MINDFUL INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES

OF ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS IN

WASHINGTON STATE

By

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Abstract

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The purpose of this study was to describe and analyze the mindful instructional leadership of elementary school principals. Specifically, the study addresses the following questions for principals in Washington State: (a) What are their mindful instructional leadership beliefs and practices? (b) How mindful are elementary principals as instructional leaders? and (c) Are there differences in mindful instructional leadership associated with the level of principal experience? The study gathered the self-reported beliefs and practices of elementary principals to determine how mindfulness is integral to instructional leadership. While mindfulness may be a new concept for most principals, understanding how they respond to questions tied to the five cognitive processes of mindfulness provides important clues about the nature and approach to this critical work. It is important to connect mindfulness practices to instructional leadership to help principals pay attention to the components of their leadership in order to improve instruction and increase student outcomes.

The study employed a quantitative survey design and was theoretically grounded using two bodies of scholarship. The first conceptual model was derived from the Association of

iv

Washington School Principals (AWSP) Leadership Framework (Kipp et al., 2014). The second

body of research that is evident throughout the study comes from high reliability organizations

(HRO) with particular attention given to the application of mindfulness practices for educational

leaders (Hoy, Gage, & Tarter, 2006). The five constructs of mindfulness include preoccupation

with failure, reluctance to simplify, sensitivity to operations, commitment to resilience, and

deference to expertise. The study included the design of the *Principal Resilience for Educator*

and Student Success (PRESS) survey instrument to measure mindful instructional leadership

practices.

Key findings of the study indicate that elementary principals are most mindful in

engaging communities and the least mindful in planning with data. The inferential analysis found

that there was no significant difference in the relationship between principal experience and

mindful instructional leadership. The discussion and findings explore the possible professional

development opportunities and future research to examine the relationship of principal

experience on factors of instructional leadership.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Across our nation, elementary school principals are presented with the challenges of improving teaching and learning in order to increase student achievement. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was enacted in 2001 by the United States Federal Government to focus the attention of public schools on efforts to increase student academic performance. The expected outcome of NCLB was for 100% of students across the nation to reach proficiency on state assessments by the year 2014. Although this legislation was advanced in good faith, its subsequent outcomes have been less than desired. In fact, school reform efforts over the past three decades have brought about little change in student achievement. National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) testing has shown that between 1973 and 2008, scores for U.S. 4th graders have increased 12 and 24 points in reading and math respectively. However, the results of the 2012 NAEP showed 4th grade performance in mathematics and reading have not changed significantly since 2008. Specifically, student gains in math and reading only show a one-point gain in those four years (National Center for Education Statistics Institute of Education Sciences, 2013). Stringfield and Datnow (2002) conclude "It is little wonder that public and policy demands on education have escalated, as has widespread frustration with the education system" (p. 273). Dissatisfied with the lack of consensus around the re-authorization of NCLB, Race to the Top Legislation (2009) was signed into law by President Obama as a means to provide bold incentives to states willing to spur systemic reform to improve teaching and learning in America's lowest-performing schools.

In addition to the high expectations for improvement of student achievement outcomes, principals today grapple with balancing this work with the barrage of other federal and state

mandates. Recent mandates include: a more rigorous teacher and principal evaluation; Common Core State Standards; individualized student learning plans; highly capable student identification and support; and the new Learning Assistance Program (LAP) changes that require third graders scoring a "below basic" on the state assessment to either repeat third grade or have intensive improvement strategies put in place prior to promotion to the fourth grade. The role of the principal has undeniably changed from that of the past. Gone are the days where the principal was expected to just manage the building (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Honig, 2012; Horng, Klasik, & Loeb, 2010; Lortie, 2009). The responsibilities of fiscal, human resources, and student behavior management – just to name a few – still exist. However, the requirement to improve student learning has risen to become principals' main responsibility. Reflecting on this changed work emphasis, principals are now called upon to be instructional leaders of their buildings in order to strengthen the craft of teaching.

The chapter continues by further developing the background for the dissertation. The overview of the literature in the background frames the context for the study. Next, the chapter delineates the study's problem that includes its guiding research questions. Following the purpose of the study, this introductory chapter provides a brief description of the methods used for gathering and analyzing data that address the questions and purpose of the study. Finally, the chapter ends with a summary and organization of the dissertation.

Background

The principal plays an important role in the improvement of instruction and student achievement outcomes. The dissertation that follows focuses on the instructional leadership practices of principals through the lens of mindfulness. The background for the study begins with an overview of instructional leadership and examines findings from prior research that have

sought to clarify the nature of instructional leadership for those who occupy the elementary principalship. The section tenders a definition of instructional leadership and identifies six key areas of principal practice. The background continues to lay the groundwork for this project by briefly exploring how level of principal experience is seen to influence their understanding of the position. The next section of the background introduces the notion of high reliability and research in education that seeks to apply theory on high reliability organizations (HROs) to schools. Educational researchers are seeking to draw lessons from studies on HROs and the concept of mindfulness is introduced, which possesses roots in this body of work. Literature on mindfulness is reviewed in the final section of the background.

Instructional Leadership

While many scholars have tried to define the role of instructional leadership, Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) posit, "The term 'instructional leader' has been in vogue for decades as the desired model for education leaders – principals especially. Yet the term is often more a slogan than a well-defined set of leadership practices" (p. 6). Over the past several decades, the debate among scholars is whether principals should be acting as an educational manager or instructional leader (Dwyer, 1984; Hallinger & Heck, 1996). Since the early 2000's, the public's increased pressure for accountability caused schools to become more responsive to student needs. Thus the focus shifted to the improvement of instruction (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Leithwood, Patten & Jantzi, 2010). Instructional leadership conveys the importance for teaching and learning to be at the center of decision making. However, this conveyed importance is no more meaningful than admonishing leaders to stay focused on the core objective of making schools work better for students (Leithwood, et al., 2004).

