A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF THE PRACTICES OF SUPERINTENDENTS IN DEVELOPING THEIR ADMINISTRATORS AS INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS

by

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WHAT ARE THE PRACTICES OF SUPERINTENDENTS IN DEVELOPING THE

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP SKILLS OF THEIR ADMINISTRATORS?

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The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine the influence of superintendents in developing their administrators as instructional leaders. This study will examine the practices of school districts that have demonstrated success on the Pennsylvania School System Assessment results in which students consistently scored proficient on their assessments. The assessment results in combination with the percentage of students in the district eligible for free and reduced lunch was the determining factors of which districts were chosen for this research study. The researcher will examine the practices and opportunities provided to administrators that develops their instructional leadership skills. The purpose is to determine if common themes exist, such as staff development, embedded activities and authentic learning, to name a few, that support administrators in being instructional leaders. The research will provide the effective practices demonstrated by school districts that support instructional leadership.

Improving teaching and learning is a major responsibility of leaders in our schools. Therefore, this research study will provide the strategies implemented by superintendents in developing the practices to support administrators in becoming instructional leaders in their building.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

PREFACE

I would like to acknowledge the support I have received from my dissertation advisor, Joseph Werlinich. I am extremely grateful for his guidance and encouragement throughout this journey. I would also like to thank the other members of my dissertation committee for their support: Dr. Maureen McClure, Dr. William Bickel and Dr. Sean Hughes.

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I want to thank my family for their support, patience and sacrifices that has allowed me to accomplish my goal. My wife, Debby, have been extremely understanding in helping me throughout this journey. My daughters, Carly, Chelsea and Alexandra have been a source of inspiration to ensure that I complete this mission.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents for imparting the importance of education to me. They are the reason I entered the education field. It has been a rewarding experience.

1.0   INTRODUCTION

The purpose of every educational system is to provide every child with the opportunity to develop their knowledge, skills and abilities to be productive citizens. In the age of No Child Left Behind and globalization, administrators more than ever, are being held accountable for student achievement. They are more than ever compelled to lead the improvement of student achievement. Administrators are balancing the roles of manager and leader and have found it very difficult to find the time to be the instructional leaders that schools need. Due to charter schools and PSSA scores, to name a few, tremendous expectations have been placed on administrators to succeed without the support and knowledge needed to formulate the necessary changes and adaptations to improve student learning. Schools need administrators who have an understanding of how students learn and not just how to operate a school. If the expectation for administrators is to be instructional leaders, then the standards of the role of instructional leaders should be defined. Administrators have to understand the expectations of this role.

So why are teachers entering the administrative profession without the knowledge and skills to be instructional leaders? In studies conducted by Mazzeo (2003) and Levine (2005) they claim that one reason this skill is lacking has been that licensure programs are not adequately preparing leaders to enter the administrative profession. Administrators attend and earn their administrative certification through universities. However, certification does not

equate to quality leadership. They argue that these programs have curriculum that is irrelevant and incoherent with low admissions criteria and unskilled faculty.

In addition, a report from the Educational Research Service (1998) states "An inadequate number of qualified candidates are applying for open positions in their districts" (p. 249). They identify the reasons for the shortage of qualified candidates as important factors discouraging principal applications (p. 251):

- Compensation is insufficient compared to responsibilities (60 percent)

- Job is too stressful (32 percent)

- Too much time is required (27 percent)

- It is difficult to satisfy parents/community (14 percent)

- Societal problems make it difficult to focus on instruction (13 percent)

- Fewer experienced teachers are interested (12 percent)

- Testing/accountability pressures are high (7 percent)

- Job is viewed as less satisfying than previously (6 percent)

How can these factors be addressed so that school leaders are developed to become future administrators? If our teacher leaders are not encouraged to enter the field, then the best potential leaders are not advancing to become administrators. If schools truly expect top administrative candidates to enter the field, the factors listed must be addressed to support leadership development. It is important for administrators to be effective instructional leaders. The reason being is due to the research that clearly states that instructional leaders are a contributing factor to student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 2000; Lezotte, 1994; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). It is second only to teaching among school-related factors on its effect on student achievement. Although other factors influence student achievement such as

social and economic factors, motivation, parental support and school structures, the research has demonstrated that there exists a positive correlation between effective administrative leadership and student achievement. In *School Leadership That Works,* Marzano, Waters and McNulty (2005) state "A highly effective school leader can have a dramatic influence on the overall academic achievement of students" (p. 10). They define leadership within twenty-one responsibilities with many of these responsibilities aligned to the leader as an instructional leader.

Once teachers become administrators they are required to continue their learning. Pennsylvania compels administrators to attend professional development programs to maintain their administrative certification and to keep them abreast of effective leadership. Through various programs, such as Pennsylvania Department of Education professional development, individual district trainings and the University of Pittsburgh's Principal's Academy, coaching, mentoring, collegial networks, and job-embedded activities are provided to administrators to help develop their instructional leadership skills. Therefore, it is important for school districts, specifically superintendents, to allow their administrators involved in these trainings to practice their learning in an authentic setting, notably the classroom. It is essential that they are provided the preparation, training, support and practice to improve the teaching and learning in classrooms

According to the Southern Regional Education Board, *Schools Need Good Learners Now* (2007) "The state's power to license principals can be an effective tool to ensure schools have learning-centered principals" (p. 5). In an Education Week article entitled *States Must Take the Lead in Improving School Leadership,* the Pennsylvania Secretary of Education, Gerald Zahorchak (2008) remarks "States are the key actors in setting school-leadership policy. Yet few of them have offered adequate support to principals in addressing the new school challenges" (p. 32). It is clear from these studies that there exist some states and universities that need to

improve their selection process, curriculum and leadership roles in developing administrators. However, in spite of the strengths and weaknesses of these programs, systematic, school district practices on developing instructional leaders focusing on student achievement is essential in every school. Therefore, superintendents are needed to take the leadership role of supporting administrators in developing the skills and providing the opportunities for them to become effective instructional leaders.

1.1   STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The research clearly demonstrates the challenges that exist with the development of instructional leaders. As expectations of school administrators increase, are they provided with the learning, support and opportunities to practice their instructional skills in an authentic setting? Therefore, the statement of the problem is: Do superintendents lack the development and inclusion of practices in developing and supporting their administrators as instructional leaders?

This study will seek to answer the following questions:

1. How does the literature define the role of instructional leaders?
2. How do superintendents view the role of an instructional leader?
3. How do superintendents develop the instructional leadership skills of their administrators?
4. What do superintendents report as currently offered programs to support administrators in developing their instructional skills?
5. How do the reported practices of superintendents compare to the research literature?

2.0   REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

As a former school administrator and now the site coordinator of administrative professional development based on the new Pennsylvania Inspired Leadership Initiative on developing and supporting instructional leaders, my interest in this topic has lead me to this research. My study will look to answer the following questions:

1. How does the literature define the role of instructional leaders?
2. How do superintendents view the role of an instructional leader?
3. How do superintendents develop the instructional leadership skills of their administrators?
4. What do superintendents report as currently offered programs to support administrators in developing their instructional skills?
5. How do the reported practices of superintendents compare to the research literature?

The researcher will review the literature of the meaning of an instructional leader and their role, why administrators need to be instructional leaders, what programs exist that support the development of instructional leaders and what is the superintendent's role in the development of their administrators as instructional leaders.

2.1   WHY DO ADMINISTRATORS NEED TO BECOME

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS?

The top priority for administrators is leadership for student learning. Administrators have a moral obligation to ensure that all students receive a quality education. They are required to lead in the atmosphere of change to meet the challenges of the 21st century. More intense focus on improving teaching and learning of both teachers and students are some responsibilities that encompass the role of the administrator. With issues such as the diversity of students, the rapid changes in technology, globalization and the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, the role of an administrator is changing from a manager to leader. In *The Principal Challenge: Leading And Managing Schools In An Era Of Accountability*, Tucker and Codding (2002) state "The public and all the organs of government are insisting that student achievement performance improve – and fast" (p. 1). They go on to state "We need people who can lead and manage the school to much higher levels of student achievement at little or no increase in cost, in an environment in which they have much less control over the key factors that determine the outcome than similarly situated leaders and managers in most other fields" (p. 4). The role of a leader has to shift from a managerial leader to an instructional leader (Brewer, 2001). How can administrators free themselves of the bureaucratic tasks to become more of an instructional leader? The core charge of public schools is to educate students, but because of other issues occurring in schools such as student safety, lack of resources, parent concerns and rundown buildings, administrators are being pulled in many directions. But the focus remains on improving student achievement through effective teaching and learning. Administrators are more accountable and their roles have become more challenging. With the public knowledge of

testing results, administrators are leading in an era of more accountability and are judged by their school's test results. Although management and leadership are important and necessary qualities of effective leaders, being the instructional leader of a school is the most important role of an administrator.

According to a 2003 survey by Public Agenda, a nonprofit research organization that reports public opinion and public policy issues, *Rolling Up Their Sleeves*, superintendents believed that the principal's job is changing and it is no longer enough to be good building managers. They need to be instructional leaders. In the survey, a high number of superintendents (83%) and principals (75%) stated that they are more focused on the instructional duties, such as curriculum, teaching and professional development than ever before. It is clear from this study that the role of manager is important but the role of an instructional leader is imperative.

A report conducted by Augenblick, Palaich and Associates entitled *Costing Out the Resources Needed to Meet Pennsylvania's Public Education Goals* (2007) named a variety of strategies that can improve student performance. One strategy is "expanding the capacity for school principals to become instructional leaders in their buildings by providing full time principals in each school as well as improved training and professional development opportunities for administrators. As instructional leaders, principals conduct class observations for the purpose of ensuring student learning, make sure that curriculum maps and pacing guides are followed, and ensure that common assessments are used in each grade" (p. 59). This committee, in suggesting strategies for districts to implement to support students in reaching district outcomes, found that administrators need to be instructional leaders in their building in addition to their other duties. Through their development as instructional leaders, they will have the knowledge and skills to support teaching and providing a standards-aligned education that improves student learning.

In a NEA policy brief *Changing Role of School Leadership* (2008) "Successful principals provide a common vision of what good instruction looks like, support teachers with the help and resources they need to be effective in their classrooms, and monitor the performance of teachers and students, with an eye always on the overall goal – to create school cultures or environments in which all children can achieve to their full potentials" (p. 1). Therefore, instructional leaders are needed to ensure effective teaching and more importantly, student learning.

2.2   WHAT IS AN INSTRUCTIONAL LEADER?

What qualities and skills comprise an instructional leader? When an administrator is considered an instructional leader, how will they be described? According to Fullan (2009) *Leadership Development: The Larger Context*, "The common wisdom today is that school principals should be instructional leaders. But most principals face a major stumbling block – they don't know what instructional leadership means or how to do it" (p. 45). Therefore, according to Fullan, the development of instructional leaders is for school districts to provide strong embedded learning for their administrators. On-the-job training will support administrators in this role.

The National Association of Elementary School Principals (2001) defines effective instructional leaders in six standards: make student and adult learning a priority; set high expectations for academic and social development of students; align content and instruction to standards; create a culture of continuous learning; use multiple sources of data; and actively engage the community to share in the responsibility of supporting student success. Being able to evaluate the effectiveness of the alignment of skills and assessments to standards and to be able

to evaluate student work for evidence of learning based on the standards are also roles of instructional leaders.

Whitaker (1997) in *Instructional Leadership and Principal Visibility* identified four skills essential for instructional leadership.

- First, they need to be a resource provider. It is not enough for principals to know the strengths and weaknesses of their faculty but also recognize that teachers desire to be acknowledged and appreciated for a job well done.

- Secondly, they need to be an instructional resource. Teachers count on their principals as resources of information on current trends and effective instructional practices. Instructional leaders are tuned-in to issues relating to curriculum, effective pedagogical strategies and assessment.

- Thirdly, they need to be good communicators. Effective instructional leaders need to communicate essential beliefs regarding learning such as the conviction that all children can learn and no child should be left behind.

- Finally, they need to create a visible presence. Leading the instructional program of a school means a commitment to living and breathing a vision of success in teaching and learning. This includes focusing on learning objectives, modeling behaviors of learning and designing programs and activities on instruction (p. 155-156)

According to Johnson (2008) *The Principal's Priority 1,* "Instructional leaders are school principals who communicate an explicit and comprehensive vision of how children learn" (p. 72). Administrator's belief is that all students can learn and experience success. It is the responsibility of administrators to convey and model this vision in their daily practice. Making this vision come alive in their day-to-day activities, models this belief to students and teachers.

The leader's vision promotes and sustains continuous growth of both students and teachers and describes how students learn through effective instructional classroom practice.

In *Preparing a New Breed of School Principals: It's Time for Action,* Bottoms, Gene and O'Neill, Kathy (2001) respond to the question of "What future leaders need to know and be able to do?" by providing the following three statements:

- Have comprehensive understanding of school and classroom practices that contribute to student achievement

- Know how to work with teachers and others to fashion and implement continuous student improvement; and

- Know how to provide the necessary support for staff to carry out sound school, curriculum and instructional practices (p. 2)

Bottoms responses to the questions of future leaders describe all qualities of an effective instructional leader.

For administrators to develop their instructional leader skills, focusing on becoming experts on curriculum and instruction will be a priority. Understanding standards-aligned systems will enhance their skills so that they can support the instruction in the classroom. Effective instructional leaders understand the following concepts and are therefore able to apply this learning in the classroom:

- The big ideas of the content

- How curriculum, instruction and assessments are aligned

- Standards and their relationship to the content

- Research based, student-centered instruction

- Data to support teachers in changing, developing and analyzing curriculum to make the necessary adjustments in their pedagogical skills

Having a deep understanding of teaching and learning is an essential skill of effective instructional leaders. Knowledge and the ability to apply this knowledge of standards-based learning will allow administrators to support teachers in the classroom. Improving student learning will be supported by administrators that have an understanding of how curriculum and skills align to standards. The knowledge base of administrators includes understanding curricula, pedagogy, brain theory and how to engage and motivate students. Possessing the knowledge of effective instructional strategies and various models of teaching that provides the best learning for students will allow administrators to assist teachers in their classroom. Expertise of assessments provides administrators the knowledge to support teachers in effectively measuring student learning. Since students arrive to school with different skills, interests and abilities, a variety of assessments need to be available for teachers to utilize. Instructional leaders are pivotal in their role of understanding sound assessments to support classroom instruction and improve student learning. An effective instructional leader not only has the knowledge of these assessments, but also knows how to align the assessments to skills and standards. They can utilize the data from student assessments to help teachers focus on the strengths and weaknesses of students. This allows the curriculum to meet the needs to students to improve their learning. Instructional leaders knowledgeable of these concepts are the leaders that will successfully orchestrate the professional development, feedback and evaluations of classroom instruction that will significantly impact the increase of student achievement. But most importantly they are able to translate this knowledge into practices that teachers can implement. Knowing the theoretical aspects of effective instruction and connecting the theory to practice is needed support that teachers can use in their classes.

Evaluating instruction and providing feedback to teachers will encourage teachers to grow in their profession. Therefore, it is necessary for administrators to have an understanding of effective pedagogy as well as the research on effective instruction. Providing guidance in instruction to teachers to help them develop their skills can be done in a variety of methods. One technique of providing this support is through walk-through observations. However, Reeves (2009) in *Leading Change In Your School* states "Administrators can walk marathons through the hallways and classrooms of a school and accomplish nothing if they do not begin with a clear and consistent idea of what effective instruction looks like and have the ability to communicate the elements of effective instruction in a clear and unmistakable terms" (p. 119). It is important that administrators are able to evaluate student learning and student work to ensure that it is aligned to the standards. Managing curriculum and monitoring lessons will ensure that student's are provided an adequate curriculum. Supporting collaborations among teachers and providing the necessary professional development will support teachers in their growth. As Reeves states, these strategies will allow administrators to have clear ideas of effective instruction.

2.3   WHAT IS THE ROLE OF AN INSTRUCTIONAL LEADER?

If society has high expectations for student learning and requires schools to be high performing districts, hiring the best administrators is essential. As we head into the second decade of the 21st century, what role do administrators play as instructional leaders? According to the Public Agenda Survey (2006), more than 9 in 10 public school principals (92 percent) say that "ensuring that all teachers use the most effective instructional methods" is an essential part of being a school leader today. Administrators believe that their role as instructional leaders is

important and must therefore, find the time to support teacher's pedagogical skills. Without good teaching, there cannot be good learning. Some responsibilities of an instructional leader include coaching and teaching educators to support their development as facilitators of student learning. A commitment to regular classroom visits, understanding, recognizing and improving the pedagogical skills of teachers are essential dispositions of instructional leaders. Creating learning communities to ensure that teachers are sharing ideas, studying effective instructional practices and analyzing student data and work to improve their instruction provides the opportunity for continuous improvement. Improving school quality is an ongoing process led by administrators with the knowledge and skills to promote the teaching and learning in schools.

However, administrators are asked to be instructional leaders but they are not sure what this means. This question was asked recently at a Pennsylvania Inspired Leadership training (2008) of relatively new administrators having less than five years of experience. A few were just recently hired as an assistant principal and/or principal. Some of the responses to the question of what is the role of an instructional leader were: observing teachers; help students learn; modeling effective instruction; provide research to teachers on good teaching; be able to have high test scores. It is obvious from these responses that administrators are being asked to be a leader in a role in which they clearly do not understand. Their definitions exhibit a lack of knowledge of the skills and abilities needed to be an instructional leader. However, after two days of training and discussion on the topic of an administrator as an instructional leader, the administrators developed a much deeper understanding of their role. Some of the responses included: an instructional leader has a clear vision and is able to motivate stakeholders to a common goal so that educators are able to sustain exemplary instruction in the classroom leading to high student achievement; individuals whose vision is to promote and improve instructional practices to achieve higher levels of sustainable academic success for students; an instructional

leader has a vision to improve student achievement by motivating the stakeholders to provide a framework while maintaining focus and accountability; an instructional leader positively impacts student learning through strategically aligned actions while fostering care and respect; an instructional leader provides continuous improvement of learning and maintaining sustainability and ensures opportunity for continuous student growth encouraging lifelong learning. It is obvious that these administrators now have a better grasp of their role, which is a positive step in developing instructional leaders.

A recent study *Conceptualizing Instructional Leadership* (2008) focused on how principals understand their relationship of their daily work and the improvement of instruction. The study analyzes the voices of 20 principals and their understanding of their role as an instructional leader. Of the 20 principals, 13 were elementary principals, 2 were middle school principals, 4 were high school principals and 1 was the principal of a K-8 school. The data collected focused on gathering detailed information about how principals describe their practice and how it relates to improvement of instruction. Through individual, in-depth interviews of one to two hours, data was collected to understand how each principal viewed his or her role.

The responses of principals were divided into four categories of instructional leadership. The first category was termed relational instructional leadership. This is defined as taking actions focused on building relationships. It is about the principal's actions in helping students and faculty feel better about themselves. The analysis found that in 4 of the 20 principal's responses, the relational leadership was dominant.

Linear instructional leadership is defined as taking actions that align standards, curriculum, learning objectives and monitors outcomes with test data. For 5 of the 20 principals, linear leadership was the dominant style. This leadership style also includes using data to drive

instruction.   14 of the 20 principals discussed this concept of linear leadership. Monitoring teachers' lesson plans was another dimension cited by many of the principals.

Organic instructional leadership is taking actions that stimulate inquiry and discourse about teaching and learning. Those principals embracing this style discuss professional learning communities, walk-through observations and team-based study. However, only 3 principals were categorized in this leadership style.

