment (Northouse, 2010). These aspects of transformational leaders have been linked to outcomes of greater job satisfaction, effectiveness, and effort in employees’ work performance (Avolio & Bass, 2004).

Leithwood and Jantzi (2006a) investigated the influence of transformational leadership on teachers and their practice during a period of literacy and numeracy initiatives in English. Two surveys, one for literacy and one for numeracy, were used to acquire information from 2,290 teachers in 514 primary schools. The reliabilities for each survey were reported using Cronbach’s alpha as 0.90 and 0.88 respectively.

An analysis of the results produced correlation coefficients that indicated a significant relationship for transformational leadership and teacher work setting ($r=0.71$, $p<0.01$) and for transformational leadership and motivation ($r=0.56$, $p<0.01$). A smaller effect was found for teacher capacity ($r=0.41$, $p<0.01$) and only a modest effect was reported for classroom practice ($r=0.17$, $p<0.01$). The results were quite similar for both the literacy and numeracy programs.

Herold et al. (2008) expanded the investigation of the interactive relationship of transformational leadership and employee behavior to include change leadership. Although specific change behaviors of leaders have been explored in prior research, there has been a limited focus on linking change to the broader construct of leadership style. Data for the study was derived from 343 employees from a cross-section of 30
organizations in the southeastern United States. Two separate surveys were administered to employees producing 176 Personal Change Surveys and 167 Organizational Change Surveys. Scale reliability was adequate for both surveys with a Cronbach’s alpha range of 0.83 to 0.94.

The study’s findings did not reveal any significant correlation between transformational and change leadership. However, the results did show that transformational leadership, rather than change leadership behaviors, and commitment to change, were both significantly and positively related, thus lending support for transformational leadership in an environment of change (Herold et al., 2008). Generalizations were improved by the cross-sectional representation from different corporations and the use of alternate surveys to reduce the common methods variance for leadership behaviors. However, the use of multiple change scenarios decreased the capacity of this study to gauge the strength of transformational characteristics.

Although the aforementioned studies underscored the positive benefits of transformational leadership, Yukl (1999) cautioned that transformational leadership may be insufficient for all aspects of organizational effectiveness. In conjunction with the prominent position that transformational leadership occupies in the literature, a different perspective connects both transformational and transactional leadership as working in concert with each other (Leithwood et al., 1999; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006a; Oke, Munshi, Walumbwa, 2009). Rather than a single leadership domain, change facilitation may be served through multiple forms. “Although transformational and transactional leadership are distinct leadership styles, they should be seen as complementary rather than polar opposites” (Oke et al., 2009, p. 66). Each form operates through
fundamentally different ways. Transactional leadership may well serve organizations that follow predictable patterns of operation whereas transformational leadership may be better suited to the instability of changing organizational norms (Oke et al., 2009).

While transactional leaders negotiate commitment primarily through rewards and sanctions, transformational leadership is driven by a common system of values and expectations. Leadership for change has been predominately linked to transformational behaviors with limited attention given to a connection between leadership style and the innovation process (Oke et al., 2009). However, in a study of innovative business leaders, Oke et al. (2009) found that transactional leaders advance innovation through identifying new standards and prescribing the necessary organizational performances to attain them. Innovations may arise in a top-down or bottom-up fashion within an organization. In either instance, the innovation process requires that individuals accept the risk to disrupt the status quo and operate outside the boundaries of conformity. Transformational leaders inspire and empower members to take such risks for initiating change. These leaders guide new behaviors and actions through a moral concern for doing what is right for the school community.

**Transformational leadership and moral purpose.** Fullan (2001) posited that pursuit of different ideas and pathways of action should be guided by moral purpose. “Moral purpose means acting with the intention of making a positive difference in the lives of employees, customers, and society as a whole” (Fullan, 2001, p. 3). A moral intent acts to bind the actions of all organizational members as a collective commitment to a path of change. Rather than simple compliance, shared commitment acts to stimulate, inspire, and motivate individuals (Fullan, 2001, p. 118).
Hand-in-hand with moral purpose, the ethical behavior of school leaders emerged as important for school change (Dantley, 2003; Starratt, 1991). Starratt (1991) expressed that ethical behavior emanates from concerns of justice, critique, and care. Moral leaders are inclined to critique the standard norms of operations and challenge the status quo. A sense of justice drives leaders to affirm the fairness and equality in school processes and practices. The ethic of care guides leaders in fostering relationships that are based upon trust and respect. “Moral purpose sets the context; it calls for people to aspire to greater accomplishments” (Fullan, 2001, p. 117). In essence, the ethical and moral intentions of leaders who champion new ideas are instrumental to gaining the commitment of others to the work for change.

Murphy (2006) expressed a similar concern for the moral and ethical nature of change. He contended that leadership for change should be ethically anchored and environmentally sensitive. Educational environments that support a market based governance of schools maintain the necessity of innovation, risk taking, and proactive orientation in serving the needs of students. Given the notion of continual change in schools, processes and practices open up as avenues for inquiry and critical analysis. Consequently, the aggregated response of community members can produce multiple voices for what is right and fair. In leading for change, school leaders arouse others’ sense of moral purpose for a commitment toward improving their schools. For a strong internal school structure, Elmore (2004) envisioned a proactive leader who fosters a sense of collective responsibility through mutual decisions about improving the condition of schools.
**Transactional leadership.** In contrast to the focus on a collaborative relationship among leaders and followers, the transactional leadership domain establishes leaders’ control through reciprocal actions between leaders and followers (Northouse, 2010; Williams-Boyd, 2002; Bass, 1990). The focus of transactional leaders is on the accomplishment of assigned tasks and mechanisms of reward for high employee performance (Bass, 1990). *Contingent Reward* and *Management by Exception* are significant components of transactional leadership (Avolio & Bass, 2004). These elements of leadership are devoted to setting standards for measuring performance and prescribing actions in response to the results of employee actions, respectively.

Transactional leadership assigns and communicates expectations for the role of followers (Pieterse, Knippenberg, Schippers, & Stam (2010). Although the role of transactional leaders has not been favorably depicted in connection with organizational change, Oke et al. (2009) suggested evidence to the contrary. In a study of innovative business leaders, Oke et al. (2009) found that transactional leaders advance innovation through identifying new standards and prescribing the necessary organizational performances to attain them. While transformational leadership focuses on the development of organizational members, transactional leadership is attuned to assigned organizational roles and task completion (Williams-Boyd, 2002). In the implementation phase, attention to the technical management of procedures and practices may be best addressed through transactional leadership (Oke et al., 2009).

The routines of transactional leaders are peppered with negotiated steps (Calabrese, 2002). Rather than a proactive role for organizational development, transactional leadership is typically reactionary to organizational needs. Progress toward
change is often attained through incremental accomplishments that are acquired by leadership interventions and transactions with followers. Transactional leaders typically accept the necessity for change rather than constructing a moral orientation to pursuing organizational improvement (Calabrese, 2002).

**Passive/avoidant leadership.** Passive/avoidant leadership occupies an area of leadership along the continuum of a full range of leadership behaviors developed by Avolio and Bass. While transformational and transactional leadership rely upon interactions with subordinates, a passive/avoidant style is characterized by delays of action, absence, and indifference (Sosik & Potosky 2002, p. 213). Often termed as a laissez-faire style of leadership, individuals tend to relinquish leadership responsibilities associated with the management of organizations. Minimal interactions with subordinates have led to a reference of a “hands-off” leadership style.

Laissez-faire is often associated with less productive forms of leadership and hence, decreased organizational performance. Limited direction at the onset of employee tasks along with little feedback at the conclusion of tasks leaves much to the discretion of organizational members. When difficulties arise in organizational functioning, Laissez-faire leaders refrain from taking action until compelled to do so. Consequently, an attitude of non-leadership is evident in those individuals who refrain from taking the helm for managing organizational functions and tasks (Hinkin & Schriesheim, 2008).

**Leadership Outcomes.** Leadership behaviors have been noted to significantly contribute to followers’ extra effort, satisfaction, and perceived leader effectiveness (Avolio & Bass, 2004; Masood, Dani, Burns, & Backhouse, 2006; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, & Fetter, 1990). More positive aspects of these three outcomes
have been reported in connection to transformational leadership (Avolio & Bass, 2004). Transformational leaders raise the level of moral consciousness about what is important to achieve thereby impacting the output of others toward those ends. Under this domain of influence, followers put forth conscientious efforts beyond the obligatory tasks to improve organizational performance. Moreover, the manner of trust and confidence that transpires between transformational leaders and followers reinforces the propensity for such altruist behavior aimed at the greater good.

Similarly, effectiveness of leadership practices as well as the subsequent level of satisfaction experienced by subordinates is reflective of the manner of leadership practice. An uncertain environment of change necessitates a spectrum of leadership practice that encompasses both group and individual capacity for change. Furthermore, transformational leaders are proactive and anticipate a fluctuating level of motivational behaviors from followers. Such leaders maintain a responsive mode of behavior to accommodate variable conditions while maintaining the vision and a supportive structure for accomplishing expectations. Hence, greater effectiveness and satisfaction ensues through the work of transformational leaders who competently bridge the span of needs for both organizational and individual performance (Avolio & Bass, 2004).

In summary, the multidimensional nature of leadership necessitates that school leaders balance several roles. A core of leadership formed around moral and ethical purposes demands that practices be infused with these intentions. Subsequently, these types of leaders are better situated to transfer these values into the work of building a collective focus on improving the education of all students. Both external and internal expectations for improvement place pressure on school leaders for change. In meeting
the demands for resolving organizational needs, transformational leaders focus on building a collective purpose while transactional leaders operate through positional authority over individual tasks and goals.

As the primary instrument in unpacking the complex process of change, school leadership has the responsibility for engendering the commitment of staff toward the goal of school reform. Transformational leadership appears in the literature as well suited to this purpose. Working within the context of changing conditions of schools, transformational leadership negotiates the terrain of change by setting directions, developing people, and redesigning the organization. Working through these principles, transformational leaders engage with others in the work for school reform. In a collaborative partnership for change, leaders effectively influence teachers’ satisfaction and tendency to exhibit extra efforts. Consequently, each of these contributing leadership factors underscores the importance of securing the commitment of teachers to sharing the vision for change.

**Commitment to Change in School Reform**

If schools are to make continuous improvement to meet targeted federal goals in the evaluation of school progress then school leaders cannot rely on transient innovations. While leadership occupies a pivotal role in re-conceptualizing the structure and practice of schools, teachers also must embrace new aspects of their work. Hence, the commitment of teachers to change efforts is a significant consideration in the long-term implementation of reform initiatives.

**Indicators of commitment.** Individual commitment to change holds a prominent position in the supporting mechanisms that facilitate organizational change (Fedor et al.,
Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) offered a general definition of commitment as a mindset that engages individuals in a specific set of actions relative to a given objective. From a business perspective, organizational commitment has been studied in relation to factors affecting individuals’ employment conditions within the organization. These influential factors have been categorized as affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002; Parish, Cadwallader, & Busch, 2007). An employee’s affective commitment concerns his desire to remain attached to the organization, continuance refers to the perceived cost of separating from the organization, and a sense of obligation to remain with the organization is represented by normative commitment.

In tangent with a general view of commitment to the organization, a more inclusive perspective of commitment emerged in relation to a prescribed target such as organizational change. Borrowing from their general definition of commitment, Herscovitch and Meyer contextually formed a more definitive explanation of the commitment to change as “…a force (mindset) that binds an individual to a course of action deemed necessary for the successful implementation of a change initiative” (p. 475). In a multilevel quantitative study of the interrelationship of the factors for organizational commitment and the level of commitment to change, Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) developed a set of indicators for commitment that were more conducive to change than predictors of organizational commitment. To allow for specificity to change, three accommodations were integrated into the survey design: a desire to support the change based upon its potential benefits to the organization (affective commitment); an
acknowledgement of costs or sanctions in failure to support change (continuance commitment); and a feeling of obligation to support the change (normative commitment) (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002, p. 475). These two researchers contended that the levels of commitment are distinctive from one another and that behavioral responses can be associated with the different levels.

Using a Likert-scale survey, first developed by Meyer and Allen in 1991 and modified by the researchers, a three part investigation was conducted. The first phase of the study was conducted as a laboratory simulation with 272 undergraduate students responding to hypothetical situations concerning workplace experiences with change. Reliability of scale items was determined through high Cronbach’s alpha values. The results showed that affective and continuance were negatively related ($r = -0.05$, $p<0.01$) whereas normative commitment correlated positively with affective ($r = 0.26$, $p<0.01$) and continuance ($r = 0.38$, $p<0.01$).

In the second phase of the study, 157 nurses completed a three-part survey: the previously cited commitment to change questionnaire using a simulated experience; a survey of commitment to change in reference to an actual experience; and a survey to measure organizational commitment. This portion of the study was designed to determine the degree of individuals’ behaviors that ranged from resistance to compliance to promotion of change. The results provided evidence of significant correlations for affective, continuance, and normative commitment to compliance ($r = 0.29$, $p<0.05$; $r = 0.17$, $p<0.01$; $r = 0.34$, $p<0.05$ respectively). However, the results indicated that only affective and normative commitments were related to behaviors stronger than simple
compliance. A comparable study with 108 nurses validated the initial findings (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002).

In general, Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) demonstrated that each component of commitment to change was distinctive and offered predicative value in regards to behavioral support for change. While this seemingly exhaustive study was conducted on behavioral factors for commitment, several limitations were noted. Generalizations were restricted by the self-reporting nature of the surveys and the use of only one profession, albeit a predominately female one. A low return rate of questionnaires compounded by a mean age of 54 and an average of 21 years of experience for respondents suggested the potential for selection bias.

Fedor et al. (2006) built upon the earlier study of Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) in looking at the antecedents and consequences of commitment to change. Using an instrument developed by Herscovitch and Meyer, 191 individuals were surveyed to determine the relationship of fit with vision, employee-manager relationship, job motivation, and role autonomy with affective, continuance, and normative commitment to change. These factors were then analyzed in conjunction with anticipated outcomes of employee learning, performance and degree of implementation. Employees in a university transportation department that had undergone a succession of changes were the focus of the study. The reliability of the measures was validated by Cronbach’s alpha values that ranged from 0.84 to 0.99. The results of the study showed that affective and normative commitment was positively related to both fit with vision and employee-manager relationship. Affective commitment was positively related to job motivation.
and role autonomy while a negative relationship was found between role autonomy and continuance commitment to change (Fedor et al., 2006).

In regards to employee outcomes, affective commitment to change was related to individual learning, implementation success, and improved performance whereas only individual learning was significantly linked with normative commitment. The results of this research verified the earlier work of Herscovitch and Meyer’s (2002) which brought commitment to change to the forefront of considerations in organizational change. In a later study, Herold et al. (2008) advised that “In the context of change, commitment goes beyond just positive attitudes toward the change to include the intention to support it as well as a willingness to work on behalf of its successful implementation” (p. 347).

Although affective commitment was connected to a more positive attitude toward change, a question also followed regarding the sufficiency of such an outlook over the course of long-term implementation (Fedor et al., 2006).

Several limitations existed for this study. A marginal return rate of 32% factored into a restricted generalization of the findings. Also, the use of a single industry which has a substantial part-time workforce rather than long-term employees may have implications for selection bias. Furthermore, multiple constructs examined through a singular method of study prompts a concern for common methods variance.

**Challenges to commitment.** For the process of change, commitment to individual change is recognized as crucial for success (Hord, 1987; Hall & Hord, 1987; Hall & Hord, 2001; Fullan, 2007). In developing personal commitment to change individual concerns center upon the effects of change related to self, task, and impact (Hall & Hord, 2001). Self concern denotes a person’s knowledge about an innovation
and how this change can impact the individual’s established work routine. Attention to the management issues of implementing a new practice represents a concern for task. A concern for the impact of change induces an assessment of the evaluation of its effectiveness.

Goodson (2001) dismissed this interpretation of individual concern by Hord with the contention that her approach failed to attach personal meaning to change and framed the individual’s concern within a tactical approach to new practices. Fullan (2007) suggested that individual concerns often arise in the initiation and implementation phases. “The process of initiation can generate meanings of confusion, commitment or alienation, or simply ignorance on the part of participants and others affected by the change” (Fullan, 2007, p. 82). Viewed in this light, individual commitment to change may develop in relation to the personal concerns that arise at the prospect of engaging in new initiatives.

In a review of data collected over a span of thirty years for eight United States and Canadian secondary schools, Skerrett and Hargreaves (2008) focused on the developing practices of eight schools undergoing significant shifts in their student populations. Since four of the eight schools had undergone more dramatic changes in demographics and were considered to be more innovative, the researchers narrowed their review to four. Using data from 112 teacher and administrator interviews along with school observation reports and school records, the researchers considered the level of reform in teachers’ practices as demographics changed.

Some teachers reported a change to include multicultural curriculum while other teachers remained unchanged in their alignment with traditional curricular and instructional methods. Responses were not consistent across time and place and were
inclined to be discretionary. Newer teachers and those in specialized areas such as special education and English as a Second Language were more apt to embrace change (Skerrett and Hargreaves, 2008). Even though surface features changed, minimal changes were observed in regards to teachers’ pedagogy. Thus, the study revealed that challenges to commitment to change can occur through the personal bias of individual educators. Confining the analysis to select schools narrowed the implications of the results for broad scale change. Also, greater emphasis on repetitive interviews with the same participants excluded the impressions of less seasoned staff members.

Further evidence of the influence of educator bias on change development was provided in a study by McKenzie and Scheurich (2008). An elementary school that experienced a significant shift in its student demographics sought to improve the classroom practice for diverse groups. McKenzie and Scheurich (2008) examined the combined efforts of an elementary school principal and faculty to determine effective teaching strategies for an increasingly diverse student population. For the school population of 800 students, 85% were Black and Hispanic with 83% economically disadvantaged, and a mobility rate of 35%. Individual interviews, focus groups, classroom observations, and journal entries were used over the period of a year to investigate how teachers viewed the adoption of new practices to better serve their population. The results revealed a theme of defensive attitude toward school reform emanating from biased notions about student characteristics and negative perceptions of external accountability.

The implications derived from this research led the authors to emphasize the importance of teachers’ position regarding change initiatives (McKenzie & Scheurich,
The limiting features of this study included a singular focus on one elementary school without a cross-sectional representation and no information regarding the number of teacher participants or related teacher demographics. In addition, the interactive nature of the researchers with participants may have contributed to some degree of researcher bias.

**Antecedents of commitment.** Bandura’s theories of motivation and self-efficacy contribute to the likelihood that teachers will commit their efforts to change initiatives. Motivation denotes an evaluative orientation toward the future regarding the need for action while self-efficacy represents a personal belief about one’s capability for change (Leithwood et al., 1999). Both psychological processes operate through the individual’s personal goals, capacity beliefs, context beliefs, and emotional arousal (Leithwood et al., 1999, p.136-142).

Personal goals develop in relation to the individual’s perception of a gap between an existing state of circumstances and a desired state. These goals are more apt to stimulate commitment to some action when new goals appear doable and progress is in short term increments. While new expectations typically identify a general consensus of desired levels of improvement, individual commitment arises from the internalization of these purposes into personal objectives. Little meaning is attached to the larger organizational goals unless accompanied by personal ownership by individual members (Leithwood et al., 1999).

Accomplishing personal goals is partly under the direction of the self-belief about one’s professional or personal capacity to accomplish targeted goals. Judgment about one’s abilities may be affected in various ways that include interactions with role models
and other professionals perceived as experts. However, a prominent influence occurs through the feedback that teachers receive on the performance of their work. Feelings of accomplishment or inadequacy impact one’s beliefs about subsequent performance on similar tasks (Bandura, 1993; Leithwood et al., 1999). In conjunction with one’s feelings regarding individual capacity, context beliefs contribute to the efforts for change.