Within the context of making schools better for students, some scholars present areas on which principals can focus, saying that successful schools have similar characteristics such as strong instructional leadership, a climate that is conducive to learning, a clear and focused mission, high expectations for all students, consistent monitoring of classrooms, and positive relationships with parents (Levine & Lezotte, 1990). Over the past decade, scholars have provided several areas of focus on which principals can improve their practice. First, more attention has been paid to the principal's role of improving instruction (Leithwood et al., 2010; Spanneut, Tobin & Ayers, 2012). Studies have identified that instructional leadership is an important contributor to the success of improving teaching. In some studies the impact of instructional leadership has contributed to gains in student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006; Leithwood et al., 2004; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2010).

A second area of focus is creating a learning culture in the school. Culture is referred to as the way we operate or do things around here. The principal must ensure the focus of the school culture is on student learning. Reflecting this continuous focus on student learning results in developing a shared vision and clear mission (Grissom, Loeb, & Master, 2013; Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011) where all stakeholders work together to strengthen student learning with beliefs that all students can learn (Heck, 1992).

Third, planning with data has become a focus of many schools in order to determine how effectively students are learning and to interpret multiple data points that can inform instruction. Since effectiveness of schools is now being measured by student performance measures, it is important for schools to use data for improvement decisions (Datnow, Park, & Wohlstetter, 2007). Principals play an important role in the establishment of building-level data use as

protocols (Wayman, Cho, Jimerson, & Spikes, 2012). Instructional leaders develop data-driven practices to assist teachers in improving their practice to increase student achievement (Kerr, Marsh, Ikemoto, Darilek, & Barney, 2006).

Fourth, pressures on principal accountability for closing the achievement gap continue to increase. While this learning gap has decreased over time, the education system continues to see a gap exist, which causes concern that while literature defines closing the gap in terms of groups, educators could be wiser to determine equity one student at a time (Murphy, 2009). The focus on the evaluation of achievement gaps between groups must shift to increasing the achievement among individual students with low skills. In addition to this shift in thinking, instructional leaders are encouraged to think about the effects of teacher quality – in terms of excellence and equality – on the closing of achievement gaps (Borman & Kimball, 2005).

A fifth area of focus for instructional leaders is on curriculum alignment. In researching what works in schools, Marzano (2003a, 2003b) concludes that a guaranteed and viable curriculum is the most powerful factor at the school level in determining overall student achievement. Marzano defines a guaranteed and viable curriculum as the combination of the opportunity to learn and time to learn. The author posits leaders must ensure that all teachers implement the intended curriculum in a consistent manner. Additionally, scholars have presented three areas of focus for curriculum alignment: intended or written curriculum; delivered or taught curriculum; and tested or achieved curriculum (Glatthorn, 2000; Marzano, 2003b).

A sixth area of focus is engaging the community (Epstein, 2001; Epstein & Salinas, 2004; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2010). Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, and Easton (2010) identified a framework of essential supports for schools. The authors describe three practices that constitute the support of family and community involvement: reaching out and involving parents,

teacher efforts to learn about students and their local community, and establishing community partnerships.

Experience

While the aforementioned six areas provide a lens for instructional leadership practices of principals, scholars have also developed literature on the professional identity or experience of principals. As novice principals enter the profession, they are often shocked and overwhelmed by the sense of ultimate responsibility resulting in a struggle to effectively manage time and priorities of the job (Spillane & Lee, 2013). Specifically, beginning principals often feel overwhelmed by the large number of administrative tasks that limit them from performing the expected duties to be an instructional leader. Spillane and Lee (2013) argue that both pre-service and in-service leadership development programs allow principals to develop skills necessary to manage stress and develop skills to address situational issues when they arise. Marczynski and Gates (2013) discuss how distributive leadership considers situational variables, but they examined leadership through a broader lens. The authors posit distributive leadership requires awareness by leaders in order to effectively lead and length of time in administration contributes to this awareness. From a psychological perspective, Langer (1997) speaks of being aware of multiple perspectives and having alertness to distinction. Reflecting on this notion of awareness, or paying attention, Johnson, Uline, and Perez (2011) carried out a study to examine "expert noticing" (capacity to attend to and make sense) of principals in high-performing schools. In this study, Johnson et al. looked at the construct of "expert noticing" from the field of literacy education (Ross & Gibson, 2010) and contended that experts use their depth of knowledge and understanding to identify things that novices may not discern. Hargreaves, Moore, Fink, Brayman, and White (2003) add to the research on experience with a study on principal

succession and sustainability. The authors posit principals should be in their schools for five to seven years to build relationships of trust. Hargreaves et al. based much of this work on Day and Bakioglu's (1996) study of career stages in which they posit principals go through an "Initiation" and "Development" phase between one and eight years.

High Reliability Organizations

Principals as instructional leaders face challenges of accountability and they must operate schools in a way that ensures high success rates and avoids failure of students. The challenge for educators is to eliminate all failure and close the achievement gaps among student groups (Bellamy, Crawford, Marshall, & Coulter, 2005). In order to meet the needs of students in this high stakes, high accountability environment, principals can learn from the rich literature of organizations outside of K-12 education. The literature aids in operating in a manner to avoid catastrophic accidents (La Porte, 1996; Rijpma, 1997; Vogus & Welbourne, 2003). Schools must find ways to become more highly reliable as organizations (Bellamy, et al., 2005). The theory of High Reliability Organizations (HRO) comes from literature within the social sciences and relates to how organizations or systems operate. These organizations include hospitals, air traffic control, naval aircraft carriers, and nuclear power plants. In these organizations, employees must operate in a highly reliable manner to avoid deadly mistakes.