Prophet instructional leadership is not about achieving higher test scores but on working collaboratively with teachers. Principals in this category are concerned with more of a better world than better test scores. Only 1 principal fell into this category

There was great variance between principals, their roles and the multiple conceptions of instructional leadership. Although all responses were components of instructional leadership, principals are leading people on different journeys. However the goal remains for higher test scores in three of the leadership styles. Only the prophet was more about a better world than better test scores. Only in the linear instructional leadership category did most of the principals' share some commonalities.

Educational organizations and school leaders have defined the role of instructional leader in similar but yet different terms.   But the agreement is that the purpose is always the achievement of student learning. Providing the best practice in the classroom so that all students can achieve is the top priority of instructional leaders.

A report from the Institute for Educational Leadership entitled *Leadership for Student Learning: Reinventing the Principalship* (2000) states "The schools of the 21st century will require a new kind of principal, one whose role will be defined in terms of:

• **instructional leadership** that focuses on strengthening teaching and learning, professional development, data-driven decision making and accountability;

• **community leadership** manifested in a big-picture awareness of the school's role in society; shared leadership among educators, community partners and residents; close relations with parents and others; and advocacy for school capacity building and resources; and

• **visionary leadership** that demonstrates energy, commitment, entrepreneurial spirit, values and conviction that all children will learn at high levels, as well as inspiring others with this vision both inside and outside the school building" (p. 4)

The report goes on to say that "leadership for student learning is the priority that connects and encompasses all three major roles" (p. 4). Student learning is what is important in schools. With all the given and inherited roles of a principal, being an instructional leader is extremely crucial. Making sure that the best education is provided to students is an important function of the instructional leader.

The reasons the role of an administrator is as an instructional leader are clear. One reason is that NCLB has put a higher emphasis on school districts to ensure proficiency of student achievement. This legislation requires states to develop assessments to measure student skills. The belief of this legislation is that setting measurable goals will increase student learning. The results of the testing will demonstrate which students are not learning the basic skills effectively, therefore, holding schools accountable. Not meeting the benchmarks on this assessment will require interventions. Therefore, it is the responsibility of administrators to lead their schools as instructional leaders to meet the mandates of this legislation.

Another area that administrators need to address is the rapid growth of technology. This is one major change which has "flattened" the world in which students will compete. As Thomas Friedman describes in *The World Is Flat* (2007*)*, the flattening of the world happened at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Friedman describes how the world is now a more level playing field in the areas of competition, business and the economy. All countries and individuals around the globe have a more equal opportunity to compete in the global market. Because of these reasons, the educational system needs to adjust to the changing world by developing student skills for the 21st century such as communication, cooperation and critical thinking to name a few. To provide students the opportunity to be successful in this flattening world, it becomes necessary for teachers to address student interests and needs. Therefore, instructional leaders influence on effective teaching is at the forefront of successful schools.

Faced with the globalization and competition throughout the world, it becomes necessary for students to be prepared to meet these challenges. The Committee for Economic Development (2006) states "Many American students lack sufficient knowledge about other world regions, languages and cultures, and as a result are likely to be unprepared to compete and lead in a global work environment" (p. 14). According to the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) study of 2007, United States students scored lower than many other countries. The TIMSS is an international mathematics and science assessment of fourth and eighth graders. This assessment provides information to participating countries of how well their students are doing compared to other students internationally. It also provides the data of the strengths and weaknesses of students and monitors trends over time since the test has been first offered in 1995. TIMSS collects data on students, teachers and schools to develop cultural comparisons that may relate to student achievement. Understanding how students of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and gender score will allow countries to evaluate the

education provided to all students. With the globalization of the world, it is important to compare student's progress at different grade levels in order to benchmark their performance to the performance of other students. With approximately sixty countries participating in the recent test, TIMSS is the largest study of math and science achievement of students.

In the most recent testing of approximately sixty countries, United States students, relative to their peers in other countries, did not score well. Fourth grade students finished eleventh in math and eighth in science (Table 1) and eighth graders finished ninth in math and eleventh in science (Table 2). Compared to the 2003 TIMSS, United States fourth graders improved their ranking in math due to improved results on their assessment. However, in the eighth grade science results, their rankings dropped due to the fact that their scores dropped.

Table 1. United States 4th Grade TIMSS Results

	2003	Ranking	2007	Ranking
Science	536	6	539 (+3)	8 (-2)
Mathematics	518	12	529 (+11)	11 (+1)

Table 2. United States 8th Grade TIMSS Results

	2003	Ranking	2007	Ranking
Science	527	9	520 (-7)	11 (-2)
Mathematics	504	9	508 (+4)	15 (-6)

With the competition of jobs in the changing world, it is important for United States students to improve their skills. It is the responsibility of the schools to improve student learning. Administrators, working in conjunction with teachers, will have a major influence of this improved learning.

With NCLB, the flattening, changing world and the rapid growth of technology, effective instructional leaders are those that are flexible, knowledgeable and stay current on the needs of students and teachers. They are cognizant of pedagogical techniques that meet the learner's

needs to thrive and survive in the 21st century. U.S. Education Secretary Richard Riley (2004) stated "None of the top 10 jobs that will exist in 2010 exist today." We are preparing students for jobs that do not yet exist. Therefore, instructional leaders are able to support students in the skills they will need to thrive and compete successfully in the 21st century.

2.4   WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS ON TEACHERS AND STUDENTS?

What specifically is the role of the instructional leader in relationship to classroom teachers and students? Why does the role of improving student achievement begin with teachers and what effect do instructional leaders have on learning?

The link between instructional leadership and student learning is clearly stated in a Wallace report entitled *Leadership For Learning* (2006):

> Behind excellent teaching and excellent schools is excellent
> leadership – the kind that ensures that effective teaching practices
> don't remain isolated and unshared in single classrooms, and
> ineffective ones don't go unnoticed and unremedied. Indeed, with
> our national commitment to make every single child a successful
> learner, the importance of having such a high-quality leader in
> every school is greater than ever (p. 1).

In a meta-analysis over a thirty year period conducted by the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL), included 69 studies, 2,802 schools and approximately 14,000 teachers. Through this study, twenty-one leadership responsibilities were identified that are

correlated with student achievement. The study, *Balanced Leadership: What 30 Years of Research Tells us about the Effect of Leadership on Student Achievement* (2003), found that leadership, specifically instructional leadership, is a defining characteristic of student achievement. The average effect size, expressed as a correlation, is .25. This means that one standard deviation improvement in principal leadership translates into a 10 percentile-point gain in student achievement on a norm-referenced test. Within the twenty-one responsibilities, those that align to instructional leaders had some of the highest effect sizes. For example, monitoring the effectiveness of school practices had an effect size of .27; knowledge of curriculum, instruction and assessment (.25); involvement in curriculum, instruction and assessment (.20); and intellectual stimulation in which administrators ensures teachers are aware of the most current theories (.24). What the study also found was that knowing what to do is important; however, knowing when and how to do it and why it is important are components of effective leaders. This research not only demonstrates the impact leadership has on student achievement but it provides specific action required by administrators to support their findings.

According to a recent report by the Pennsylvania State Board of Education (2009), "One in three Pennsylvania graduates who enrolls in state-owned university or community college cannot pass a first-year college Math or English course, and the failure of our high schools to prepare those students costs taxpayers more than $26 million annually" (p. 1). This report is proof of the importance of improving the instruction in schools, lead by instructional leaders in our schools. The teaching and learning in schools obviously is not rigorous enough to meet the basic requirements of college courses. Even though there are standards in Pennsylvania and Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) scores are improving, there are still a high percentage of students that are not successful based on the results of the PSSA. Instructional

leaders that are involved in the classroom with teachers and students will understand the issues of rigorous curriculum and therefore have the knowledge to improve the instruction.

In *The Teaching Gap,* Stigler and Hiebert (1999) compared math teaching in Japan and Germany with those of the United States. According to their finding they stated:

> Yet it is equally important to recognize that standards and assessments, though necessary, are not enough. What must be done now is to find ways of providing students with the learning opportunities they need to reach the new standards. Making higher standards a reality for students will require more than just the status quo inside our nation's classrooms; curriculum, assessments, and – above all – teaching must improve dramatically. In our view, teaching is the next frontier in the continuing struggle to improve schools. Standards set the course, and assessments provide the benchmarks, but it is teaching that must be improved to push us along the path to success (p. 2).

Moving away from a traditional approach of school management to focus on instructional leadership is an important component to improve student learning. Administrators focusing on curriculum, assessment, instruction, data analysis but especially on educating and supporting teachers on their instructional delivery will improve the pedagogy of teachers. Improving the quality of teaching is more important than ever as instructional leaders become facilitators of teacher growth supporting the development of their pedagogical skills and abilities. Stigler and Hiebert found that in American mathematics classrooms, most students "learn isolated skills through repeated practice" (p. 11). In comparison, Japanese students "spend as much time solving challenging problems and discussing mathematical concepts as they do practicing skills"

(p. 11).   The research clearly demonstrates that teachers have the most impact on student learning, however, what strategies are teachers utilizing to teach students? Because of NCLB and PSSA testing, are teachers feeding information to students?

Along with the findings of Stigler and Hiebert is the concept discussed by Paulo Freire (1993) in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.   Freire describes the teacher as a "depositor" of information and the students as the "containers" being filled with facts. He calls this the "banking concept of education" in which teachers provide the information and the learning to students, as students are passive learners, supposedly soaking up the information. Freire states "In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing. Projecting an absolute ignorance onto others, a characteristic of the ideology of oppression, negates education and knowledge as processes of inquiry" (p. 72). Based on these observations, teachers are using an excessive amount of lecturing and requiring memorization of information by students. Teachers believe that they have the knowledge and therefore, just need to feed it to students for learning to take place. This could be in part due to the accountability of higher test scores since proficiency of student learning seems to be defined by these standardized assessments. Utilizing the banking concept of teaching minimizes the abilities of students to use their creative thinking. According to Hubbard, Mehan and Stein (2006) in *Reform Learning*, "In this banking model, learners are told very little about how to make meaning of the received information, how to go about connecting it to their present situation, or how to help others understand the information" (p. 167).

To eliminate this "depositor-container" practice of teaching, instructional leadership is required. It is imperative that administrators are visible in the classroom to assess teaching and more importantly, student learning. To help eliminate this banking model, effective instructional

leaders provide the knowledge to support teachers in developing their pedagogical skills. With effective learning leaders in the schools, holding teachers accountable for their responsibilities, but supporting and providing them the resources needed to succeed, schools and teaching can become institutions in which creativity is the norm. Administrators can create schools in which students are not seen as buckets being filled by teachers. But it takes an effective instructional leader to raise the teaching standards so that students are not viewed as empty containers. This entails working with teachers to improve their skills through professional development opportunities, observing student learning through classroom observations and working with teachers to understand student learning. Improving teaching and learning is an attribute required by all school leaders. Rigorous curriculum and instruction is required to be consistently implemented in each lesson. To provide the best education in the classroom, effective instructional leaders support the development and refinement of teacher's pedagogical skills. Administrators help teachers develop effective teaching strategies that are relevant and meet the interests of students. Effective teachers are proficient on not only their instructional delivery skills but they are also experts in their content area. They create a learning environment that meets the diverse needs of students (Danielson, 2007; Ubben, Hughes, & Norris, 2007).

Instructional leaders should understand student's learning styles, how they process information and how to motivate them so that they become interested and engaged in the learning. In order for administrators to support teacher learning, they themselves are required to have a deep understanding of how students learn (Spence & Bottoms, 2007). With the changing global world, administrators are cognizant of the curriculum needed to prepare students for the real world. It is important for administrators to understand the skills students need in order to be successful when they graduate. Understanding the demands of the 21st century so that students can be successful is one of the most important skills that administrators possess.

Student-centered approaches in which students interests and needs are considered in their learning are necessary for twenty-first century learning. Student interests, their desire to discover learning and the nature of their curiosity are concepts to be addressed in their education. As developed by The Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2004), skills students should master to succeed in the 21st century include being creative and critical thinkers, becoming problem solvers, developing communication and social skills. These skills as defined by the partnership include demonstrating originality and inventiveness in work, framing, analyzing and synthesizing information in order to solve problems and answer questions, exercising sound reasoning in understanding, exercising flexibility and willingness to be helpful in making necessary compromises to accomplish a common goal and articulating thoughts and ideas clearly and effectively through speaking and writing. Concepts incorporated into the school curriculum include life and career skills such as flexibility, self-direction, productivity, accountability and leadership in order to prepare students to live in the real world. Students working collaboratively to succeed in the globalized economy is another skill developed for 21st century learning. Developing global citizens is a goal of schools. In *Education in the Flat World*, Zhao (2007) states "Citizens must be able to competently negotiate cultural differences, manage multiple identities, comfortably interact with people from different cultures, and confidently move across cultures as well as the virtual and physical worlds" (p. 16). Supporting teachers in providing the necessary curriculum for students to compete, collaborate and connect in the 21st century creates an impact on student learning by instructional leaders.

As John Dewey stated years ago, it is important for schools to create relevant curriculum so that students recognize the importance of their education. Without meaning, students are not motivated to learn. Curriculum considers student interests so that they realize the relevance of their learning. The factory line approach is no longer viable for the skills and abilities students

24

need to be successful in the globalized world. This emphasizes the importance of administrators being in the classroom. Observing the teaching and learning will allow administrators to support students in their learning and allow them to have a deeper understanding of the curriculum that needs to be incorporated in the disciplines of study. In *Experience and Education* (1938), John Dewey, in discussing instruction and discipline states "The main purpose or objective is to prepare the young for future responsibilities and for success in life, by means of acquisition of the organized bodies of information and prepared forms of skill which comprehend the material of instruction" (p. 18). Equipping students with the skills, more specifically problem solving skills needed to face 21st century challenges, will improve the chances of student success in the globalized world. Instructional strategies, such as cooperative learning and project-based learning, can develop student's collaborative skills and improve their communication and social skills. Incorporating the community into these projects will also provide students with experiences in the real world. Developing the skills needed for the 21st century, such as collaboration, creativity, respect for diversity and communication, can prepare students to be successful, to grow and to achieve in the future.

Dewey advocated that children should be involved in real life tasks that take into consideration their interests and stated that the curiosity of children and the experiences children have should be included in the curriculum. One of his criticisms of the traditional, curriculum-centered, approach was that the curriculum did not take into consideration student interests. Dewey (1938) stated "The traditional curriculum undoubtedly entailed rigid regimentation and a discipline that ignored the capacities and interests of child nature" (p. 16). Students were told what to do and were not provided the freedom to discover. This equates to Freire's "depositor-container" approach to teaching. The curriculum was based on content and not the needs of students. Subject matter consisted of information in which students learned facts and dates.

25

Learning is more than just subject matter as the whole child needs to be educated. It is important to include children's needs and interests in the development of curriculum, instructional strategies and assessment. Unfortunately, the current testing system encourages this type of teaching and learning in schools. However, Dewey advocated for providing guided experiences for students that would prepare them for success in life. A major tenet of Dewey's thinking was learning by thinking and doing. Involving students in a more active learning environment, in which they utilize instructional strategies such as role playing and cooperative learning, as opposed to a passive environment in which students are lectured to and stay in their seats for the entire period will create a more motivational environment for student learning. Addressing student's curiosity of questioning and investigation will allow them to discover learning and not just be told what to learn and what knowledge they need as adults. He also argued that students need to be challenged and should be involved in real-life experiences. Without the presence of instructional leaders involved in every facet of student learning, students will not be provided with the best and needed education that they require to be successful when they graduate.

School's curriculum should entail the skills students will need to succeed in the global world. In *A Whole New Mind* (2006) Daniel Pink uses the brain as a metaphor to discuss the skills students need in the changing world. He states that the "left side of the brain" jobs of the future are the routine jobs which will disappear. According to Pink, teaching to the right brain, the creative side of the brain, the arts side of the brain so that students can learn to be creative and be able to synthesize is an important component of teaching. However, these are the skills that are not tested by the standardized assessments. Pink states that students need to develop "high concept" skills which involve "The ability to create artistic and emotional beauty, to detect patterns and opportunities, to craft a satisfying narrative and to combine seemingly unrelated ideas into a novel invention" (p. 52). In Pink's statement, he defines creativity as having the

passion and commitment to think and produce new ideas. These are the skills necessary for students to succeed in the 21st century.

Pink goes on to say that students need to develop the ability to put together the pieces to synthesize rather than to analyze, to see relationships between seemingly unrelated fields, to detect broad patterns rather than to deliver specific answers. In *Two Visions of Education*, Eisner (2006) states, "Schooling is regarded as an occasion for discovery, and perhaps most of all, for helping the student learn how to secure experience that is meaningful" (p. 3). Eisner discusses the importance of students to pursue multiple solutions to problems, which is the work of a creative mind. Based on the thinking of Pink and Eisner, it demonstrates the need of the instructional leader to ensure these skills are included in the learning of students. Teachers require support to provide the learning that students need in changing world. It becomes apparent and essential that an instructional leader spends the majority of their day in the classroom involved in the learning process.

In looking at the impact of administrators on student achievement, specifically schools with a high number of students receiving free and reduced lunch, a study *Within the Accountability Era: Principals' Instructional Leadership Behaviors and Student Achievement* (2005), researchers identified Pennsylvania middle school principals' instructional leadership behaviors and student achievement and school socioeconomic status as a secondary variable of interest. The study also looked at teacher's perceptions of instructional leaders, however, that is not the components of the findings this researcher is evaluating. The study addressed the question of the significant relationship between instructional leadership behavior scores and the level of student performance in grade eight reading and mathematics as measured by the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment. The participants included 75 middle school

principals randomly selected in Pennsylvania that have been in their position for a minimum of two years.

Instructional leadership in this study was defined as the behaviors and tasks in Hallinger's (1987) Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS). Hallinger's instrument assesses three dimensions of a principal's instructional leadership role: (1) defining the school mission, (2) managing the instructional program, and (3) promoting the school learning climate. This behavior-anchored rating scale evaluates 50 specific instructional behaviors that principals perform. The assessment is a 5-point Likert scale which rates the various job functions of an instructional leader. The scoring is about the frequency of the behaviors, not the quality performance.

Student achievement data for this study included the eighth-grade reading and mathematics scores of the 2000-2001 PSSA. The study also considered the schools SES as a context variable.

The findings of the study found that leadership behaviors of promoting the school learning climate (promote professional development, provide incentives to teachers) more than defining the school mission (frame and communicate school goals) or managing the instructional program helped increased student achievement. For schools with a higher SES population, defining the school mission had a positive influence on students reading achievement. The study contained a small sample of schools with a low SES population so a more in-depth study is recommended. The study concludes that context effects have an impact on principal's instructional leadership. Principals adapt their leadership to the needs of their students and school (Hallinger & Heck, 1996).

This study did not provide much data as to the significance of using Hallinger's instrument. The researchers of this study stated that the study "contributed a thin, yet

meaningful, layer to the literature." However, the instrument does provide the attributes of instructional leaders and provides a good self-assessment of one's performance of these traits.

2.5   ARE TEACHER LEADERS RECRUITED TO BECOME INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS?

The challenge of school districts is to attract and prepare talented teachers into the administrative field. But with the demands and expectations, how will teacher leaders be recruited to become instructional leaders? One of the challenges facing principal recruitment is not actually a shortage of candidates but a shortage of desirable applicants (Hess & Kelly, 2005).

In *The Principal Challenge: Leading and Managing Schools in an Era of Accountability*, Tucker and Codding (2002) write "The importance of principals to school success makes it essential to examine the role more carefully in order to consider ways to improve the preparation and professional development of these leaders" (p. 252). They also state "The schools offering the programs typically make no effort to identify potential school leaders. The result is that the pool of candidates from whom the districts select principals is generally composed of people who may or may not have any aptitude or desire for the job or be regarded by their employers as suited for it" (p.13).