Context beliefs are related to teachers’ perception of their working environment. Previous experience with support for change initiatives may affect the beliefs about future possibilities. School conditions that include the availability of human and material resources for teachers may affect their reactions to potential changes. Yu et al. (2002) noted the importance of school conditions on teacher commitment to change in a study of 2,941 Hong Kong elementary teachers that completed a 113 item survey to determine the related effects of transformational leadership, school conditions, and teacher commitment. Using a linear regression analysis, 62% of the variance in teacher commitment was explained by school conditions while transformational leadership explained just 11% of the variance. Despite a significant correlation coefficient (r=0.328, p< 0.01) between the composite variables of teacher commitment and transformational leaders, context beliefs demonstrated the highest value for a single variable (Yu et al., 2002). Limitations to this study existed in the sole use of elementary teachers who were predominately female and unique cultural conditions that may have influenced attitudes about educational conditions and leadership. A cautionary note is also necessary regarding the possible indirect influence of leadership through school conditions.

Perceptions of school conditions along with beliefs about self-efficacy may ignite positive or negative emotional responses from those expected to engage in change.
activities. Negative feelings toward reform efforts may reduce teachers’ motivation toward change and hamper teachers’ beliefs about their personal efficacy for successful implementation (Leithwood, Steinback, & Jantzi, 2002). Thus, emotional investment in new initiatives may be a necessary ingredient for a genuine commitment to their success.

In summary, individual commitment and leadership have both been shown to have significance for change implementation. While distinct from the construct of organizational commitment, the commitment to change operates from a similar theoretical framework. Indicators for commitment that are noted as affective, continuance, and normative, represent varying levels of attachment to the organization. In a similar fashion for change, these three indicators have been associated with a set of behaviors that are positioned on a continuum with resistance and championing at opposite ends and compliance as the middle point (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002).

The role of transformational leadership has been highlighted for its positive association with organizational and change commitments. Transformational leadership and specific change behaviors were noted to be separate in their behavioral characteristics and function in leading for change in organizations. Interacting with the influence of leadership, the factors of personal goals, capacity beliefs, context beliefs, and emotional arousal have been suggested as concerns for employee commitment. Thus, these peripheral elements contribute to the complexity of the relationship between transformational leadership and teacher commitment to change.

A current environment of accountability holds expectations for student achievement at all levels of schooling. However, the complex nature of high schools may contribute to unsuccessful outcomes for some students upon passage into high school.
Consequently, careful attention should be directed toward the type of leadership required to engender the commitment of teachers for improving student performance at the entry point of ninth grade.

**Implementing High School Reform for Ninth Grade**

Thus far, the literature has drawn from descriptions of a current schooling environment that is pervasive with the expectations of accountability for student learning along with providing a learning environment for excellence and equity. While the research has not defined only one recipe for educating all students within these contexts, the attitude remains that school leaders must improve the organization for successful student outcomes. At the secondary level, the organizational unit of the high school structure has gained an increased focus in regards to reducing the complexity of the traditional high school especially at the ninth grade level.

 Constructed to accommodate large numbers of students, the traditional high school arose through the political, social, and economic developments during the early twentieth century. The goal for social cohesion and a need for an industrialized workforce combined to produce a high school as a comprehensive structure designed to accommodate these issues. Both curricular commonality and diversification were dual objectives for educating a large diverse number of students (Wraga, 1998). During the latter part of the twentieth century, a shift to more global awareness and competition brought a returned scrutiny of the effectiveness of the American high school. A world market and rapid technological developments placed a focus upon knowledge rather than skill-based employment opportunities. A divergence of purpose emerged with a combined emphasis on the cognitive and practical aspects of education. Given the reality
of the pressure of accountability and persistent demands for excellent and equitable structures in diverse schools, concern persists in the literature for reducing the complexity of the organization of high schools (Lachat, 2001; Owen et al., 2002; USDOE, 2001).

A compilation of research provided evidence that small schools tend to produce higher student achievement, lower dropout rates, less violent events, higher rates of participation in school activities, and more positive feelings about self and school (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p. 643; Lachat, 2001; Lee & Burkam, 2003; USDOE, 2001). Stiefel, Swartz, and Ellen (2006) also proposed a relationship between student performance and school size in their examination of fifth and eighth grade students’ achievement scores in New York City from 2001 to 2002.

The results of a study by Patterson, Hale, and Stessman (2007) revealed school structure to be a consideration in students’ failure to persist in high school. Using the organizational theories of Schein and Argyris as the conceptual framework, the study examined a population of 1600 students through interviews, student focus groups, and document review. Although the high school had originally served a White middle class student population, the school had experienced a significant increase in its immigrant population, a rise in the percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch status, and a continual decline in the graduation rate with a rate of 53.6% in 2003.

Rather than a reliance upon student characteristics to explain the dropout phenomena, this study turned attention to school conditions. The results suggested that the bureaucratic structure of the school as indicated by standard scheduling methods, conventional course offerings, and Carnegie unit requirements interfered with the development of a culture that was responsive to the particular needs of a diverse student
population. Patterson, Hale et al. (2007) stressed the importance of re-examining the expressed mission of the school in relation to the actual practices that are in place. However, the reliance upon one high school and the use of purposive sampling limited the generalizations that can be determined from the results.

Lee and Burkam (2003) contributed to the consideration of the relationship between school conditions and students dropping out of school on a broader scale with 3,840 students within 190 high schools. Using student and school data from the 1988 National Educational Longitudinal Study, the researchers considered school organization, academic structure, and student-teacher relationships. School organization was defined by school size and type. A multilevel analysis was employed for comparisons between school characteristics.

The outcome of the study indicated that schools at one Standard Deviation (SD) above the mean for the number of mathematical courses offered below algebra indicated an increase of 28% (p< 0.10) in the likelihood of dropping out. In contrast, positive student-teacher relationships reduced the odds of dropping out with a reported 86% (p<.01) for medium schools. This effect of relationships was not supported in the results for large schools with a population of 1600-2500. In considering school size, the dropout rate for medium schools was the most modest. A 300% increase in the dropout rate was reported for large schools while small schools experienced a slightly higher rate than medium sized high schools (Lee & Burkam, 2003). However, the strength of the findings was limited considerably by the dated nature of the information used for analysis.

While reduced size may appear to be a panacea for the issue of students’ failure to succeed in school, the decline of the larger comprehensive high school may be related
more so to prevailing social and political attitudes than actual deficiencies in the model (Wraga, 1998). In conjunction with the reorganization of schools into smaller units, four other elements have been noted as critical to the success of schools that exhibit high performance: well qualified teachers that also function as collaborative professional learners; personalization through a team format; a common curricular core; and supporting structures for struggling learners (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p. 645).

**School-within-a-school reform model.** Contrary to the chronicled development of the large comprehensive high school, a more recent trend advocates the belief that smaller organizational units provide greater advantage to both students and teachers. This benefit diverges into two aspects of schooling: social and academic (Lee & Ready, 2007). While NCLB demands regulatory monitoring of academic progress, the social dimension necessitates attention from the basis of professional and personal responsibilities that are defined internally by the school. Given the dual aspects of education, attention to size is not sufficient, but a reconfiguration of procedures and practices must also accompany the practicality of a smaller learning environment. Without one definitive model of ‘smallness”, the resulting menu of choices offers different reorganizational options (Lee & Ready, 2007; USDOE, 2001).

- *House Plans* are the most non-specific of the smaller school options. Course offerings and student scheduling can be specific to the unit but extracurricular activities typically continue to exist within the larger school structure. A distinctive component for high school freshman may be formed under this unit as a transitional unit into high school.
• **Academies** are typically themed based units that are specialized in their curriculum but remain dependent upon the larger school for other operational needs.

• **Magnet Schools** are new autonomous units rather than a reorganization of existing large structures. This unit typically offers a specialty curriculum in the form of a cluster of courses.

• **School-within-a-School** arises from the restructure of the larger school. These smaller schools continue to share space with other components of the larger school but have considerable autonomy concerning its school processes.

The extent of reformation of the traditional high school depends heavily upon the investment into the change process by those with viable interests in the plan. Personal commitment may vacillate in regards to the depth of the conversion. The familiarity and assurance of traditional ways, the demands of time for new ways teaching, or the loss of individualistic work habits may act to draw teachers back into routine practices (Lee & Ready, 2007).

**School-within-a-school as a community.** Scaling up an innovation requires systemic change in the way of doing things (Giles & Hargreaves, 2006; Strike, 2008). Reorganization efforts that are diffused through district or state policies require clarity and accommodation with existing school policies. Agreement on central ideas and beliefs about the change is a necessary step in developing a common language regarding new ideas (Strike, 2008). A subsequent query emerges into the meaning of size. One conception may be in relation to the numbers of students while a different notion entails
an autonomous entity with collective vision and well-defined social interaction patterns. In essence, a paradigm shift occurs regarding what is necessary to become a small school. A form of community emerges that conveys what is important for learning and who is accountable in the school (Lawrence, 2006; Strike, 2008).

Personal and professional accountability coalesce around what is internally important to teachers and leaders in contrast to externally mandated policies. “Thus, where large-scale reforms fail to incorporate teachers’ senses of passion and purpose, such changes will actually face major problems of sustainability and generalizability. External direction and definition of large-scale reform does not ensure internally implemented and sustained improvement” (Goodson, 2001, p. 49). Conversations around authentic teaching and assessment dominate in contrast to the technical aspects of school (Strike, 2008).

The norms that students perceive about the school are embedded in their social and cultural environment (Berk, 2003). Understandings about community and the accompanying beliefs are shared through interactions and conveyed between school members. Shared values and commitment create a bond between individuals from which a sense of care develops (Strike, 2008). This sense of care extends to concern for students’ emotional and academic needs. If students are held to a standard of excellence, then they must have a clear understanding of what that entails. The traditional factory model of high school can be highly stratified and focused on student management rather than on community development (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Students’ view of their place within the social and academic layers of the high school environment is closely linked to the perceptions they have formed about the community. Thus, community
becomes a potential antidote to the alienation and disengagement that can be experienced by students in schools (Strike, 2008). For ninth grade students, the development for community portends well for their performance in high school.

**Issues of ninth grade success.** The ninth grade is normally a student’s introduction to high school and begins the process of earning credits toward graduation. For some students, the move from eighth to ninth grade may present concerns and challenges that they may not be adequately prepared to understand or to manage. The move by students into a new school setting may prove to be problematic for high school freshman when faced with forming new relationships with peers and adults along with challenges of more rigorous curriculum and academic standards. If students are unable to cope with these issues, then they may disengage from school resulting in poor patterns of attendance, behavior, and grades (Fulk, 2003; Neild et al., 2008; Patterson, Beltyukova et al., 2007). Ultimately, failing ninth grade and eventually not graduating can impact students’ future earning potential and quality of life (Allensworth & Easton, 2005).

**Academic issues.** In moving from eight to ninth grade, difficulties that students encounter can be grouped collectively into the areas of academic, procedural, behavioral, and personal relationships (Morgan & Hertzog, 2001; Queen, 2002). According to Roderick and Camburn (1999), students who fail a course in the first semester of 9th grade are likely to continue to perform poorly. Further evidence of this troubling prediction of poor student performance outcomes was reported by the Consortium Chicago School Research group in a study of Chicago schools from 1999 to 2004. The study reported that 60% of students who acquired at least one semester grade of F may fail to graduate in four years. Additionally, only 28% of the students who were retained
in the freshman year graduated within four years. Patterson, Beltyukova et al. (2007) reported that approximately one-third of the ninth grade students in the United States failed to succeed well enough in ninth grade to be promoted to tenth grade. An earlier prediction of this problem indicated the retention to be as high as 40% (Morgan and Hertzog, 1998).

One outcome from the Chicago research group was the development of an indicator for on-time graduation of students entering the ninth grade. A student who earned at least five credits for promotion to tenth grade and did not fail more than one semester of a core academic subject was considered to be on-track. The study indicated that 83% of students who were identified as on-track by the end of their freshman year graduated within four years (Allensworth & Easton, 2005). In considering factors that might affect ninth grade success, Allensworth and Easton (2005) found that eighth grade achievement scores were not a clear predictor of students’ performance in their freshman year. They reported that over 40% of the students that entered ninth grade with low standardized test scores performed well enough to be considered on-track by the end of ninth grade. Additionally, 25% of those students who entered the ninth grade with high test scores failed to be on-track by the end of that school year. A limitation in the study existed by a strict reliance upon aggregate sets of data without consideration of factors outside of performance reports. While the use of longitudinal data lent confidence to the results of this study, the concentration on primarily urban schools in one geographic area placed some limitations on generalizing the results across other types of localities.

The Chicago Consortium’s research also elaborated on additional factors that may affect students’ success in the freshman year (Allensworth & Easton, 2005). One
potential condition that arose in relation to student performance was the manner of academic course-taking by students. Courses that are characterized by low teacher expectations often have fewer resources, and students whose test scores relegate them into such classes often invest less time and may be less engaged in their learning (Cammarota & Romero, 2006; Conchas, 2001; Marks, 2000; Oakes, 2005).

Florida provides an example of the confluence of testing outcomes and academic course-taking. Students are categorized according to their performance on the reading, math, and science portions of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). Non-proficiency in reading is indicated by the labels Level 1 and Level 2. Subsequently, students that are designated with a low performing status of Level 1 are channeled into remedial reading classes while students achieving a Level 2 may be consigned to the same circumstance or enrolled in courses embedded with reading remediation (Florida K-20 Education Code, 1008.25). A review of the results of the ninth grade reading assessment in Florida for 2009 indicated that 53% of the students performed at non-proficient levels. Differentiating these results for race and ethnicity, 41% of White students were considered low performing in comparison to 74% of Black students and 61% of Hispanic students (FCAT State Demographic Report, 2009). Given these testing outcomes, remediation may be entwined with the pattern of academic courses for ninth grade students in Florida.

Along with responsibility for testing outcomes, NCLB has included the accountability for high school to improve graduation rates. The failure to persist in school often affects students of color or poverty to a larger extent than white students (Amrein & Berliner, 2002; Borg, Plumlee, & Stranahan, 2007; Dorn, 2003; Heck &
Mahoe, 2006). The National Center for Education Statistics (2005) reported dropout statistics for Whites at 6% while the dropout rate for Blacks was 10.4% and 22.4% for Hispanics. Consequently, high schools experience pressure for higher rates of graduation.

While high school attendance may have originally been a custodial issue, the value of the high school diploma has risen in terms of educational and economic potential. The reality of attaining a high school diploma under the conditions of a high-stakes test was investigated by Borg, Plumlee, and Stranahan (2007). Using Florida’s high school exit exam, the (FCAT), researchers examined the relationship between student performance on the tenth grade test and the probability of obtaining a high school diploma in Duval County, Florida. The data was obtained from the tenth grade test results for 5,205 students in 2000 for comparison with the graduation requirements set for those students in 2002.

A regression analysis of the FCAT reading and math scores determined that characteristics of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic level were factors in determining student graduation success. Using a probit model for analysis, the results showed that an African American student had a 34% probability of passing the test the first time and a Hispanic student had a 54% probability in comparison to a White student with a 65% probability. In a similar manner, a student from a family earning $10,000 or less had a 30% probability of passing the first time compared to a 60% probability for students from more affluent backgrounds (Borg et al., 2007). These results for race and ethnicity were influenced by using an average sample of each while holding school characteristics
Therefore, factors outside the single arena of academic performance may work to impact students’ progression through high school.

**Social issues.** The social setting of ninth grade students can influence the level and quality of success in high school. As adolescents move from the middle school to the high school they may experience uncertainties and concerns associated with a new, unknown environment (Morgan & Hertzog, 2001). Using a survey of eighth and ninth grade students in four Georgia school districts, Morgan and Hertzog found that students expressed anxieties about ninth grade, including interactions with upperclassmen and the possibility of being bullied, encounters with difficult or unfriendly teachers, and learning the physical organization of the new school.

The often impersonal nature of the large comprehensive high school may present unique challenges for some individuals. Students entering the ninth grade may encounter valid concerns in regards to changes in peer relationships, school structure, and academic requirements (Cauley & Javanovich, 2006; Potter, Schlisky, Stevenson, & Drawdy 2001). Locating classes, learning rules and procedures, and establishing relationships with peers and teachers comprise typical activities that may elicit student anxieties. Subsequently, feelings of stress may ensue from an environment that places less emphasis on the learner and more on efficiency and abstract subject content (Cauley & Javanovich, 2006). The high school experience can be especially challenging for those students possessing weaker social or cognitive skills. Validation of these concerns is reflected through the continuum of development from childhood to adulthood. Capabilities for abstract thought and more complex verbal expressions may not by in sync with the timing of high school entry. Furthermore, peer group acceptance and encounters with conflicting value
systems may also present potential difficulties for students entering the larger social setting of high school (Potter, et al., 2001).

Patterson, Beltyukova et al. (2007) attested to the critical nature of relationships in high school. Both teacher-student and student-student associations were considered important determinants for high school success. Unless students have a good experience in the freshman year, their level of motivation and academic engagement may diminish resulting in declining levels of academic achievement (Fulk, 2003; McIntosh & White, 2006; Neild et al., 2008; Patterson, Beltyukova et al., 2007). The combined challenges of social and developmental changes along with more rigorous academic requirements may result in a decline in high school success. However, the academic and social experiences of students may not develop along paths that are lined with equitable opportunities.

**Equity issues.** In Florida, the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Tests (FCAT) in reading, math, and science has produced a system to categorize students by achievement levels according to their scores. As a consequence, such testing outcomes have resulted in a system of student identification for remediation and academic interventions (*Florida K-20 Education Code, 1008.25*). However, differentiated courses or tracks of study often have greater implications for the academic development of non-White students or those in poverty (Burris & Wellner, 2005; Lee & Burkham, 2003; Oakes, 2005; Rubin, 2003; Rubin & Noguera, 2004).

A study of reform efforts to dismantle these tracks for high school was conducted by Burris and Wellner (2005) in a diverse suburban New York school district. As an initiative to improve performance on the New York State Regents exams for core subjects, a common curriculum was implemented for ninth grade English and social

In 2001, the passing rate on the biology exam rose from 48% to 77% for Blacks and increased from 85% to 94% for Whites in ninth grade. More modest gains were found in the overall passing rate for the 1999 cohort that graduated in 2003 with increase of 19.3% to 26.4% in the passing rate for Black and Hispanic students while the passing rate for White and Asian students improved from 58.7% to 66.3%. One high school in the district was reported as an exception to these statistics with a dramatic increase of 32% to 82% in the passing rate for Blacks and Hispanics (Burris & Wellner, 2005). Although limited information was provided regarding students characteristics, the general findings were supportive of de-tracking. Thus, notions for equitable opportunities as well as for positive social and academic experiences may prompt the consideration for designing ninth grade in a manner conducive to these conditions.

Ninth grade redesign. The literature revealed a host of strategies purported to improve the high school experience for ninth grade students. One prevailing suggestion was to organize the collective group of high school freshmen into a separate academy or house arrangement. The creation of smaller school units fosters the feeling of a small school atmosphere thus promoting a collaborative teaching community and more personalized attention on students (Oxley, 2005). Jett, Pulling, and Ross (1994) recommended less rigidity in school processes to include a fluid master schedule in which instructional groups can be changed as needed throughout the year in order to maximize learning opportunities for students. Introductory activities, such as student and parent meetings and high school visits, occurring during the eighth grade year were
suggested as methods to ease the transition process. Advisory periods, peer mentoring, and extended academic periods during the day were additional recommendations to improve the conditions for high school freshmen (Cauley & Jovanovich, 2006; McPartland & Jordan, 2001).

One prominent recommendation for academies was the formation of teacher teams (Jett, et al., 1994; McPartland & Jordan, 2001; Oxley, 2005). In a smaller structured setting, teams of teachers can build better relationships, thus facilitating the identification of at-risk students for appropriate interventions (Oxley, 2005). The development of an inclusive environment is an important element for incorporation into the academy structure to benefit students from all racial, ethnic, and social backgrounds (Oxley, 2005). According to Ilg and Massucci (2003), a smaller school setting improves the achievement level for minority students and for those from a lower socio-economic background. With the greater flexibility that can be provided through an academy, teachers can make instructional decisions regarding the most appropriate learning experiences for students (Oxley, 2005). Thus, the academy seeks to improve student achievement by placing the student at the center of the small school design.