Bellamy et al. (2005) suggest that while schools face demands for high reliability that are similar to problems that HROs confront, there are organizational differences that cause doubt as to the direct transfer of HRO principles to educational institutions. However, the authors posit that experiences from HROs can offer important lessons for school leaders. Drawing from this reasoning, Bellamy et al. (2005) conclude that HROs should be used more as a metaphor than a model; thus they have renamed their approach "fail-safe schools framework" (p. 390).

Specifically, the authors outline the ideas of improving normal operations, detecting problems early, and recovering from mistakes or problems in a quick manner. Stringfield, Reynolds, and Schaffer (2008) state that the urgency for high reliability in education evolves from the realization that (1) failures of the system have results that are catastrophic, (2) the variability of current performance levels are unacceptable, and (3) much higher levels of reliability in performance are possible. Public education is not in need of more improvements through identifying new practices and programs but rather in the understanding of and engaging in instructional practices that increase reliability (Eck, 2011). In order to operate in a more highly reliable manner and avoid mistakes, HROs must operate in a way that ensures high success rates. Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (1999) argue that there are five characteristics of effective HROs that reduce "the initial blind spots that allow failure to cumulate and produce catastrophic outcomes" (p. 83). Drawing from the literature on HRO, scholars posit that the five cognitive processes interrelate to produce an effective way to detect errors and allow organizations to become more reliable. The constructs promote mindfulness and include: preoccupation with failure, reluctance to simplify, sensitivity to operations, deference to expertise, and commitment to resilience (Hoy, 2002; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001; Weick et al., 1999).

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is defined by Langer (1993) as "a state of mind that results from drawing novel distinctions, examining information from new perspectives, and being sensitive to context" (p. 44). By being mindful, individuals have a way to deliberately attend and develop awareness to deepen one's understanding of the perspectives of others. Mindfulness is a process, which includes examining various perspectives and maintaining mental functioning, that allows for continuous updating in order to have a deeper understanding of perspectives. Mindfulness is

being truly present and sensitive to the present perspective of others (Langer, 1993: Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007). Weick et al. (1999) posit, "Mindfulness allows for inquiry, interpretation, and action" (p. 88). Hyland (2014) states, "Mindfulness simply means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally in a way which nurtures greater awareness, clarity, and acceptance of present-moment reality" (p. 278).

Drawing on Langer's (1989) seminal work on mindfulness, scholars have applied the concepts of individual (Langer, 1993; Langer, 1997; Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000) and collective (Hoy, 2002; Weick et al., 1999) mindfulness to education. According to Hoy (2002), "Individuals and organizations are easily seduced by routine ways of doing things that worked at one time. There is much dependence on the use of standard categories and automatic responses to events; indeed habit itself can become mindless" (p. 94). While scholars have applied the concept of mindfulness both individually and collectively, it is the application of individual mindfulness that will be explored in this dissertation. Individuals take in information in either a mindless or mindful way but when initial mindsets form before there is reflection, premature cognitive commitment takes place (Hoy, 2002; Langer, 1993) resulting in an adherence to old routines and rules. Adhering to routine rules and procedures, individuals often become tempted by old habits. Thus when routine ways of doing things do not work, the response is too often doing more of the same thing while expecting that more is the requisite to fix the problem. In their discussion of individual mindfulness, Langer and Moldoveanu (2000) posit, "Education is an area that often seems to abound in mindlessness" (p. 3). The authors suggest that mindlessly accepting basic tasks that have become second nature inhibits the questioning of "who determined what the basics are" (p. 3). Thus individuals who operate in a mindless manner are not in a position to make adaptations as more information is learned about the task. According to

Hoy (2002), mindlessness grows out of repetition causing individuals to act in routine ways that become automatic and safe.

In comparison to mindlessness, Langer (1993) posits, "Mindfulness is the capacity to see any situation or environment from several perspectives" (p. 44). Additionally, mindfulness in education should consist of that which is active and causes individuals to draw novel distinctions, utilize new perspectives when examining information, and be sensitive to the context. Acting in a mindful manner allows individuals to feel a heightened state of wakefulness and involvement. "When one is actively drawing novel distinctions, the whole individual is involved" (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000, p. 2). Hoy (2002) argues, "Mindfulness also requires that expectations be viewed as assumptions to be tested rather than givens to be accepted" (p. 96). When individuals make an assumption and look narrowly for confirmations of those assumptions poor outcomes tend to follow. Over time, this causes one to see an increased amount of confirmations based on very little data, causing beliefs to become more certain. Weick and Sutcliffe (2001) summarize:

> Believing is seeing. You see what you expect to see. You see what you have the labels to see. You see what you have the skills to manage. Everything else is a blur. And in that 'everything else' lies the developing unexpected event that can bite you and undermine your best intentions. (p. 46)

In education, the high expectations of student achievement have caused a narrow focus on standardized state test scores, and educators have become highly focused on improving testing outcomes. Teachers and administrators who concentrate on these goals and outcomes can only be seen as falling into a pattern of mindlessness whereas those who focus on processes might tend to act in a mindful manner (Hoy, 2002). While research has been conducted on mindfulness in

organizations, there is less known about the measurement of mindfulness in schools. Furthermore, there is even less known about the mindfulness of principals. Hoy, Gage, and Tarter (2006) state, "Mindfulness in schools warrants more attention and has strong potential to increase our understanding of effective school organizations. We suspect that positive school leadership is pivotal in promoting mindful and productive school operations" (p. 253). The authors also invite further study of mindfulness in schools as the conceptualization and measurement are still in early stages. Researchers are invited to "use and refine the concept" (p. 252). The measurement of principal mindfulness in instructional leadership practices will help flesh out the concept of mindfulness. Additionally, principals might be better equipped to meet the increasing challenges of education as they engage in instructional leadership with their teachers and students to improve learning outcomes for schools.