In 2007 Learning Point Associates conducted a series of four focus groups of 74 aspiring school principals. The participants were enrolled in principal preparation programs from three major cities: Washington, D.C.; Chicago; and New York City. Through interviews that ranged from 30 to 90 minutes, participants were asked to share their thoughts of what attracts, deters and motivates them to become school principals. Responses for attractions to the principalship

include the opportunity to give back to the community and transform children's lives, having a vision of what needs to be done to improve schools and a commitment to support teachers. Drawbacks of the job included the inability to balance work and home, lack of parental support and loss of close interaction with students.

In a similar study, *The Pain Outweighs the Gain: Why Teachers Don't Want to Become Principals* (2005), Ohio teachers were interviewed to determine the list of incentives and deterrents in the role of an administrator. The results were similar to the Learning Point survey. The attractions in this study included the satisfaction of making a difference, the ability to affect the lives of students and the chance to have a greater impact as principal. Deterrents included stress about having less time at home, responsibility for mandates and decreased opportunity to work with students.

Administrators play a significant role in school leadership, particularly as an instructional leader. Therefore it is essential to recruit potential leadership candidates and support their growth and development in becoming a leader in their schools. Understanding the reasons that teacher leaders are attracted to the administrative field and the deterrents of this position provides information to school districts to recruit qualified candidates.

2.6   WHAT EFFECT DOES PRINCIPAL LICENSURE PROGRAMS HAVE ON DEVELOPING INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS?

In *The Accidental Principal* (2005), Hess and Kelly state "Because preparation of principals has not kept pace with changes in the larger world of school, graduates of principal-preparation programs have been left ill equipped for the challenges and opportunities posed by an era of

accountability" (p. 40). A 2006 survey conducted by Public Agenda found that sixty-nine

percent of principals believe that typical graduate leadership programs "are out of touch" with

today's realities. (p. 31). These results are similar the 2001 Public Agenda survey in which

superintendents (72%) and principal (67%) felt that "leadership programs in graduate schools of

education are out of touch with the realities of what it takes to run today's school district" (p.

39). It is obvious from these two surveys that school leaders, in the position of leading schools,

believe that the educational programs available are not preparing and supporting school leaders.

According to the Mazzeo (2003) in *Improving Teaching and Learning by Improving*

School Leadership, "For those who want to become principals, state licensure does little to assess

their potential for success. State systems are keyed to "input" measures of competence (e.g.,

courses taken, prior teaching experience, and licensure assessment scores) rather than "outcome"

measures (e.g., on-the-job performance or impact on student learning). Such input measures are

imperfect indicators of leadership potential" (p. 3). University programs were developed when

the role of administrators was more managerial than instructional. These programs are based on

theory with very little application or competencies based on what participants are learning and

practicing as instructional leaders in the classroom. Administrative candidates are passed through

the university program based on their academic coursework rather on their abilities and skills to

lead a district. In a report entitled *Educating School Leaders* (2005) Levine stated that university

preparation programs for administrators are poor as they range from "inadequate to appalling"

(p.23). Levine goes on to state

> The typical course of study for the principalship has little to
>
> do with the job of being a principal. In fact, it appears to be a
>
> nearly random collection of courses. The Principals Survey asked
>
> school heads, which had graduated from or were currently

attending a university-based degree or certification program, what

courses they had taken. More than 80 percent of them reported the

same nine courses—instructional leadership (92 percent), school

law (91 percent), educational psychology (91 percent), curriculum

development (90 percent), research methods (89 percent),

historical and philosophical foundations of education (88 percent),

teaching and learning (87 percent), child and adolescent

development (85 percent), and the school principalship (84

percent). These courses are, in effect, the core curriculum for the

nation's principals, adding up to somewhere between 75 and 90

percent of the credits required for a master's degree. But they seem

little more than a grab bag of survey courses offered in most

education schools. If one removed the class on the principalship

from the list, it would be a real challenge to guess the purpose of

the program (p.27-28).

Although Levine's study does not put university programs in a positive light, it needs to

be mentioned that his research included case studies of only 28 schools and departments of

education.   This does not mean all programs are a concern and producing unprepared

administrators. States have taken the lead in developing strategies for improving the licensure

programs. Louisiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Pennsylvania and Ohio have tiered systems in which

newly hired administrators must complete an induction program in order to maintain their

license. Other states are also requiring graduate programs in educational leadership to meet new

standards. Delaware had adopted a state-wide appraisal system aligned to the Interstate School

Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards.   All criteria on evaluation of all

administrators are connected to student learning. Under state law, all administrators are evaluated based on this performance appraisal.

In a report by Darling-Hammond (2007), *Preparing School Leaders for a Changing World: Lessons from Exemplary Leadership Development Programs*, a study was commissioned on the components of programs that provide effective initial preparation and ongoing professional development for principals.

The study examined eight exemplary principal development programs based on strong evidence of strong outcomes in preparing school leaders. Four pre-service and four in-service programs were chosen for this study. The selection of programs was based on multiple criteria which included a review of the literature, solicitation of recommendations from fifty expert consultants, and a survey to participants in the 2004 Wallace Foundation grantee conference and participants in an E-Lead meeting in 2004. This led to 29 programs. Programs were then eliminated based on little evidence of effectiveness and fewer than three years of graduates.

The survey used a four-point Likert scale which developed the survey questions based on national leadership standards and research on leadership effectives by Leithwood and Janatzi (1999). Surveys were conducted with 1,086 principals, all graduates or participants in the eight exemplary programs. Among the program sample, 249 were graduates of the pre-service programs, 244 were participants in the in-service program and 661 were part of the national comparison sample.

The exemplary graduates reported to have faculty members more knowledgeable about their subject matter and have practicing school administrators teaching in their program as compared to the comparison sample of principals. They also reported that their program integrated more theory into their practice and emphasized instructional leadership. Exemplary graduates reported have an internship of 89% vs. 72% and to be placed in an apprentice

leadership role with expert principals rather than doing a project on the side while working as a full time teacher. Other noticeable differences included more intensive mentoring, specific curricular emphasis and more pervasive professional learning opportunities.

What was also found is that graduates of these exemplary programs spend more time on instructionally focused work compared to the comparison groups. The survey showed that they engaged at least weekly and sometimes daily on instructional duties.

Pennsylvania is requiring administrative programs to align to the newly developed leadership standards as their renewal for licensure is due. They have provided monetary support to various universities to redesign their principal's program. The University of Pittsburgh is one institution that has designed a new principal's certification program which equips leaders with expertise in instructional, institutional and public leadership grounded in ethics, inquiry and integrity. This program offers practical, authentic experiences to improve student learning and achievement. Although Levine's and Mazzeo's study are critical of university programs, there are universities that are providing the instructional leadership and job-embedded experiences to support the development of effective leaders.

2.7   WHAT STEPS HAS PENNSYLVANIA TAKEN TO DEVELOP INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS?

In an article published in Education Week, *States Must Take the Lead In Improving School Leadership* (2008), Dr. Gerald Zahorchak, Pennsylvania's Secretary of Education, states "Education has not done nearly enough to develop leaders who can meet the increasing challenges America's students and communities face" (p. 32). Based on his statement that states

must support the development of administrators, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) has become very proactive in supporting the growth of administrators as instructional leaders. They initiated the Pennsylvania Inspired Leadership Program (PIL) which provides a statewide, standards-based leadership development and support system for leaders at all levels through a cohort-based delivery system.

As of January 1, 2008, Pennsylvania passed legislation (Act 45) which defines the responsibilities of administrators in maintaining their administrative license once they are in the role of an administrator. The legislation affects administrators in the following seven categories: Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, Principal, Assistant Principal, Executive Director, Assistant Executive Director and Director of a Vocational School. All educators, actively employed in these positions, are required to attend courses or programs aligned to the 3 "CORE" and 6 "COROLLARY" leadership standards. Administrators are required to attend a minimum of one hundred eighty hours of professional development every five years in order to keep their administrative certification active. In addition, any educator that has become an assistant principal or principal after January 1, 2008, is required to attend an Induction program. Other agencies or educational entities may provide training for administrators but they are required to submit and have their professional development proposal approved by PDE.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education adopted the National Institute of School Leadership (NISL) to provide the curriculum for professional development which aligns to the new leadership standards. PDE determined that the NISL curriculum was a perfect match for the comprehensive, standards-based program that focuses on improved instruction leading to higher student achievement.

> The NISL executive development curriculum is designed to
> teach principals the theory and practice of standards-based

instructional leadership. The research and planning for the curriculum included NISL studies of corporate and business school executive-training techniques, U.S. military leadership training and the best school administrator training worldwide. The program is research-based, job-embedded, and taught in cohorts. NISL research also included extensive interviews with school principals and experts in cognitive psychology, organizational studies, sociology, and economics. (National Center On Education and The Economy, 2005)

Tucker (2002) states "The mission of NISL is to enable principals to acquire the skills and knowledge they need to produce substantial gains in student achievement in their schools" (p. 393). NISL consists of four courses: Course 1: World Class Schooling: Vision and Goals; Course 2: Focusing on Teaching and Learning; Course 3: Developing Capacity and Commitment and Course 4: Driving for Results. PDE selected Courses 1 and 4 to address the three "Core" standards. Tucker continues with "This curriculum is specifically designed to support the development of principals who see their task not as keeping school but as creating a new kind of high-performance school dedicated to bringing all of its students up to an internationally benchmarked standard of performance as quickly as possible" (p 395).

NISL's executive development program uses adult teaching and learning strategies that include case studies, computer-assisted simulations and group discussions of topics such as how best to align instruction with standards. It also uses videos of exemplary practices, readings and video clips from leading international and national education and business experts and web-based instruction, including interactive tutorials. At every turn, the curriculum helps

administrators apply what they have learned to real-life situations in their schools. The focus is always on instructional practices that will lead to high achievement by all students.

Hughes (2005), *Creating a New Approach to Principal Leadership* states "The program (NISL) encourages participating principals to think and act strategically about vision and results (Tucker and Codding, 2002, The Principal Challenge). It trains them to:

- Formulate a clear vision that inspires others

- Think strategically

- Lead the implementation of fully aligned, standards-based instructional systems

- Build effective math, reading and writing programs

- Design and implement professional development programs

- Manage for results that produce steady improvements in student achievement

- Coach faculty teams to get the job done

- Foster ethical and moral behavior in a just, fair, and caring culture (p. 37)

Through this initiative of PDE, the state is investing monies and other resources in staff development for administrators that are essential in making a difference in the development of the skills of instructional leaders. In addition, PDE offers these professional development courses at no cost to administrators. This makes evident their commitment to providing a viable, research-based program for developing the leaders in our schools.

A recent study was conducted by The Center for Educational Partnerships at Old Dominion University (2010) entitled *The Effect of the National Institute for School Leadership's Executive Development Program on School Performance Trends in Pennsylvania*. This study evaluated the effects of student achievement based on the impact of principals attending the National Institute's of School Leadership (NISL) Program. This study addressed the question of

trends in school level performance as measured by the PSSA's in reading and mathematics at the elementary, middle school and high school levels between 2006 and 2009. The NISL-trained principals were compared to principals not enrolled in the NISL program. The study matched comparison districts with similar performance and demographic profiles in the baseline of 2006. There were 70 NISL elementary schools, 19 NISL middle schools and 12 NISL high schools in the study. In this study, 69 NISL principals and over 40,000 students were included.

In the elementary study, 36 NISL elementary schools were compared to within district non-NISL elementary schools and 32 non-NISL out-of-district elementary schools. The middle school compared 19 districts and the high school compared 14 districts. The middle and high school's comparison groups were out-of-district school.

Based on the 2009 performance, NISL schools had higher results in both reading and math. Mathematics had the largest difference between NISL and comparison students. The gains in math were: +2.69%, +3.71%, +1.70% and +5.52% for elementary within-district, out of district, middle schools and high schools respectively. Smaller gains for reading were observed: +3.7%, 2.55%, +1.63% and +1.89% for the four cohorts, respectively. Given the number of students in the study, the results are significant.

This study shows increases in student achievement for NISL training principal's compared to non-NISL trained principals. What this study does not look at is the instructional leadership skills that principals learn from NISL that effects the improvement of student achievement.

In addition to Pennsylvania, Massachusetts (2005) and Minnesota (2006) have adopted the NISL curriculum for their professional development for administrators. Both states initiated this program to develop the instructional leadership of their administrators. Although there hasn't been any research from either state on the connection between administrators as instructional

leaders and improved student learning, based on the 2007 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMMS) scores, one would assume that there is some alignment. In 2007 both Massachusetts and Minnesota participated in the TIMSS as a mini-nation, which allows their scores to be compared on a global scale. The results of the TIMSS scores of these states clearly demonstrate that both are performing extremely high compared to other countries in the world. In addition, both states scored higher in both science (Table 3) and mathematics (Table 4) in fourth and eighth grade compared to the US. When compared to the other countries both states are at the top of the list. The tables show the ranking of students in both tests and clearly illustrate how much better students in these two states score as compared to the rest of the countries. Both states maintain that high standards, high expectations and teachers working closely with each other are some reasons for their success…all expectations of the role of instructional leaders.

Table 3. 2007 TIMSS Science

	United States	**Massachusetts**	**Minnesota**
4	539 (8)	571 (2)	551 (4)
8	520 (11)	556 (3)	539 (6)

Table 4. 2007 TIMSS Mathematics

	United States	**Massachusetts**	**Minnesota**
4	529 (11)	572 (4)	554 (5)
8	508 (15)	547 (6)	532 (6)

2.8 WHAT STEPS MUST SCHOOL DISTRICTS TAKE TO DEVELOP THE INSTRUCTIONAL SKILLS OF ADMINISTRATORS?

School districts cannot rely solely on licensure programs and professional development programs to develop instructional leaders. Because administrators have completed their principals program and have earned their degree, this does not translate into being an instructional leader. Understanding the research of effective leadership does not make an effective instructional leader. The experience of practicing instructional leadership is how administrators will learn to become effective leaders. Therefore, superintendents, providing continual opportunities for administrators to develop and enhance their abilities, will support administrators for the purpose of improving the teaching and learning of students.

The question is what steps must districts take to support administrators in becoming instructional leaders for the purpose of improving student achievement? From the research the following are strategies that superintendents can adopt to improve instructional leaders:

- Professional development based on leadership standards that focuses on teaching and learning
- Administrative collegial groups that allow administrators to discuss and study as a team
- Added support for novice administrators
- Free up administrators from managerial duties to provide more time to practice their learning in the classroom

Many school districts have developed practices to improve administrator's instructional leader's skills. Effective school districts create the ability for administrators to conduct walk-through observations using a specific format to create consistency throughout the district. Others

develop collegial groups in which administrators meet to discuss and study the latest research on effective instruction. What these high achieving schools do is focus on effective teaching and learning that provides success to all stakeholders.

The Pittsburgh Public School District has developed a principal evaluation program called the Pittsburgh Urban Leadership System for Excellence (PULSE). This district partners with other organizations to support administrators in developing their leadership skills. Their belief is that effective instructional leaders are the key to school improvement. Effective instructional leadership is the center of any reform effort in closing the achievement gap and improving the skills of all students.

2.8.1   Professional Development

Powerful, ongoing, sustained professional development focused on improving teaching and learning will provide the knowledge and skills in improving student achievement. Research-based professional development that aligns to national and state leadership standards are trainings that superintendents can adopt to support their instructional leaders. Professional development, incorporating experiences in authentic context as to provide real-world issues that administrators face, is the most effective.

National standards that can help develop the learning of administrators include the Educational Leadership Policy Standards developed by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) 2008. They were adopted by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) which revised the original ISLLC Standards (1996). The criteria of these standards focus on developing a deep understanding of teaching and learning and provides a set of expectations so that all administrators are cognizant of their role as instructional leaders.

The standards emphasize what administrators need to know and be able to do to improve student learning. The standards provide a framework for schools to develop professional development with high expectations for their administrators. This educational policy organizes the functions that help define strong school leadership under six standards. These six standards represent the important concepts and themes that leaders must address in order to promote the success of every student. They include:

- Setting a widely shared vision for learning;

- Developing a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff's professional growth;

- Ensuring effective management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment;

- Collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources;

- Acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner; and

- Understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, legal, and cultural contexts.

Although the new standards are guiding statements regarding improving the success of all students, one standard in particular, details the role of administrators as instructional leaders. The standard states, "An education leader promotes the success of every student by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth." The functions of these standards are:

- Nurture and sustain a culture of collaboration, trust, learning, and high expectations

- Create a comprehensive, rigorous, and coherent curricular program

- Create a personalized and motivating learning environment for students

- Supervise instruction

- Develop assessment and accountability systems to monitor student progress

- Develop the instructional and leadership capacity of staff

- Maximize time spent on quality instruction

- Promote the use of the most effective and appropriate technologies to support teaching and learning

- Monitor and evaluate the impact of the instructional program

In addition to the national standards, Pennsylvania leadership standards for administrators also guide the development of all staff development programs. The standards provide a research-based guide to support districts in aligning their professional development. It provides a powerful statement of the expected quality of administrators. Under the leadership of the Governor Rendell and the Secretary of Education of Pennsylvania, Dr. Gerald Zahorchak, a committee of school leaders was formed with the purpose of focusing on leadership for improving student achievement. The Pennsylvania Department of Education, concerned with the development of instructional leaders, developed leadership standards which drives the staff development training for administrators. Pennsylvania believed that it was important for every new administrator to have some depth in the fundamental building blocks of a standards-based system – a clear vision for student success, an aligned system that is focused on the end result, and the knowledge to be able to access and use appropriate data to inform decisions. Therefore, PDE developed nine leadership standards in which all administrative professional development offered in Pennsylvania must align.

The three "CORE" standards are:

- *The leader has the knowledge and skills to think and plan strategically, creating an organizational vision around personalized student success*
- *The leader is grounded in standards-based systems theory and design and is able to transfer that knowledge to his/her job as the architect of standards-based reform in the school*
- *The leader knows how to access and use appropriate data to inform decision-making at all levels of the system*

The six "COROLLARY" standards are:

- *The leader creates a culture of teaching and learning with an emphasis on learning.*
- *The leader manages resources for effective result*
- *The leader collaborates, communicates, engages, and empowers others inside and outside of the organization to pursue excellence in learning*
- *The leader operates in a fair and equitable manner with personal and professional dignity*
- *The leader advocates for children and public education in the larger political, social, economic, legal and cultural context*
- *The leader supports professional growth of self and others through practice and inquiry*

Every district is unique and therefore professional development is different in every district. When developing administrative professional development, the cultural context, community demographics, district initiatives and data from student assessments are components that have to be considered to provide relevant trainings for administrators. Participation in sustained professional development, aligned to standards that meet the initiative and needs of teachers and students, is an essential component to the role of instructional leaders.

Professional development, based on research-based concepts, ensures the best concepts are taught. Knowing what are proven teaching and learning strategies will provide administrators the information needed to improve student learning. In addition, since learning is an ongoing process, a culture of continuous learning is emphasized. Research has shown that professional development that is job-embedded so that administrators practice their skills in a real-life, authentic context is the most effective. Problem based learning and case studies that focus on complex real-world issues will allow administrators the opportunity solve situations that may arise. Problem based learning promotes the integration of theory with practical application to enhance the abilities of administrators in successfully solving dilemmas that they are challenged with on a daily basis.