Using a case study method, Patterson, Beltyukova et al. (2007) explored the potential advantages that a separate academy may have for new ninth grade students in one high school of 1300 students with approximately 67% White, 33% non-White, and 35% economically disadvantaged. A pilot program was initiated during the 2003-2004 school year for 43 freshmen students that were assigned to a team of five teachers. A comparison group was established with 146 freshmen students that were scheduled into classes in a traditional manner. While students were randomly assigned to the academy
or control group, the qualifier for placement in either one was enrollment in Algebra I. The teacher team had a common planning time to discuss and plan common strategies for academic and behavioral issues. Periodic social events were planned for the group of 43 and parent involvement was encouraged by all five teachers.

A survey of participating freshmen students revealed that a substantially greater number of academy students expressed experiencing respectful and fair treatment from their teachers than non-academy students. Interviews with students also indicated that the academy eased the process of forming new friendships while some students indicated that the academy hindered forming relationships outside the academy (Patterson, Beltyukova et al., 2007). Although the qualitative results were promising, no statistical information was provided on the survey results other than percentages for individual survey items.

Using two-way ANOVA tests, quantitative analysis was conducted to compare suspensions, attendance, and grade point averages (reported on a scale of 0 to 4) for academy and non-academy students. A significant main effect was reported for differences for the in-school suspension \[ F(1, 189) = 16.3, p< .001 \] while none were found for out-of school suspensions. A significant effect was also determined in attendance of academy students \[ F(1, 189) = 4.6, p< .05 \]. Effect sizes were reported as small for suspension and medium for attendance, however, no actual values were given. No significant differences in grade point averages were reported between groups for English and math. The academy group performed better than the control group in social studies, 1.67 and 1.23 respectively, while the control group had a higher grade point average of 1.79 in science compared to the academy group of 1.09.
Although grade point averages were not strikingly different for most subjects, the percentage of academy students that were promoted to tenth grade was approximately 75% compared to 59% for the control group. The promotion status and positive social benefits provided encouragement for a smaller school setting for students entering the often more impersonal and complex environment of high school (Patterson, Beltyukova et al., 2007). However, the strength of the findings was diminished due to a focus on one high school and the exclusion of freshmen not enrolled in Algebra I also limited the generalizations of the results.

In summary, the reorganization of high schools is concerned with more than size. Rather than only changes in the physical dimension, different internal practices are also a necessary feature for successfully redefining schools into smaller units. Central to the innovative approach of creating a school-within-a-school is the leadership that facilitates the process and the commitment of others to that vision. Collectively, a sense of community emerges that is constructed in accordance with the development of internal commitment for successful student outcomes.

An overall understanding is present in the literature regarding the significance of the freshman year. The long-term success of high school students appears to depend heavily upon the ninth grade experience. Course failure in the freshman year has been presented as a significant indicator for high school completion. Along with academic challenges, ninth grade students may also encounter social discomfort. Both academic and social issues may impede students’ progress toward graduation and thus, significantly hinder their future economic success. Smaller school units, teaming of teachers, transitional activities, peer mentoring, advisory periods, and extended learning time have
been purported to improve the performance of ninth grade students. Consequently, educators may be prompted to reorganize the ninth grade structure and to redefine practices in an attempt to produce more high school graduates. Although the front end of change may gain the initial investment of leaders and teachers, sustained school reform is dependent upon maintaining committed efforts over the long-term.

**Sustaining High School Reform for Ninth Grade**

Implementation of school reform coexists alongside a historically conservative system of education. Thus, the organization of change itself is susceptible to the pull of conventionality and coherence. Fullan (1993) expressed that prolonged change requires a fundamental shift of mind (p. 3). This different mindset for change imparts some resiliency to intervening forces that may disrupt continued implementation of reform strategies. Such forces arise from within the operational elements of change or from conflicting expectations imposed by outside entities. In either instance, coalescence of these internal and external influences with a determined mindset for purposeful change is important for maintaining school reform.

**External influences.** Ninth grade reform represents a second-order layer of school reform. Change of this magnitude reaches to the deeper layers of school structure and practice (Hall & Hord, 2001). Sustaining this level of reform requires that change strategies become ingrained into the fabric of ordinary school routines (Datnow, 2005; Datnow & Stringfield, 2000; Goodson, 2001). Contentions to on-going implementation may arise through new policies or regulations that dampen the initial determination for change. However, reform that stands the test of time emanates from a shared purpose and a mutual interchange of knowledge and professional skills (Datnow, 2005). Copland
(2003) also affirmed the importance of capitalizing upon the expertise of those intimately involved in change to produce long-term improvements. Thus, leaders and teachers develop an interdependent relationship in addressing the uncertain conditions that may accompany school reform.

An investigation by Datnow (2005) examined internal and external influences on the sustainability of a Comprehensive School Reform model in thirteen elementary schools from 1996 to 2000. Each school was experiencing a changing policy environment and was regarded by the district as moderate to exemplary in their reform efforts. Information was drawn from interviews with school and district staff over the four year period along with observations reports. Varying levels of longevity for the reform were reported for the schools in the study.

Datnow (2005) noted the lack of continued commitment by staff members, a shift in focus to new district programs, and continued difficulties with implementation as conditions that contributed to reform expiration. One consistent reported comment was the secondary emphasis placed on the reforms in all schools in comparison to the primary focus of preparation for state tests. The findings contributed to a better understanding of how schools navigate through waves of new policies while attempting school reforms. Even though almost half the schools retained viable reform efforts, the results were not completely reliable given the purposeful sample of schools with histories of moderate to high levels of change implementation. The interpretation of results was limited by a lack of descriptive detail for both schools and individual participants.

The effects of a volatile policy environment were further supported through the work of Giles and Hargreaves (2006) on the sustainability of reform in schools
experiencing pressures of standardization. Selecting from the same set of United States and Canadian schools as noted earlier, Giles and Hargreaves (2006) conducted a cross-case analysis of data for three innovative high schools from the original study. Data was obtained during a four year period through semi-structured interviews with teachers and administrators, on-site observations, and documents of school meetings. In their analysis, Giles and Hargreaves noted that the policies for standardization had chipped away at each school’s reform efforts although one school had remained more resilient than the others.

The researchers noted that shifts in the dynamics of school conditions may produce a regression back to the conventional school. Pressures to comply with new district and state policies also placed hardships on schools to maintain their status as innovative. Two of the high schools succumbed to changing conditions within the school such as attrition of personnel committed to change and passive attitudes toward a changing environment. Adaptability through a culture of continuous learning was noted as a significant influence for one school which maintained a steady course for implementation (Giles & Hargreaves, 2006). While the case study method offered depth to the review of reform sustainability, generalizations were restricted by the small number of schools. The prolonged interaction of researchers with the three schools suggested some measure of bias in the reported results.

Hanson (2001) referred to new external forces pressing upon an organization as an environmental shift. Schools that are constrained by the technical aspects of managing the organization may tend to cling to familiar routines and practices. A sense of nostalgia for what has proven safe and reliable in the past may restrain leaders and teachers from seizing innovative opportunities. Hanson noted the subsequent reliance upon the status
quo as “…they become forces for stability rather than change” (Hanson, 2001, p. 648).
Conformity to the conventional school reduces the risks for legitimation and social inclusion for school members. While appearances may indicate some perfunctory attempts at new practices, the safety and reliability of schooling norms may dampen the impetus for change. Tubin (2009) termed this shift back to conventional norms as a “regression toward the mean” (p. 404). Given that change initiatives are developed within the existing confines of institutional policy and structure, these boundaries to new endeavors may overshadow and restrict the full development and expansion of an innovation.

**Internal influences.** Concerned with the distributive effects of change, Fedor et al. (2006) contended that change may produce disproportionate effects on different members of the organization. Thus, unequal outcomes of change may introduce added difficulty in moving beyond simple compliance. Conflicting circumstances that disrupt the continuum of change may require different facets of leadership (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Bonner, Koch, & Langmeyer, 2004). Bolman and Deal (2003) offered a composite framework of leadership as a means of managing internal dilemmas and conflicts. The structural frame operates with an eye on the governing rules, policies, and procedures of the school. In contrast, the human resource perspective is concerned with subordinates’ needs and skills. Issues of power and control among organizational members are managed by the political dimension while the symbolic frame draws from the norms and values that define the organization’s culture.

In reference to change, the structural frame reduces confusion through the communication and alignment of existing practices and procedures to new initiatives.
The human resource frame focuses on training and the involvement of stakeholders throughout the change process (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Negotiation of conflicts between groups that support or oppose change is a necessary function of the political frame of leadership. “Changing always creates divisions and conflict among competing interest groups. Successful change requires an ability to frame issues, build coalitions, and establish arenas in which disagreements can be forged into workable pacts” (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 378). Working through the symbolic frame, leaders facilitate transitional events that ease individuals from existing conventions to future possibilities (Bolman & Deal, 2003). School leaders that rely on the structural aspects of change without regard to the human resource frame may fail to gain the personal commitment required to initiate and maintain innovation. The value that transformational leaders attach to the human resource frame emerges through the aspect of leadership that seeks to develop and orient followers toward a vision of change.

Internal shifts in school conditions often produce a regression back to the conventional school. For example, attrition of personnel and passive attitudes toward a changing environment alter the focus on change. Thus, this framework provides multiple modes of responsive intervention to intervening factors in the progression of change.

Bonner et al. (2004) examined the sustainability of an elementary school inclusion model through the lens of the four frame model of leadership. Using interviews and observational data, researchers determined difficulties in each frame for maintaining reform over the long term. Tensions emerged in the structural aspect of the initiative during a system of formalized problem-solving meetings. Unresolved conflicts between general education and special education personnel presented a problem in the political
framework. Although positive results in the form of collaborative support were identified for the human resource area, a lack of cohesion around a common vision emerged as a prevailing theme (Bonner et al., 2004). The researchers proposed that the absence of teachers’ personal commitment to change goals or emotional investment in change contributed to a lack of cohesive support for the inclusion model (Bonner et al., 2004). The methodology of the study was not well articulated and the narrow focus on one school restricted the generalization of the results. However, Bolman and Deal’s four frame model offered a strategic approach to delineating and resolving distractions to the long term course of school reform.

In summary, waves of reform have historically washed over the educational terrain through the impetus of national or local concerns (Goodson, 2001, Fullan, 2007; Hall & Hord, 2001). The launching of Sputnik, which sparked a focus on space exploration, and successive decades of events such as desegregation and the publication of *The Nation at Risk*, produced widespread efforts at educational change. Current interests in school reform have been largely generated by political concerns for accountability.

The expanse of innovation efforts have ranged from policy development for large scale reform to isolated individual classroom improvements. The current distinction of being organizations of continuous improvement places school leaders in the pivotal positions of change leaders. The role for change is subsumed within an already highly complex framework of leadership. Contentions arising through accountability policies are not relegated to the back burner of concerns, but are viable issues that form the parameters for innovation. Consequently, school leadership that embraces change must
remain cognizant of the human resource frame in developing the commitment of others toward reform efforts for their schools.

Summary of Literature Review

The reform of ninth grade is driven by several interrelated components. Issues of academic and social conditions provide cornerstones in the quest for providing an optimal ninth grade environment. As schools strive to meet NCLB standards for student performance, they must also attend to many aspects of the high school experience for ninth grade students. The attainment of a high school diploma is generally accepted as an important achievement for students. School conditions such as size, scheduling practices, and course offerings have been indicated as important in the persistence of students toward successful completion of high school.

Accountability for student outcomes translates into school reform efforts that require both leadership for change and the commitment of teachers for successful implementation. By engaging in an interactional process for change, school leaders facilitate and monitor the progress of innovation while attending to the structural, political, symbolic, and human aspects of the school. Inattention to any of these four components can hinder progress at the implementation or sustainability level. The ethical and transformative dimensions of leadership may convict others to create the space on their plate for commitment to an internal system for change.

For the secondary level, a prevailing discontent with the comprehensive high school model has prompted considerable interest in smaller schools. Smaller units may be carved out of the traditional school structure to create a format more conducive to the academic and social world of students at the dawn of their high school years. Although
smaller schools may imply a reduction in size, an accompanying commitment to related changes in conventional practices is also necessary. Small school structures have been related to improved academic performance, positive social relationships, better attendance and behavior, and increased teacher and parent involvement. While school leaders may direct the goals of change, these efforts do not occur in isolation. The commitment of teachers is also necessary in steering the school toward new practices or processes. Given the importance of the freshman year, the redesign of ninth grade occupies a considerable place of importance as an innovation for improving high schools.

**Implications for Research**

The reduction of high schools into smaller units of learning is one innovation that has been pursued to improve student achievement at the secondary level. A recent policy directed toward the implementation of a school-within-a-school plan for each ninth grade within one school district presented an opportunity to explore the relationship between school leadership style and the level of teacher commitment existing in those high schools. Data collected through a survey of ninth grade teachers regarding commitment to change and perceptions of leadership was used to inform each of these constructs pertaining to those working for large scale change in schools.

The current distinction of being organizations of continuous improvement places school leadership in the critical position as leaders for change. External policies of accountability that are uniformly applied across schools run the risk that implementation will not be consistent across all venues of school leaders and teachers. Furthermore, external mandates project the notion that educators are accountable for improving schools. Given that the expected outcomes of school reform depend heavily upon those
responsible for change, the human aspect of implementation is important to understand. In particular, the relationship between school leadership and the commitment of teachers to change has important implications for successful implementation of school reform efforts.
Chapter Three Methods

Organization of Chapter Three

The purpose of Chapter Three is to describe the methods utilized in the investigation of the stated purpose and research questions of this study. This chapter presents the study design, the research instrumentation, the process of data collection and analysis, and a summary of the methodology. Chapter Three is organized into eleven sections: an introduction; research questions; profile of academy implementation in the study; research population; design of the study; design of the instrument; data collection; data analysis; researcher role and ethical responsibilities; and a summary.

Problem and Purpose of the Study

The review of literature on change offered considerable evidence of the complex task of school reform (Elmore, 2004; Fullan, 2007; Goodson, 2001; Hall & Hord, 1987; 2001; Hord, 1987). Investigations into the antecedents that reflect personal motivation, attitude, and commitment have provided insight into the influence of individual members on organizational change (Smylie & Evans, 2006). “Systems change when enough kindred spirits coalesce in the same change direction” (Fullan, 1998, p. 143). Under the constant pressures for improving school performance and the subsequent federal evaluation of schools, change is a pervasive condition for many schools.

Individually and together, leadership and teacher commitment to change operate to advance or restrict the advancement of school reform (Datnow & Stringfield, 2000;
Fullan, 2007; Hall & Hord, 2001; Herscovitch & Myer, 2002; Hord et al., 1984). Thus, the literature purported that both the leadership at the helm of change and the commitment of followers are necessary to move forward with change. While a substantial portion of the research on change focused on the behaviors of leaders during the change process, school leadership and teacher commitment to change have not been fully explored in understanding the phenomenon of school reform. The purpose of this study was to describe teachers’ commitment to change and to examine perceptions of school leadership in relation to a purported model of transformational leadership for change within the conditions of ninth grade reform.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do teachers perceive themselves in terms of affective, continuance, or normative types of commitment to change in the implementation of ninth grade as a school-within-a-school?

2. What are teachers’ perceptions of the school leadership style in the implementation of ninth grade as a school-within-a-school?

3. What is the correlation between commitment to change and school leadership styles in the implementation of ninth grade as a school-within-a-school?

4. What is the correlation between commitment to change and subscales of school leadership styles in the implementation of ninth grade as a school-within-a-school?
5. To what extent are the leadership outcomes of satisfaction, effectiveness, and extra effort evidenced by teachers in the implementation of ninth grade as a school-within-a-school?

Profile of Academy Implementation in the District

In accordance with the purpose of this study, an examination of teachers’ commitment and associated school leadership was undertaken during the systemic reform of ninth grade in one Florida school district. Centrally located, this district serves approximately 90,000 students with a reported 63% poverty rate as defined by free and reduced lunch status. In 2009, 14 district high schools reported a ninth grade population of 6,552 students. The population data was disaggregated as 52% White, 22% Hispanic, and 21% Black with the remaining 5% represented by Asian, Indian, and Multiracial classifications. As evidenced, the graduation rate shows yearly improvements over a recent three year period. Non-promotion rates have decreased in contrast to fluctuating dropout rates (FLDOE)

Table 1

District Profile for Graduation, Dropout, and Ninth Grade Non-promotion Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Graduation</th>
<th>Dropout</th>
<th>Non-promotion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>70.6%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>73.6%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>74.7%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Graduation, dropout, and non-promotion rates are represented as percentages. Non-promotion values are for ninth grade.
Leadership for academy implementation. Devised to address the root problems of inadequate high school outcomes, a central Florida school district undertook a district wide reform of ninth grade. A considerable investment of time and resources was directed toward the development of a small school model within the larger school setting. Conversations that focused on the rationale for this plan flowed along an interactional pathway between the Office of Secondary Schools and high school administrations. While 2009-2010 was earmarked for full implementation of ninth grade academies, planning and transitional strategies were implemented prior to this time period. Formulated as a top-down initiative, the burden for large-scale implementation was ultimately shifted to building principals. Plans for the daily management of ninth grade academies were determined by each school. Different school level personnel including administrative deans, assistant principals, and master teachers filled supportive roles to assist teachers and monitor students. In support of this initiative for ninth grade, the district assigned funding to the construction of new ninth grade buildings at five high schools while the remaining schools were required to devote an existing structure to the academy until future construction could be evaluated. Construction of the five new ninth grade buildings was completed for the 2009-2010 school year.

A district partnership with the International Center for Leadership in Education provided opportunities for the engagement of school administrators in workshops on strategies targeting the improvement of ninth grade. Emanating from these professional development opportunities emerged a comprehensive list of strategies that had proven successful at high schools designated as academy model schools by the International Center for Leadership in Education. Consequently, the conceptual basis for ninth grade
academy development was derived from this national research on successful high schools.

As primary building administrators, principals hold responsibility for improvement efforts in their schools. Principal development and evaluation is based largely upon the Florida Principal Leadership Standards (2006). Key among these standards are the vision and decision making elements that were critical to creating a school-within-a-school. District expectations prescribed the centrality of the principal in all aspects of school improvement efforts including the comprehensive planning for ninth grade academy implementation. Furthermore, inclusion of student performance into the annual evaluation of school principals places further emphasis on successful school improvement efforts. Even though daily management roles may be dispersed among support personnel, a hierarchal system places the principal at the forefront of directing implementation of ninth grade academies.

**Academy structure and practices.** In May 2009, the school district acquired a 1.3 million dollar grant through the Helios Education Foundation to provide resources for academy implementation. This infusion of funding combined with a special interest by the International Center for Leadership in Education on small school reform has brought attention to the district as a potential model for wide spread change at the high school level. Training by the International Center for Leadership in Education was conducted for teachers in 2010 and a resource guide *Reinventing Ninth Grade*, outlining best practices for ninth grade transition, was provided to each high school.

Equipped with this manual of research-based practices and procedures, a common set of operations were devised for academies. This unitary plan defined four essential
areas for implementation: a) a separate area of the school designated for ninth grade academics; b) interdisciplinary teacher teams with common planning; c) an academic intervention plan for struggling students; d) articulation between middle and high schools. Teacher participation in academies was determined through voluntary participation or administrative placement. Of the 14 high schools, nine used both methods of placement while five relied only upon administrative placement. Consequently, ninth grade teachers in this Florida school district comprised a significant study population to provide perceptions of commitment and leadership during the process of large scale reform.

**Research Population**

Following the purpose of this study, selected ninth grade teachers in 14 high schools in one Florida school district were targeted for this study. The core practices designated for academy implementation placed increased emphasis on the position of ninth grade teacher and prescribed behaviors or tasks beyond those of the conventional role of content teacher. This reform effort across one grade level was well suited to the purpose of this study given that the reform of ninth grade into a school-within-a-school model was a pervasive change throughout the district. A district-wide model of change satisfied the necessary conditions of this research for an aggregate study of leadership and teacher commitment.