Statement of the Problem

Over the past 30 years, our nation has undergone school reform efforts that continue to shape current policy and focus on school failure. During the past decades, the role of principal has shifted from that of a manager to the role of instructional leader with the additional responsibilities of student achievement accountability. Thus, many scholars have attempted to define instructional leadership in ways to assist principals in meeting the public demand for improving instructional practices (Leithwood et al., 2010; Spanneut, Tobin, & Ayers, 2012) and, ultimately, student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood et al., 2004; Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2010). Attempts have been made to draw attention to focus areas on which instructional leaders may examine education through a new lens and apply experience and knowledge to improve educational opportunities for their students in the areas of improving instruction, creating a

11

culture, planning with data, closing the gap, aligning curriculum, and engaging the community. Although instructional leadership has become the focus for principals, there still exists a problem of student failure (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Leithwood, Patten, & Jantzi, 2010).

Furthermore, researchers have posed questions regarding the years of experience of principals and the impact on student outcomes. While there is research that speaks to the professional identity or experience (Spillane & Lee, 2013), awareness (Marczynski & Gates, 2013) and "expert noticing" (Johnson et al., 2011), there remains a question on the relationship of principal years of experience and mindful practices. Additionally, research has addressed principals' length of time considered to be "ideal" in a school. Specifically, researchers have posited one to seven years as an ideal length of time for principals to reach a point where their effectiveness is developed (Day & Bakioglu, 1996; Hargreaves et al., 2003).

The challenge of improving outcomes for students in this high stakes, high accountability environment warrants increased attention on improving school operations. Principals can learn from the rich literature of HRO and mindfulness. While HRO theory and mindfulness in particular has been applied to education, questions remain about the application of mindfulness for instructional leadership by school principals (Hoy et al., 2006). The *School Mindfulness Scale (M-Scale)* created by Hoy, Gage, and Tarter (2004) results in a strong correlation of principal and teacher mindfulness but the instrument lacks focus. While this instrument discusses organizational mindfulness connected to a wide array of both teacher and administrator practices, the questions do not exclusively address specific areas of instructional leadership. For example, the questions "my principal negotiates faculty differences without destroying the diversity of opinions" and "the principal welcomes challenges from teachers" are not exclusive to one area of

focus in instructional leadership such as improving instruction, closing the gap, or creating a culture. Additionally, "my principal often jumps to conclusions" could cover many areas of leadership rather than just focusing on one of the foci such as planning with data or aligning curriculum. Another important area of focus for administrators is engaging the community. While the *M-Scale* addresses many areas of mindfulness, it does not provide data to inform these focus areas of instructional leadership. An apparent need for the development of an instrument to measure mindful instructional leadership of elementary principals is demonstrated in the literature. As the empirical debate continues on the role of the principal, leaders continue to struggle with efforts to provide reliable learning opportunities for their students. Therefore a study on mindfulness as part of instructional improvement practices can inform the leadership efforts of elementary school principals.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to describe and analyze the mindful instructional leadership of elementary school principals. The study addressed the following questions for principals in Washington State: (a) What are the mindful instructional leadership beliefs and practices as self-reported by elementary principals in the State of Washington?; (b) How mindful are elementary principals as instructional leaders?; and (c) Are there differences in mindful instructional leadership associated with the years of principal experience?

The study addressed four specific areas in answering the aforementioned questions. First, the study described the self-reported perceptions of elementary principals of their instructional leadership practices based on their beliefs and practices. It is important to understand how administrators in the State of Washington work with their teachers to refine instructional practice in areas related to improving instruction (Leithwood et al., 2010; Spanneut et al., 2012) aligning

curriculum (Marzano, 2003a, 2003b) and planning with data (Datnow et al., 2007; Kerr et al., 2006; Wayman et al., 2012). It is also important to understand how administrators work with parents and the community to engage them in conversations about teaching and learning to improve instructional opportunities for students (Bryk et al., 2010; Epstein, 2001; Epstein & Salinas, 2004; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2010) develop a positive learning culture (Grissom et al., 2013; Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011) and address the closing of the achievement gap (Borman & Kimball, 2005; Murphy, 2009).

Second, the study described the self-reported perceptions of elementary principals on their beliefs and practices as connected with mindfulness. While mindfulness may be a new concept for most principals, understanding how they respond to questions on instructional leadership that attend, include, or indicate the use of mindfulness will add to and deepen understanding about cognitive experiences of principals as they work with their students, teachers, and parents to bring about school reform.

Third, the study described the overall self-reported perceptions of mindful instructional leadership. As previously mentioned, mindfulness is a concept that can be simply stated as paying attention. It is important to connect mindfulness practices to instructional leadership to help principals pay attention to the components of the leadership framework in order to improve instruction and increase student outcomes. Through the analysis of self-reported perceptions of principals on mindful instructional leadership practices, the study can contribute to the knowledge developed by educational researchers in the application of mindfulness practices that improve instructional leadership.

Finally, the study sought to determine the nature of the relationship between mindful instructional leadership and the years of principal experience. The overall mindful instructional

leadership (MIL) score was the dependent variable while the number of years in the principalship was the independent variable.

Methods

As principals continue to struggle with the pressures and demands for improved student learning, instructional leadership has become a focus for leaders across U.S. schools in general, and Washington State specifically. Although instructional leadership practices have changed the role of the principal over time, there remains a problem with student failure in Washington State schools. There has not been research on the mindful instructional leadership practices of elementary principals, thus there are questions that remain unaddressed. What are the mindful instructional leadership beliefs and practices as self-reported by elementary principals? How mindful are elementary principals as instructional leaders? Are there differences in the mindful instructional leadership associated with the level of principal experience? In order to address these questions, the following research design was utilized for the study. Following is a brief discussion of the procedures for data collection, sampling procedures, statistical analysis, and ethics.