Administrators are more likely to improve student learning is they have the expertise of what instructional instruction looks like. High quality professional development will provide administrators with the declarative knowledge of what effective teaching and learning entails. Without this background knowledge, administrators will lack the knowledge to engage in improving student achievement. Developing strong proficiency in the knowledge of effective pedagogy will allow administrators to apply the learning to contribute to improved education in their schools. Focusing on student achievement, aligning the training to leadership standards and providing opportunities for administrators to problem solve are essential components for effective professional development.

2.8.2   Collegial Teams

School administrators need time to meet to discuss and reflect on their readings, observations and experiences as instructional leaders. Dialoguing about the process of their responsibilities will permit administrators to learn from each other and grow from their learning. This inquiry among administrators will allow them to engage in discussion and hands-on learning to improve their skills. These collegial teams can work together in the school improvement process aligning with the district standards. The power of these teams is the feedback, reflective discussions and the support provided to improve the skills of administrators.

Richard Elmore discusses the idea of a professional network which creates a learning community among administrators. In *Professional Networks and School Improvement* (2007), Elmore states "The network is designed to provide a setting where school leaders can work together in a structured way on issues of instructional practice that are directly relevant to their work, developing their understanding and skill around practices of improvement" (p. 22). This network is grounded in instructional practice. Administrators working together on issues of instructional practice supports the learning and sharing of effective leadership which in turn will improve administrator's skills.

Administrators, working collegially, will have the opportunity to discuss student learning, evaluate standards, curriculum, instruction and assessment expected in every classroom. This will ensure a better understanding of the theory through the ability to apply the learning in context. They will also be able to observe teaching and learning together to develop a shared understanding of effective instruction. Administrators working collegially will allow leaders to delve deeply into instructional issues, such as analyzing data, improving instruction and

evaluating student learning that they face on a daily basis. Collegial teams emphasize shared learning as administrators are provided the opportunity for collaboration. Looking at problems and issues from multiple perspectives provides more indepth reflection of problem-solving issues.

2.8.3   Novice Administrators

As administrators enter their role as instructional leaders, superintendents, providing the support needed to allow these administrators to develop and practice their instructional leadership skills, will create an environment of learning for their leaders. Methods to provide this support include mentors and coaches. Bloom, Castagna and Warren (2003), *More Than Mentor: Principal Coaching,* compares mentoring with coaching. Bloom states that novice administrators need both mentoring and coaching. His distinction is that mentors are in-house administrators who can provide information and advice dealing with district concerns. Through mentoring, districts can assign a current instructional leader in the district with a new administrator to provide guidance and support in their development. Collaboration, team learning and conducting walk-throughs are some ideas of how this pairing can support new administrators. This mentoring model can provide new administrators with the collaboration needed to design the thinking and reflection to grow and develop as an instructional leader. Mentors can help new administrators focus more on their instructional leader role compared to managerial concerns. However, because mentors are from the same district, it may be difficult to share confidential information.

Coaching, on the other hand, is from an external administrator. Coaches can support administrators on more personal issues that are affecting the novice administrator. Bloom states "Supported principals not only report that they are more engaged in instructional leadership, they

actually are spending more time on instructional issues and are addressing them with more skill than unsupported principals" (p. 8).

Districts can utilize other resources available through professional organizations that pair mentors with protégés. The Pennsylvania's Principals Mentoring Network provides mentoring to any Pennsylvania administrator that requests this support. In fact, any new administrator enrolled in the PIL Induction program is provided the opportunity to be assigned a mentor to help guide them as they begin their administrative career. Other professional organizations such as the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) has a Peer Assisted Leadership Services (PALS) program designed to support new administrators. They also have a principal's helpline in which administrators can call with any questions.

Because most new administrators arrive from being classroom teachers, this does not ensure that they have the ability and knowledge to evaluate classroom instruction, analyze effective learning, develop school-wide curriculum or develop effective staff development for teachers. Through staff development, job-embedded learning, coaching and mentoring, new administrators will learn the skills of an instructional leader and then be able to support teachers in improving instruction.

2.8.4   Free Up Administrators

Administrators duties include managerial responsibilities which take away from time administrators are able to spend on their main role as an instructional leader. Duties include but not limited to cafeteria and bus duty, parent conferences, discipline, facility maintenance and security. Principals wear these different hats each day but to be the most effective leader, bureaucratic roles of administrators are reduced to spend more time on instructional leadership

duties. Administrators require opportunities to apply their learning in the classroom. This can be accomplished by alleviating some of the managerial roles of instructional leaders.

In *California Principals' Resources Acquisition, Deployment and Barriers*, Fuller (2007) states "Principals report spending a great deal of time managing facilities, supervising staff, dealing with discipline and security, and student learning. They devote less time to professional development and curriculum supervision" (p. 10).

A developed procedure to free up administrators from their management roles to practice their instructional leadership is an important practice of superintendents in their role of developing instructional leaders. One practice is to redesign the school day for instructional leaders so that they can focus on classroom instruction for the purpose of improving teaching and learning. Learning through their real world experiences in the classroom will allow administrators to apply their learning to support teachers and students in the classroom.

In early 2009, a study entitled *Evaluation of the School Administrations Manager Project,* was conducted by the Policy Studies Associates and funded by the Wallace Foundation. The School Administration Manager (SAM) project focuses on changing the conditions in schools that prevent administrators from spending more time as instructional leaders. The key emphasis with SAM is to shift the role of administrators from managerial leaders to instructional leaders. A SAM could be a retired administrator, a teacher interested in administration, a secretary or office manager, or a person from another career with no previous experience in schools.

For this study, principal's focus on time was through a measurement of their time between management and instructional tasks. There were 25 descriptors each describing an observable behavior used for administrators to evaluate their use of time. Besides the behavioral survey, trained data collectors shadowed administrators, recording their behaviors at the

beginning of a full year and at the end of the year. This enabled an evaluation of the change in principal's tasks. Individual in-person and telephone interviews were also conducted to collect data.

Results demonstrated that instructional leadership time increased in the SAM project. Among the 75 principals that participated in the project for at least one full year, their instruction-related tasks increased by an average of 58 minutes per day. Specific instructional tasks such as walkthrough observations, instruction related office work and working with students increased 10 minutes per day on average. The decrease in management tasks of 10 minutes per day was on four management tasks: office work prep, building management, student supervision and student discipline. Citing the data from the 3 original principals in the SAM program, their instructional time increased 34% over a year. A small group of 10 principals, over a two year period, increased their instructional time by 27%. This suggests that instructional leadership increases with the SAM program over an extended period of time.

Gains were significant in schools in which SAMs carried out the following five management responsibilities: student discipline, student supervision, management of non-teaching staff, management of school facilities and interactions with parents.

Those districts interested in the SAM project cited better achievement gains, more instructional supervision and less costly than hiring an assistant principal as reasons to implement this program. The reason some districts chose not to adopt this program was the cost of the position, the appearance of top-heavy staffing and the belief that some administrators are not equipped to spend more time as an instructional leader effectively.

Districts from around the country are finding unique methods in finding time to free their administrators from managerial roles to that of instructional leaders. This has allowed school administrators to spend their time concentrating on raising student performance. However, to

free up administrators to spend more time as instructional leaders, schools need to ensure that administrators are equipped to provide the support for teachers to improve student learning.

2.8.5   Summary

In an April 2007 report, *School Need Good Leaders Now*, The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) provided seven components of strategies for improving leadership programs based on their research:

- Leadership standards

- Recruitment

- Leadership preparation programs

- Tiered licensure

- Alternative licensure

- Professional development

- Conditions to help improve teaching and learning

The strategies listed can provide a model of practices that states, universities and superintendents can develop and implement to support the growth of teacher leaders and administrators as instructional leaders. These steps include states evaluating how they certify administrators, licensure programs evaluating their curriculum, professional development agencies incorporating relevance and job-embedded experiences based on leadership standards and school districts providing ongoing sustained opportunities for their administrators to develop and practice their instructional leadership skills. Embracing these concepts will support the development of administrators so that they can have an impact on student learning.

2.9   CONCLUSION OF LITERATURE REVIEW

Because administrators have earned their administrative certification, this does not equate to being knowledgeable or experts as instructional leaders. In *Reform As Learning*, Hubbard, Mehan and Stein (2006) state "School districts throughout the country typically provide very little professional development for principals and assistant superintendents, apparently assuming that once these leaders have secured their position, they don't need additional training" (p. 148). Based on the research in this study, school districts cannot rely on licensure programs alone to develop the skills of instructional leaders. Through the research of this study, it is inevitable that superintendents practices in supporting their administrators as instructional leaders provide the best opportunity of developing the skills of their administrators. Although local and statewide opportunities are available to administrators to enhance their educational learning on being an effective instructional leader, without the learning being embedded in the classroom, the learning is not effective.

In *Excellent Teachers Deserve Excellent Leaders* (2007), Darling-Hammond states that when principals engage in effective leadership practices they:

1. Set direction, by developing a consensus around vision, goals and direction;

2. Help individual teachers, through support, modeling, and supervision, and develop collective teacher capacity, through collaborative planning and professional development that creates shared norms of practice;

3. Redesign the organization to enable this learning and collaboration among staff (and personalization/support for students),as well as to engage families and community; and

4. Manage the organization by strategically allocating resources and support (p. 21)

There exists an urgency to improve the learning and teaching in our classrooms. Leadership programs, designed by superintendents, can provide the essential training that support administrators for the purpose of improving teaching and learning. The goals of NCLB include raising achievement levels of all students and closing the achievement gap. These have become the main challenges of instructional leaders in the twenty-first century. Although instructional leadership is not addressed in the federal legislation, it is implied that schools need to hire and develop the best candidates and support their development in being the instructional leaders essential for improved teaching and learning. If student achievement is truly the priority for schools, then developing instructional leaders is a priority.

In developing practices for administrators, leadership standards are the guide to be utilized as the focus of the essential instructional learning. It is imperative that districts develop their professional development by aligning to state and national standards. Superintendents are responsible for taking the lead to ensure that their administrators are knowledgeable on all areas of instruction, curriculum, data analysis, brain theory and learning styles to improve the teaching and learning in the classrooms. Although well educated administrators are important to improving student achievement, without professional development learning applied in authentic context, a real disconnect will exist in solving real-world learning. Simulating problem-based learning will allow administrators the practice of solving issues that may arise in their tenure. Putting the administrator in the role of solving real-world dilemmas will develop their decision-making thinking skills. The goal of the learning is to improve student learning, not just training that amounts to hours needed for administrators to maintain their certification.

If student learning is to be a priority, then administrators are needed to be present in the instructional process. Alleviating some managerial duties to focus on instructional roles will support the role of an instructional leader. This does not mean that managerial tasks are totally

eliminated as this is unrealistic. However, reducing this role will provide more time for administrators to be instructional leaders. Administrators in the classroom supporting teachers and students and dialoguing with teachers to improve instruction will demonstrate that instruction is important in the school. The goal is to create a culture in which all students will learn by developing leaders of instruction and not managers of schools.

Although improving principal leadership programs will improve the education in our schools, it is not the panacea. There is no simple solution to the challenges facing administrators. Knowing the research of effective instructional leadership and ensuring that administrators are provided the support needed to implement the research is imperative for effective instructional leadership. Improving university programs, getting states involved and selecting teacher leaders in our district so that the best are being trained will add to the improvement of our future leaders.

In conclusion, from the literature review of strategies that superintendents can adopt to improve instructional leaders, the following four standards will be used to evaluate the practices of superintendents in developing their administrators as instructional leaders:

- The professional development provided to administrators both internally and externally

- Administrative collegial groups both internally and externally

- Support provide for novice administrators both internally and externally

- Providing managerial support to administrators that will provide them more time to focus on instructional duties

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the age of No Child Left Behind administrators are being held accountable for student achievement. With the global competition and in light of the economic factors affecting the job market, more than ever, students need prepared with 21st Century Skills necessary to experience success. Therefore, the role of administrators has to focus more on their instructional leadership role and less on their management role. Administrators are needed to lead this charge.

The research clearly demonstrates the positive effect administrators have on student learning (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). As an instructional leader, it is important that administrators are involved in the process of student learning. This study will focus on the administrator's role as an instructional leader and how superintendents align this role with their practices. The study will evaluate how superintendents develop and support their administrators to be instructional leaders. The factors that influence student learning from the instructional leader's role will be an essential component of this study.

3.2   STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Do superintendents lack the development and inclusion of practices in developing and supporting their administrators as instructional leaders?

3.3   RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How does the literature define the role of instructional leaders?

2. How do superintendents view the role of an instructional leader?

3. How do superintendents develop the instructional leadership skills of their administrators?

4. What do superintendents report as currently offered programs to support administrators in developing their instructional skills?

5. How do the reported practices of superintendents compare to the research literature?

3.4   METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

This descriptive, qualitative study will explore the programs, trainings and teachings of administrators in developing their instructional leadership skills. School districts in Western Pennsylvania will be the subjects of this study. Qualitative research was chosen for this study for the purpose of exploring the experiences and practices of school districts as it relates to the

study. In *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, And Mixed Methods Approaches* Creswell (2009) defines qualitative research as "The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data" (p. 4).

Strauss and Corbin (1998) discuss, in *Basics of Qualitative Research,* the term grounded theory as an approach to qualitative research. They explain the grounded theory approach as allowing the researcher to begin with an area of study and then allowing the data to determine the theory. Because the theory is drawn from the data, it is "likely to offer insight, enhance understanding, and provide a meaningful guide to action" (p. 12). In *Qualitative Evaluation And Research Methods*, Patton (1990) continues by stating "Qualitative evaluation inquiry draws on both critical and creative thinking" (p. 434). The inquiry by the researcher will determine a theory grounded from the information provided by the participants of the study. According to Kvale (2009) in *InterViews: An Introduction To Qualitative Research Interviewing*, "The purpose of grounded theory is not to test existing theory, but to develop theory inductively" (p. 202).

This qualitative research study will analyze ten school districts in which students consistently score proficient on the Pennsylvania School System Assessment taking into consideration the percentage of students in the district eligible for free and reduced lunch. The study will describe and analyze the practices superintendents employ in developing the instructional leadership of their administrators. The researcher will compare the practices of each district with the responses of the other nine school districts to find similarities and differences. The researcher will also compare these practices to the research of effective practices in developing instructional leaders to evaluate the commonalities and disparities.

57

In *Qualitative Communication Research Methods,* Lindlof and Taylor (2002) states "Researchers usually select persons for interviews only if their experience is central to the research problem in any way. They may be recruited for their expertise in a skill or discipline, or because their role in a scene or in critical events created a unique fund of knowledge" (p. 173). Therefore, purposeful sampling will be utilized in this study as it allows the researcher to interview subjects based on pre-determined criteria relevant to the research topic. Patton (1990) states "The logic and purpose of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, thus the term *purposeful* sampling" (p.169). The superintendents of these ten districts will be interviewed to gather the data for this research as they provide the best opportunity to address the purpose of the research and clarify the questions to be studied. Since superintendents have the authority over their administrators, they possess the best knowledge of the practices that exist in their respective school districts.

In developing this study, the researcher will first send a letter to the ten superintendents of the respective districts explaining the research study, why they were chosen to be interviewed and asking for their support in this study. The letter will also notify the superintendents that they will be contacted in the near future to schedule a time to meet. At this time, the interview questions will be provided to superintendents. The researcher will contact the superintendent by email and/or through a phone call to schedule the interview. The interviews will be attempted to be conducted face-to-face, recording each interview to capture the dialogue between the researcher and superintendents. The results of the data will be written as a qualitative narrative of the information gathered based on the research questions asked of interviewees. The narrative will include a matrix that shows the connections among the ten districts interviewed. The narrative will also include a second matrix showing the alignment of what the research states are

the factors in developing effective instructional leaders and the superintendent's responses in developing their administrators as instructional leaders. The research will determine the practices and strategies implemented by superintendents to support the development of their administrators as instructional leaders. If necessary, the researcher will follow-up with superintendents to clarify information or to expound upon statements that were made.

It should be noted that the researcher is the Site Coordinator of the Pennsylvania Inspired Leadership Program for the Western Pennsylvania area. This includes all school districts within the area of the following Intermediate Units: 1, 2, 3, 7 and 27.

3.5 SAMPLE

The 2010 Pittsburgh Business Times Guide To Western Pennsylvania Schools creates an "Honor Roll Rank" of the top performing public school districts in the Pittsburgh area based on the Pennsylvania School System Assessment (PSSA) scores. The rankings of the schools are based on students' scores on the PSSA for the past three years in math, reading, writing and the first year science scores. The current year of PSSA results are given the most weight. The school district's rankings are based on the number of students scoring advanced and proficient on the PSSA. The results for this ranking are provided in the Pennsylvania Department of Education's website. The Business Times adds to this "Honor Roll Rank" another category by taking into consideration the percentage of students in the district eligible for free and reduced lunch. They name this ranking the "Overachiever Rank." According to the Business Times, this ranking answers the question of which school districts do better than expectations based upon economics.

The Business Times computes this information through a formula[1] considering the previous three years of PSSA data. They continue by stating that "It is widely acknowledged that the economic situation of a student is one of the strongest predictors of how well a student will perform academically – a low percentage of economically disadvantaged students generally results in a high percentage of top performances on the state's standardized tests" (p. 47).

3.6   DATA COLLECTION

3.6.1   Interviews

Strauss and Corbin (1998) define qualitative research as "Any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification" (p.

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[1] All of the rankings take into account the previous three years of PSSA scores, weighed with the most recent score as one half, the prior year as one-third and two years prior as one-sixth of the ranking. For each test, a school or district's score is based on the mean score for that test among the set examined compared, the standard deviation for that score among the group and the schools score for that test. Add up all the individual scores for each test and this is the overall score.

The formula for Overachievers is to compute a district's mean score for a grade. Take the district's mean grade score minus the set's mean grade score divided by the standard deviation for the set. Separately, take the percent of students economically disadvantaged (qualify for free/reduced lunch) and do the same formula (district's percent disadvantaged minus average percent disadvantage divided by standard deviations percent of percent disadvantaged).   The second result is subtracted from the first result to determine how much above or beyond expectations the district performed.

11). Therefore, this qualitative study will utilize individual semi-structured interviews with the superintendents of the ten districts chosen for this study. Most interviews will be face-to-face as this provides the best opportunity to conduct the interview in a more conversational style, which allows the researcher to probe deeper for clarification and discussion into the superintendent's responses. Kvale (2009) defines qualitative research interviews as "Attempts to understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples' experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations" (p. 1). The purpose of the interviews will be to develop an understanding of the vision, journey and experiences of the interviewee that answers the researcher's questions. The researcher's responsibility will be to frame the questions in which superintendents can respond with in-depth, accurate information that captures the dynamics of their policies and procedures.

The interview process will permit an in-depth analysis of the research questions. A list of open-ended questions was developed that investigates the strategies utilized by the school districts that emphasize the importance of developing instructional leaders. In *Qualitative Evaluation And Research Methods,* Patton (1980) states "The purpose of gathering responses to open-ended questions is to enable the researcher to understand and capture the points of view of other people without predetermining those points of view through prior selection of questionnaire categories" (p.28). Open-ended questions allow superintendents the opportunity to elaborate in greater detail on their responses. The questions will explore the issues that are relevant and important to the evaluation questions.