A purposive sampling method was employed to determine the research participants. This manner of sampling allowed the researcher to identify participants that were best qualified to provide information for the intended purpose of the study (Creswell, 2005; Fraenkel & Wallen, 1990). The nature of this study that focused on a
single reform was better served by a purposive sample of the population than a random portion. The selected ninth grade teachers also represented a convenience sample since the researcher is employed in the same district. Three criteria were used to determine the purposive sample: 1) the participant must be a currently employed or retired high school teacher; 2) the participant must be currently or previously associated with a freshman academy; 3) the participant must be willing to participate in the study. A database of 320 current and previous ninth grade academy teachers was acquired from the district coordinator of ninth grade academies by this researcher.

Based upon these criteria, respondents to the survey evidenced a range of demographic information regarding gender, age, years of experience, ethnicity, and recent school grade. Eighty-four individuals reported gender. Females comprised the largest group of respondents that chose to identify their gender with 57 (67.9%) females in comparison to 27 (32.1%) males. The primary age group for the respondents was 30-39 with 23 (27.4%) of the 84 participants in this age range. Fourteen (16.7%) respondents indicated under 30 as their age with 19 (22.6%) in the 40-49 range, 18 (21.4%) in the 50-59 age group, and 10 (11.9%) indicated the 60+ age group. In regards to ethnicity, 74 (90.2%) of the 82 individuals who responded to the demographic items were White non-Hispanic. Three (3.7%) individuals indicated Black as well as three (3.7%) selected Hispanic. No respondents indicated Asian as their ethnicity, and two (2.4%) selected the category of other.

The average number of years of teaching experience was indicated by 82 participants. Forty-one (50%) reported having under 10 years of experience. Thirteen (15.9%) respondents indicated the 11-15 years of experience while five (6.1%) reported
having 16-20 years of experience, 10 (12.1%) were in the 21-25 years of experience range, and 13 (15.9%) indicated 26+ years of experience.

The final demographic item referred to the most recent state evaluation of respondents’ schools as indicated by the letter grade of A, B, C, D, or F. For the 84 individuals completing this item, the prevailing response was a grade of C by 52 (61.9%) respondents. Sixteen (19%) individuals indicated a most recent school grade of B while 14 (16.7%) individuals selected a recent school grade of D and two (2.4%) indicated a school grade of A.

**Design of the Study**

A descriptive and correlational research design was used in this study concerning school leadership and teacher commitment to change and the resulting relationship between them under the conditions of ninth grade reform. The value of the descriptive approach lies in the depiction of how a sample population feels or says about a topic (Gliner & Morgan, 2000). Frequencies, percentages, variability, and central tendency measures are typically used to describe the results of descriptive research. The correlational research design is commonly linked to the descriptive method and allows the exploration of relationships between the identified variables of a study (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1990). Taken together, these design models provide the potential for more depth of analysis.

Descriptive designs often employ the use of a survey instrument as a means of obtaining data. Creswell (2005) noted that surveys have proven to be a useful instrument for describing trends, opinions, attitudes, and behaviors of targeted samples or entire populations. Surveys have been used for educational purposes since the implementation
of a national survey of educational systems in 1817. Thereafter, the use of surveys in the social sciences grew during the early part of the nineteenth century. More recently, state and federal organizations have funded survey research as a means of acquiring large-scale response to topics of social or political interest (Creswell, 2005). According to Fowler (2009, p. 1), “The purpose of the survey is to produce statistics, that is, quantitative or numerical descriptions about some aspects of the study population.” The data emerging through these descriptions form a foundation of information about a given population.

Government, business, and social institutions rely upon surveys as one means of access to data that is essential for their continued operation. In education, Thomas (1999) noted that “…educators can use surveys to gather information about many different topics and for many different reasons” (p. 1). Such information can lay the foundation for subsequent educational decisions. While other methods such as direct observation may serve the same ends, surveys can produce information on large numbers of individuals in an efficient and low cost manner. Consequently, a survey provides an appropriate means of gaining the perceptions of school leadership and teacher commitment to ninth grade reform from approximately 320 ninth grade teachers across 14 high schools in one district.

Self-reported information obtained through the survey may be the most feasible method of acquiring subjective information such as perceptions or beliefs (Gonyea, 2005). Two contributing effects, social desirability bias or the halo error, may exist to influence self-reporting. Social desirability bias occurs through the respondents’ desire to appear in a favorable manner to the researcher whereas the halo error refers to an
individual’s general perception of a topic that emerges through a uniformity of responses across multiple questions on that topic. However, social desirability bias is more of a concern in face-to-face interviews with considerably less influence in self-administered questionnaires (Gonyea, 2005).

Survey information can typically be drawn through personal or telephone interviews, mail surveys, and online methods of data collection (Alreck & Settle, 2004; Fraenkel & Wallen, 1990). Personal and telephone interviews have the advantage of developing a conversational relationship between the researcher and respondent. However, the intensive amount of time and money that can be involved in either of these methods may be prohibitive to surveying large numbers in multiple localities. While mail surveys typically provide little interaction between the researcher and participants, they do offer the researcher a means of reaching a large sample of the population and allows respondents more time to consider their responses (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1990). Online surveys have the distinct advantage of an inexpensive means of survey distribution and rapid response format with accessibility to a large population sample (Schaefer & Dillman, 1998). Thus, cost effectiveness and an efficient means of distribution to a large number of individuals contributed to the choice by this researcher to implement an internet based survey for teacher perceptions of school leadership and commitment to ninth grade reform.

Researchers must also be aware of potential drawbacks to the survey method of investigation. One related concern for this method is the response rate. In a review of studies that explored the different modes of survey distribution, Schaefer and Dillman (1998) reported that multiple contacts of participants was the most significant factor for
increasing the rate of return. Personal written contact was another recognized strategy for improving the response rate. Both mail and online surveys that are accompanied by a personalized introductory note tend to improve the likelihood of completion and return (Schaefer & Dillman, 1998). While random non-response may have only a negligible effect, the failure to return by a segment of the targeted population that has similar characteristics or attitudes in connection with the survey objective can create conditions for more biased results (Alreck & Settle, 2004).

Subsequent to the consideration for an appropriate return rate, this researcher developed an initial email invitation to ninth grade teachers for their participation with a follow-up email reminder at the end of one week. “The size of the sample should be large enough so one does not fail to detect significant findings” (Gliner & Morgan, 2000, p. 158). In regards to the statistical value of the research findings, power is one preliminary consideration to support the significance of the results. An increase in sample size can increase the power accordingly. A power value of 0.80 is typically recommended to determine an appropriate sample size for most educational research. For a power of 0.80 and an effect size of .50, a sample size of 85 is generally recommended (Cohen, 1992).

The validity and reliability of the measuring instrument must also be factored into the design of the study (Alreck & Settle, 2004). Validity provides assurance that the instrument measures the topics that it was constructed to assess. For reliability, researchers must determine that the instrument produces consistent responses without random errors. Both validity and reliability lend credibility to the reported results of research studies. To enhance both validity and reliability, Fowler (2009) recommended
careful attention to the construction of survey questions. “Good questionnaires maximize the relationship between the answer recorded and what the researcher is trying to measure” (Fowler, 2009, p. 87). In accordance with consideration for both validity and reliability, survey items for this study were derived from instruments established through prior published research.

**Design of the Instrument**

The instrument in this study was designed in the form of a survey to measure teacher commitment to change and perceptions of school leadership style in connection to ninth grade reform. The identification of measurable objectives constitutes the initial component of survey design (Fowler, 2009). To gain insight into teachers’ understanding of school leadership, the instrument served to elicit their perceptions of attributes of school leaders. As defined by Robbins and Judge (2008), “Perception is a process by which individuals organize and interpret their sensory impressions in order to give meaning to their environment” (p. 139). Following these perceptions, the behaviors of individuals develop from a basis of their constructed reality. As individuals encounter new experiences, different perceptions may develop accordingly. Thus, a changing work environment associated with school reform provides a background for exploring how teachers’ perceive the leadership of schools that are undergoing reform initiatives.

In order to accomplish the dual purpose of investigating ninth grade teachers’ perceptions of leadership and their commitment to the reform of ninth grade, two separate published measurement instruments were merged. The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire 5X (MLQ 5X) was obtained to categorize leadership as transformational, transactional, or passive avoidant and to measure leadership outcomes. The MLQ 5X
contains 45 items to measure several areas of leadership: 20 items for transformational leadership; 8 items for transactional leadership; 8 items for passive avoidant leadership; and 9 items for outcomes of leadership. The information below identifies each leadership characteristic, the related subscale, and the number of survey items included for each subscale (Avolio & Bass, 2004). This survey instrument provided an aggregate view of school leadership style and leadership outcomes across a district setting of the implementation of ninth grade reform.

A separate section of the survey instrument was designed to measure the affective, normative, and continuance levels of commitment to change. Each of these commitment levels respectively conveys the extent to which individuals believe (a) that the change is valuable, (b) that there is an obligation to comply, and (c) that failure to comply would be costly. Meyer developed a method for measuring organizational commitment and subsequently, in collaboration with Herscovitch, adapted this method to specifically address commitment to change. An original survey for commitment to change designed by Meyer and Herscovitch contained 18 items that were divided into three subscales, affective, normative, and continuance, with six items each. This survey was field tested in 2002 with a sample population of 450, producing strong reliabilities ranging from 0.86 to 0.94 for the subscales.

This original published survey for commitment to change was reduced in 2008 by Parish, Cadwallader, and Busch to 11 of the original survey items. Using the modified survey, Parish et al. (2008) conducted research on change with 191 university employees. The reliability values for the modified version were reported as 0.95, 0.91, and 0.87 for affective, normative, and continuance commitment respectively. The shorter 11 item
survey for commitment to change was utilized by this researcher to address the first research question pertaining to teachers’ commitment to ninth grade reform. The 11 items for commitment to change combined with 45 items for leadership style and leadership outcomes produced an instrument with a total of 56 survey items as shown in Appendix A.

Table 2

*Items for Each Leadership Subscale on the MLQ 5X*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Subscale Name</th>
<th>Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transformational</td>
<td>Idealized Attributes</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformational</td>
<td>Idealized Influence</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformational</td>
<td>Inspirational Motivation</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformational</td>
<td>Intellectual Stimulation</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformational</td>
<td>Individualized Consideration</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transactional</td>
<td>Contingent Reward</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transactional</td>
<td>Management by Exception*</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive Avoidant</td>
<td>Management by Exception**</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive Avoidant</td>
<td>Laissez-Faire</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes of Leadership</td>
<td>Extra Effort</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes of Leadership</td>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes of Leadership</td>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Each characteristic of leadership is measured as a separate subscale. The total number of survey items is 45. The single asterisk (*) refers to active management by exception. The double asterisk (**) refers to passive management by exception.
The survey was placed into an online format for availability to 320 ninth grade teachers in one central Florida school district. The introduction to the survey informed participants of the purpose and provided instructions and assurances of confidentiality and anonymity. In the first section of the survey, directions specified that participants should respond to the items for commitment to change on a five-point Likert Scale indicating one for strongly disagree, two for disagree, three for neither agree nor disagree, four for agree, and five for strongly agree. The second section was composed of the 45 questions from the MLQ 5X. Respondents were directed to indicate on a Likert Scale the degree to which each statement described the school leadership. Each item offered five possible answers with a choice of one for not at all, two for once in a while, three for sometimes, four for often, and five for frequently if not always. Demographical information including age, gender, years of experience, ethnicity, and most recent school grade was requested from each participant in the final section.

Data Collection

Quantitative data collection. Quantitative data was collected through an online format using a commercial survey website, Survey Monkey. An introductory email was sent to members of the sample population with a brief explanation of the purpose of the survey, a request for their participation, and a reassurance of confidentiality and anonymity along with the link to the survey website. Participants responded to the 56 item survey pertaining to commitment to change and school leadership using the previously described Likert Scale.

Validity and reliability. This study utilized quantitative items to investigate commitment to change and teachers’ perceptions of school leadership during a large-
scale implementation of ninth grade academies. Two published surveys provided the basis of construction for the instrument for this study. The resulting survey combined measures to assess different types of commitment and perceptions of school leadership during the ninth grade reform. The school leadership measure was developed using items from the MLQ 5X that was obtained online from Mind Garden, Inc. A survey developed in 2002 by John Meyer from the University of Western Ontario and subsequently shortened by Parish et al. (2006) provided the source of items for teacher commitment to change.

The MLQ 5X originated from the longer MLQ which was developed by Bernard Bass and Bruce Avolio approximately 25 years ago. The MLQ has been used with a diverse range of organizational leaders including those from military, educational, manufacturing, government, and correctional institutions in over 30 countries (Avolio & Bass, 2004). As a widely accepted instrument for rating leadership styles, the survey items have been refined and validated through documented studies over time. Confidence in the reliability of the instruments was gained through nine studies involving 2,154 participants from both public and private institutions. Avolio and Bass reported Cronbach alpha values of 0.74 to 0.94 for each leadership subscale. Cronbach’s alpha provides a standard measure of the internal consistency of a measurement instrument. In comparison to the recommendation of a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.60 to 1.0, the reported reliability measures were acceptable values.

The items for commitment to change were first developed by John Meyer and Lynne Herscovitch in 2002 and were based upon John Meyer and Natalie Allen’s research on organizational commitment. In a study involving over a 450 participants,
Meyer and Herscovitch reported an internal reliability for affective, continuance, and normative commitment as 0.94, 0.94, and 0.86 respectively. According to Meyer and Allen (2004), the commitment scales can be adapted to different objectives of organizational commitment without a significant impact on reliability or validity. Building upon the research of Meyer and Herscovitch, Parish et al. (2008) shortened the 18 item instrument to 11 items for commitment to change. Parish et al. (2008) reported Chronbach alpha values of 0.95, 0.87, and 0.91 for affective, continuance, and normative commitment, respectively. Consequently, the reliability remained stable and provided confidence in the measures obtained through this instrument.

In addition to the content validity and internal reliability, the format of the survey was a consideration. This researcher used suggestions from two reference sources in designing the layout of the survey (Cox & Cox, 2008; Thomas, 1999). A carefully planned survey format that has clear and precise directions contributes to respondents providing valid information (Thomas, 1999).

To provide added fidelity to the survey design, an assistant principal and two ninth grade teachers reviewed the survey for clarity of directions, ease of navigation through the instrument, and length of time to complete. Based upon feedback from two of the individuals, changes were made to each of the survey sections regarding the directions in the first and second sections and the format in the final section. The phrase “there are no correct or incorrect responses” was added to the directions for the commitment to change and leadership sections since one reviewer pointed out that this phrase would add clarity to the directions. In the last section, the demographic items were left justified instead of a two column format based upon the recommendation of one
reviewer that a single column was easier to complete and would add assurance that every demographic question would be completed. The three reviewers estimated that completion of the survey should take approximately 10 to 15 minutes.

Once the survey was placed into an online format, the same three individuals were given access and asked to review the survey once again for clarity of directions and ease of navigation. The number of items was a concern for the assistant principal but this was not changed. Upon recommendations from one teacher, I placed the demographic page at the end rather than the beginning. A concern was expressed by one reviewer as to the length of the survey in regards to the response rate but the number of items was not a detail that could be changed. While the ideal length of a survey is difficult to determine, time of response is a consideration for the effect on response rate (Creswell, 2005; Fowler, 2009).

**Data Analysis**

Descriptive statistics enable the researcher to summarize trends in data, reveal the extent of variances in scores, and develop comparisons between scores (Creswell, 2005, p. 182). Central tendencies in descriptive analysis, represented by the mean, median, and mode, determine a set of averages for the data. Variance in responses is typically provided by the standard deviation (Gliner & Morgan, 2000). Frequency distributions present another method of analysis which summaries the occurrence of each variable.

Survey items for commitment to change were sorted into the three subscales of affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. Responses to commitment to change were rated along a continuum of values that ranged from a one for *strongly disagree* to a five for *strongly agree* on a Likert scale. The survey items for
the MLQ 5X were categorically organized into twelve subscales. Five subscales for transformational leadership were represented by idealized attributes, idealized behaviors, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Transactional leadership was associated with two subscales that included contingent reward and management by exception (active). Passive avoidant leadership was represented by the two subscales of management by exception (passive) and laissez-faire. Leadership outcomes were identified by the subscales of satisfaction, effectiveness, and extra effort. A Likert Scale was used to rate responses from a value of one for not at all to a value of five for frequently if not always.

Data collected through the online survey format was transferred into an electronic spreadsheet for organizational purposes and subsequent entry into the Statistical Analysis Software (SAS) 9.3.1 computer program. Ninth grade teachers collectively formed the unit of study based upon the shared experience of the change event and leadership. Although other approaches may exist, one acceptable method of analysis can occur through an average of the participants’ responses to present a cross-situational perspective (Caldwell, Herold, & Fedor, 2004; Kozlowski & Klein, 2000). Consequently, each type of commitment to change, leadership style, and each subscale of leadership were analyzed using the descriptive statistical methods of mean, median, mode, standard deviation, and frequencies. A summary of the research questions, data to be collected, and the method of analysis was organized and presented below.

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### Table 3

**Summary of Research Questions, Data Collection, and Analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Data Collection</th>
<th>Method of Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do teachers perceive themselves in terms of affective, normative, and continuance type of commitment to change in the implementation of a ninth grade as a school-within-a-school?</td>
<td>11 survey items</td>
<td>(mean, median, mode, standard deviation, and frequencies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are teachers’ perceptions of the school leadership style in the implementation of ninth grade as a school-within-a-school?</td>
<td>36 survey items</td>
<td>(mean, median, mode, standard deviation, and frequencies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the correlation between commitment to change and school leadership styles in the implementation of ninth grade as a school-within-a-school?</td>
<td>47 survey items</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the correlation between commitment to change and subscales of leadership styles in the implementation of ninth grade as a school-within-a-school?</td>
<td>47 survey items</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent are the leadership outcomes of satisfaction, effectiveness, and extra effort evidenced by teachers in the implementation of ninth grade as a school-within-a-school?</td>
<td>9 survey items</td>
<td>(mean, median, mode, standard deviation, and frequencies)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* A total of 56 survey items address the four research questions.

The statistical analysis for commitment to change and leadership styles were organized into table formats in Chapter Four. Separate tables were created to display the results for the frequency distributions and measures of central tendency for research questions one, two, and five. A mean, median, mode, and standard deviation were
determined for these three research questions related to commitment, leadership style and outcomes. Frequencies were utilized to support the interpretation of average measures. Frequencies and central tendencies provided analysis of research question one: How do teachers perceive themselves in terms of affective, normative, and continuance type of commitment to change in the implementation of a ninth grade as a school-within-a-school?

Frequencies and central tendencies were employed for research question two and five: (a) What school leadership styles are perceived by teachers in the implementation of ninth grade as a school-within-a-school?; and (b) To what extent are the leadership outcomes of satisfaction, effectiveness, and extra effort evidenced by teachers in the implementation of ninth grade as a school-within-a-school?

In addition to descriptive results, correlation measures were also determined for commitment to change and leadership styles. The resulting values were examined to determine any significant statistical results for the third and fourth research questions: (a) What is the correlation between commitment to change and school leadership styles in the implementation of ninth grade as a school-within-a-school? and (b) What is the correlation between commitment to change and subscales of school leadership styles in the implementation of ninth grade as a school-within-a-school?

**Researcher Role and Ethical Considerations**

The researcher constructed an instrument for survey purposes to investigate commitment to change and leadership styles within the context of ninth grade reform. In the development of this survey instrument, permission was acquired for two online publications with a cost associated in the use of one as shown in Appendix B. Permission
for survey participation was obtained from the institutional review board of the school
district in this study, as shown by Appendix C. This researcher complied with guidelines
concerning the use of the survey instrument.

In the administration of this survey, the ethical position of the researcher must be
considered. During this investigation, the researcher held a position of high school
assistant principal in one high school in the study. In regard for this association, the
researcher implemented strategies to ensure the integrity of the study. All recruitment
and data collection was conducted through a commercial survey provider to minimize
researcher-participant interaction. Research participation was strictly voluntary with an
option to block any further contact. No identifying information linked responses to
participants or individual schools, and the data analysis was conducted in an aggregate
form, thus providing anonymity and minimizing researcher bias.