MIL Tool Development

The study followed traditional quantitative survey methods. First, a tool was developed, *Principal Resilience for Educator and Student Success* (PRESS) and its questions included beliefs and practices theoretically grounded using two conceptual frameworks. Specifically, the instrument draws on six of the criteria for instructional leadership evident in the Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP) Leadership Framework (Kipp et al., 2014) and the five constructs of mindfulness presented in HRO theory (Hoy et al., 2006). Twenty items were created and the PRESS was field tested prior to being finalized and sent out to respondents. The

PRESS is fully explained in chapter three as are the other components of the dissertation methods offered below in this introduction to the dissertation.

Sampling and Data Collection

Once the survey was prepared, a sampling frame was constructed using data provided by the State of Washington's Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). The 2014 School Report Card database was accessed and all regular public elementary schools in the state were identified. The procedures followed McNamara's (1994) formula for calculating an appropriately sized sample for generalizability. Next, 293 elementary schools were randomly selected for inclusion in the study. The contact information for the principals of these randomly selected schools were gathered and sent invitations to participate in the survey. Four contacts were made with principals to encourage participation and increase the response rate, which resulted in scores from 78 respondents (27% response rate). School data from OSPI were also downloaded and merged with respondent data for analysis.

Analysis

Descriptive statistics were run on the data to check for errors and assumptions. The median and standard deviation were used to assess the distribution of scores for the sample. The median was chosen as the most applicable measure of central tendency due to the ordinal nature of the PRESS item scores. Means and standard deviations were used for factor scores calculated using principal responses to the PRESS as well as the school variables provided by OSPI. The inferential analysis of the mindful instructional leadership of principals and the length of time in administration were conducted by using an independent samples t test.

Ethics

Since the analysis of elementary principals in the state was based on information that is available to the public, the risk of harm to human subjects was minimal. Cover letters provided for informed consent and fully informed participants of the study purpose, procedures and risks prior to participation. An Exemption Determination Application was submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies at the Washington State University (WSU) for this study. The WSU Office of Research Assurances found the study qualified as exempt from the need for Institutional Review Board (IRB) review.

Chapter Summary and Organization of Dissertation

While student failure continues to be a problem in our schools, and high expectations for improving student achievement outcomes increase, the role of the school principal is changing. The challenge for school principals has now become the elimination of all failure and the achievement gap (Bellamy et al., 2005). Over the past several decades, scholars have tried to re-define the role of principal as instructional leader resulting in the importance for teaching and learning to be at the center of decision making. Therefore, a study on the mindfulness practices in instructional leadership is important. While the instructional leadership practices of principals have become more of a focus, through the development of the Teacher and Principal Evaluation Project (TPEP), there continues to be increased accountability and community pressure to improve student achievement. Reflecting these expectations, mindful instructional leadership practices can help leaders across the state to improve instructional practices, improve culture and relationships, and engage their community in creating reliable learning opportunities for students. In responding to this need, professional development opportunities for instructional leaders is necessary to support principals in the meeting the challenges of high accountability.

The remainder of the dissertation is organized into five chapters, a bibliography, and appendixes in the following manner. Chapter one summarizes the changing role of principals in improving instruction and introduced the construct of mindfulness to inform this changing role. Chapter two presents a review of the related literature dealing with instructional leadership, high reliability organizations (HRO), and the construct of mindfulness. Chapter three delineates the research design and methodology of the study to address the problem and purpose identified in the introduction. Discussions on the creation of the instrument used to gather the data, the procedures followed, and determination of the sample selected for study is described. Chapter four presents an analysis of the data and a discussion of the findings organized around the primary research questions. Chapter five contains the overview of the study, summary of the key findings, significance, and implications and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

As our nation continues to grapple with educational reform, the federal government adopts new standards and accountability measures that raise the stakes for students, schools and districts. With the implementation of No Child Left Behind (2001) and Race to the Top (2009), principals and teachers have become accountable for student performance on mandated state assessments. In order to prevent student failure, close the achievement gap, and meet the needs of students, educators are faced with the challenges of transforming educational organizations to improve reliability in learning outcomes of youth. In the K-12 school system today, student achievement continues to be a major concern (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008). Despite numerous school reform efforts over the past decade, little remains changed. For example, site-based management, learning academies for administrators, distributive leadership practices, shared decision making, and charter schools have been widely adopted, but the bottom line is that schools continue to fail too many students (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). The call for school leaders to be more mindful has caused Stringfield (1995, 1998) and other authors (Bellamy, Crawford, Marshall, & Coulter, 2005) to examine how research from other fields, where fail-safe performance is the standard, can be applied to education.

The following chapter offers a review of literature to provide the background for understanding instructional leadership, high reliability organizations, and mindfulness as it applies to principals in the State of Washington. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section presents an overview of the literature on instructional leadership. The second section provides an understanding of the theory of high reliability organizations (HRO). The third

19

section provides the literature on one of the main concepts of HRO known as mindfulness. Within this section, the five tenets of mindfulness will be presented and discussed.

Instructional Leadership

Over the past decade, teachers and principals have been faced with a significantly higher level of demands from parents, communities and politicians. Simultaneously, school organizations have been faced with an increased number of unfunded mandates resulting in a higher level of pressure to do more for students with fewer resources. Stringfield and Datnow (2002) state "It is little wonder that public and policy demands on education have escalated, as has widespread frustration with the educational system" (p. 273). Race to the Top (2009) has been implemented by national policy makers in dissatisfaction with the lack of progress in our nation's schools. This legislation calls for reorganization of schools or closure as choices for schools possessing the lowest student outcomes.

Research in education has produced a high volume of literature on the functions of the complex role of the school principal. The principal role has been described with various terms such as instructional leader, manager, teacher, as well as a political figure to manage the parent community. In an attempt to reframe organizations and leadership, Bolman and Deal (2003) talk about frames from which organizations can learn. Their work relates to the role of principal very directly in defining new perspectives for leaders. "Learning multiple perspectives, or frames, is a defense against cluelessness. Frames serve multiple functions. They are maps that aid navigation, and tools for solving problems and getting things done (p. 18). The authors present four frames rooted in managerial practice and social science research. These frames are the structural, human resources, political, and symbolic. This work provides principals with the tools to view the same thing from multiple perspectives in order to solve problems.