3.6.2 Interview Questions

There are eleven focus questions that will be asked of superintendents. These questions align to the five core research questions of this study. In Table 3.1, a matrix of the connections and alignment between the focus questions of the interview and the core questions of the research study are shown. The focus questions are:

1. How does the superintendent define an instructional leader?

2. How does the superintendent define the role of an instructional leader?

3. How much of the role of their administrators is as an instructional leader?

4. What duties entail this role as an instructional leader?

5. How does the superintendent support and guide their administrators to be instructional leaders?

6. What kinds of supports exist for new administrators to encourage and develop them to be instructional leaders?

7. What types of staff development exists for administrators to develop their instructional leadership skills?

8. How is the management role covered so that administrators can be instructional leaders?

9. What have you found effective in your administrative instructional leaders that have led to student achievement?

10. How are administrators accountable as instructional leaders?

11. What steps must still be taken in your district to develop more effective instructional leaders?

Table 5. CORE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Eleven focus questions as they align to the five core research questions	How does the literature define the role of instructional leaders?	How do superintendents view their role as an instructional leader?	How do superintendents develop the instructional skills of their administrators?	What do superintendents report as currently offered programs to support administrators in developing their instructional skills?	How do the reported practices of superintendents compare to the research literature?
How does the superintendent define an instructional leader?	X	X			
How does the superintendent define the role of an instructional leader?	X	X			
How much of the role of administrators is as an instructional leader?	X	X			
What duties entail this role as an instructional leader?	X	X			
How does the superintendent support and guide administrators to be instructional leaders?			X	X	X
What kinds of supports exist for new administrators to encourage and develop them to be instructional leaders?			X	X	X
What types of staff development exists for administrators to develop their instructional leadership skills?			X	X	X
How is the management role covered so that administrators can be instructional leaders?				X	
What have you found effective in your administrative instructional leaders that have lead to student achievement?				X	
How are administrators accountable as instructional leaders?				X	
What steps must still be taken in your district to develop more effective instructional leaders?				X	

3.7   SCHOOL PROFILES

Creswell (2009) states "The idea behind qualitative research is to purposefully select participants or sites that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question" (p. 178).   The participants were selected based on their success in student learning.   The researcher identified the ten top districts on their student's PSSA performance for the past three years as reported in the 2010 Pittsburgh Business Times Guide To Western Pennsylvania Schools "Overachiever Rank."   Information in the following charts of the ten districts include: County of the School District; student enrollment numbers; expenditure per student; percent of disadvantaged students; economically disadvantaged rank (schools ranked on the number of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch as of October 2009): overachiever rank (a formula taking into account the past three years of the PSSA test scores and the number of economically disadvantaged students receiving a free or reduced lunch); percentage of students district wide scoring advanced and proficient on the PSSA reading and math; number of professional teaching staff; number of principals and the student/teacher ratio.

Table 6. School District "A" – Beaver County, Pennsylvania

Enrollment 1747	Expenditure Per Student $9,500	Honor Roll Rank 69
Overachiever Rank 1	Economically Disadvantaged 66.7%	Economically Disadvantaged Rank: 95
District Wide 2009 PSSA Scores	Reading Proficiency 72%	Math Proficiency 76 %
Professional Teacher Staff 159	District Principals 4	Teacher/Student Ratio 11.0

Table 7. School District "B" – Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania

Enrollment 2987	Expenditure Per Student $12,398	Honor Roll Rank 20
Overachiever Rank 2	Economically Disadvantaged 42.9%	Economically Disadvantaged Rank: 72
District Wide 2009 PSSA Scores	Reading Proficiency 82%	Math Proficiency 88%
Professional Teacher Staff 204	District Principals 5	Teacher/Student Ratio 14.6

Table 8. School District "C" – Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania

Enrollment: 971	Expenditure Per Student $13,713	Honor Roll Rank 93
Overachiever Rank 3	Economically Disadvantaged 71.5%	Economically Disadvantaged Rank: 100
District Wide 2009 PSSA Scores	Reading Proficiency 63%	Math Proficiency 73%
Professional Teaching Staff 90	District Principals 3	Teacher/Student Ratio 10.8

Table 9. School District "D" – Beaver County, Pennsylvania

Enrollment 1580	Expenditure Per Student $8,224	Honor Roll Rank 28
Overachiever Rank 4	Economically Disadvantaged 36.9%	Economically Disadvantaged Rank: 59
District Wide 2009 PSSA Scores	Reading Proficiency 79%	Math Proficiency 86%
Professional Teaching Staff 119	District Principals 4	Teacher/Student Ratio 12.9

Table 10. School District "E" – Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania

Enrollment 2346	Expenditure Per Student $12,241	Honor Roll Rank 39
Overachiever Rank 5	Economically Disadvantaged 42.7%	Economically Disadvantaged Rank: 71
District Wide PSSA Scores	Reading Proficiency 78%	Math Proficiency 80%
Professional Teaching Staff 172	District Principals 5	Teacher/Student Ratio 13.6

Table 11. School District "F" – Allegheny County, Pennsylvania

Enrollment 4397	Expenditure Per Student $17,934	Honor Roll Rank 6
Overachiever Rank 6	Economically Disadvantaged 16.0%	Economically Disadvantaged Rank: 18
District Wide PSSA Scores	Reading Proficiency 87%	Math Proficiency 88%
Professional Teaching Staff 398	District Principals 6	Teacher/Student Ratio 11.0

Table 12. School District "G" – Fayette County, Pennsylvania

Enrollment 1136	Expenditure Per Student $8,200	Honor Roll Rank 33
Overachiever Rank 7	Economically Disadvantaged 41.1%	Economically Disadvantaged Rank: 65
District Wide PSSA Scores	Reading Proficiency 78%	Math Proficiency 81%
Professional Teaching Staff 85	District Principals 4	Teacher/Student Ratio 13.3

Table 13. School District "H" – Allegheny County, Pennsylvania

Enrollment 690	Expenditure Per Student $10,180	Honor Roll Rank 87
Overachiever Rank 8	Economically Disadvantaged 62.2%	Economically Disadvantaged Rank: 91
District Wide PSSA Scores	Reading Proficiency 67%	Math Proficiency 74%
Professional Teaching Staff 62	District Principals 2	Teacher/Student Ratio 11.1

Table 14. School District "I" – Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania

Enrollment 1098	Expenditure Per Student $9,195	Honor Roll Rank 75
Overachiever Rank 9	Economically Disadvantaged 60.2%	Economically Disadvantaged Rank: 90
District Wide PSSA Scores	Reading Proficiency 70%	Math Proficiency 69%
Professional Teaching Staff 90	District Principals 3	Teacher/Student Ratio 12.2

Table 15. School District "J" – Fayette County, Pennsylvania

Enrollment 3906	Expenditure Per Student $8,500	Honor Roll Rank 92
Overachiever Rank 10	Economically Disadvantaged 64.7%	Economically Disadvantaged Rank: 94
District Wide PSSA Scores	Reading Proficiency 65%	Math Proficiency 67%
Professional Teaching Staff 274	District Principals 9	Teacher/Student Ratio 14.2

In evaluating the top ten school districts in Western Pennsylvania in the Overachiever rank as described by the 2010 Pittsburgh Business Times Guide To Western Pennsylvania Schools, there are some distinctive features of these districts. Only one district in the top ten in the Honors Rank also made the top ten in the Overachiever Rank. This concludes that only one district not only does well with the PSSA scores, but also the scores when including students that are categorized as economically disadvantaged.

Half of the Overachiever top ten districts in 2010 were also in the top ten in the Overachiever rank in the 2009 study. The biggest gain was a district that improved their ranking from twentieth in 2009 to third in 2010. Another improved school gain was from eighteen in 2009 to ten in 2010 and another school with a gain from fourteen to five.

Of these top ten schools in the Overachiever Rank, five of the districts have over 50% of their students qualifying for a free or reduced lunch. When taking into consideration the Economics Disadvantaged Rank, which lists the districts by the number of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch, half of the top ten districts on the Overachiever list rank in the bottom 15% with another four districts in the lower 50% rank. The scores of these successful districts demonstrate that socioeconomic conditions can be overcome to support these students in improving their learning.

When analyzing these top 10 districts on the Overachiever Rank, their Honors ranking is not very high. The Honors ranking is strictly based on the PSSA scores. These 10 districts rank much lower than other Western Pennsylvania schools based on these scores. Only one district was in the top ten and another in the top twenty of the Honors rank. Most of the schools in the Overachiever rank do not do well overall in comparisons with other Western Pennsylvania schools unless economically disadvantaged students are added into the equation.

3.8   DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative data analysis is the process of taking the collected data and interpreting the information that is being investigated. According to Creswell (2009) data analysis "Involves preparing the data for analysis, conducting different analysis, moving deeper and deeper into understanding the data, representing the data, and making an interpretation of the larger meaning of the data" (p. 183). In *Research In Education* McMillan and Schumacher (2006) state "Qualitative analysis is a relatively systematic process of coding, categorizing and interpreting data to provide explanations of a single phenomenon of interest" (p. 364). The researcher will look for patterns, generalizations or themes from the information provided by the participants. Through the use of open-ended questions, the researcher will analyze the data to determine any themes in the responses among the respective school districts.

As the data is collected it will be coded to identify emerging themes. Coding the data has an important role in organizing and analyzing the data. According to Rossman and Rallis (1998) in *Learning In The Field*, "Coding is the process of organizing the material into chucks or segments of text before bringing meaning to information" (p. 171). In *Educational Research*

(2003) Basit states "Coding is to allow the researchers to communicate and connect with the data to facilitate the comprehension of the emerging phenomena and to generate theory grounded in the data" (p. 152). Coding will allow the research to bring together the data to determine commonalities gathered through the interviews. The data will coded for the purpose of organizing the information to determine the themes expressed by participants regarding their development of their administrators as instructional leaders. The researcher, in coding the information, will put aside his biases and knowledge to remain open-minded in order to determine the emerging themes of the information collected in the interview process. The themes will be identified based on those that are common among all participants and those that are mentioned by only one or a few of those interviewed. Once the research is coded, it will be interpreted based on this research study. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) state "The code is not the interpretation" (p. 222). The results of the data will compared among the ten school districts involved in the research. The superintendent's responses will also be compared to the research of the practices of effective instructional leadership for similarities and differences.

4.0   DATA ANALYSIS

4.1   INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the influence of superintendents in developing their administrators as instructional leaders. This study examined the practices of school districts that have demonstrated success on the Pennsylvania School System Assessment results in which students consistently scored proficient on their assessment. The assessment results and the combination of the percentage of students in the district eligible for free and reduced lunch were the determining factors of which districts were chosen for this research study. Through this investigation, the researcher examined the practices and opportunities provided to administrators that develops their instructional leadership skills. This chapter includes the information provided by superintendents through the interview. It also contains an analysis of the data collected.   The common ideas shared will follow each research question.

4.2   STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Do superintendents lack the development and inclusion of practices in developing and supporting their administrators as instructional leaders?

4.2.1   Research Questions

1. How does the literature define the role of instructional leaders?

2. How do superintendents view the role of an instructional leader?

3. How do superintendents develop the instructional leadership skills of their administrators?

4. What do superintendents report as currently offered programs to support administrators in developing their instructional skills?

5. How do the reported practices of superintendents compare to the research literature?

4.3 REVIEW OF THE INTERVIEW PROCESS, DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Qualitative inquiry methods were utilized in this study. This method allowed the researcher to capture the practices of developing instructional leaders, as conveyed by the superintendents interviewed in this study. The superintendents from the top ten schools listed in the 2010 Pittsburgh Business Times Guide To Western Pennsylvania Schools as Overachievers were interviewed for this study. The superintendents were chosen for the interviews as they provided the best opportunity to describe the practices for their administrators as instructional leaders.

Eleven open-ended questions were developed to collect descriptive data from the superintendents. This chapter will review the interview results of the superintendents. The interviews were completed over a period of five weeks and were all completed face-to-face. All interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher.

The researcher will use the data to compare the practices of each district with the responses of the other nine school districts to find similarities and differences. The researcher will also compare these practices of superintendents to the research of effective practices to evaluate the commonalities and disparities.

4.4   REVIEW OF THE INTERVIEW RESPONSES

The following section provides the responses of the superintendents of the eleven questions that address the five research questions identified in this study.   The responses were evaluated to find common themes among the ten school districts in addressing instructional leadership.

Research Question 1:   How does the literature define the role of instructional leaders?

The National Association of Elementary School Principals (2001) defines effective instructional leaders in six standards: make student and adult learning a priority; set high expectations for academic and social development of students; align content and instruction to standards; create a culture of continuous learning; use multiple sources of data; and actively engage the community to share in the responsibility of supporting student success. Being able to evaluate the effectiveness of the alignment of skills and assessments to standards and to be able to evaluate student work for evidence of learning based on the standards are also roles of instructional leaders.

Whitaker (1997) in *Instructional Leadership and Principal Visibility* identified four skills essential for instructional leadership.

- First, they need to be a resource provider. It is not enough for principals to know the strengths and weaknesses of their faculty but also recognize that teachers desire to be acknowledged and appreciated for a job well done.

73

- Secondly, they need to be an instructional resource. Teachers count on their principals as resources of information on current trends and effective instructional practices. Instructional leaders are tuned-in to issues relating to curriculum, effective pedagogical strategies and assessment.

- Thirdly, they need to be good communicators. Effective instructional leaders need to communicate essential beliefs regarding learning such as the conviction that all children can learn and no child should be left behind.

- Finally, they need to create a visible presence. Leading the instructional program of a school means a commitment to living and breathing a vision of success in teaching and learning. This includes focusing on learning objectives, modeling behaviors of learning and designing programs and activities on instruction (p. 155-156)

According to Johnson (2008) *The Principal's Priority 1,* "Instructional leaders are school principals who communicate an explicit and comprehensive vision of how children learn" (p. 72). Administrator's belief is that all students can learn and experience success. It is the responsibility of administrators to convey and model this vision in their daily practice. Making this vision come alive in their day-to-day activities, models this belief to students and teachers.

The leader's vision promotes and sustains continuous growth of both students and teachers and describes how students learn through effective instructional classroom practice.

Educational organizations and school leaders have defined the role of instructional leader in similar but yet different terms. But the agreement is that the purpose is always the

achievement of student learning. Providing the best practice in the classroom so that all students can achieve is the top priority of instructional leaders.

Some responsibilities of an instructional leader include coaching and teaching educators to support their development as facilitators of student learning. A commitment to regular classroom visits, understanding, recognizing and improving the pedagogical skills of teachers are essential dispositions of instructional leaders. Creating learning communities to ensure that teachers are sharing ideas, studying effective instructional practices and analyzing student data and work to improve their instruction provides the opportunity for continuous improvement. Improving school quality is an ongoing process is lead by administrators with the knowledge and skills to promote the teaching and learning in schools.

With NCLB, the flattening, changing world and the rapid growth of technology, effective instructional leaders are those that are flexible, knowledgeable and stay current on the needs of students and teachers. Administrators focusing on curriculum, assessment, instruction, data analysis but especially on educating and supporting teachers on their instructional delivery will improve the pedagogy of teachers. Improving the quality of teaching is more important than ever as instructional leaders become facilitators of teacher growth supporting the development of their pedagogical skills and abilities.

Research Question 2: How do superintendents view the role of an instructional leader?

Interview Questions:

How does the superintendent define an instructional leader?

Superintendent "A": An instructional leader is a resource provider, an instructional resource for student learning, an effective communicator and demonstrates a presence within the school building/district. They are very focused on student learning and academic achievement. They need to model this in their buildings.

Superintendent "B": Someone who is open-minded and a visionary. Have to be looking ahead for years down the road as education is changing. Help make kids better than they are.

Superintendent "C": A person who communicates to the staff and works with staff on new ideas and how to instruct students using data to drive instruction.

Superintendent "D": Someone who understands that the core business of public school is to maximize the positive impact of all resources that end up in the classroom so that students can learn more and do more over time. Our core mission is to educate students so that is the main idea.

Superintendent "E": Someone who focuses on student achievement. Get trained on concept and bring it back to implement. Must be student-centered. Every decision whether it is budget, curriculum, instruction has to relate back to the best interest of students.

Superintendent "F": The leader has a full understanding of the instructional process; one that recognizes good instruction and can help others in raising student achievement. They have goals and core values so that they know where to lead people. They are focused on content and knowledge.

Superintendent "G": Someone who leads by example and works with teachers in the trenches on curricular items, such as textbooks and resources. They research these resources as a team. Someone who empowers those around him. Someone who finds the strengths of teachers and builds upon them. Selects people around them to make them stronger.   Visibility is important for instructional leaders.

Superintendent "H":   Someone who emphasizes the process of instruction and facilitates the interaction with teachers and students. Works with curriculum. Someone who is goal driven. Follow goals of strategic plan.

Superintendent "I": A person who motivates and facilitates. Have to know best practices, the latest things that are working and convey that to the people that have to carry it out.

Superintendent "J": Making people better than they are. Good time management. Getting parent support. Someone in the classroom as much as possible. Creating the best staff as possible.

Common Themes: Two comments that were common in the responses included student learning and instruction. All superintendents stated that student learning is the goal of all actions of instructional leaders. With instruction, comments made included textbooks, recognizing good instruction, curriculum and best practices.

How does the superintendent define the role of an instructional leader?

Superintendent "A": An instructional leader provides materials and resources for their staff, but most importantly actively supports day-to-day instructional activities by getting into the classroom and through modeling desired behaviors. The need to plan the instructional focus of in-service training but if they are not leading these trainings then they need to be a participant.

Superintendent "B": People who know instruction, curriculum and assessment. Have to know best practices. Need to know what works in education.

Superintendent "C": To be supportive of staff and to provide professional development on topics such as differentiated instruction and the use of technology in the classroom.

Superintendent "D": Someone who can always bring back what's on the table (learnings that they gain such as building and grounds or working with teachers). How does that support the mission of maximizing the success of all kids so that means maximizing the success of teachers. Everything that leads to the bottom line of learning.

Superintendent "E": A facilitator, a cheerleader, a coordinator, we hold everyone accountable.

Superintendent "F": The role may differ depending on the person and his/her position within the organization, administrators vs teacher leaders. The role of the building principal is to take teachers to the next level in developing student's skills. They need to set standards and expectations. The instructional leader must understand data analysis and recognize the connection between the data and the instruction.

Superintendent "G": Someone who is collaborative, a team-player, guides people but doesn't micromanage people. Role is to allow people to problem solve on their own.

Superintendent "H": The role is to be a good communicator. Make sure they collaborator. Engage all stakeholders, empower others inside and outside the organization to make thing happen in the schools.

Superintendent "I": The key role is motivation. You have to motivate your people and this is done by valuing their input. Then you get buy-in.

Superintendent "J": Assessing what is happening in the district with formative and summative assessments. Helping teachers meet the needs of students through the use of data.

Common Themes: Although stated in different words, a common thread throughout the responses of superintendent focused on instruction. Topics such as professional development, data, curriculum, assessment and best practices were the main role of instructional leaders as perceived by superintendents. Many of the superintendents discussed walk-through observations

as a method of supporting teachers and assessing student learning. Another Being in the classroom also provided visibility of administrators within the learning environment.

How much of the role of their administrators is as an instructional leader?

Superintendent "A": Ideally it would be 90% instructional and 10% management but realistically right now I would say that it is 60% instructional and 40% management based. In a district that has a lot of students with needs and barriers to education, we are pulled in on their struggles in their home life and outside resources that they need.

Superintendent "B": Not enough, it should be about 50%. Elementary probably do more since the high school seems to have more crisis every day.

Superintendent "C": It should be 80 to 90 percent but in a small district with just 3 principals, they must deal with discipline, parents and scheduling.

Superintendent "D": I'd like to think it is 50%. That is my hope.

Superintendent "E": It depends and evolves depending on experience and what is going on at any particular time. For example, one principal is spending a lot of time on the renovation of the building so this is their role right now so there is less time to be an instructional leader. It's not the optimal use of time but it needs to be done. An experienced administrator in an building is probably spending 75-80% of their time as an instructional leader.