The requisite online training was completed by the researcher for the University
of South Florida Institutional Review Board. While the potential for harm to participants
was negligible, guidelines for anonymity and confidentiality were followed. Participants
were advised of the purpose of the study and that participation was voluntary with the
option to decline or withdraw at any time. No identifying information was obtained to
determine who participated. Participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality
of all responses. Only the researcher had access to the data, and the records from this
survey will be maintained in a password protected file for a period of five years at the
researcher’s home.
Summary of Methods

This chapter described the methods used in the study of teachers’ commitment to change and their perceptions of school leadership during implementation of ninth grade reform. The development of the research design, research instrument, data collection and analysis, validity and reliability, and researcher responsibilities were explained. In the following chapter, Chapter Four, the survey data and associated analysis is presented.
Chapter Four Findings

This chapter reports the findings of the study. The purpose of the study, research questions, and research design are presented at the beginning of this chapter. A description of the study sample, demographic data, and the selection criteria for the sample are also presented. This chapter then provides an overview of data collection and instrumentation followed by an analysis of the data and a brief summary of the findings.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate and describe teachers’ commitment to change and perceptions of school leadership as compared to the transformational model for change during implementation of ninth grade reform in one Florida school district. In alignment with the endeavors of many high schools to produce more graduates in an on-time manner, educators look to the initial high school year as a critical point in determining students’ successful completion of high school. However, in the development of an alternative conception of the organization of ninth grade, changes may be required that significantly affect the traditional work of high school teachers.

While leadership is a prominent topic in educational literature, less consideration has been given to the style of the school leader under conditions of school reform. Inclusive in this was the deficit of research on the association of school leadership with the commitment of teachers to engaging in such reform. To foster a better understanding of teachers’ commitment to change and perceptions of the accompanying leadership
involved in its occurrence, this study concentrated on a reform as presented through a
district wide redesign of ninth grade into a school-within-a-school format.

**Research Questions**

In accordance with the purpose of this study, the following questions were
addressed in the study.

1. How do teachers perceive themselves in terms of affective, normative, or continuance types of commitment to change in the implementation of ninth grade as a school-within-a-school?

2. What are teachers’ perceptions of the school leadership style in the implementation of ninth grade as a school-within-a-school?

3. What is the correlation between commitment to change and school leadership styles in the implementation of ninth grade as a school-within-a-school?

4. What is the correlation between commitment to change and subscales of school leadership styles in the implementation of ninth grade as a school-within-a-school?

5. To what extent are the leadership outcomes of satisfaction, effectiveness, and extra effort evidenced by teachers in the implementation of ninth grade as a school-within-a-school?

**Research Design**

An online survey instrument was used to collect responses regarding teachers’ commitment to the implementation of ninth grade academies and their perceptions of school leadership during this reform. The design of this study employed both descriptive
and correlational statistics. A mean, median, mode, and standard deviation were calculated to provide a descriptive analysis of the type of commitment to change, leadership style, satisfaction, effectiveness, and extra effort. The mean, median, and mode each identified an average of responses situated within a set of minimum and maximum values. Outliers or anomalies in the responses have greater influence on the mean than other measures of central tendency. Response frequencies were computed to add support to the calculated averages. A consideration of the extent of variance in the responses in comparison to the mean was provided by the standard deviation (Creswell, 2005). To describe the relationship between each type of commitment to change and school leadership style, a Pearson’s product-moment correlation coefficient was computed.

**Research Sample**

Purposive sampling was used to identify ninth grade teachers who were currently or previously associated with the implementation of a ninth grade academy. On this basis, the survey was distributed electronically to 320 teachers in one Florida school district. Of this number, 105 individuals responded to the online survey for a response rate of 33%. Approximately 17% of respondents did not complete any items in the optional demographic section. Since demographics were not included in the analysis, non-response in this area did not affect the statistical outcomes. In regard for the level of impact of the findings, Cohen’s tables indicated that at least 85 participants were necessary to produce a statistical power of 80% power and a medium effect size (Cohen, 1992). Therefore, this study exceeded the expected conventions for educational research.
A specific selection criterion was utilized for this study on ninth grade teachers’ commitment to change and their perceptions of school leadership. The selection of participants included three criteria: 1) the participant must be a currently employed or retired high school teacher; 2) the participant must be currently or previously associated with a freshman academy; 3) the participant must be willing to participate in the study. All 105 survey respondents met these criteria.

**Demographic Data**

The demographics section was the final section of the online survey. A summary of the demographic data for respondents was presented in greater detail in Chapter Three. Consistent with the norms for gender and ethnicity for the teaching profession, females were the primary respondents while approximately one-third were males and all most all were White non-Hispanic. The largest single category of age was reported for the 30-39 range which was followed closely by the 40-49 and 50-59 groups. The balance of experience was approximately equal between those with less than or greater than 10 years teaching experience. Over half of respondents reported a recent school grade of C which reflected the typical school grade earned by high schools in this district.

**Study Instrumentation**

Data for this study was acquired through the use of an online survey constructed from previously published surveys for commitment to change and leadership styles. The initial survey design was developed under the auspices of instrument reliabilities established through prior work by researchers in these two areas. To support the reliability of the resulting survey compiled for this research study, a Cronbach alpha was computed as part of the data analysis process to produce an overall reliability measure of
0.81 for the survey instrument. A Cronbach alpha of this value is designated as good reliability for social science research (Diem & Diem, 2003). In regards for the validity of the survey items, the researcher relied upon the validation of the survey items through multiple prior research studies and by advice from the researchers’ committee, an assistant principal, and two ninth grade academy teachers.

The online survey consisted of three parts as presented in Appendix A. The first section requested that participants rate their commitment to the ninth grade academy implementation on eleven items using a five point Likert scale. In the next section of 45 items, the same individuals were asked to rate their principal school leader on characteristics of leadership with a five point Likert scale. In the final section of the survey, participants were presented an optional demographic section that requested individual information pertaining to the participant’s gender, age, years of educational experience, ethnicity, and most recent school grade. The resulting instrument was comprised of 56 rating items and six demographic questions.

**Quantitative Data Analysis**

Consistent with the purpose of this study, the analysis of the research data was designed to examine teachers’ commitment to change and the related perceptions of leadership in schools experiencing the reform of ninth grade. The mean, median, mode, and standard deviation were determined for the responses to items organized as commitment, to change, leadership style, and leadership outcomes. The statistical mean represents the arithmetic average of responses that is sensitive to outlying indicators. The mean values were further validated by determining a set of distribution frequencies that displayed the most frequent responses. Such frequencies are resistant to outlying effects.
For the purpose of examining the relationship between each type of commitment to change and leadership style, a Pearson $r$ was calculated to describe the strength and direction of the association between the two areas. While a statistical connection may be established between sets of variables, the existence of a relationship does not translate into an interpretation of causality (Creswell, 2005). Data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Analysis Software (SAS) 9.1.3.

**Presentation of Findings**

The following section presents the research questions and an overview of the survey items pertaining to each question. Items related to commitment to change were delineated as affective, normative, and continuance types of commitment. Survey questions concerning leadership styles were organized as transformational, transactional, and passive/avoidant forms for measurement purposes. Transformational leadership was further defined by the five subscales of idealized attributes, idealized behaviors, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. The subscales of contingent reward and management by exception (active) comprised transactional leadership. Passive/avoidant leadership was depicted by the subscales of management by exception (passive) and laissez-faire. The outcomes of leadership were represented through the subscales of effectiveness, satisfaction, and extra effort.

The frequencies served as supporting descriptive documentation and were referenced in relation to measures of central tendencies. Frequencies assisted in a more complete interpretation of information provided by the mean, median, and mode. Following a more detailed description of each variable indicator, the reported
frequencies, measures of central tendency and Pearson correlations were organized according to each research question.

**Research question one.** A brief summary and analysis of teachers’ reported commitment to change was formulated in response to the first research question.

How do teachers perceive themselves in terms of affective, normative, or continuance types of commitment to change in the implementation of ninth grade as a school-within-a-school?

Commitment to change was generally noted in the literature to be a mindset regarding personal actions for a designated change. The construct of commitment to change was defined as three different types: affective commitment; normative commitment; and continuance commitment. The first eleven survey items measured commitment to change. For each item, individuals rated themselves on a five point scale of one for *strongly disagree*, two for *disagree*, three for *neither disagree nor agree*, four for *agree*, and five for *strongly agree*.

Affective commitment to change was described as arising through individuals’ belief in an organizational change and personal alignment with the related goals of the change. Affective change was measured by four items: I believe in the value of this change; this change is a good strategy for this organization; this change serves an important purpose; and things will be better because of this change.

Normative commitment represented an overall attitude of support for change arising from a sense of obligation to adhere to responsibilities in association with maintaining attachment to the organization. Four items pertaining to normative commitment were presented to participants: I would feel guilty about opposing this
change; I do not feel it would be right of me to oppose this change; I feel obligated to support this change; and I feel a sense of duty to work for this change.

Continuance commitment was represented in the literature as a sense of apprehension regarding employment status with the organization in the event of non-compliance with change. The survey presented three items to assess this type of commitment: it would be too costly for me to resist this change; I have too much at stake to resist this change; and I feel pressure to go along with this change.

The statistical analysis of the types of commitment to change was accomplished through determining the frequency distribution and the measures of central tendency for the group of respondents. Affective commitment displayed the largest percentage of responses at agree and strongly agree end of the scale thus indicating that slightly more than three-fourths of the respondents reported to value the change.

Table 4

Frequency and Percentage Distribution for Commitment to Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commitment</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affective</td>
<td>5(4.4%)</td>
<td>4(4.2%)</td>
<td>16(14.8%)</td>
<td>51(41.9%)</td>
<td>36(34.7%)</td>
<td>105(100.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normative</td>
<td>7(6.9%)</td>
<td>23(22.0%)</td>
<td>26(25.0%)</td>
<td>35(33.2%)</td>
<td>14(12.9%)</td>
<td>105(100.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuance</td>
<td>15(14.6%)</td>
<td>32(29.9%)</td>
<td>31(29.6%)</td>
<td>21(19.9%)</td>
<td>6(6.0%)</td>
<td>105(100.00%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Numbers represent the Likert scale values of 1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=neither agree nor disagree; 4=agree; and 5=strongly agree.
For continuance commitment, approximately 45% of respondents reported to disagree or strongly disagree with perceived costs for non-compliance with change while almost 30% indicated to neither agree nor disagree with any perceived penalty. One-fourth of respondents reported to neither agree nor disagree with an obligation to change whereas almost one-half expressed such an obligation. Thus, in general, the strongest agreement was found for affective commitment followed by the results for normative commitment.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commitment</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>Mdn</th>
<th>Mo</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affective</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normative</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuance</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

Inclusion of the minimum and maximum values added one method of validation for the reported statistics. The mean for normative commitment as supported by the frequencies and mode indicated that respondents more frequently chose agree in regards to an obligation to support the change. For affective agreement, the mean indicated that respondents more often selected agree in relation to the value and purpose of the intended reform initiative. The frequencies and mode further supported the reported mean value of affective commitment. The mean as supported by the frequencies and mode revealed that respondents more often tended to select disagree or neither agree nor disagree
concerning continuance commitment. This view related to such items as feeling pressure for change or perceiving personal cost for opposing change. Therefore, the mean and mode in accordance with the frequencies indicated the presence of affective and normative commitments for ninth grade reform.

**Research question two.** A description and analysis of teachers’ perceptions of school leadership as determined through the MLQ (5X) survey were composed in alignment with the second research question.

What are teachers’ perceptions of the school leadership style in the implementation of ninth grade as a school-within-a-school?

These leadership styles were defined as transformational, transactional, and passive/avoidant. Transformational leadership was typified as raising followers’ consciousness about the value of identified goals and the intended methods for obtaining them. Participants responded to each item on a scale of one to five with one as *not at all*, two as *once in a while*, three as *sometimes*, four as *often*, and five as *frequently if not always*. The mean, median, mode, and standard deviation were presented as measures of central tendency for each leadership subscale and in total for the leadership styles of transformational, transactional, and passive/avoidant. This arithmetic average was further supported by evidence of responses most frequently chosen by participants in the form of the mode.

The subscale of transformational leadership identified as idealized attributes was measured by four items, 10, 18, 21, and 25, on the survey on leadership. Idealized attributes concerned leadership characteristics that inspire others to a collective vision along with trust and confidence in the leadership. The associated subscale of idealized
behaviors denoted a moral and ethical stance in leaders’ actions as they build the relationships necessary for the collective work toward that vision. Idealized behaviors were assessed by items 6, 14, 23, and 34. Together these two subscales represented the idealized influence of leaders striving to transform organizations.

Inspirational motivation was measured through items 9, 13, 26, and 36. This subscale highlighted the leadership characteristics that promote what is important for the organization and convey the positive expectations of what should be accomplished. Items 2, 8, 30, and 32 were related to intellectual stimulation. The subscale of intellectual stimulation pertained to leaders who motivate others to question beliefs and assumptions and to problem solve creatively. The transformational subscale of individual consideration was related to items of 15, 19, 29, and 31. This latter subscale was concerned with treating others uniquely in regards to their concerns and developmental needs (Avolio & Bass, 2004).

The value for often on the Likert scale appeared consistently as the most frequently indicated response for each subscale of transformational leadership as well as the summary construct of this leadership style. Almost 60% of respondents indicated a level of idealized behavior at the often to frequently if not always level. A similar level of response was reported for idealized attributes. Approximately two-thirds of responses for inspirational motivation were located at the often to frequently if not always part of the Likert scale. Intellectual stimulation was reported by approximately 60% of respondents as sometimes to often in evidence. While almost one-half of respondents indicated sometimes or often for individualized consideration, one-third reported once in a while to not at all. For the total leadership style, slightly more than one-half of responses
indicated leaders as *often* or *frequently if not always* having transformational characteristics whereas nearly one-fourth indicated that leaders *sometimes* exhibited transformational characteristics.

Table 6

*Frequency and Percentage Distribution for Transformational Leadership and Subscales*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Idealized Attributes</td>
<td>5(4.7%)</td>
<td>12(11.2%)</td>
<td>26(25.2%)</td>
<td>36(34.6%)</td>
<td>26(24.3%)</td>
<td>105(100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealized Behaviors</td>
<td>4(3.9%)</td>
<td>12(11.9%)</td>
<td>24(22.6%)</td>
<td>38(36.3%)</td>
<td>27(25.3%)</td>
<td>105(100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualized</td>
<td>15(14.3%)</td>
<td>20(19.1%)</td>
<td>24(22.6%)</td>
<td>27(26.2%)</td>
<td>19(17.9%)</td>
<td>105(100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspirational</td>
<td>2(1.5%)</td>
<td>11(11.0%)</td>
<td>20(19.0%)</td>
<td>43(41.0%)</td>
<td>29(27.6%)</td>
<td>105(100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual</td>
<td>9(9.0%)</td>
<td>18(17.3%)</td>
<td>32(29.9%)</td>
<td>33(31.6%)</td>
<td>13(12.2%)</td>
<td>105(100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformational</td>
<td>7(6.7%)</td>
<td>15(14.1%)</td>
<td>25(23.8%)</td>
<td>36(34.0%)</td>
<td>22(21.5%)</td>
<td>105(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Numbers represent the Likert scale values of 1=not at all; 2=once in a while; 3=sometimes; 4=often; and 5=frequently if not always.*
Table 7

Mean, Median, Mode, and Standard Deviation for Transformational Leadership (n=105)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$Mdn$</th>
<th>$Mo$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
<th>$Min$</th>
<th>$Max$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Idealized Attributes</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealized Behaviors</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualized Consideration</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspirational Motivation</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Stimulation</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformational</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

Inspirational motivation emerged with a mean value that indicated leadership as often associated with inspiring enthusiasm and high expectations. Comparable means for idealized attributes and behaviors as supported by the frequencies and mode indicated that participants reported leadership as often having characteristics and behaviors that inspired confidence and trust in a vision of what could be attained. The compiled findings of the means for intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration equated to a view that leaders sometimes or often fostered critical thinking and concern.
for personal needs. The means were further supported by the frequencies and mode for the latter subscales of transformational leadership. In general, teachers perceived leaders as often exhibiting the characteristics of transformational leadership.

Transactional leadership has been generally viewed as an exchange of rewards and consequences in connection to the accomplishment of assigned tasks. Two subscales, contingent reward and management by exception (active) represented two aspects of this leadership style. Survey items 1, 11, 16, and 35 were indicators for contingent reward and 4, 22, 24, and 27 were linked to management by exception (active). Management by exception (active) took into account an expectation for followers’ adherence to rules and regulations while contingent reward established the expectancy of gaining a reward for positive outcomes.

Table 8

*Frequency and Percentage Distribution for Transactional Leadership and Subscales*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contingency</td>
<td>8(7.4%)</td>
<td>13(12.2%)</td>
<td>31(29.4%)</td>
<td>32(30.9%)</td>
<td>21(20.2%)</td>
<td>105(100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reward</td>
<td>21(20.2%)</td>
<td>28(26.8%)</td>
<td>33(31.3%)</td>
<td>18(17.5%)</td>
<td>5(4.2%)</td>
<td>105(100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management by Exception</td>
<td>15(13.8%)</td>
<td>20(19.4%)</td>
<td>32(30.3%)</td>
<td>25(24.2%)</td>
<td>13(12.3%)</td>
<td>105(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Numbers represent the Likert scale values of 1=not at all; 2=once in a while; 3=sometimes; 4=often; and 5=frequently if not always.
Approximately 60% of respondents indicated *sometimes* to *often* for contingent reward.

Fifty-eight percent indicated *sometimes* to *once in a while* for management by exception (active) while 20% indicated *not at all*. For the total leadership style, approximately 55% of respondents reported that leaders *sometimes* to *often* exhibited transactional characteristics.

Table 9

*Mean, Median, Mode, and Standard Deviation for Transactional Leadership (n=105)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>Mdn</th>
<th>Mo</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contingent Reward</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management by Exception</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transactional</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

A mean of 3.44 and a median four for contingent reward signified that participants reported leaders as *often* specifying the goals to be accomplished and the anticipated rewards for completion. The findings of a mean of 2.59 and median of three for management by exception (active) indicated that leaders *sometimes* focused on mistakes and failures. The selection of the means for contingency reward and management by exception (active) were supported by the modes 4 and 3 respectively. In
general, respondents viewed leaders as *sometimes* having characteristics of transactional leadership while the more specific behavior of contingent reward was more *often* evident.

The third leadership style, a passive/avoidant form, was typified by minimal interactions in the leadership role with a tendency to refrain from intervening in issues and making decisions. Two subscales, management by exception (passive) and laissez-faire, comprised the assessment of this leadership style. Management by exception (passive) was measured through survey items 3, 12, 17, and 20 and items 5, 7, 28, and 33 pertained to laissez-faire.

Table 10

*Frequency and Percentage Distribution for Passive/Avoidant Leadership and Subscales*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management by Exception</td>
<td>37(35.0%)</td>
<td>28(27.3%)</td>
<td>25(23.4%)</td>
<td>12(11.9%)</td>
<td>3(2.4%)</td>
<td>105(100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laissez-Faire</td>
<td>48(45.5%)</td>
<td>29(28.1%)</td>
<td>19(18.6%)</td>
<td>7(6.3%)</td>
<td>2(1.5%)</td>
<td>105(100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive/Avoidant</td>
<td>42(40.2%)</td>
<td>29(27.7%)</td>
<td>22(21.0%)</td>
<td>10(9.1%)</td>
<td>2(1.9%)</td>
<td>105(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Numbers represent the Likert scale values of 1=not at all; 2=once in a while; 3=sometimes; 4=often; and 5=frequently if not always.

For the leadership subscale of management by exception (passive), almost two-thirds of respondents indicated *once in a while* to *not at all* whereas approximately one-third reported *sometimes* to *often* for that subscale. Almost three-fourths of respondents reported *once in a while* to *not at all* for the subscale of laissez-faire. For the total
leadership style, two-thirds of respondents indicated that leaders *once in a while* to *not at all* exhibited passive/avoidant characteristics.