While there is a wide acknowledgement of the important role of principals in school operations, little is known on what a principal does every day (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Horng, Klasik, & Leob, 2010). Principals have been described in terms of fire fighting where they take the heat, put out spot fires, get burned, face explosive situations, and watch fireworks happen (Weick, 1996). With increased government involvement, policy initiatives have included shared decision-making, administrative academies, site-based management, charter schools, parent choice and privatization. Despite a persistent belief in the importance of the principal's role to improve schools, literature has failed to thoroughly explain the complexity of the principal's role (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). There is a large body of research that supports the concept of principals as instructional leaders. Many scholars have endeavored to define instructional leadership leading to many different interpretations. The notion of principal as the leader of learning in the building has been around for many years. Over the past decade, there has been a call for principals to shift their practice from managing the building to a more concentrated focus on improving instruction. This shift has been supported by research that shows the principal's work as instructional leader positively impacting improved teaching and, in some cases, impacting increased student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2010).

Different forms of leadership are presented in literature using descriptors such as instructional, transformational, moral, servant, and the like. While these terms generally describe a style of leadership, they do speak to the main objective to any organization's success: helping set a direction and influencing members to move in those directions. Lortie (2009) offers:

> The challenges are greater today. Principals will have to have a firmer grasp of how their decisions affect students and what they learn. They will have to expect and, encountering

them, master emotional hazards that cannot be avoided. Their diplomatic skills will have

to be sharp and steady, as potential occasions for conflict will probably increase. And,

perhaps most difficult and most important to acquire, they will have to possess a sense of

direction and be guided by educational goals that provide coherence in their daily work.

(p. 212)

Instructional leadership encourages a principal to focus on improving the classroom. The term

instructional leader has become more of a slogan than a clearly defined set of practices

(Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). In an executive report sponsored by the

Wallace Foundation, *How Leadership Influences Student Learning,* leadership was found to be

second only to classroom instruction in influencing what students learn (Leithwood, et al., 2004).

This study also found that there were very few cases where a failing school became successful

without effective leaders.

As the arguments among researchers continue to muddy the waters on what it is that

principals do to improve instructional practices in their schools, the State of Washington enacted

legislation to change the teacher and principal evaluation system. In a call to action, the

Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP) embarked on efforts to influence this

work by creating a statement of accountability that addresses leadership. In this statement,

AWSP recognizes that the leadership of principals is essential in the shared responsibility of

student achievement. Furthermore, as a leader, the principal is responsible for the continued

growth of school performance as measured over time by state and local standards. AWSP

developed seven responsibilities of leadership for principals, which provided the foundation for

the criterion on the state evaluation system. In 2010, the state adopted these seven criteria and

added an eighth criterion as well. The eight criteria of the state evaluation system are creating a

culture, ensuring school safety, planning with data, aligning curriculum, improving instruction, managing resources, engaging communities, and closing the gap (Kipp et al., 2014, p. 3).

To help define instructional leadership practices of principals, the instructional framework created by AWSP (Kipp et al., 2014) was used for two reasons. First, this framework was developed by the state to help synthesize research on the role of principals specifically in improving instruction. The framework includes four major components to support instructional leaders in their work: skills and knowledge characteristic of successful principals, evidence used for measures, support principals need to be successful, and the command that principals need to find success in each responsibility. Second, this framework is part of the practice of Washington State principals, which will make the study more relevant to potential readers – specifically principals and administrators from our state. Using the framework in the study provided common terminology and language for Washington State practitioners who are looking for practical and relevant ways to improve teaching and learning. For the purpose of the study, I focused on six of the eight criteria to assist in interpreting the role of principal as instructional leader: creating a culture, planning with data, aligning curriculum, improving instruction, engaging communities, and closing the gap.

Creating a Culture

School culture is often referred to as the beliefs, perceptions, relationships, and rules that shape the functions of a school. Culture is the way the school functions. Principals are faced with the challenge of leading their school in creating a culture that supports improvements in student learning. Knapp, Copland and Talbert (2003) wrote about creating a culture,

> Leaders ask what is essential, what needs to be done and how can we get it done. An
>
> effective leader maintains visibility and transparency and creates a culture that fosters

mutual accountability; it becomes the responsibility of all staff to make sure that all

students are successful. An effective leader advocates, nurtures, and sustains a school

culture and instructional program that promotes student learning and staff professional

growth. They lead by creating powerful, equitable learning opportunities for students,

professionals, and the system, and motivating or compelling participants to take

advantage of these opportunities (p. 12).

To further explain the notion of creating a culture to improve instruction, AWSP (Kipp et al.,

2014) created four elements of focus. First, principals develop and sustain focus on a mission

that is shared and a vision that is clear for improving learning and teaching. The focus of

principals in this element is on student learning. All conversations and actions are centered on an

unremitting attention to student learning (Grissom, Loeb, & Master, 2013; Louis & Wahlstrom,

2011). In order to change culture, instructional leadership is dependent on shared/distributed

leadership. Instructional leadership is defined as taking responsibility to shape improvements at

the classroom level. Principals who are effective in creating a culture for improved student

learning stimulate conversations and require all school personnel to attend to instruction and

learning; develop a practice of shared norms and values where leadership and responsibility are

shared; and build a culture of trust where instructional quality is a visible priority (Louis &

Wahlstrom, 2011).

The second element of creating a culture involves the principal engaging in essential

conversations for ongoing improvement. There are several factors that are required in order to

develop a culture where teachers are open to having these conversations about instruction.