Superintendent "F": The principals complete over 100 walk-through observations annually. They participant in professional development sessions with the staff and use the walk

through observation process to make certain teachers are using the techniques expected. They do these walk-throughs with ELI and switch buildings to observe. 75% of their time is spent developing the emerging teacher and supporting good teaching practices.

Superintendent "G": We take an active role in instruction so it is a huge role of administrators. We are in the classrooms doing walk-through observations. We make time to do these observations of 12-15 times a year. Administrators are involved in instructional decisions such as induction. They decide how they want to train their teachers.

Superintendent "H": Not enough due to managerial issues. I would say about 25% because of all other duties.

Superintendent "I": We are unique in our district as we are so small so we don't have a lot of administration. Therefore everyone has to take on many roles. Not as much as I would like as they do the management in their buildings. I would say less than 50% which is unfortunate.

Superintendent "J": I would like more but they do all the work such as busing, parents, health issues. I expect them to be in the classroom as much as possible.

Common Theme: "Not enough" seemed to be what echoed from most superintendents. Due to managerial issues, administrator's time was limited. This was especially prevalent in the smaller districts that have less support personnel. However, even though some districts are highly involved in a majority of their time as instructional leaders, the superintendents would like more time in this role. The range that administrators spend as instructional leaders was from 25% to 80%.

What duties entail this role as an instructional leader?

Superintendent "A":   The instructional leader's duties and responsibilities include: providing a safe and orderly academic environment; providing a positive and supportive climate for students and staff; maintaining the district vision and setting goals focused on high levels of student learning; maintaining high expectations for student learning; being visible and accessible to staff and students; communicating effectively with staff; shared leadership, decision-making, and staff empowerment (building capacity); modeling instructional leadership and focus; consistent discussion of instructional issues; classroom observations and feedback to teachers; effective use of student data for student progress and improvement; professional development opportunities and resources; recognition of student and staff achievement.

Superintendent "B": Working to improve teachers. Know best practices to support better teaching. Helping all students become smarter.

Superintendent "C": They have to research ways to improve student achievement. They have to analyze different programs to see what best fits for students.

Superintendent "D": Able to evaluate and monitor staff but not for the sole purpose of satisfactory or unsatisfactory ratings. Figure out what individual teacher's weaknesses and strengths are and translate that into appropriate staff development. Understand where we need to go with the curriculum and turn that into learning experiences. Find ways to empower teachers to improve learning such as doing walk-throughs together as part of their professional development. Create trusting environment. Provide time for teachers to reflect on their practice

in community of learners. Support teachers in their conversations of learning...4th grade teachers talking with 5th grade teachers.

Superintendent "E":   Have to be very knowledgeable on curriculum, pedagogy, effective teaching strategies and assessments and analyzing data. Have to stay current. Facilitate and monitor that best practice is happening.

Superintendent "F":   Their duties include identification of teacher needs, teaching/learning process, communicating with teachers, students, and parents, and evaluating the progress made on a regular basis. They need to partner with teachers.

Superintendent "G": Very good with time management. Be able to empower those around you. Be able to identify one's own strengths and weaknesses and surround yourself with those that support you. Someone who is compassionate and creates a trusting environment.

Superintendent "H":   Attending different professional development programs. Make sure they are well read on the latest practices to inform teachers. Should have meeting with teachers on instruction. Administrators have lunch-n-learns to spend time talking with teachers on instructional topics such as technology. Come back from trainings and share with others.

Superintendent "I":   First is to be knowledgeable of instructional strategies and programs. Keep people motivated.

Superintendent "J": They work with the curriculum coordinator to help with textbooks and to help develop the curriculum.

Common Themes: Throughout all responses, it is important for administrators to know best practices and to use this knowledge to develop and support teachers. The concept of

improving teacher's skills through professional development and informing teachers of best practices was consistently stated by superintendents. Many different roles were described by the superintendents, however, it all aligned with their expectations of their administrators to improve student learning.

Research Question 3: How do superintendents develop the instructional leadership skills of their administrators?

Interview Questions:

How does the superintendent support and guide their administrators

to be instructional leaders?

Superintendent "A": I keep the administration team focused on student achievement and set clear academic goals and expectations for the district. Guidance and support is provided individually as well as within a team atmosphere. Our administrative team participates in a summer administrative retreat to re-establish goals for the upcoming school year, and I meet with them individually in the summer and at the start of the school year to set individual administrative/instructional goals. The district administrative team meets bi-weekly to discuss district goals and strategies, programs and reports out on progress or barriers. We conduct book

circles to stay current on educational research and practices. I encourage administrators to attend staff development trainings outside the district.

Superintendent "B": Once a month we have administrative meetings to discuss specifically curriculum, instruction and assessment. We focus on what we want to do with instruction. Seven or eight times a year we have administrative team meetings. Sometimes we have a speaker talk about instruction or better teaching. I send out a lot of readings, sometimes three to four a week, to administrators on teaching. I highlight the readings as administrators are busy. So they can read the parts I highlight. It gives them insight to my thinking. We study the research so that administrators understand and have the facts on best practices.

Superintendent "C": I meet with them monthly to review test scores, direction of where we need to go. We discuss topics of how to improve what we do in the district.

Superintendent "D": Give them a lot of responsibilities. Try to set the overall vision and the belief that "best thinking wins." Allow them to create ideas on their own and provide adequate resources such as time, materials and staff development.

Superintendent "E": I provided resources, support with staff development. Encourage them to attend outside staff development.

Superintendent "F": I encourage leaders the opportunities to attend professional development outside of the school district. We provide professional development on a regular basis, regular discussions and modeling. Using our Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) we set the framework of what administrators need to focus on such as data driven instruction and differentiate instruction. We are an ELI (Education Leadership Initiative) school district for 4 ½ years.

Monthly meetings are held with teacher leaders and administration to network on developing leadership skills. Teachers complete walk-through observations with the administration and discuss what they observed with the teacher following the observation. They have conversations with them to discuss what they observed in the classroom. This often results in suggestions that would enhance the teaching/learning process.

Superintendent "G": I provide them with free reign to make decisions in their building. I entrust them making decisions.

Superintendent "H": I hold meeting once a week to share different issues and updates on latest information. I am visible in their schools.

Superintendent "I": Try to support them in initiatives that they have. In a small district, they do a lot on their own. So they come to me with ideas and I support them. I sent them to professional development that aligns to their initiatives. They attend the University of Pittsburgh's Leadership Academy. I also send them to Pattan trainings.

Superintendent "J": I acknowledge their efforts and accomplishments through "extra effort" awards. I encourage them to attend trainings. I encourage them to work together to share their work.

Common Themes: One common response is that superintendents empower their administrators to make decisions and to implement ideas that they may have. In addition, administrators are encouraged to attend professional development on topics that align to their school needs. These include local, state and national trainings although most of the administrators attend local workshops to develop their instructional skills. All superintendents

report that they have administrative staff meetings to keep their administrators abreast of current educational updates in order to keep them abreast of needed information. Three superintendents stated that they meet monthly with their administrators, one meets weekly and another meets bi-weekly to support and guide their administrators.

What kinds of supports exist for new administrators to encourage and develop them to be instructional leaders?

Superintendent "A": New administrators meet with me and the assistant superintendent upon hiring and initially and review the District's mission, vision, goals, academic programs, background, direction and expectations. We set specific focus areas with the new administrators. The new administrator is assigned a mentor administrator, is enrolled within the local principal's academy and PIL.

Superintendent "B": Since most are most within the system, they already know the expectations. If they come from the outside, we look for someone who has the philosophy that aligns to our district. We start teaching them through our meetings. I meet with them often and have our Directors of Curriculum talk with them. We provide readings and articles that we feel are important.

Superintendent "C": We send them to the Principal's Academy where they network.

Superintendent "D": Talk more often with new administrators than the seasoned administrators. Make sure they attend staff development outside the district. Looking at other

organizations in the near future, such as ELI (Educational Leadership Initiative), to help with this development.

Superintendent "E": Provide mentorship for new principals. Also encourage them to attend staff development outside the district to work with other principals.

Superintendent "F": The administrative team works together to support new administrators by mentoring the new administrators. The CIP outlines the district-wide expectations. The central office administration visits buildings regularly and completes walk-throughs with the principals. The district has elementary and secondary curriculum personnel that works with the principals.

Superintendent "G": Support new administrators through informal evaluations throughout the year along with formal evaluations. We talk and collaborate often. I let them know that I am available. I support them with professional development by allowing them to attend trainings such as PIL.

Superintendent "H": I allow them to attend professional development with the University of Pittsburgh's Principal Academy as they learn so many new ideas that they bring back to their schools. Support them with their ideas such as working with other administrators in learning together.

Superintendent "I": Try to send them to professional development that applies to their initiatives. They also are able to network at these trainings.

Superintendent "J": I provide mentors to new administrators within the district.

Common Themes: The responses to this question revolved around two strategies. The first support for new administrators is mentoring. Seven of the superintendents provide mentors for these novice administrators. The mentors are internal personnel such as other administrators or curriculum coordinators.   The second support is professional development. Seven superintendents stated that they encourage their administrators to attend trainings and workshops such as the Principals Academy and the Pennsylvania Inspired Leadership program.

Research Question 4:   What do superintendents report as currently offered programs to support administrators in developing their instructional skills?

Interview Questions:

What types of staff development exists for administrators to develop

their instructional leadership skills?

Superintendent "A": We conduct book circles to stay current on educational research and practices. We participate in professional development opportunities with the University of Pittsburgh, PATTAN, PIL Leadership Programs, and Intermediate Unit sponsored professional development programs.   This upcoming school year we are expanding our administrative professional development with the University of Pittsburgh's Educational Leadership Initiative Program and Mutiu Fagbayi's Eye on the Goal (Score Card) Program.

Superintendent "B": We bring in speakers to address instructional issues. We work with the University of Pittsburgh to provide workshops. Some of administrators attend the University of Pittsburgh's Principal Academy.

Superintendent "C": Some administrators attend the Principal's Academy. They attend trainings at the Intermediate Unit. There are also speakers that we bring in which they learn alongside teachers on topics such as differentiated instruction.

Superintendent "D": We use the formal staff development from the state such as PIL and Intermediate Unit trainings. I have monthly staff meetings but we spend some time discussing instructionally curriculum oriented topics. The staff meetings include time for reflection and collaboration to talk about the strengths and weaknesses and how to address the weaknesses.

Superintendent "E": Encourage them to work together. We bring in experts from a local university to help with the needs of administrators. Right now data analysis support is provided to find root causes and how to address them. It is situational depending on what schools need. Right now autistic training is needed. Also use the Intermediate Unit for support.

Superintendent "F": There are a variety of staff development for administrators: ELI team meetings, monthly administrative meetings, national and local conferences, and leadership initiatives through local universities. Administrators are encouraged to learn with other administrators with other district administrators. A few administrators are enrolled in the PIL program. Next year, an administrator will be part of the Leadership Pittsburgh program.

Superintendent "G": We use PIL and the Intermediate Unit especially for data driven instruction. We attend trainings as a team such as Steven Covey's trainings. We do book studies

and meet at least once a month as a team to discuss instruction. We use consultants as needed, for example, we just changed our evaluation system. I meet individually at times to discuss instruction.

Superintendent "H": I send them through different professional development such as the Principal's Academy and the PIL program.

Superintendent "I": Half of the administrators attended the Principals Academy which they found very beneficial. We are concerned with one of our schools so that principal is attending trainings to help with school improvement.

Superintendent "J": Through our team meetings we discuss topics as instruction and data. Some administrators attend the Pennsylvania Inspired Leadership trainings. They attend

workshops through their Intermediate Units. Some attend the University of Pittsburgh's Principal Academy. We also bring in speakers on professional development in which administrators learn with teachers.

Common Themes: Two leadership programs were continually mentioned by the superintendents. Six of the districts send their administrators to the University of Pittsburgh's Principal Academy and eight districts to the Pennsylvania Inspired Leadership Program. Although other staff development was mentioned by the superintendents such as trainings by local Intermediate Units, the Principals Academy and Pennsylvania Inspired Leadership were utilized by a majority of the districts. For some of the districts, they used both programs for their administrators. The needs and interests of administrators determined which program to attend.

How is the management role covered so that administrators can be instructional leaders?

Superintendent "A": Most of our buildings have a designated staff member to assist with the management responsibilities within the building: Head Teacher, Dean of Students, Assistant Principal and Guidance Counselors also help with student issues in order to assist the principal with their instructional duties.

Superintendent "B": We have quite a bit of support staff. We have a Dean of Students to handle some management issues.

Superintendent "C": Because we are such a small district, administrators must do all the roles. We can't hire anyone new to help. Our central office is limited in staff so it is difficult to support administrators with managerial roles.

Superintendent "D": We hire leaders that have good managerial skills. This allows more time for instruction. We try to minimize the potential of fires so that less time is spent on managerial items. We have board policies that we review to eliminate problems becoming big issues that take a lot of time to solve.

Superintendent "E": We created a Dean of Students to help with discipline, parking, detention, and student issues.   Department chairs are involved to help with some of the managerial issues such as scheduling and operations of the building.

Superintendent "F":   I guess it is called overtime. Most of the principals and administrators spend extended hours in their buildings once the teachers have left for the day and

prior to their arrival. I have cut back on some of the required paperwork like the monthly principal's report.

Superintendent "G": The management role is covered by everyone. Discipline is one issue in which teachers were provided staff development to alleviate the referrals to administrators. Using support staff to help with some of the roles as well as the use of guidance counselors to handle conflict resolution situations with parents which helps administrators.

Superintendent "H": I try to cover some of their duties to help administrators. Teachers help with bus duty. We have school aides that help with some responsibilities. But in a small district everyone has to do all the work.

Superintendent "I": There is some support from our Pupil Personnel by taking care of busing, some scheduling, attends magistrate hearings. But in a small district, the principals do it all.

Superintendent "J": Principals have to do it all. Don't have the economic base to hire others to do the managerial roles. I am working to hire Dean's of Students to help administrators with some of their managerial roles so that they can get into the classroom more.

Common Themes: What stood with superintendent's responses is that the role of management is part of administrator's duties. However, six of the districts try to support administrators with additional staff to help with managerial duties. Teachers, Dean of Students and teacher aides are employed to help with bus duty, discipline and scheduling to name a few of the managerial roles. The other districts do not have the resources to hire extra personnel to help

with these duties and they do utilize currently employed personnel to help with managerial duties of their administrators.

What have you found effective in your administrative instructional leaders that have led to student achievement?

Superintendent "A": I have found that the administrators that focuses on student learning with their staff by being involved in grade-level planning meetings, conducting data sessions, are visible in classroom visits and observations, and provide constant communication and feedback to staff are very effective administrators.

Superintendent "B": Our job to make sure all kids can learn. Focus on student achievement. Work with teachers to help with student motivation and work with all kids.

Superintendent "C": The use of technology in classrooms in which administrators are involved. Principals work well with staff on new initiatives such as differentiated instruction.

Superintendent "D": Caring about their faculty by what they say and do. Have they earned the trust of their staff? Good communication skills and empathetic for their faculty. They don't hide in their office but they are working principals…talking with kids and parents. They take pride in their building.

Superintendent "E": They lead data teams to determine what data is saying. Design needs based on data. Help with the school improvement document. Book study on data.

Superintendent "F": Definitely the CIP which allows all of us to concentrate on the goals and not start new projects that are not connected to student achievement. Administrators are very knowledgeable of the focus of the initiatives as they attend the same professional development as the teachers.

Superintendent "G": The number one thing is data review. They have learned how to read data and they share this with teachers.

Superintendent "H": One administrator created a cohort of other administrators around the area. They meet periodically to do walk-throughs or to discuss instructional issues. They work with lead teachers to help develop the instructional program. For example, they were able to get teachers to be leaders in teaching others of how to use the smart boards in their classrooms.

Superintendent "I": Very supportive of teachers. He is in charge but supportive of teachers. He sends them to workshops and brings back his learning to the school.

Superintendent "J": The administrators communicate well with each other. They network to define the needs to a deeper level. They share information on their schools with each other.

Common Themes: Although there was not one specific strategy that superintendents found effective within their administrators, what was apparent is that districts all have different goals. The administrators were effective in implementing the district goals in their schools. Technology, data analysis and walk-through observations were a few of the initiatives

mentioned. Each administrator had their own strengths which helps move the district forward in improving student learning.

How are administrators accountable as instructional leaders?

Superintendent "A": This is demonstrated through programs, 4sight scores, attendance, graduation rates and PSSA scores. I look at the attendance every day as I think this is a good indicator. Administrators meet with me on a monthly basis and report on academic progress as well as lack of academic progress through the above indicators.

Superintendent "B": One thing is to make sure they have their observations completed. They are required to do at least sixteen walk-throughs per month. They don't set goals as I don't feel they are important. We have a focus of student learning in our district and that is what they are to work on during the year.

Superintendent "C": We just try on focusing on teaching all students.

Superintendent "D": Set goals of 4-5 for the year. We meet at beginning of year to discuss what those goals are. At the end of the year, they bring data to support the accomplishments of their goals.

Superintendent "E": Meet with them on regular basis. They set their goals for the year during the summer and then they meet with me at half way through the year and at the end of the year to see if they met their goals.

Superintendent "F": At the end of the year the superintendent meets with each administrator to show evidence of student achievement.   Superintendent and assistant superintendent sit in on classes observing student learning and teaching which demonstrates if administrators are working with teachers. Administrators submit reports at the end of the year that demonstrates if administrators are meetings goals. State of Schools report is given to the school board at the end of the year.

Superintendent "G": In a meeting at the end of the year, administrators share their accomplishments based on their goals. This occurs periodically throughout the year as informal evaluations. They are held responsible for the success of their schools.

Superintendent "H": They write goals and action plans. I meet with them to discuss. The PSSA scores and analyzing the scores to make sure they meet with teachers to discuss the results and what they need to do.

Superintendent "I": It's difficult to be critical in a small school and being in that role in the past I know what their challenges are. They set goals and then they are evaluated at the end of the year to see if they were achieved. Accountability seems to come down to test scores which isn't the best method.

Superintendent "J": Through visits I make sure the climate of the buildings is good and that the administrators are making sure teachers are learning.

Common Themes: Six superintendents stated that they evaluate their administrators based on goals developed. The goals written by administrators were focused on student achievement. Therefore, in the evaluation of administrators by superintendents, evidence of

student learning is required. Three superintendents that don't have their administrators develop goals, meet with their administrators regularly and discuss student academic progress based on their classroom observations and various assessments.

What steps must still be taken in your district to develop more effective instructional leaders?

Superintendent "A": Keeping up with current research and additional opportunities for students to help them learn is important.

Superintendent "B": We are studying assessment. Administrators are learning about how best to assess students and how to effectively measure the learning. Develop a system for providing grades to students in a different manner than the past.

Superintendent "C": I think that we need to continue what we are doing as it seems to be going well. I'd like to hire more administrators to help with all the roles.

Superintendent "D": Cohort long term staff development program. Continue to invest in teachers to help them tap into their own capacity to be instructional leaders in their own peer group.

Superintendent "E": Coming up with creative ways of dealing with limited resources. Continuing to work together and talk to create ideas.

Superintendent "F": We must stay with the focus and not let our guard down. We need to understand the consequences of not reaching goals that raise achievement. Administrators

need to spend more time together or be with other leaders so that they can learn. New research and new requirements from PDE can be shared. Read some books together such as Good to Great and Communication. Handouts at administrative meetings are shared with administrators on research in which discussions take place.