Table 11

*Mean, Median, Mode, and Standard Deviation for Passive/Avoidant Leadership (n=105)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>Mdn</th>
<th>Mo</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management by Exception</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laissez-Faire</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive/Avoidant</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

The means for both management by exception (passive) and laissez-faire were situated at 2.19 and 1.90 respectively. The selection of the means for both subscales of passive/avoidant leadership was supported by the frequencies and mode 1. In general, the characteristics of passive/avoidant leadership were infrequently perceived as indicated by indicators of *not at all* or *once in a while.*

**Research question three.** A summation and analysis of the results of the investigation of a relationship between teachers’ commitment to change and school leadership style were presented through the third research question.

What is the correlation between commitment to change and school leadership styles in the implementation of ninth grade as a school-within a-school?
Commitment to change was delineated as affective, normative, and continuance. An examination of these three types of commitment in connection with the three forms of leadership as defined by transformational, transactional, and passive/avoidant was presented in the analysis of this research.

Using SAS 9.1.3 software, a proc corr analysis was performed to determine the existence of a relationship between each type of commitment to change and each leadership style. A Pearson Correlation Coefficient was computed as an acceptable method of investigation (Creswell, 2005; Gay & Airasian, 2003). Correlation values range from -1 to +1 and were considered significant at $p < .05$ (Creswell, 2005).

Table 12

Summary Bivariate Correlation Results for Commitment and Leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>AC</th>
<th>NC</th>
<th>CC</th>
<th>TRANSF</th>
<th>TRANSAC</th>
<th>PA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AC</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC</td>
<td>.125*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC</td>
<td>-.224*</td>
<td>.411*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRANSF</td>
<td>.091</td>
<td>.123*</td>
<td>-.039</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRANSAC</td>
<td>.016</td>
<td>.082</td>
<td>.076</td>
<td>.248*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA</td>
<td>-.021</td>
<td>-.082</td>
<td>.086</td>
<td>-.276*</td>
<td>-.253*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * = .05, AC = affective commitment, NC = normative leadership CC = continuance commitment, TRANSF = transformational leadership, TRANSAC = transactional leadership, PA = passive/avoidant leadership.
The findings showed a significant positive correlation between transformational leadership and normative commitment.

**Research question four.** Further analysis was conducted between the subscales of each leadership style and commitment to change.

What is the correlation between commitment to change and subscales of school leadership styles in the implementation of ninth grade as a school within-a-school?

Table 13

*Summary Bivariate Correlation Results for Commitment and Transformational Subscales*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>AC</th>
<th>NC</th>
<th>CC</th>
<th>IA</th>
<th>IB</th>
<th>IM</th>
<th>IS</th>
<th>IC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AC</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IA</td>
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<td>IC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* * = .05, AC = affective commitment; NC = normative commitment; CC = continuance commitment; IA = idealized attributes; IB = idealized behaviors; IM = inspirational motivation; IS = intellectual stimulation; and IC = individualized consideration.
For transformational leadership, two subscales showed significant positive correlations with affective commitment. Both individualized consideration and intellectual consideration correlated at the $p<.05$ level. Normative commitment correlated significantly and positively with all but the individualized consideration subscale of transformational leadership at the $p<.05$ level. No significant correlations were determined for continuous commitment and any transformational subscale.

The two subscales of transactional leadership were analyzed for correlations with each type of commitment to change. Contingent reward was correlated significantly and positively with normative commitment at the $p<.05$ level.

Table 14

*Summary Bivariate Correlation Results for Commitment and Transactional Subscales*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>AC</th>
<th>NC</th>
<th>CC</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>MBEA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AC</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>NC</td>
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<tr>
<td>CC</td>
<td>-.224*</td>
<td>.411*</td>
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<tr>
<td>CR</td>
<td>.065</td>
<td>.231*</td>
<td>.058</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MBEA</td>
<td>.015</td>
<td>.082</td>
<td>.076</td>
<td>.285*</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* * = .05, AC = affective commitment, NC = normative commitment, CC = continuance commitment, CR = contingent reward, MBEA = management by exception active.
An examination also was conducted to determine the relationship between the two subscales of passive/avoidant leadership and each type of commitment to change.

### Table 15

**Summary Bivariate Correlation Results for Commitment and Passive/Avoidant Subscales**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>AC</th>
<th>NC</th>
<th>CC</th>
<th>MBEP</th>
<th>LF</th>
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</thead>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC</td>
<td>.125*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC</td>
<td>-.224*</td>
<td>.411*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MBEP</td>
<td>-.021</td>
<td>-.082</td>
<td>.086</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LF</td>
<td>.029</td>
<td>-.074</td>
<td>.083</td>
<td>.440*</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* * = .05, AC = affective commitment; NC = normative commitment; CC = continuance commitment; MBEP = management by exception passive; and LF = laissez-faire.

No significant correlation measures emerged for the subscale of management by exception (passive) or laissez-faire with the three types of commitment—affective, normative, or continuance.

**Summary of Correlations**

No significant correlations emerged between affective commitment to change and the overall construct of transformational, transactional, or passive/avoidant leadership style. However, significant correlation measures were determined to exist between affective commitment and two individual subscales, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration, for transformational leadership. Normative commitment
correlated significantly with transformational leadership as well as with four of the five subscales of transformational leadership—idealized attributes, idealized behaviors, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation. A Pearson $r$ value indicated a positive linear relationship between the reported obligation to support organizational change, as defined by normative commitment, and respondents’ reported perceptions of transformational leadership. No significant correlation emerged for normative commitment and the subscale individualized consideration. For transactional leadership, the subscale contingent reward was also significantly correlated with normative commitment.

**Research question five.** Outcomes of effectiveness, job satisfaction, and extra effort were determined for teachers experiencing change as indicated by the fifth research question.

To what extent are the leadership outcomes of satisfaction, effectiveness, and extra effort evidenced by teachers in the implementation of ninth grade as a school-within-a-school?

Successful outcomes pertain to leaders’ motivational influence on followers’ extra effort, the leaders’ effectiveness in facilitating interactions with others, and the resulting satisfaction gleaned by those individuals experiencing these methods (Avolio & Bass, 2004). Satisfaction was measured by survey items 38 and 41. Items 37, 40, 43, and 45 assessed effectiveness while extra effort pertained to item numbers 39, 42, and 44.
Table 16

*Frequency and Percentage Distribution for Leadership Outcomes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>1 (1.2%)</th>
<th>2 (14.4%)</th>
<th>3 (26.4%)</th>
<th>4 (32.9%)</th>
<th>5 (25.2%)</th>
<th>Total (100%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>4 (3.9%)</td>
<td>17 (15.9%)</td>
<td>24 (22.8%)</td>
<td>34 (32.7%)</td>
<td>26 (24.6%)</td>
<td>105 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra Effort</td>
<td>10 (9.6%)</td>
<td>21 (19.9%)</td>
<td>24 (22.3%)</td>
<td>29 (27.9%)</td>
<td>21 (20.3%)</td>
<td>105 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Numbers represent the Likert scale values of 1=not at all; 2=once in a while; 3=sometimes; 4=often; and 5=frequently if not always.

For each leadership outcome, the largest percentage was reported for the Likert scale value of *often* observed. Satisfaction with leadership was reported at a level of *sometimes* to *often* by approximately 60% of respondents. Almost 58% of respondents indicated *often* to *frequently if not always* for leadership effectiveness. For extra effort, 50% of respondents reported this leadership outcome as *sometimes* to *often* while almost 30% indicated *once in a while* to *not at all* for this outcome.

Table 17

*Mean, Median, Mode, and Standard Deviation for Leadership Outcomes (n=105)*

<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>3.66</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra Effort</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* M=mean, Mdn=median, Mo=mode, SD=standard deviation, Min=minimum, and Max =maximum.
The mean and mode indicators for leadership outcomes were supported by frequency measures. These findings indicated an average response of often for satisfaction with leaders’ methods and leaders’ effectiveness. In conjunction with the frequencies, the mode represented an average that individuals often exerted extra effort.

**Summary of Chapter Four**

Several key findings emerged in the analysis of teacher commitment to change and leadership styles. Approximately three-fourths of respondents expressed a level of agree to strongly agree with affective commitment to change along with a mean value that substantiated agreement with the goals and value of the change. Almost half of the individuals acknowledged an obligation to support change while almost as many disagreed with any perceived costs for failure to support change.

The teachers who participated in this study generally reported that they perceived the principal school leadership as often exhibiting the characteristics of transformational leadership. The combined transformational characteristics of idealized influence and inspirational motivation were indicated at the often to frequently if not always level for at least 60% of respondents. For intellectual stimulation, sixty percent of responses were concentrated at the sometimes to often level. While about one-half of respondents also indicated sometimes to often for individualized consideration, about one-third perceived this characteristic as once in a while to not at all. Transactional leadership was also evident in that respondents generally reported leaders as sometimes evidencing transactional traits. The transactional component, contingent reward, emerged as a leadership characteristic that was reported by 60% of respondents as sometimes to often evident. A comparable percentage of respondents reported management by exception
(active) at the level of sometimes to once in a while. Passive/avoidant leadership was largely perceived as once in a while to not at all. The passive/avoidant subscale, management by exception (passive) was indicated by two-thirds of responses at the once in a while to not at all level while three-fourths indicated this level for the subscale of laissez-faire.

In determining the existence of any relationship between commitment to change and leadership style, several statistically significant points emerged for normative commitment, identified as an obligation to support change, and transformational leadership. The transformational subscales of idealized attributes, idealized behavior, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation demonstrated significantly positive associations with normative commitment. One subscale of transactional leadership, contingent reward, was also found to be significantly and positively related to normative commitment. This association of normative commitment with transformational leadership and contingent reward suggests that leaders engage in consistent communication about the ideals and expectations of change, establish an environment of mutual trust, and inspire collaborative interactions among organizational members.

Affective commitment, denoted by a belief in the value of change, was significantly related to the transformational characteristics of intellectual stimulation and individual consideration. This association of an affective perspective of change with individual thinking and support alludes to the importance of building a foundation of knowledge and skills at the individual teacher level. The result for these two transformational characteristics in concert with affective commitment was suggestive of leadership that encourages organizational members to be reflective about their work,
think creatively, and work cooperatively to set new standards of practice. No significant relationships were determined for continuance commitment and leadership styles.

Satisfaction with the methods used by leaders, the effectiveness of leaders, and extra effort were apparent outcomes expressed by respondents as often evident. While almost 60% of respondents indicated a level of sometimes to often for satisfaction, a comparable percentage perceived leadership effectiveness at the level of often to frequently if not always. Approximately half of respondents indicated extra effort as sometimes to often.

This chapter presented the findings from the study on teachers’ commitment to the implementation of ninth grade academies and their perceptions of school leadership. Chapter Five presents a discussion of the findings, limitations of the study, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research.
Chapter Five Summary and Discussion

An expanse of literature highlighted a recurring interest in the area of school improvement. Issues of student performance as well as timely progression toward high school graduation have created a sense of urgency in some Florida schools to produce better results. In response to such demands, schools may embark upon new avenues of purpose and practice. Rather than a simple event, school reform concerns a complex set of professional interactions. At the core of this phenomenon of change is a perceptual framework that individuals bring to the work of improving schools. Individuals’ interpretation of people and events around them give meaning to their environment. Such interpretations are not constructed in response to an absolute reality but are formed as they filter through the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of individuals. Hence, the perceptions of commitment and leadership emanating from this study were examined in light of a conceptual model of commitment and leadership for change.

A comparative examination of school leadership and commitment of teachers to school reform offered opportunity to examine the theoretical basis of each construct in a system-wide approach to change. Expanding the conceptual foundation of each contributes to a better understanding of the individuals involved in organizational change. Thus, the convergence of these two human resource elements comprised the focus of this study.
Purpose of the study

The prominent roles that educators play in reform initiatives were well represented in the literature on successful school change. While the literature on school reform generally posited that leadership was critical to paving the way for reform initiatives, less attention was placed on the emergent leadership styles of those individuals facilitating these initiatives. As change unfolds for individuals, the literature also failed to fully explain the commitment of teachers to engage in reform efforts.

To more fully explore both the leadership and commitment involved in change, this study endeavored to provide a monocular perspective in its concentration on a singular reform initiative in one Florida school district. In response to the pressing concern for greater high school outcomes, a Florida district directed attention to changing the traditional format of ninth grade across 14 high schools.

Proffered as a panacea for the ills of large comprehensive high schools, ninth grade academies represented a large scale investment of leaders and teachers in a singular initiative across high schools within this district. Goals of improving student outcomes as specified by academic grades, test scores, and social acclimation to high school were set as a common focus for achieving better long term results for high school graduation rates. With the potential to produce considerable benefits for student outcomes along with better state and federal school evaluations, academy implementation emerged as a “high stakes” initiative. Thus, the purpose of this study was to provide a broader view of teachers’ commitment to change and their perceptions of leadership style in relation to the theoretical construct of transformational leadership in school change.
Research Questions

Consistent with the purpose of this study, the following questions guided the investigation of teacher commitment to change and perceptions of leadership style.

1. How do teachers perceive themselves in terms of affective, normative, or continuance types of commitment to change in the implementation of ninth grade as a school-within-a-school?

2. What are teachers’ perceptions of the school leadership style in the implementation of ninth grade as a school-within-a-school?

3. What is the correlation between commitment to change and school leadership styles in the implementation of ninth grade as a school-within-a-school?

4. What is the correlation between commitment to change and subscales of school leadership styles in the implementation of ninth grade as a school-within-a-school?

5. To what extent are the leadership outcomes of satisfaction, effectiveness, and extra effort evidenced by teachers in the implementation of ninth grade as a school-within-a-school?

Context of the Study

This study examined the spectrum of teachers’ commitment to change and their perceptions of leadership during a district-wide reform for ninth grade in one Florida school district. This school district is ranked among the largest 40 school districts nationally and is the eighth largest school district in Florida. Overall, the district received a grade of “B” during each year from 2008 to 2010 through Florida’s accountability
system for districts and schools. Ninth grade students demonstrate yearly performance through the reading and mathematics portions of the FCAT. For the years 2008, 2009, and 2010, the percentages of ninth grade students scoring proficient in reading were reported as 38%, 38%, and 39%, respectively. For the same time period, the math results were 58%, 59%, and 58%.

During the period 2009-2010, approximately 2,458 of the district’s 7,253 teachers taught at the secondary level. Twenty-eight percent of secondary teachers held degrees above the bachelor level. The demographics for secondary teachers consisted of 64% female, 36% male, 84% White, 10% Black, 5% Hispanic with 1% as other ethnicities. In the same time period, the district reported 7,396 ninth grade students. Ninth grade demographics were represented by 48% White, 22% Black, 25% Hispanic, and 5% as other ethnicities.

All fourteen high schools were engaged in the district-wide initiative to establish an academy structure within the high school unit. The shift in focus to a small school format was undertaken to improve student outcomes and subsequently, high school graduation rates. In collaboration with the International Center for Leadership in Education, this Florida school district developed the parameters of a ninth grade academy within the larger school structure. Although developed as a district level initiative with commonality of structure and practice across schools, each high school assumed responsibility for site level implementation. As the primary leaders, high school principals in the district were accountable for school level outcomes as well as improvement plans.
The implementation of a ninth grade reform model across this Florida school district precipitated considerable investment by the district in resources to advance the initiative. New construction of five academy buildings, a 1.3 million dollar grant, and a partnership with the International Center for Leadership in Education underscored the importance of the purpose of the reform. While planning for each ninth grade academy was delegated to each school, a common set of standards was applied to all. The School year 2009-2010 was designated as the year for full implementation in all fourteen high schools.

Professional development for this reform was provided through conference participation with the International Center for Leadership in Education during the summers of 2009 and 2010. Each high school principal, along with a team of a three to four academy personnel, was offered the opportunity to attend one or both conference events that featured national level model schools. Conference participation afforded selected academy teachers and school level administration access to information on successful ninth grade academies. A subsequent one day district level professional training for all ninth grade academy teachers was provided in January, 2010 to offer broader exposure to recommended practices.

Sample Population

The sample for this study was comprised of teachers in the district with existing or prior associations to ninth grade academy implementation. In determining a purposive sample, a set of criteria was employed for the selection of participants: 1) the participant must be a currently employed or retired high school teacher; 2) the participant must be currently or previously associated with a freshman academy; 3) the participant must be
willing to participate in the study. The resulting sample totaled 320 potential participants who were invited to participate in an electronic survey to determine measures of teacher commitment to change as well as their perceptions of leadership style. A response rate of 33% was achieved with 105 respondents.

**Study Instrumentation**

A three part electronic survey instrument served the dual purpose of measuring teacher commitment and perceptions of leadership style. In the initial section, items for commitment originated through the work of organizational commitment by John Meyer. A commercially available instrument, the MLQ (5X) provided items for leadership in the second section and the final section contained demographic questions. The MLQ (5X) and earlier versions of this instrument have been used in over 30 countries to investigate leadership in a wide array of institutions including military, industry, business, religious organizations, and schools (Avolio & Bass, 2004).

Participants responded to items for commitment and leadership using a five point Likert Scale. For items pertaining to a commitment to the implementation of ninth grade academies, participants indicated responses that ranged from a one for *strongly disagree* to a five for *strongly agree*. The range of responses for leadership style was one for *not at all* to five for *frequently if not always*. Five optional demographic questions were placed at the end of the survey that was available online to participants for a two week period.

**Discussion**

This study sought to explore the important issue of both teacher commitment and perception of school leadership in a unified initiative to conform ninth grade into an
academy model across the high schools in one Florida school district. Previous research on educational change conveyed a general consensus on the importance of both school leadership and the commitment of teachers in schools that embark upon effective school reform (Calabrese, 2002; Elmore, 2004; Foster, 2005; Fullan, 2007; Hall & Hord, 2001). Prior studies that considered associations between commitment and leadership promoted a model of high affective commitment in connection with high transformational leadership. Thus, in addition to examining the presence of these two constructs within the context of school reform, this research sought to add to the evidence in the literature regarding the theoretical connections between each type of commitment to change and leadership styles.

Although the leadership style of those at the helms of schools may be categorized as transformational, transactional, and passive/avoidant, the research literature has promoted the transformational form to the forefront of studies on school change (Geijsel et al., 2003; Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006a; 2006b). Along with these three leadership styles, this study examined three types of commitment to change represented as affective, normative, and continuance. In 2002, Herscovitch and Meyer established the influence of these three forms of commitment and alluded to a predictive feature in regards to individuals’ behavior for change. Thus, the findings of this study supplied further evidence of the leadership, commitment, and related associations occurring during the context of a significant school initiative.

**General findings.** Several findings emerged for this study which will be addressed more fully in the subsequent discussion. The study provided a systemic view of teachers’ commitment to ninth grade reform and perceptions of leadership style during
the early wave of ninth grade change across a single school district. Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) developed a three component model that differentiated the three perspectives of commitment to change as affective, normative, and continuance. Their research, later expanded upon by others, employed this model as a predictor for different modes of compliance with change. In a district-wide perspective of ninth grade reform, respondents summarily displayed both affective and normative commitments to this initiative. In accord with the prevailing theoretical framework of specific leadership attributes and behaviors for changing organizations, this study found sufficient evidence of transformational characteristics as perceived by teachers. Furthermore, transactional leadership, in the form of contingent reward was also evident in the results of this research.

In the comparative analysis of the expressed commitments and teachers’ perceptions of leadership, the evidence failed to substantiate the prevailing association of affective commitment with the transformational style of leadership as purported in the change literature. However, marginal evidence emerged at the level of analysis for commitment and specific leadership behaviors, in the form of intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration. While the foundational background on normative commitment and leadership was almost non-existent, this study contained indicators of an intersection between this form of commitment and teachers’ perception of the specific leadership attributes of idealized influence and inspirational motivation. In contrast to the transformational leadership model for change, perceptions of leadership behaviors associated with transactional leadership and normative commitment appeared in the results.
Commitment to change. Considerable importance has been attributed to the commitment of teachers in the successful implementation of new initiatives (Fedor et al., 2006; Herold et al., 2008; Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002; Zimmerman, 2006). This study considered a three-fold construct of commitment described as affective, normative, and continuance. Affective commitment to change has been theorized as the ideal condition for the positive embracement of change. Earlier research tended to focus on a single form to the exclusion of others, and in most instances, affective commitment was singularly examined for its influence on individuals’ efforts toward change.