Principals who work with teachers to establish shared goals, a culture of collaboration, open and

supportive relationships, and a culture of trust, are more successful in developing a culture where

teachers are willing to take risks and be open to serious reviews of their instructional practices (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990; Hoy et al., 2006; Kruse & Louis, 1997; Price, 2012; Strahan, 2003; Youngs & King, 2002). Effective principals must also manage conflict effectively and proactively in order to foster high levels of trust among colleagues (Tschannen-Moran, 2009; Youngs & Kings, 2002) which, in turn, increases the organizational capacity of the school and, ultimately, improvements in student achievement.

Third, principals facilitate collaborative processes that lead toward ongoing improvement. Literature supporting the facilitation of collaborative practices (Bryk, Camburn, & Louis, 1997; Grissom et al., 2013; Hollins, McIntyre, DeBose, Hollins, & Towner, 2004; Huggins, Scheurich, & Morgan, 2011; Kruse & Louis, 1997; Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011; Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008) guides principals in the work of focusing on second order changes such as developing reflective dialogue, deprivitized practice, staff collegiality, focus on student learning and socialization of new professional members (Bryk et al., 1999; Huggins et al., 2011; Scribner, Cockrell, Cockrell, & Valentine, 1999). Successful collaboration efforts also include the balance of keeping the peace, managing conflict and keeping a pulse on the tension between professional autonomy and shared practices in a learning community (Kruse & Louis, 1997; Scribner, Hager, & Wayne, 2002).

The fourth and final element of creating a culture is defined as creating opportunities for shared leadership. Research on shared leadership (Copland, 2003; Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011; Scribner et al., 1999; Somech, 2005, 2007; Tschannen-Moran, 2009; Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008; Wahlstrom, Leithwood & Anderson, 2010; Youngs & King, 2002) provides a basis for principals to develop practices that support improvement in instructional practices. Participation in shared decision-making processes might encourage teachers to experiment with innovative practices in

curriculum and pedagogy as well as empower teacher teams to become more effective in their practices (Somech, 2005, 2010). In a study of leadership, Copland (2003), found that distributive leadership provides a direction for moving schools away from the narrow role-based strategies that have defined leadership in the past. Additionally, this study found that effective distributive leadership could build the capacity of the school to sustain reform efforts. AWSP's efforts in aligning instructional leadership with the state evaluation system has created a framework for principals to work toward creating a school culture that promotes the ongoing improvement of learning and teaching for students and staff.

Planning With Data

Criterion 3 of the Leadership Framework is planning with data. Data is defined by AWSP as any type of information, both quantitative and qualitative, that can be used to develop and implement a data-driven plan for increasing student achievement. Research shows that principal leadership is crucial to the effective use of data to drive instruction within schools. Additionally, the same research has shown that effective use of data at the building level is a systems issue where districts need to build capacity to fully support data analysis in schools (Kerr, Marsh, Ikemoto, Darilek, & Barney, 2006; Wayman, Cho, Jimerson, & Spikes, 2012). Principals who are effectively leading their buildings in planning with data recognize and seek out multiple data sources, analyze and interpret those sources to inform school-level improvement efforts, implement data driven plans for improving teaching and learning, and assist their staff to use data to guide and modify their instruction. When analyzing data, it is important for practitioners to seek out multiple data sources so that triangulation of data can take place for reliability and validity (Goldberg & Roswell, 2001). Secondly, it is important for principals to lead the efforts of analyzing and interpreting these multiple sources of data in order to inform the improvement

26

efforts of the school. When principals use data in a systemic way, it can provide insight into the thinking of students thus informing classroom instruction (Wahlstrom et al., 2010). The third element for principals is to implement a data driven plan for implementing improvements in teaching and learning. These efforts help create a systemic way to accurately collect and interpret data in order to develop an appropriate plan of improvement. The fourth element of this criterion discusses the principal's effectiveness in assisting staff to use data to guide improvements in instruction. Principals, with district support, are charged with driving this work. There should be systems in place to provide data that is timely, valuable, and presented in user-friendly formats so that teachers can readily benefit and impact their daily practice (Kerr et al., 2006; Wayman et al., 2012). In a study of high performing elementary schools, Datnow, Park, & Wohlstetter (2007) share some general lessons summed up by six "key points". School systems that are leading the work in using data to inform practice: build a foundation that includes data-driven decision making, establish a culture for continuous improvement and data use, invest in an information management system, select the right data, build the capacity for making decision using data, and analyze and act on data to improve instructional performance (Datnow et al., 2007).

Aligning Curriculum

"An effective leader assumes responsibility such that state and district learning goals align with curriculum, curriculum aligns with best instructional practice, and best instructional practices align with assessment practices" (Kipp et al., 2014, p. 19). The 4th criterion of the instructional framework is aligning curriculum with a focus on three elements: aligning curriculum to state and local district learning goals, aligning best practices to state and district learning goals, and aligning assessment practices to best instructional practices. Hallinger (2007)

categorizes these three elements within the dimension of managing the instructional program, which includes the functions of supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating curriculum, and monitoring student progress. Other scholars have identified these elements as: intended or written curriculum; delivered or taught curriculum; and tested or achieved curriculum (Glatthorn, 2000; Marzano, 2003b). Additionally, in researching what works in schools, Marzano (2003a, 2003b) concluded that a guaranteed and viable curriculum is the most powerful factor, at the school level, in determining overall student achievement. Marzano defines a guaranteed and viable curriculum as the combination of the opportunity to learn and time to learn. The author posits leaders must ensure that all teachers implement the intended curriculum in a consistent manner.