Superintendent "G": With the influx of new teachers in the district, we need to strengthen our teacher induction program. Administrators are working on this project. Administrators need to meet more with their teachers to discuss instructional issues. This has been built into the schedule for next year.

Superintendent "H": Do some book reads and discuss with each other. Doing some moving forward with Professional Learning Communities. Encourage principals to attend principal's conferences.

Superintendent "I": I'd like to get them together more often. We did spend time this summer on a project. Get them together to look at the programs from K-12 not segmented from K-5, 6-8 and 9-12.

Superintendent "J": Do more team trainings together to share the learning.

Common Themes: One goal that seemed common in most responses of superintendents was the idea of administrators working more closely together. Five superintendents describe learning together through discussions of instructional issues, book reads and focusing on district initiatives as a need. Others responded with a stronger Induction program and keeping up with the research.

4.5   SUMMARY

In this chapter, the superintendent's main ideas were shared regarding their practices and thinking in their development of administrators as instructional leaders. A summary of the interviews of the eleven questions was presented. For each question, the main theme(s) of the responses of the superintendents were stated. Although there was not a strategy or practice to any question that was stated by every superintendent, the responses were similar in nature. How the superintendents responded was influenced by the method in which they frame their conceptions of an instructional leader. In many ways they were making similar comments but stating them in different ways. A more in-depth analysis as compared to the research will be provided in the following chapter.

The responses of the superintendents were excerpts of the transcribed interviews. Only the comments that were related to the questions were provided. In Appendix B, a more detailed transcription of one superintendent's responses is provided. Again, only those comments that related to this study are provided in this appendix.

5.0   CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1   OVERVIEW

Do superintendents lack the development and inclusion of practices in developing and supporting their administrators as instructional leaders? If superintendents are to develop practices to develop instructional leaders, they must ask themselves the following questions:

- What do we want our administrators to know and be able to do especially with the shifting mandates required of school districts?

- How can we develop the knowledge and skills of administrators?

- What are our district initiatives to improve student achievement?

- How can we support our administrators in practicing their role as instructional leaders?

The review of the literature has provided the steps that school districts need to initiate to develop effective and efficient instructional leaders. It provides the connections of the role of instructional leaders to that of student learning. The development of administrator's declarative knowledge is of extreme importance as it provides them with the academic background of effective instruction. However, without the ability to practice this learning or the lack of time for

administrators to practice the role of instructional leadership, the learning will have little or no effect on student learning

5.2   SUMMARY OF PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to investigate the practices of superintendents in supporting the development of their administrators as instructional leaders. Through this study, the researcher interviewed ten superintendents of the top districts as evaluated by the 2010 Pittsburgh Business Times Guide To Western Pennsylvania Schools. This study examined the practices of school districts that have demonstrated success on the Pennsylvania School System Assessment results in which students consistently scored proficient on their assessments. The assessment results and the percentage of students in the district eligible for free and reduced lunch were the determining factors of which districts were chosen for this research study.

5.3   SUMMARY OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research was chosen for this study for the purpose of exploring the experiences and practices of school districts as it relates to the study. This study utilized individual semi-structured interviews with the superintendents of the ten districts chosen for this study. All ten interviews were conducted face-to-face as this provided the best opportunity for a more conversational style, which allowed the researcher to probe deeper for clarification and

discussion into the superintendent's responses. The interviews were recorded to capture the dialogue between the researcher and superintendents. The results of the data are written as a qualitative narrative of the information gathered based on the research questions asked of interviewees. The narrative includes a matrix that shows the connections among the ten districts interviewed. The narrative also includes a second matrix showing the alignment of what the research states are the factors in developing effective instructional leaders and the superintendent's responses in developing their administrators as instructional leaders.

5.4   SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

5.4.1   How do superintendents view the role of an instructional leader?

This question also included the following questions in analyzing responses to the role of an instructional leader: How does the superintendent define an instructional leader?; How does the superintendent define the role of an instructional leader?; How much of the role of their administrators is as an instructional leader?; What duties entail this role as an instructional leader?

Whitaker (1997) in *Instructional Leadership and Principal Visibility* identified four skills essential for instructional leadership. The skills included the administrator as a resource provider, instructional resource, good communicator and having a visible presence. When analyzing the responses to the questions, these four essential skills were common in the

103

responses.   Although not all superintendents named these four skills individually, the compilation of their responses listed all four skills. In their role as instructional leaders, terms used by superintendents included facilitators, collaborators, coordinators and motivators. Taking teachers from "good to great" is a duty of instructional leaders as described my many of the superintendents.   Throughout the responses, student learning and student achievement was consistent.   Responses to support students in improving their learning included many pedagogical skills. Knowing best practice, applying the learning in the classroom, having the knowledge of effective learning, being able to develop curriculum and ensure teachers are implementing it faithfully and providing good instruction were specifics on instruction that superintendents discussed. It is important, as stated by the majority of superintendents, that administrators understand the strengths and weaknesses of their teachers. Through this assessment of teacher skills, professional development is provided to inform teachers of effective instruction. Administrators need to take their learning and ensure that the strategies are utilized in the classroom.

Many of the superintendents stated that their administrators were not involved as instructional leaders enough. The time they spend as instructional leaders ranged from 25% to 89%. Three districts in particular were very involved in walk-through observations.   One superintendent requires sixteen walk-through observations a month. Others include one hundred per year and 12-15 per teacher per year. These particular superintendents took a strong position on the effectiveness and importance of these observations. Visibility is a role of administrators and doing walk-through observations enforces this role.

5.4.2 How do superintendents develop the instructional leadership skills of their administrators?

This question also includes the following questions in analyzing the responses to superintendents developing their administrators as instructional leaders: How does the superintendent support and guide their administrators to be instructional leaders?; What kinds of supports exist for new administrators to encourage and develop them to be instructional leaders?

Empowerment is important according to most superintendents. They encourage their administrators to make decisions that they feel best for their schools. They allow their administrators to create their own ideas providing resources, time and support to move their schools forward.

Staff development is strongly encouraged by all superintendents. Since knowing best practices is expected of instructional leaders, superintendents support administrators in attending professional development trainings that meets their needs. With each school being different, each administrator has different needs to meet based on their teachers and students. In working with novice administrators, superintendents also encourage these administrators to attend professional development. They feel that the networking is important for all administrators as it provides the opportunities to share and learn new ideas.

Mentoring for new administrators is another support superintendents provide to help develop the instructional skills of these administrators. The mentors are instructional leaders in the district such as effective veteran administrators and curriculum coordinators. They provide the support, sharing of knowledge and strategies such as walk-throughs to help new

administrators. However, no district provides external mentoring except for those provided to novice administrators that are enrolled in the Pennsylvania Inspired Leadership Program.

5.4.3   What do superintendents report as currently offered programs to support administrators in developing their instructional skills?

This question also includes the following questions in analyzing the responses to programs offered to support administrators as instructional leaders: What types of staff development exists for administrators to develop their instructional leadership skills?; How is the management role covered so that administrators can be instructional leaders?; What have you found effective in your administrative instructional leaders that has led to student achievement?; How are administrators accountable as instructional leaders?; What steps must still be taken in your district to develop more effective instructional leaders?

Superintendents take advantage of a variety of programs to support administrators. One program utilized is the Pennsylvania Inspired Leadership Program. This trainings mission is to support the development of administrators as instructional leaders. Another program with the same goal is the University of Pittsburgh's Principal Academy. In both programs, networking is an important concept of administrators learning with and through others. Some superintendents use programs offered by their local intermediate units. Others use outside resources and consultants to address instructional issues needed by the schools.

One of the reasons that administrators role as instructional leaders is limited is due to their managerial responsibilities. Superintendents attempt to help alleviate these responsibilities

through the utilization of current school staff. Dean of Students, department chairpersons, teachers, guidance counselors and teacher aides are used to help with some of the managerial duties such as busing, discipline and scheduling. However, it is a reality that administrators are required and needed to handle both managerial and instructional duties. Administrators handling all responsibilities were especially prevalent in the responses of superintendents from the smaller schools.

Through the knowledge and skills of administrators, effective instructional leadership that has led to student achievement varies in each district. Administrators focus their instructional leadership skills on the goals, initiatives and strategic plans for each respective district. For some districts, data analysis and its use to inform instruction, led by administrators, has led to student achievement. In other districts, initiatives such as technology and the use of smart boards in the classroom, working with teachers to develop strategies to motivate students and differentiated instruction were implemented by the leadership of the instructional leaders.

Superintendents encourage their administrators to attend professional development programs to improve their knowledge and skills as instructional leaders. However, administrators are held accountable for improving student learning. The expectation is that the administrators will bring back the learning to their schools, share it with their teachers and ensure that it is being implemented in the classrooms.

For future goals, superintendents would like to provide time for administrators to work together. They state that working with their peers, administrators will learn and create new ideas together. Topics such as instructional issues, assessments and data analysis are areas in which administrators need to focus their instructional learning.

5.4.4   How do the reported practices of superintendents compare to the research literature?

The research clearly provides information on how administrators can develop and improve their instructional leadership skills. For administrators to become the instructional leaders of their schools so that teachers can improve their teaching and students improve their learning, there must exist opportunities for administrators to learn and practice their profession. The following are strategies that superintendents can adopt to improve the knowledge and skills as instructional leaders:

- Professional development based on leadership standards that focuses on teaching and learning

- Administrative collegial groups that allow administrators to discuss and study as a team

- Added support for novice administrators

- Free up administrators from managerial duties to provide more time to practice their learning in the classroom

Based on this research, the following narrative will evaluate the practices of school districts in developing instructional leaders as compared to the literature review. Based on the superintendent's responses in the interviews, how their practices align to the research will be analyzed to determine if their strategies align to the research or if they utilize other strategies to develop the skills of their administrators in becoming instructional leaders.

Professional Development

Professional development is one research-based strategy that can be provided in various manners. When analyzing the responses of superintendents, the following questions were considered: Is the professional development provided internally and/or externally? How is it determined which professional development administrators should attend? Is the professional development aligned to district goals, vision and strategic plan and determined by an assessment of the needs of the district? Is the professional development aligned to leadership standards such as the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards or the newly developed Pennsylvania leadership standards? How do administrators apply the learning in authentic context to improve student learning? Is the professional development sustained? How are administrators held accountable for being instructional leaders?

In Table 16, Professional Development, the superintendent's responses are coded to demonstrate their alignment to the research.

Table 16. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

	PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IS DRIVEN BY DISTRICT GOALS, VISION AND STRATEGIC PLAN	TRAININGS WERE ALIGNED TO LEADERSHIP STANDARDS	LEARNING IS APPLIED IN AUTHENTIC CONTEXT	OTHER
A	X	X	X	Summer Administrative Retreats Bi-weekly team meetings Book studies on educational research
B	X	X	X	Monthly meetings on curriculum, instruction and assessment Seven/eight times a year, evening team meeting on instruction Send out readings to administrators on latest research
C	X	X	X	Monthly team meetings on data
D	X	X	X	
E	X	X	X	
F	X	X	X	Monthly meetings on developing leadership skills
G	X	X	X	
H	X	X	X	Weekly meetings to discuss issues
I	X	X	X	
J	X	X	X	

Based on the information from the superintendent interviews on professional development, all superintendents encourage their administrators to attend professional development trainings. Some districts conduct their own trainings or use their Intermediate Units as resources for this learning. Topics such as data, differentiated instruction and technology are trainings in which administrators participate. These trainings include teachers and administrators. The superintendents that discussed these trainings believe that it is important for

administrators to learn the content alongside the teachers. This is how to create valid and reliable observations by administrators.

Other professional development was conducted by the Principals Academy and the Pennsylvania Inspired Leadership Program. One of the strengths of attending these trainings outside the district is the networking it provides to their administrators. Superintendents state that this is invaluable as they gain different perspectives on educational issues and gain new ideas and insights into being an instructional leader. In a study conducted by Old Dominion University as described in the literature review, the research of administrators that attend the Pennsylvania's Inspired Leadership training was discussed. Districts that have administrators attend this particular training show an increase in student learning. Eight of the ten districts have administrators that have participated in the Pennsylvania Inspired Leadership Program. Six of the districts have their administrators attend the University of Pittsburgh's Principal Academy and two districts use the services of the University of Pittsburgh's Educational Leadership Initiative. It is interesting to note that the top district utilizes all three of these professional development trainings. Four districts use both the Pennsylvania Inspired Leadership Program and Principal's Academy for administrative professional development trainings. All three of these organization's goals is to improve the instructional leadership skills of administrators for the purpose of improving student learning. In the literature review, it was clearly described the importance of providing administrators the opportunity for professional development to support them in becoming instructional leaders. In addition, administrators need an understanding of classroom practices that contribute to student learning. According to the Institute for

Educational Leadership, one of the roles of 21st century administrators is that of an instructional leader that focuses on professional development.

None of the superintendents mentioned leadership standards. Although the Pennsylvania Department of Education requires administrators to earn their Act 48 hours through courses that align to the Pennsylvania leadership standards, this topic did not surface in any interview. However, the Principal's Academy and the Pennsylvania Inspired Leadership courses are approved by the Pennsylvania Department of Education which align to the leadership standards.

Other professional development provided to administrators to improve their instructional leader skills includes trainings and dialogue implemented by the superintendents. Most of these programs were administrative team meetings in which instruction, curriculum and assessment for discussed. Topics that supported administrators in developing their administrative skills were the focus of these meetings. It was not meetings that discussed just managerial issues, but time devoted to strictly instructional topics. The top two districts went above and beyond other districts. An instructional retreat, evening meetings focused on instruction and book reads were a few other strategies superintendents implemented to support their instructional leaders.

Administrative Collegial Groups

In collegial teams, dialogue occurs in a variety of ways. Reading a common book or educational article, discussing the reading and implementing the ideas in the classroom is one strategy for working in teams. Administrators, working collegially, have the opportunity to discuss student learning, effective teaching and assessments to improve student learning. Collegial teams share their experiences and learning to improve the learning of others. This can be done in a variety of ways. Walk-through observations, developing professional development for teachers based on student needs and solving school problems are just a few ways of utilizing this teamwork. In evaluating the responses of superintendents, the following questions were considered: Do administrators meet on a regular scheduled basis to discuss student learning, curriculum, instruction and assessment? Do there exists in-depth discussions of readings and how the information can be used to improve student learning is another strategy? Do administrators collaborate to analyze data, conduct walk-throughs and reflect on problems to gain multiple perspectives? Do administrators share their learning with other administrators?

In Table 17, Administrative Collegial Groups, the superintendent's responses are coded to demonstrate their alignment to the research.

Table 17. ADMINISTRATIVE COLLEGIAL GROUPS

	ADMINISTRATIVE MEETINGS TO DISCUSS DISTRICT GOALS, VISION, STRATEGIC PLAN	WALK THROUGH OBSERVATIONS	BOOK AND ARTICLE DISCUSSIONS	COLLABORATION ON TOPICS SUCH AS DATA ANALYSIS AND ASSESSMENTS	NETWORKING WITH ADMINISTRATORS OUTSIDE THE DISTRICT*
A	X Bi-Weekly		X Summer Institute	X	X 1,2,4
B	X 7-8 times annually	X 16 Monthly	X Weekly	X Monthly	X 1,2,4
C	X			X Monthly	X 2,4
D	X	X		X	X 1,3,4
E	X			X	X 1,2,4
F	X	X 100 Annually	X	X Monthly	X 1,2,3,4
G		X 12-15 Annually As A Team	X	X Weekly	X 1,4
H	X	X		X	X 1,2,4
I					X 4
J	X			X	X 1,4

*1 – Pennsylvania Department of Education Principal Inspired Leadership Program (PIL)

2 – University of Pittsburgh's Principal Academy

3 – Educational Leadership Initiative (ELI)

4- Intermediate Unit and PaTTAN Professional Development

Based on the information from the superintendent interviews on administrative collegial groups, superintendents are implementing practices as provided in the literature review. All superintendents emphasize the concept of networking with their administrators. They allow their administrators to attend professional development trainings outside the district to gain new ideas

and insights into educating students. Most superintendents also provide time for their administrators to get collaborate with each other. One purpose of the collaboration is to discuss the districts goals and visions. As stated by superintendents, the goals and vision drive the expectations of the district. These goals focus on student learning and therefore it is important for administrators to continually focus on these goals to drive their own school initiatives. Other meetings conducted by superintendents include discussions of specific instructional topics. Elmore (2007) states the importance of collegial teams in which administrators work together to discuss instructional practice. These discussions provide the opportunities for administrators to share their learning, their successes and to gain ideas of areas of weaknesses. Through this collaboration, administrators develop their instructional leadership knowledge to a deeper level and they take this learning back into the classroom. The collegial teams allow administrators to work together, to share their thinking and to provide time to problem solve educational concerns. A third purpose of getting administrators together is to discuss readings on instructional topics or on book reads. Four superintendents conduct these meetings for the purpose of staying abreast of the latest educational research. Each superintendent handles these meetings in different ways. Some have administrators read and share specific chapters of books where others have an open discussion on the main themes of the articles/books and how it applies to their district.

About half of the superintendents also provide other methods of creating collegial teams. Some superintendents encourage their administrators to conduct walk-through observations together to develop commonalities in their observation system. Although other superintendents have expectations of their administrators conducting walk-through observations, they work on these on their own and not in collegial teams. One superintendent in particular stated that

115

working alone in their own building creates a sense of leadership and loyalty to that administrator.

Support for Novice Administrators

With new administrators entering the administrative field, the research is clear that they are not well-prepared to be instructional leaders. Support is needed for these administrators to support their development. The research defines coaching and mentoring for these administrators to provide the support, development and focus as instructional leaders. Mentors and coaches can be provided by the district through internal personnel with the experiences of being an instructional leader. This can also be supported by external mentors through different educational organizations. The following questions were considered in the evaluation of superintendent's response: Are novice administrators provided mentoring and/or coaching to support their development as instructional leaders? Are these mentors skilled on instruction to provide the mentoring/coaching to support new administrators? Through administrative meetings, are novice administrators involved in discussions about strategies to improve student learning? Are novice administrators provided opportunities to attend professional development to develop their instructional skills?

In Table 18, Support for Novice Administrators, the superintendent's responses are coded to demonstrate their alignment to the research.

Table 18. SUPPORT FOR NOVICE ADMINISTRATORS

	INTERNAL MENTORS/ COACHING	EXTERNAL MENTOR	PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR NOVICE ADMINSTRATORS*	OTHER
A	X Administrator		X	Help set focus areas
B	X Directors of Curriculum		X	Provide readings and articles on district initiatives
C			X	
D		X Principal's Mentoring Program	X	
E	X Administrators		X	
F	X Administrators	X Principal's Mentoring Program	X	Works with other principals to do walk-through observations
G	X Administrators		X	Meet with more often
H	X Administrators		X	
I			X	
J	X Administrators		X	

*Professional Development for Novice Administrators are through the Pennsylvania Inspired Leadership Induction Program and the University of Pittsburgh's Principal Academy.

Based on the information from the superintendent interviews on support for novice administrators, the chart clearly demonstrates the importance of professional development by superintendents. Every superintendent acknowledged that this is an important aspect of developing their novice administrators as instructional leaders. Programs utilized for staff development includes the Principals Inspired Leadership Program, the University of Pittsburgh's

Principal Academy and Educational Leadership Institute, Intermediate Unit trainings and Pattan workshops.