Portrayed as a mindset for change, each commitment is contrasted by differing modes of approach. Affective commitment denotes the desire to pursue new goals, where as normative commitment represents an obligation to do so, and continuance commitment acknowledges the personal costs for non-compliance. In the present study, the commitment or mindset was identified for the specific change goals of ninth grade reform. As noted by Zimmerman (2006), teachers’ willingness for change is a powerful indicator for the success of school reform efforts.

The district in this study has assigned considerable resources to a small school model for ninth grade with the hope of changing existing outcomes. Hence, teacher commitment has significant implications for the extent of return on this investment. While the evidence revealed that teachers reported affective commitment, sufficient levels of normative commitment were also determined. These results indicated an overall agreement with the value of academy implementation and that the initiative was a worthwhile reform. Additionally, indicators for normative commitment showed that teachers acknowledged an obligation to their professional duties to the goals for ninth
grade. Together, the results for both affective and normative commitment indicated that teachers acknowledged an agreement with the potential benefits in restructuring ninth grade as well as an understanding of their professional role in academy implementation. Both affective and normative commitments have been linked to individual efforts beyond mere compliance with change (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). Thus, expressions of both portend to a district teaching base that understands the value of making the anticipated ninth grade improvements and which acknowledges an obligation to follow through with the expectations of their work in this change process. While the results for commitment suggested a positive mindset of teachers, consideration must be given to the possible mediating influence of a district vision for ninth grade reform. Promoted as a district-wide initiative, expectations for success have been widely disseminated.

Although prior research has awarded greater significance to affective commitment, both affective and normative have been purported to produce positive employee behaviors that extend beyond mere compliance. Individuals exhibiting both these commitments were shown to be more apt to cooperate and openly advance change initiatives (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). Consequently, these constructs function as additive elements with predictive value in the efforts to facilitate change (Herold et al., 2008; Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). An extension follows in the wake of this interpretation for an expectation of greater efforts for the implementation and advancement of change in an environment of affective and normative commitments.

While the present study attested to earlier research designed to gauge the commitment of employees to change initiatives, this study also diverged from most previous investigations through the homogeneity of a system-wide reform. Moreover,
Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) stated that any change strategy can be evaluated in terms of the likelihood of a committed attitude toward implementation. Even though the antecedents of commitment may not be totally clear, nonetheless, the presence of affective and normative commitments leads to certain assumptions about their impact on the change process. Normative commitment typifies the individual who works within acceptable boundaries of organizational policy and procedures suggesting the role of a “good” employee. The findings in this study indicated that respondents expressed an obligation to undertake their part in ninth grade reform. Moreover, social or financial incentives may influence a level of commitment, thus alluding to the contingent conditions that also surfaced in these findings. Subsequently, a reciprocal pattern may emerge in teachers’ conformity to change strategies while realizing the benefits of organizational membership.

Stepping beyond the parameters of obligatory adherence to change requirements, affective affiliation to change goals takes the conception of commitment to a more intimate level. Individuals who become involved in and take an active interest in constructing plans for change may be more apt to an affective affiliation with such initiatives. Essential to laying the groundwork for change is an assessment of the organization’s status by its members (Hall & Hord, 2006; Hord, 1987).

While the conception of redesigning ninth grade originated as a district initiative, the depth of improvement was a school concern. For teachers in the Florida school district in this study, a review of school level data for ninth grade students’ academic performance, attendance, and discipline provided a basis of reflection about areas for improvement. Aligning practices outlined by the district with this rational assessment of
data provided a basis for conversations about the potential benefits at the school and teacher level. A district focus on teacher teaming, as part of the ninth grade initiative, contributed to collective dialogues about improving student results. Consequently, the opportunity emerges for professional identity to become entwined with a course of action, and success takes on personal meaning. From the perspective of this researcher as a high school administrator in the district, the affective and normative commitments expressed by the stakeholders of ninth grade reform bode well for the buy-in that maintains a course for change.

Given that both affective and normative commitments lead to employee actions beyond the minimum, the present study offered a picture of respondents who acknowledged a commitment to improvement goals and were willing to engage in reform strategies. Evidence of each commitment affirmed the value of keeping a pervasive message of the ideals of change on the minds of teachers and at the heart of work activities, thereby validating the importance of this vision. Moreover, building a culture of cohesive support throughout the process of implementation may affirm or elevate the level of commitment.

The findings also implied that commitment may not be a finite concept or delimited by one form. Just as change evolves along a continuum, commitment may unfold in the same manner. Uncertainties and challenges introduce variable conditions in the progression of implementation. Varying periods of stability may prompt individuals to draw upon differing perspectives of commitment. Intervening conditions such as new policies or mandates interject different constraints on teachers’ work. Datnow (2005) noted that the introduction of new educational policies or mandates may undermine
commitment and filter into the decision-making process for reform implementation. Such shifts in the environment require advocates of change to draw upon an affective perspective for maintaining the progress of change.

Thus, an assumption follows in the wake of this study that, while separate, the commitment to change should not be narrowly bound to a singular perspective or by time. Furthermore, simple agreement with change may not always translate into the unconditional embracement of a new initiative. Hall and Hord (2006) advised that the process of change is neither linear nor devoid of pitfalls. Navigating through difficult periods of implementation may warrant higher endurance and energy best given by those acting out of affective commitment. In contrast, actions that emanate from a normative perspective place commitment in a mode of professional duty to maintain progress. Undeniably, expressions of affective commitment represent the epitome of what leaders want of those individuals in the trenches of reform especially during darker periods of change. However, longitudinal evidence of affective commitment has not been explored, thus leaving open the question of whether this level of commitment can be sustained or is necessary in every stage of change. Consequently, a balance of the two may well serve the peaks and valleys that individuals encounter while moving through the process of reform.

Environmental instability may also emerge through the attrition of teachers. As new individuals enter ninth grade positions, commitment to the plan for change must remain a foremost concern. Hence, a continued sense of urgency inserts the purpose of change into the center of decision-making, teacher conversations, and individual
development. Spreading this vision forward also necessitates that school leaders derive momentum from a foundation of district support.

Not surprising was the limited presence of continuance commitment. This latter finding suggested that teachers who participated in this study did not feel that their position was dependent upon compliance with reform measures. Continuance commitment was found to have a moderating influence on the positive nature of affective commitment (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). Therefore, modest expressions in this study indicated that teachers were not constrained by mere compliance with reform strategies. However, employment conditions may have been relevant to this perspective of commitment. Considering that approximately half of the participants reported more than 10 years experience, those with greater longevity may have relied upon the security of tenured positions and summarily dismissed this aspect of commitment. Furthermore, increased demands for qualified teachers in accord to state legislative regulation of class size may also have contributed to a greater sense of security for some individuals.

**Leadership style in reform.** Leadership has been generally acknowledged as a prominent factor in successful schools. The literature on leadership was attuned to the theoretical and practical characterizations of those placed at the helms of organizations undergoing change. Oke et al. (2009) noted the social interactive nature of leadership.

Leadership has been viewed as a social process that takes place in a group context in which the leader influences his or her followers’ behaviors so that desired organizational goals are met. The leaders’ role as an influencer of required behaviors may range from being inspirational, motivational, and visionary to a
role that involves the design of an appropriate organizational context (Oke et al., 2009, p. 65).

These social aspects of leadership were subsumed within the general forms of transformational and transactional leadership. Recent studies on leadership and change have singled out the transformational style as most conducive to change (Geijsel et al., 2003; Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006a; 2006b). Accordingly, this study contributed to the broader context of research concerning the perception of transformational leadership as a driving element of organizational change.

In general, the literature established the premise that transformational leadership and organizational change go hand in hand. The results of the present study were examined in light of this conceptual link between a transforming view of leadership and change phenomena. Discernment of an array of transformational characteristics emerging from this study confirmed the applicability of a conceptual model of transformational leadership to system-wide reform. Transforming characteristics in the form of inspirational motivation, idealized attributes, and idealized behaviors have been typically associated with those leaders who paint a vision of the future, set high standards of performance, and convey determination and confidence toward that vision (Rafferty & Griffin, 2004, p. 329). Consequently, the supporting evidence for a model of transformational leadership in a setting of school change was derived from a system-wide view of school leadership that promotes vision as well as inspirational motivation and idealized influence.

The perceptions offered by this study paralleled the expected transformational characteristics that attest to an inspired vision for school reform and motivation to fulfill
the related expectations. Transformational leaders organize support through the collective good and a set a moral purpose for change (Fullan, 2001). The perceived characteristics in this study related well to a model of leadership that builds enthusiasm for a vision and generates momentum for constructing school change. However, Fullan (2001) contended that an inspiring vision alone is not sufficient for sustained change. Respondents’ perceptions of leadership coincided with a suitable model of leadership that transforms individual capacity through intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration. Consequently, this study supported the prevailing assumptions that multiple facets of transformational leadership are evident during school reform.

Leithwood and Jantzi (2005) generalized the duality of intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration into the notion of “helping people.” Earlier studies were mixed in determining the comparative significance of individual and group processes in relation to the proposed model of transformational leadership. Geijsel, Sleegers, and Van den Bern (1999) found greater evidence of individual consideration and intellectual stimulation than vision, while Leithwood and Jantzi (2006b) attributed less significance to each in comparison to other leadership factors. However, despite some dissension in the positional value of these two components of transformational leadership, related studies maintained the importance of providing individual assistance. Consequently, the current examination of this construct substantiated the contention that leadership support must drill down to the individual level.

While improving practice is often an important aspect of change criteria, a gap may exist between the expectations for implementation and the efficacy of individual teachers to achieve the targeted practice. Individual assistance may be overlooked in the
reality of making significant changes that broadly affect whole groups of teachers. However, individuals may differ in their backgrounds or capabilities for change. Findings from this study substantiated the importance of transformational leadership in regards to individual teacher capacity for engaging in reform practices. Leadership that promotes personal reflection, initiates individual dialogue, and provides coaching assistance filter support to those on the front lines of change (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005).

As described by Leithwood and Jantzi (2006b), transformational leaders set forth the ideals of what is possible for organizations and motivate others to set new goals toward these ends. The evidence from this study verified the perceptions of essential leadership characteristics that motivate and influence individuals to envision a new model of ninth grade and to set the expectations for implementation. In contrast to the usual solitary dimension of teachers’ work, the collegial nature of teacher teams set as part of the academy format introduced a collective approach to routine practice. Thus, the nature of the academy design introduced a level of group dynamics into the work culture of ninth grade teachers. In balancing the simultaneous support of group and individual behaviors, leaders must walk a fine line between developing a collaborative community and individual capacity. Hence, the evidence of leadership motivation and idealized influence solidified the importance of building a collaborative environment that is steeped in communication through words and actions about what is important for students in ninth grade reform.

A conflicting element in the purported model of transformational leadership emerged through the perception of contingent reward under conditions of change. The discernment of transactional behavior interjected a singular contrast into the evidence that
otherwise largely supported a transformational framework. Most research in recent years has focused largely upon transformational leadership in regards to innovation without regard to transactional attributes (Geijsel et al., 2003; Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006a; 2006b). However, this interest in transforming organizations to the exclusion of transactional characteristics operated in opposition to Bass’s contention that both forms were necessary aspects of good leaders (Bass, 1997). “The transactional leader works within the constraints of the organization; the transformational leader changes the organization” (Bass, 1997, p. 132). These constraints on school leaders are often constructed through legislative mandates as well as governing policies.

The current high accountability environment holds implications for a transforming model of leadership that aspires to a moral purpose and motivates followers to work for the good of all. School leaders that face a daily message of expectations for improvement may be guided by the prospect of benefits or sanctions in connection to state and federal evaluations of schools. Such an environment may serve to set the stage for negotiated rewards or consequences for employee contributions to such evaluations. As Bass (1997) explained, “contingent reward refers to the degree to which the leader clarifies expectations and establishes rewards when followers meet these expectations” (p. 65). Therefore, this contrast in the evidence for a transformational framework of leadership may reflect a current context of high accountability standards that is a reality in the current operation of public schools. While this aura of contingency may seem outside the mold of transforming schools, the interplay between reform efforts and associated outcomes sets a conditional background for most school improvement efforts.
As anticipated, passive/avoidant behaviors of leadership were rarely in evidence in the perceptions of teachers in this study. This form of leadership was represented by the two subcomponents, management by exception (passive) and laissez-faire. Passive/avoidant leaders typically delay addressing organizational issues and avoid initiating intervening actions until necessary. Usually referred to as non-leadership, this style has negative implications for school leadership. Certainly, this leadership style has received little attention in recent research and operates in contrast to the transformational model of leadership that is more conducive to facilitating change.

**Relationship of leadership style and commitment to change.** Leithwood (2007) conceptualized leadership as a venue for providing direction and influence with the intended purpose of organizational improvement. Hence, leadership becomes a catalyst for igniting the capacity and commitment of others across the organization (Marks & Printy, 2003). In this study the emergent framework for leadership was concerned with the attributes and behaviors related to changing the paradigm of a uniform high school structure. The commitment of teachers was discerned in light of a three component model of commitment, denoted as affective, normative, and continuance. This study examined these two human aspects of change together in light of a theoretical framework of an interdependent model of transformational leadership and commitment.

Individuals who express affective commitment subscribe to a mindset that extends beyond self-interest to the good of the larger organization. In a similar manner, transformational leadership promotes a vision oriented toward the betterment of the organization and motivates followers to meet the expectations aligned with organizational
goals. Prior research established a link between the altruistic elements of leadership and affective commitment. Leithwood et al. (1994) and later Herold et al. (2008) portrayed this link in the form of higher levels of affective commitment in connection to greater displays of transformational leadership. While this interaction between leaders and followers has been associated with advancing change, less well understood is the intervening place that normative commitment holds in the context of change.

In regard for the considerable investment across a Florida school district to cap the flow of students into the dropout phenomenon, the potential connection between leadership and teacher commitment to reform measures was a driving concern for this study. This research examined the perceptions of teachers in one Florida district in light of an ideal framework of transformational leadership and affective commitment. While a system-wide approach to teachers’ perceptions of transformational leadership and affective commitment displayed no significant connections, some supportive details were delineated to the component level of this leadership style. The results of this study also brought out an array of contrasting evidence for normative commitment and transformational and transactional leaderships, thereby expanding the base of information on the interdependent nature of leadership and commitment.

The current study failed to fully support the proffered model of high levels of affective commitment in accordance with substantial measures of transformational leadership. However, at the component level, some marginal evidence emerged in regards to intellectual stimulation and affective commitment. This component of leadership highlights an interactive setting that promotes teachers’ critical reflection and dialogue about what is important for students. Reflective activities are indicative of the
importance of community discourse about beliefs and expectations for student learning (Lawrence, 2006; Strike, 2008). Yu et al. (2002) pointed out that transformational leaders challenge teachers to rethink their assumptions about teaching practices and to discern the changes necessary for developing new methods. The system-wide implementation of collaborative teaming in ninth grade academies provides a possible venue for engaging teachers in intellectual interactions. Transformational leadership purportedly stimulates a more affective orientation to change through engaging teachers’ voices around important issues. Thus, teachers’ can benefit from the empowerment to analyze and refine practice which may well translate into greater buy-in to the reform process.

In this study, some weak connections were found for affective commitment and the individualized consideration component of transformational leadership. This transformational behavior illuminates the relevance of leaders’ concern for the personal challenges and needs of those engaging in different routines of teaching in ninth grade reform. Respect and regard for individuals aspiring to new aspects of work underscores the effectiveness of building individuals’ commitment to such changes. This result posed a contradiction to the absence of any significant connection between teacher commitment and individualized consideration by Leithwood et al. (1994). In later research, the findings of Yu et al. (2002) also indicated an overall weak connection between transformational leadership and teacher commitment but noted stronger indirect influences of leadership through school conditions. Both Leithwood et al. and Yu et al.’s findings occurred under the conditions of variable change goals rather than a comprehensive reform model. Thus, this divergence from earlier research may lie in a
commonality of issues encountered during the system-wide implementation across one Florida school district.

Effective leaders of change understand that the process of change is neither simple nor immune from intervening influences. The passage of time alone may chip away at teachers’ resolve to stay the course for change. While desired types of commitment to school reform may be in evidence at one point in time, there remains a general acknowledgment that reform is difficult to sustain. Eliminating this shadow over the prospect of long-term change requires the diligence of leaders in maintaining an eye on the prize. Professional collaboration offers one viable means of perpetuating a central focus on academy implementation. The reform model of ninth grade as a smaller community provides a structure conducive to collaborative activities. Consequently, the presence of a weak connection of affective commitment to both intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration presented a rational basis for further study on the value of frequent conversations and interactions among those involved in the work for change. A focus on a collegial environment may serve to accommodate common concerns for academy development as well as individual needs. These behaviors keep the vision and purpose of change at the forefront of daily routines.

In light of the recent trend for multiple entry routes into the teaching profession, the relevance of the results of this study posed some concern for the legitimacy of a teaching base that is increasingly populated by individuals with non-education backgrounds. Often termed as alternatively certified teachers, individuals with a bachelor’s degree may obtain a Florida professional teaching certificate through the completion of a program that is based upon the Florida Educator Accomplished Practices.
This alternative means of licensure is dependent upon individuals’ demonstrated competency in the twelve accomplished practices rather than through completion of a college or university based teacher preparation program.

The Florida school district in this study has followed the trend set by the state for increasing the teacher workforce through means of alternative certification. According to the National Center for Education Information, approximately 9,390 teachers were licensed in Florida by alternative routes during the period of 2004-2009. While exact numbers of alternatively certified teachers were not available from this Florida school district, one high school in the study indicated that approximately one-fourth of its staff was alternatively certified. Without a theoretical foundation for classroom practice as provided in the traditional route to teacher certification, alternatively licensed teachers may struggle to a level of commitment that ingrains new beliefs into the reality of teachers’ work. Such teachers may place greater demands on school leaders in regards to personal relationships, support mechanisms, and sensitivity to individual effects of change. Evidence from this study pointed to the potential benefit of raising the level of teacher-leader interactions that revolve around the process of change thereby elevating the investment and commitment of teachers to reform goals.

Emerging outside the desired parameters of affective commitment and transformational leadership, perceptions of normative commitment in relation to transformational leadership offered contrasting evidence to the proffered model of leadership and change. The reported presence of this form of commitment posed some incongruence to an interpretation that closely aligns affective commitment with transformational leadership. Gellatly, Meyer, and Luchak (2006) proposed that
normative commitment may be a conditional mindset that is susceptible to the contextual influence of the other two forms of commitment. Under the influence of affective commitment, Gellantly, Meyer, and Luchak (2006) described normative commitment as a sense of moral imperative. Similarly, affective commitment arises from a set of personal values and beliefs. Hence, a strong thread of affective commitment interwoven with the moral intentions of normative commitment creates a context of dual perspectives. In this line of reasoning, the emergence of normative commitment in concert with perceived transformational characteristics may have attenuated the expected association of affective commitment with transformational leadership.

The evidence offered a weak perceptual connection for an obligation to change and transformational characteristics that instill a sense of purpose and inspiration for change. These perceived characteristics suggested leadership that engenders respect and confidence for pursuing reform measures. At the heart of each change initiative should be a vision and conviction of what that organization can become (Calabrese, 2002). Inspiring and empowering others toward a new vision is a central premise of a theoretical model of transformational leadership (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006b).

While no relevant connection was found for the transformational characteristic of vision and affective commitment, the results of the study indicated an intervening relationship between this element of transformational leadership and normative commitment. Leadership with a new vision encourages others to see things differently. Calabrese (2002) pointed out the effectiveness of creating mental models to develop a basis for common interpretation of reform events and to cushion initiatives from intervening influences.
This research underscored the theoretical significance awarded to vision. Leithwood and Jantzi (1994) along with Parish et al. (2008) noted the importance of maintaining a focus on vision in building the commitment of others. Actions speak as clearly as words in putting new ideals before all school stakeholders. Consequently, the perceived transformational behaviors entwined with an obligation to change alluded to a communicated vision and purpose for ninth grade reform. Hence, the evidence provided a basis for speculation that normative commitment may coincide with the transformational dimension of leadership in changing the paradigm of secondary schooling. The divergent thinking that typically drives significant reforms such as academy development requires that leadership develop consensus around a different conception or mission of what is to be accomplished. Hence, the value of producing better outcomes for high school students lies not with a few but with the vision of all involved.

Leaders that transform organizations set high expectations for change while building the capacity of those that accomplish the routine work of change. Molding the mindset of others to a new purpose underscores the mission of transformational leaders to chart a successful course for change. In prior research on change and the differences among the types of commitment, Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) affirmed that affective and normative commitment each contributed to the endorsement of change and to positive levels of engagement in the work for change. Subsequently, either type may produce sufficient outcomes for reform initiatives. Thus, the model of affective commitment and transformational leadership may not be sufficient to explain all aspects of transformational leadership and commitment. Perceived leadership characteristics that
paint a clear vision of desired outcomes and inspire others to that end may also influence others to take up an obligatory mantle of commitment to reform work.

While Raffery and Griffin (2004) did not report a positive relationship between vision and employee commitment, their research omitted normative commitment from consideration with a focus on affective and continuance in a study across an Australian public sector organization. However, the present research in a setting of system-wide reform brought out some interactive connections between the perceived characteristics of transformational leadership and normative commitment that warrant further consideration. Important to these findings, also, is the overall district message for ninth grade reform. This top level of support for change may have contributed to the emergence of a relationship between leadership and an obligation to change. Even though this researcher had sought to reveal a strong underlying thread of affective commitment in the wake of transformational influence, the results failed to fully support this endeavor. However, in the reality of a high stakes environment, the relationship of leadership and commitment may be partly influenced by the parameters of negotiated responsibilities for implementation.

In contrast to an anticipated evidence of transformational leadership, this study revealed a positive relationship between respondents’ perceptions of contingent reward and normative commitment. As a subscale of transactional leadership, contingent reward presents the negotiation of rewards or negative consequences for employee performance. The perceived transactional characteristics depicted behaviors that set performance expectations for teachers in anticipation of the beneficial outcomes from successful reform. Thus, the evidence suggested a system-wide condition of leader-follower
negotiations for performance and associated rewards. Reinforcement for completion of tasks can be materialistic or symbolic in nature and either immediate or delayed (Bass, 1997, p. 132). Bass (1997) conceptualized that transformational and transactional leadership augmented each other, and later Goodwin, Wofford, and Whittington (2001) proposed that the provision of rewards for performance may be an extension of the convergence of personal investments by both leaders and followers toward the collective vision. More recently, Chan, Lau, Nie, Lim, and Hogan (2008) attested to the implementation of a reward system for building teacher commitment. This may be particularly true in states, such as Florida, which are ranked at the bottom half of the states for teachers’ salaries. Further distinctions of reward for change were represented by the possibility for tangible compensations for teachers. Improving schools in Florida offers opportunity for earning state incentive money in accordance with Florida’s school evaluation system as well as the potential for additional technology tools for teachers in the five newly constructed ninth grade academies.

Rather than a distinct demarcation between the two styles of leadership, the lines between transformational and transactional behaviors may remain blurred in relation to this study’s findings. The current accountability standards that drive many aspects of decisions for improvement initiatives carry with them consequences for success or failure. Incentive monies for schools and teachers along with evaluative processes for teachers’ performance tie consequential outcomes to the success or failure of organizational goals. A logical extension follows that conditions outside the scope of this study may have interacting influences on the relationship between leadership and the commitment of teachers to engage in school reform.
In general this study did not support the identified model of high transformational leadership in connection to high levels of affective commitment. The evidence provided some weak associations of affective commitment to intellectual consideration and individualized consideration as specific components of transformational leadership. As detailed earlier, the evidence pointed to the importance of individual development and concern for changing the dynamics of teachers’ practice. This research extended the earlier work on transformational leadership and commitment to include normative and continuance commitments as well as the addition of transactional and passive/avoidant leadership. More specifically, a comparative study was undertaken regarding perceptions of leadership and commitment in relation to a proposed framework of transformational leadership and affective commitment under conditions of change.

Expanding the consideration of commitment and leadership offered opportunity to extend the interpretation of these two constructs. Although limited in the strength of significance, the evidence of normative commitment and different aspects of transformational and transactional leadership confirmed the potential for further study and opened up concern that this association has not broadened into the affective domain. However, earlier research was not subject to an educational terrain that has been heavily burdened with multiple levels of accountability.

**Leadership outcomes and school reform.** The MLQ (5X) instrument produced indicator for teachers’ extra effort along with perceptions of satisfaction for leadership methods and effectiveness. Each of these outcomes has been identified as a responsive measure to transformational leadership (Avolio & Bass, 2004). Transformational leadership demonstrates attributes that have proven effective in raising the motivation of
others to efforts beyond the expected performance level and contributes to intrinsic satisfaction (Rafferty & Griffin, 2004). By constructing a supportive culture, transformational leadership creates conditions that elicit greater effort from individual members (Bass & Avolio, 2004).

Overall, this study reinforced the literature in regards to satisfaction, leadership effectiveness, and extra effort in the presence of the domain of transformational leadership. As expected in the proximity of transformational leadership, sufficient levels of leadership effectiveness were perceived by respondents in this study. Effective leaders understand and strive to meet both organizational and individual needs. Transformational leaders effectively set high expectations and provide individual and collective support to meet intended goals. A culture emerges that is bounded by high ideals, ethical behavior, and authentic relationships. Subsequently, employees express increased willingness to adhere to the defined parameters of their work and derive satisfaction from leaders’ methods (Masood et al., 2006).

A school environment that is conducive to undertaking a different perspective of schooling and the requisite leadership methods to facilitate that end become increasingly significant in schools undergoing important change. Altering the conventions of high school along with the mode of individuals’ routine work was inherent in the process of implementing reform measures for ninth grade. The accompanying evidence of transformational leadership in this study offers the potential for the requisite environment for effectiveness in the system-wide implementation of ninth grade reform.

Transformational leadership inspires belief in a vision, provides individual support, and exhibits confidence in followers thereby contributing to positive perceptions
of work conditions (Masood et al., 2006; Rafferty & Griffin, 2004). Perceptions of satisfaction with leadership methods were shown under the conditions of system-wide reform. While satisfaction is an encouraging attribute of those working toward academy implementation, teachers are not insulated from mitigating influences. Contextual beliefs or environmental conditions may exert intervening influences on perceived levels of satisfaction. Moreover, individuals at the lower experience level or those licensed through alternative means may be less intuitive regarding leadership methods and thus more prone to positive impressions.

Transformational leaders empower others to become partners and collaborators in working toward successful change (Marks & Printy, 2003). As a vested partner in the process of change, teachers may put forth efforts beyond the expected to ensure measures of success. By virtue of the extent of changes in connection to academy implementation, a reservoir of extra effort on the part of teachers is necessary to carve out a smaller school model. Thus, an interpretation of extra effort may have been somewhat confounded by the prescribed expectations for non-conventional strategies. The study substantiated expressions of extra effort but not at the expected level for transformational leadership. However, an assumption seems reasonable that as change proceeds, subsequent extra effort may fluctuate throughout the ongoing reform process.

The evidence for satisfaction, extra effort, and leadership effectiveness indicated potentially supportive attributes in accordance with the perceptions of transformational leadership. Through the intended goals of ninth grade reform, the traditional view of secondary school practices was redesigned in the image of an academy format. Changes in the conventional norms at the high school level such as a collaborative rather than a
content based approach to classroom routines and a holistic rather than monocular view of students’ performance placed constraints on teachers to redefine certain aspects of teaching. This study’s evidence of leadership outcomes indicated perceptions of a supportive culture which bodes well for encouraging teachers to persist in the overall goals of ninth grade reform.

**Conclusion**

In light of the emphasis on continuous improvement in schools, this study focused on the important nature of leadership and commitment, individually, and in connection with each other. This investigation relied upon the perceptions of teachers involved in the work of a system-wide approach to ninth grade reform. An examination of commitment and perceptions of leadership in comparison to the prescribed conceptual model of affective commitment and transformational leadership formed the backbone of this study.

Commitment to change has been established as an indicator for behavioral intent to support change (Fedor et al., 2006; Herold et al., 2008; Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). A three-fold standard of commitment was established to measure individuals’ perspectives of change. Affective commitment denotes a positive affiliation while normative represents an obligation, and continuance concerns cost-avoidance in reference to individuals’ orientation to change. In this study, an affective perspective was prominent in the results for commitment. Theoretically, this evidence represents a genuine belief in the value of a district-wide reform of ninth grade. However, the merit of this result was diminished somewhat by the generally prevailing view of this reform as a positive benefit across district high schools.
This study examined the perception of transformational leadership in system-wide change. Teachers viewed leadership as communicating a vision of ninth grade reform, setting high expectations for achievement of reform goals, and establishing practices to promote critical reflection and professional concern. Together, these traits align with a framework of leadership that depicted transformational characteristics as most favorable for change. Perceptions of satisfaction and leadership effectiveness compared well to the expected outcomes of leadership with a marginal match for the perceptions of extra effort. The interjection of contingent reward within the related perceptions produced one contrast to the evidence of a perceived mode of transformational leadership.

This study failed to fully support a model of high affective commitment in connection with high transformational leadership. However, weak associations of affective commitment with both intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration did reveal some marginal evidence for the model. This consistency with the model pointed to the value of promoting critical reflection on practice and providing individual support for new avenues of work. Weak evidence of an association between normative commitment and transformational leadership revealed potential outlying contingencies to the accepted commitment-leadership model.

Limitations of the Study

Descriptive statistics are used to explore the basic features of data (Gay & Airasian, 2003). This data was restricted to a system-wide examination of leadership and change, and thus, may only be generalized to other participants in this initiative. This study was limited by the analysis of views that may not have adequately represented a cross-section of the entire sample of ninth grade teachers. Teacher respondents could not
be assumed to adequately represent all high schools, and teachers with a generally 
positive view of leadership may have been more inclined to participate. In addition, this 
study did not take non-compliance into consideration. This study was further limited by 
the examination of a single moment in the continuum of the change process rather than 
multiple research interactions. In actuality, teachers’ perceptions may differ over time 
and in accordance with changing conditions. Only principal leadership was presented for 
teacher consideration with the exclusion of other positions of leadership that might exist 
at the secondary level. Thus, the attenuating influence of the roles of assistant principals, 
deans, and lead teachers were extraneous conditions that may have impacted the results. 
The study was further limited by strict reliance upon teachers’ reported commitment 
without secondary input from school leaders.

The study used a single instrument that utilized closed response items without 
open items for elaboration of input from participants. The instrument encompassed a 
wide range of leadership behaviors. Delineation to targeted aspects of leadership would 
have provided a better focus on specific leadership characteristics. A definitive sample of 
teachers from 14 high schools in a single school district limited the sample size. 
Generalizations from this research were restricted by the nature of the unique sample 
employed in this research.

Implications for Practice

Many change initiatives fail to be sustained over time. While multiple roles exist 
for school leaders, the principal provides the anchor point for new directions undertaken 
by schools. From this study, all elements of transformational leadership as well as 
contingent reward emerged as perceived leadership characteristics in schools undergoing
ninth grade reform. University educational leadership programs should thoroughly familiarize future school leaders with the process of change in preparation for an educational environment that places considerable emphasis on continuous improvement. University coursework should integrate the practical as well as theoretical framework for the role of leadership in school change.

District level professional development for school leaders should further emphasize those leadership characteristics that are proven effective for conditions of change. Furthermore, individuals in positions to place leaders into schools embarking upon a path of significant changes may do well to attend to both transformational and transactional qualities in those assignments. In particular, leaders who are visible and actively build relationships with others engender commitment to identified purposes.

Practices for teacher placement into schools in need of improvement should consider matching personal vision to those of the organization. Such schools are typically constrained by timelines for targeted improvement goals thus creating urgent needs for the appropriate placement of human resources into those schools. Collins (2005) summed up the importance of individuals by emphasizing that “first, get the right people on the bus” (p. 13).

This study provided some cautionary notes to district and school level leadership in the development of large scale initiatives in the district. Vigilance is necessary to the challenges that may emanate from inside or outside of schools to impede the progress of successful implementation. In particular, a mode of continuous learning is a concern for the on-going development of individuals involved in change. Furthermore, challenges may arise through the divergence in educators’ focus when encountering an array of
school improvement demands. The district must be cognizant that multiple layers of reform may subvert the system-wide attention to the ninth grade initiative. Large-scale reform that flows in a top-down manner necessitates the systematic involvement at all levels of stakeholders. The evidence of transformational leadership indicated one mode of promotion for a vision and course of action for ninth grade teachers. In addition, the emergence of contingent reward signified that teachers’ commitment was related, in part, to a potential reward for change.

While teachers represented one level of investment in this reform, the groundwork was not developed across all groups involved in its implementation. Rather than a grassroots effort, this initiative was fashioned in the image of model schools outside the district. Although a steering committee of district and school level administration was formed, teacher voice was absent from the mix. Attention to a collaborative relationship that encompassed district and school leadership along with teachers may have set a more solid foundation for successful implementation. Engaging the expertise and decision-making skills of each group distributes the responsibility and leadership across all levels of stakeholders. As noted by Meier (2006), successful school reform is best approach through a sense of co-ownership of leadership. Thus, the evidence of this study that failed to support high affective commitment in combination with high transformational leadership points to a reconsideration of the different leadership roles in developing change.

**Implications for Future Research**

While transformational leadership has been linked in general to effective change, examinations of leadership style and specific change initiatives has not received
sufficient attention (Herold et al., 2008). Studies such as this one may prove valuable to
districts engaging in large-scale change. Further investigations of the intersection of a
specific change and leadership are necessary to better understand leaders’ attributes that
emerge in the implementation process and the resulting connection to teachers’ attitude
toward that process. In addition, mediating factors, such as in-school conditions and
external influences should be considered for their direct or indirect impact on teacher
commitment.

Future studies might consider a longitudinal examination of a single model of
change to determine long-term evidence of teacher commitment and if time is a factor
that influences such commitment. A focus on one school site may also deepen the level
of information on commitment and leadership over time. Another recommendation for
future studies is to reduce the dimensions of school leadership to one or two styles in
regards to the relationship to commitment. Teacher variables such as age, gender, years
of experience, and method of teacher certification may add information as to groups of
individuals most committed to change initiatives. Further investigations should be
undertaken to explore the interacting variables of teacher motivation and self-efficacy in
connection to teacher commitment and leadership. Given that improving student
achievement is the main intention of school improvement efforts, this intended outcome
should be examined for possible influences by teacher commitment and leadership.
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Appendices
Appendix A: Questionnaire for School Change

Thank you for responding to the items below. You are participating in a research study on the impact of leadership and teacher commitment in the large-scale change of Freshman Academies. Participation is voluntary and you may choose to withdraw at any time. All information will be confidential and represented anonymously in any subsequent use of this data. By regulation, all research records must be kept confidential and securely stored. By beginning this questionnaire, you acknowledge that you have read this information and agree to participate.

Section I Individual Commitment to Change

Directions:

The purpose of this section is to determine individual commitment to change during the implementation of the Freshman Academy. Please read the following statements and circle the number that indicates the degree to which you agree-disagree with each statement. There are no correct or incorrect responses. All responses are anonymous. Use the following scale:

1= Strongly Disagree   2= Disagree    3= Neither Agree     4= Agree    5= Strongly Agree nor Disagree

1. I believe in the value of this change.  
2. I would feel guilty about opposing this change.  
3. This change is a good strategy for this organization.  
4. It would be too costly for me to resist this change.  
5. I do not feel it would be right of me to oppose this change.  
6. This change serves an important purpose.  
7. I have too much at stake to resist this change.  
8. I feel obligated to support this change.  
9. Things will be better because of this change.  
10. I feel a sense of duty to work for this change.
11. I feel pressure to go along with this change. 1 2 3 4 5

Section II. School Leadership
Directions:

The purpose of this section is to gain your impressions of the principal leadership in your school during ninth grade reform into a school-within-a-school also termed a ninth grade academy. Please read the following statements and circle the number that indicates how frequently each statement fits the person you are describing. There are no correct or incorrect responses. All responses are anonymous.

Use the following scale:

1= Not at All  2= Once in a While  3= Sometimes  4= Often  5= Frequently if not Always

1. Provides me with assistance in exchange for my efforts 1 2 3 4 5
2. Re-examines critical assumptions to determine whether they are appropriate 1 2 3 4 5
3. Fails to interfere until problems become serious 1 2 3 4 5
4. Focuses attention on irregularities, mistakes, and deviations from standards 1 2 3 4 5
5. Avoids getting involved when important issues arise 1 2 3 4 5
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.
11.
12.
13.
14.
15.
16.
17.
18.
19.
20.
21.
22.
23.
Section III. Demographic Information  (circle one response for each)

Age:       Under 30  30-39  40-49  50-59  60+
Gender:    Male    Female

Years of experience as an educator:       Under 10  10-15  16-20  21-25  +26

Most recent school grade:    A   B   C   D   F

Ethnicity:    White non-Hispanic   African American   Hispanic   Asian
Other__________
Appendix B: License Agreements

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Instrument: Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire

Authors: Bruce Avolio and Bernard Bass

Published by Mind Garden, Inc., www.mindgarden.com

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License Agreement

LICENSEE
Name: Deborah Kindel
Organization: University Of South Florida
Address:
Date: April 10, 2010 9:31:02 PST

TCM EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT SURVEY LICENSE AGREEMENT – FOR ACADEMIC (RESEARCH) USE
Appendix C: District Approval Form

Assessment, Accountability and Evaluation
School Board of Polk County
190 South Florida Avenue
Lakeland, FL 33801
Phone: (863) 534-0768
Fax: (863) 534-0772

Wilma Ferrer
Senior Director
(863) 534-0768
5469

Candy Amato
Assessment
(863) 534-0760
5469

Yolanda Niggli, Ph.D.
Research & Evaluation
Senior Coordinator
(863) 534-0730
5469

Debra Faucher
Accountability
Senior Coordinator
(863) 534-0737
5469

Bob Campbell
Testing & Data Analysis
Senior Coordinator
(863) 534-0715
5469

Eileen Scheffeld
Administrative Secretary
(863) 534 0689
5469

September 2, 2010

Deborah Kindel
2750 Taylor Rd.
Winter Haven, FL 33880

Topic: A Descriptive Analysis of School Leadership and Teacher Commitment in the Reform of Ninth Grade

Dear Ms. Kindel:

The Polk County Public Schools Research Review Board has approved your request to conduct the following: "A Descriptive Analysis of School Leadership and Teacher Commitment in the Reform of Ninth Grade" research proposal for the period of September 2, 2010 to December 31, 2010.

Approval is contingent on:

- Notifying the school district of any major changes to the protocols or project.
- Providing a copy of your final and any supplemental reports to the district.

Please submit copies of your final reports to my attention at the Office of Research and Evaluation upon dissemination of the report.

If you have any questions, or if I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Wilma Ferrer
Senior Director
Polk County Public Schools
Phone: 863-534-0880 (51468)
Fax: 863-534-0770
wilma.ferrer@polk-fl.net
About the Author

Deborah Kindel received a Bachelor’s Degree in Zoology from the University of South Florida in 1973. In 1987, she obtained Florida teacher certification. She later earned a M.Ed. in Mathematics Education in 1995 and a M.Ed. in Educational Leadership in 2002.

She began her educational career in middle school teaching science. After five years, she moved to the high school level where she taught mathematics for seven years. During this time, she obtained the credential of national certification. In 2003, she acquired the position of high school assistant principal. She entered the program for a Doctorate in Education at the University of South Florida in 2007.