In most cases, internal mentoring is also provided to novice administrators. The mentors include other administrators within the district, curriculum coordinators and directors of elementary and secondary curriculum. In two cases, external mentors were used. One was through the Principals Induction Network which provides a mentor to all new administrators that attend the Principals Inspired Leadership Program (PIL). The PIL program has trainings that are specifically for new administrators. The other is through the University of Pittsburgh's Educational Leadership Initiative. Bloom, in his study of mentors and coaching states that novice administrators need both. However, as per Table 7, some districts do provide both but, at a minimum, superintendents are providing mentors. Based on the responses of superintendents, their actions align to the research of providing support to novice administrators.

Some districts afford extra support for novice administrators by providing literature on effective leadership, additional meeting with superintendents and through working with novice administrators in their instructional responsibilities conducting teacher observations.

Free up administrators from managerial duties to provide more time to practice their learning in the classroom

Administrators have many responsibilities which includes managerial and instructional duties. With cafeteria duty, bus duty, parental phone calls and visits, and safety of the building, administrators have many hats to wear. At times, with all the managerial duties, it is difficult for

118

administrators to find time to be instructional leaders. As the literature reveals, administrators want to spend more time as instructional leaders, but their time is too consumed with managerial. Some districts are hiring extra personnel to handle some of the managerial responsibilities to free up administrators to perform instructional leadership duties. Questions considered in evaluating superintendent's responses include: What support is provided to administrators to alleviate some of their managerial duties so that they can focus on their instructional leadership responsibilities? Are internal personnel utilized to help with some managerial duties? Are outside personnel hired to strictly focus on managerial responsibilities?

In Table 19, Free Up Administrators to Perform More Instructional Duties, the superintendent's responses are coded to demonstrate their alignment to the research.

Table 19. FREE UP ADMINISTRATORS TO PERFORM MORE INSTRUCTIONAL DUTIES

	INTERNAL PERSONNEL	OUTSIDE PERSONNEL HIRED
A	X Head Teachers, Dean of Students, Guidance Counselors	None
B	X Dean of Students	None
C		None
D		None
E	X Dean of Students	None
F		None
G	X Teachers, Support staff, Guidance Counselors	None
H	X Teachers, teacher aides	None
I	X Pupil Personnel	None
J		None

Freeing up administrators from managerial roles to perform instructional duties is a real concern of superintendents interviewed. Most superintendents are cognizant of the fact that their administrators, to be truly effective instructional leaders, need to spend more time on their instructional role. The administrators are gaining substantial knowledge from trainings, workshops and collegial groups. However, even though they are involved in supporting teachers and students, more time is necessary to help improve student learning. As explained in the Literature Review, the study conducted by the Wallace Foundation in 2009 demonstrates that providing support for administrators to alleviate some of their management roles provides time for administrators to spend more time in their instructional role. This, in turn, supports student and teacher learning to improve student achievement. Superintendents are providing support and strategies to help alleviate the managerial roles of their administrators. Over half of the interviewed superintendents support administrators with different school personnel. A Dean of Students, guidance counselors, teachers, teacher aides and pupil personnel are involved in helping with managerial roles. Handling bus duty, discipline issues and scheduling have alleviated some of the managerial roles. A few superintendents of the smaller schools lack resources and therefore are unable to hire any other personnel. Their administrators must handle all managerial and instructional duties. One superintendent responded with "overtime". Administrators need to arrive at work early and stay late to handle all of their responsibilities.

All the superintendents are aware and concerned about all of the managerial duties of an administrator. They realize that at times, depending of the situation, they can spend their entire day just handling non-instructional duties. This keeps them out of the classroom or performing any instructional duties. However, this is the reality of a school administrator. They would like

to have their administrators perform in the role of an instructional leader more, but the day-to-day occurrences sometimes dictates the amount of time an administrator can spend as an instructional leader.

5.5   CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A discovery of the interview process of superintendents was the passion and enthusiasm they displayed. Each superintendent was driven by a particular goal. A few discussed how vision is important and drives their district. A few others were involved heavily in data. They were studying and analyzing various student data to improve instruction. One topic that was repeatedly mentioned was focusing on student achievement. With all of the initiatives and goals within a district, student learning was prevalent.

All the superintendents spoke highly of their administrators. They believed that their administrators possessed a strong knowledge of best practices. Superintendents stated that their administrators were strong instructional leaders as evidenced by their actions. Conducting staff development for teachers, assessing the strengths and weaknesses of teachers to help them move forward, their effective communication and support of staff were a few named strengths of their instructional leaders. However, what drove all of these actions and provided the opportunities to learn best practices was guided and led by the superintendent. They have many of the research-based strategies in place to support and develop their administrators as instructional leaders. What seemed to stand out was the willingness and encouragement of superintendents in

supporting administrators through outside professional development. Superintendents expect their administrators to learn the latest instructional research and sending them to trainings meets this goal. In addition, all of the superintendents believed that learning with and through others was imperative. Administrators are able to learn new ideas and gather new insights into education through the various trainings available. This included both external and internal trainings. Of the four research-based strategies presented, the staff development was the one that was strongly expressed by the superintendents. They believed that it is imperative for administrators to attend professional development trainings to develop their skills. Every superintendent talked about the learning gained by their administrators through their attendance at the various trainings.

All superintendents interviewed had a high percentage of students on free and reduced lunch. Some of the issues that districts must address with economically disadvantaged students include health issues, struggles of home life, lack of outside resources and social issues. Most superintendents discussed their challenges with this high population of students. However, they all stated that they were not considered challenging students or that their economic situation was a reason for not being able to improve their learning. Even though these students lacked resources, there were high expectations for these students. Through the interview process, it was easy to discern that this belief is ingrained in the culture of the schools. Administrators also have high expectations which they model for teachers. This seemed to be one reason for the school's successes in working with the economically disadvantaged students.

In evaluating the district's number of students and expenditures per student, this researcher did not find any correlation. The top ten districts had enrollment ranging from

approximately 700 students to over 4,000 students. The expenditures per student also had a wide range of difference. The expenditures were as low as $8,000 per student to $18,000 per student. This is quite a huge difference, however, one of the districts with a low expenditure per student ranked at the top. The enrollment numbers and amount of funds available per student was not mentioned by any of the superintendents. They often mentioned that they had to work with the resources available and the students that enrolled in their schools. Enrollment and funds was never mentioned as a hindrance or a benefit to their success.

Based on the comments and thinking of superintendents, it is not surprising that they have good results on their testing with the economically disadvantaged population. However, one comment by a superintendent was extremely surprising. Superintendents have the knowledge of instruction and the knowledge of the role of their instructional leaders to improve student learning. Through the interview, they provided numerous practices that have proven effective in their test results. However, one of the probing questions during the interview was to ask superintendents why they think their district did so well in the Overachiever Ranking. A variety of answers were provided that demonstrated that superintendents had evidence of the strategies used to improve student learning. However, one superintendent responded with an "I don't know" response. This particular district made substantial gains from the 2009 results to the 2010 results. In *The Daily Disciplines of Leadership* (2002), Douglas Reeves analyzed his Leadership and Learning Matrix. This matrix consisted of four quadrants. A quadrant in which leaders had good results with an understanding of the reasons was classified a "Leader" by Reeves. Another quadrant was a leader that had good results and did not have an understanding of the reasons. Reeves called these leaders "Lucky". He stated that replication of the high results

was unlikely. It would be interesting to follow this district that wasn't sure how they achieved high results to assess future results with their PSSA results and ranking.

Through the interviews of the ten superintendents, this researcher found that they have practices in place to support their administrators as instructional leaders. The top two districts, especially, incorporates numerous practices to develop their administrators. These top two districts in the ranking were also the top two in 2009. Not surprising when one hears the goals, strategic plans and thinking of these two superintendents. When analyzing the practices of the ten districts, they all include strategies as described in the research. These included professional development based on leadership standards that focus on teaching and learning, administrative collegial groups that allow administrators to discuss and study as a team, added support for novice administrators and freeing up administrators from managerial roles to be able to spend more time as instructional leaders. Superintendent's responses were analyzed for their alignment to these four strategies and it was verified that they do have practices in place to support the development of their administrators as instructional leaders.

School districts have little control or influence on the administrative certification process or the learning at universities. However, where they can take the lead is by developing practices and procedures that will support the development of instructional leaders in their schools. They must focus on their school organization to determine what it is that their administrative leaders need to learn and practice. School districts are held accountable for student learning so it is imperative that they step forward with a well-developed plan of creating a viable, efficient practice of improving student learning. In addition, schools must provide their administrators the support and resources needed to apply their learning in their schools. Through professional

development based on leadership standards, mentoring, coaching and collegial teams, schools can support the development of their leaders. A supportive, well-aligned system consisting of practices is needed to improve instructional leaders.

5.6   IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

One implication for a future study is to interview and evaluate the beliefs and actions of school administrators regarding their role as instructional skills. Gaining their insights into what they believe their roles and responsibilities are as an instructional leader would be the first question in an interview. Having them define an instructional leader will provide their beliefs of this role and possibly explain how they spend the majority of their time. Then determine exactly how much time they spend as an instructional leader. Administrators can document all of the actions and activities each day for a period of time to determine the amount of time they spend on both instructional and managerial roles.

Through this interview, administrator's perspective of how they learn and develop their instructional leadership skills can be captured. Administrators can be evaluated to determine if attending professional development is supportive of developing their instructional skills and which particular professional development is effective. Also, interviewing administrators to determine if their instructional leadership skills are developed through collegial teams and how this occurs would provide useful information.

Another study would be to evaluate the top districts in relationship to the connection the superintendents have to the district. For example, did the superintendents spend any time as a teacher, counselor and principal in their particular district? Did the superintendent spend any time as the assistant superintendent in their district? In this study and documented in Appendix C, 5 of the 10 superintendents spent 25 or more years as a teacher, guidance counselor and administrator in their respective district before becoming the superintendent. Only 2 of the 10 superintendents spent 5 years or more as the assistant superintendent. Two superintendents spent 3 years as the assistant superintendent and one of them served as principal for 6 years and the other was a graduate of the district. Therefore 9 of the 10 superintendents had a history within the district, learning and driving the culture of high expectations for all students. It would be an interesting study to correlate the connection of superintendents to their district and that relationship to student's PSSA scores.

APPENDIX A

INITIAL LETTER TO SUPERINTENDENTS

June 9, 2010

Dear Dr.
I want to congratulate you on your continued success with your Pennsylvania System of School Assessment results. According to the *2010 Guide to Western Pennsylvania Schools*, you ranked in the Top 10 in the Overachiever rank.

My name is Joe Lachowicz and I work for the Allegheny Intermediate Unit as the Site Coordinator for the Pennsylvania Inspired Leadership Program (PIL). I am beginning the research on my doctoral dissertation at the University of Pittsburgh with Dr. Joe Werlinich and am hoping for your support. My topic consists of studying the practices of school districts in developing their administrators as instructional leaders. My study includes interviewing the superintendents of the top 10 districts in Western Pennsylvania based on the *2010 Guide to Western Pennsylvania Schools*. Because your student scores are very good, I would like to interview you to gather information on the strategies utilized in your school district in developing the skills of administrators as instructional leaders.

I would really appreciate your time in helping me with this study. The interview will take no longer than an hour. I will contact you in the near future hoping that we can schedule time to meet and will send you the questions for discussion when we schedule our meeting. I look forward to hearing the practices of your district in supporting your administrators as instructional leaders.

Once again, congratulation

Sincerely,
Joseph Lachowicz

SCRIPTED SUPERINTENDENT "A" INTERVIEW

1. How does the superintendent define an instructional leader?

An instructional leader is a resource provider, an instructional resource for student learning, an effective communicator and demonstrates a presence within the school building/district. They are very focused on student learning and academic achievement. They need to model this in their buildings.

2. How does the superintendent define the role of an instructional leader?

An instructional leader provides materials and resources for their staff, but most importantly actively supports day-to-day instructional activities by getting into the classroom and through modeling desired behaviors. The need to plan the instructional focus of in-service training but if they are not leading these trainings then they need to be a participant. If the principal is not involved, it gives the wrong impression. Principals need to be involved and empower their staff.

The principal needs to be visible in the classroom by visiting classrooms as often as possible and provide feedback to the staff. I just attended a workshop and we discussed the idea of feedback and 360 degree feedback model needed in the schools. This is an area we can improve on in being instructional leaders. The instructional leader sets the vision for the school district and principals convey this vision within their buildings with specific goals and expectations.

3. How much of the role of their administrators is as an instructional leader?

Ideally it would be 90% instructional and 10% management but realistically right now I would say that it is 60% instructional and 40% management based. In a district that has a lot of students with needs and barriers to education, we are pulled in on their struggles in their home life and outside resources that they need. This takes a lot of our time. We need to find resources to help us deal with family issues.

4. What duties entail this role as an instructional leader?

These duties are pretty encompassing. The instructional leader's duties and responsibilities include: providing a safe and orderly academic environment; providing a positive and supportive climate for students and staff; maintaining the district vision and setting goals focused on high levels of student learning; maintaining high expectations for student learning; being visible and accessible to staff and students; communicating effectively with staff; shared leadership, decision-making, and staff empowerment (building capacity); modeling instructional leadership

and focus; consistent discussion of instructional issues; classroom observations and feedback to teachers; effective use of student data for student progress and improvement; professional development opportunities and resources; recognition of student and staff achievement.

When I first started in the district there were excuses for students not learning, students were not held to high expectations. But we have changed to hold students to high expectations. We have changed the mindset of students and teachers and we are seeing the results. That's been a positive.

5. How does the superintendent support and guide their administrators to be instructional leaders?

Our administrative team participates in a summer administrative retreat to re-establish goals for the upcoming school year, and I meet with them individually in the summer and at the start of the school year to set individual administrative/instructional goals. We evaluate what we did last year and how we can improve. We discuss barriers that may have held us back this year. It could be programs we need to change or adjust, policies that may need updated, changed or eliminated. We review policies and procedures on a regular basis in order to maintain consistency and see if there needs to be any adjustments made. In the fall we meet with the board and discuss our goals for the upcoming year. We look at focus areas for the year which is academic goals or anything to help our kids. We just changed our post-graduate survey to provide information of how graduates felt about their schooling. I keep the administration team focused on student achievement and set clear academic goals and expectations for the district. Guidance and support

is provided individually as well as within a team atmosphere. The district administrative team meets bi-weekly to discuss district goals and strategies, programs and reports out on progress or barriers. The first meeting of the month is a discussion meeting in which we go over topics that I need to cover. This meeting is also when we do reflective talk on books or current issues but they can bring problems that they are having for input. It could be as simple as a building administrator is having a problem with an issue and they want to dialogue with the rest of the team. The second meeting of the month is geared towards our school board meetings. Each school is responsible for presenting to the board so we talk about this. The team works together to build consistency among the district and helps each other overcome pitfalls as well as celebrate successes. Brainstorming occurs often throughout our sessions if an individual is dealing with a problem or if, as a district, we are noticing common issues that need to be addressed.

We conduct book circles to stay current on educational research and practices. I encourage administrators to attend staff development trainings outside the district. This learning and networking is important as they gain new ideas through their dialogue with other administrators.

6. What kinds of supports exist for new administrators to encourage and develop them to be instructional leaders?

New administrators meet with me and the assistant superintendent upon hiring and initially and review the District's mission, vision, goals, academic programs, background, direction and expectations. We set specific focus areas with the new administrators. The new administrator is

assigned a mentor administrator, is enrolled within the local principal's academy and PIL. I want to make sure that they are involved with outside trainings to network. Those connections are important. I meet with the new administrator regularly bi-weekly to monthly depending on progress throughout the school year to monitor progress and provide support. We review areas that we target and reaffirm these areas to work upon. We follow up during the year. We want to make sure they are on target and on task.

7. What types of staff development exists for administrators to develop their instructional leadership skills?

We conduct book circles to stay current on educational research and practices. Our administrative team participates in a summer administrative retreat to re-establish goals for the upcoming school year, and I meet with them individually in the summer and at the start of the school year to set individual administrative/instructional goals. We participate in professional development opportunities with the University of Pittsburgh, PATTAN, PIL Leadership Programs, and Intermediate Unit sponsored professional development programs. This upcoming school year we are expanding our administrative professional development with the University of Pittsburgh's Educational Leadership Initiative Program and Mutiu Fagbayi's Eye on the Goal (Score Card) Program. This program is new this year working with administrators. He has had programs for teachers working with our Regional Alliance program but now he has a new program for administrators. This program deals with the focus of administrators and keeps them

tracking their progress and goals for the year. It also helps them with classroom observations.

This is going to be an exciting program. I'm always looking for additional support.

We have been involved with the University of Pittsburgh's principal academy for years. Joe

Werlinich and Jerry Longo got me involved in the ELI program for this upcoming year.

8. How is the management role covered so that administrators can be instructional leaders?

Most of our buildings have a designated staff member to assist with the management

responsibilities within the building: Head Teacher, Dean of Students, Assistant Principal and

Guidance Counselors also help with student issues in order to assist the principal with their

instructional duties. The principal still has to do a lot of the managerial roles. But we are trying

to get others involved.

9. What have you found effective in your administrative instructional leaders that have lead to student achievement?

The level of inactiveness of our administrators is effective. Being involved and letting their staff

know their focus and modeling this focus has been effective. They set up data teams and

discussing the data, and building capacity so that teachers are empowered. But they are still

involved even though they may not be running these data teams. I have found that the

administrators that focuses on student learning with their staff by being involved in grade-level

planning meetings, conducting data sessions, are visible in classroom visits and observations, and provide constant communication and feedback to staff are very effective administrators. Staff needs to observe that the administrator values instruction and follows up on what is going on within the classroom. They make sure that curriculum is updated and resources are provided for teachers. The technology we provide has been effective, especially in the elementary. Administrators stay on top of this being involved in Classrooms for the Future.

10. How are administrators accountable as instructional leaders?

The administrators are accountable for student learning within their respective buildings. This is demonstrated through programs, 4sight scores, attendance, graduation rates and PSSA scores. I look at the attendance every day as I think this is a good indicator. Administrators meet with me on a monthly basis and report on academic progress as well as lack of academic progress through the above indicators. I go into the classrooms to see if student learning is taking place. They share monthly the progress and successes in their buildings. I also require 10 walk-through observations per month.

11. What steps must still be taken in your district to develop more effective instructional leaders?

As the instructional leader of the school district, it is my responsibility to model the way and emphasize an intense focus on student learning and continue to work with the administrative

staff to ensure student achievement. I will provide resources, support and guidance in order to professionally groom these individuals into instructional leaders. I will continue to meet with them individually and as a group to provide professional development, set goals and expectations, and provide feedback in order to promote professional growth. Keeping up with current research and additional opportunities for students to help them learn is important.

APPENDIX C

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE SUPERINTENDENTS INTERVIEWED

SCHOOL DISTRICT	YEARS AS SUPERINTENDENT IN DISTRICT	YEARS AS ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT IN SAME DISTRICT	DOCTORATE UNIVERSITY	LETTER OF ELIGIBILTY	CONNECTION TO SCHOOL DISTRICT
A	5	3	Youngstown State University	Youngstown State University	Graduate of district
B	15	___	___	University of Pittsburgh	30 years as teacher and principal in district
C	6	___	University of Pittsburgh	University of Pittsburgh	38 years as teacher and administrator in district
D	8	9	University of Pittsburgh	University of Pittsburgh	None
E	2 1/2	10	---------	California University of PA	None
F	4 1/2	___	LaSalle University	Dayton University	None
G	1	3	___	California University of PA	6 years as principal in district
H	3	___	___	Westminster University	37 years as teacher and administrator in district

I	3	___	___	Gannon University	25 years as a teacher and administrator in district
J	6 months	1 ½ years	___	West Virginia University	33 years as a teacher and administrator in district

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142

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