Improving Instruction

When it comes to improving instruction, "an effective leader is knowledgeable about and deeply involved in the design and implementation of the instructional program, prioritizes effective teaching by visiting classrooms regularly… and works tirelessly to support staff in doing their best work" (Kipp et al., 2014, p. 25). Criterion 5 of the framework details the four important elements vital to principal practices. First, principals monitor instruction and assessment practices by focusing on the instructional core – the classroom. Second, principals assist staff in developing required student growth plans and identify valid, reliable sources for evidence of effectiveness. Third, principals assist staff in implementing effective instruction and assessment practices. Finally, principals reliably and validly evaluate staff in effective instruction and assessment practices. Principals have an influence on achievement indirectly by impacting school organizational conditions and the quality of instruction. Implementing appropriate professional development practices may impact instructional quality. Principals can also directly

shape school conditions and teaching practices through their convictions and behaviors regarding professional development of teachers. The instructional quality of teachers can be strengthened by the creation of internal structures that promote learning. These include regular meeting times, alignment of professional development with school improvement plans and promoting social trust (Youngs & King, 2002). The focus of the principal should be on monitoring, facilitating and evaluating effective instruction and assessment practices.

Engaging Communities

According to Kipp et al. (2014), "An effective leader engages with the community in sensitive and skillful ways such that the community understands the work of the school and is proud to claim the school as their own" (p. 33). Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton (2010) identified a framework of essential supports for schools. The authors describe three practices that constitute the support of family and community involvement: reaching out and involving parents, teacher efforts to learn about students and their local community, and establishing community partnerships. The two critical elements of the AWSP (Kipp et al., 2014) framework are communicating with the community to promote learning and partnering with families and the school community. Building a strong partnership and connection with the school community is a valuable resource in establishing genuine partnership models between home and school (Adelman & Taylor, 2007; Dwyer, 1984; Epstein, 2001; Epstein & Salinas, 2004; Murphy, 2009; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2010). Additionally, interactions and collaborations with families and surrounding community can have an impact on school climate – the characteristics of the organization that capture the atmosphere of the school (Sweetland & Hoy, 2000). Furthermore, the climate of the school has been associated with aspects such as leadership style, sense of community, student expectations, an ethos of caring, and an array of student

outcomes (Goddard, Sweetland, & Hoy, 2000; Sheldon, Epstein, & Galindo, 2010; Sweetland & Hoy, 2000).

Closing the Gap

Criterion 8 of the Leadership Framework is closing the gap. This study will utilize the AWSP (Kipp et al., 2014) definition, "closing the gap refers to improving achievement for groups of students that share an historical disadvantage as well as the achievement of individual students who are not realizing learning potential" (p. 36). Principals who are committed to closing the achievement gap: identify barriers to achievement and know how to close resulting gaps, demonstrate a commitment to close the achievement gap, and provide evidence of growth in student learning. Effective principals lead efforts to eliminate the gaps that occur between proficient and non-proficient students. They are attuned to the cultural validity of assessments as well as the interests of students to engage in learning. Successful leaders align school goals with student learning and teacher practice. These leaders are also effective in developing a school culture where multiple measures of evidence of student learning are collected throughout multiple times of the school year. Instructional leaders demonstrate a commitment to closing the achievement gap.

Public schools across our nation are increasingly facing new demands of reliability for student achievement. Never before has there been more demand for a clear, focused definition of the role of principal as instructional leader. As the pressures of reliability increase for K-12 schools, the school principal has increased demands for positive outcomes in teaching and learning. The pressures of reliability hit each grade band in different ways. When applied to the high school setting, it comes in the form of accreditation, on-time graduation rates, drop out rates, state and end of course assessment results, and other forms of student failure. The middle

school also has to deal with pressures of drop out rates, student failure, and state assessment results. At the elementary level, schools are faced with accountability of creating the foundation on which all other levels build. Elementary principals and teachers must build school cultures that cultivate learners and enable them to learn the skills necessary to eliminate future problems of dropping out or falling into a continuous cycle of failure.

In 2003, Strahan conducted a study of elementary schools and their efforts toward improving student achievement. The study indicated that there has been a significant rush for schools across the nation to improve quickly in order to meet strict high stakes testing requirements for the students and the school. The rush to improve has left many schools frantically implementing new ways of reaching those high standards. Instructional leaders are called upon to implement systems and structures in their schools to effectively support sustained reform efforts. Utilizing the AWSP Leadership Framework (Kipp et al., 2014), principals in the state of Washington can develop practices and strategies to transition to becoming an effective instructional leader. When principals focus their efforts and time on creating culture, planning with data, aligning curriculum, improving instruction, and closing the gap, the instructional practices of teachers improves. The outcome of improved instruction is an increased level of student achievement. In these high stakes, high reliability times, it is important for instructional leadership to not only be defined, but to become the norm for principals across our school systems. Our students deserve to have principals and teachers who provide an education that is full of "risk-taking, learning from errors, and sharing good ideas that lead to increased self-efficacy, higher expectations, and improved learning" (Strahan, 2003, p. 129).

High Reliability Organizations

Federal and state policies in education have raised the stakes for schools and students so much that high reliability has become a critical aspect of success in schools. The challenge for

schools has now become the elimination of all failures and the achievement gap among student groups (Bellamy et al., 2005). Basically, schools are called upon to ensure high reliability for all students. In order to meet the needs of students in this high stakes, high accountability environment, educational researchers propose that schools can learn from the rich literature of HRO and the organizations outside of K-12 education that must operate in a highly reliable manner in order to avoid catastrophic accidents (La Porte, 1996; Rijpma, 1997; Vogus & Welbourne, 2003). High stakes in education have made it necessary for principals to become more mindful in their work and has resulted in research on the application of strategies from other fields where fail safe practices are the standard (Bellamy et al., 2005; Stringfield, Reynolds, & Schaffer, 2008).

The theory of High Reliability Organizations (HRO) comes from literature within social science. This theory is based on the cognitive processes found in organizations such as better nuclear power plants, nuclear aircraft carriers, and the air traffic control system, and relates to how organizations or systems operate (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 1999). In these organizations, employees must operate in a highly reliable manner in order to avoid deadly mistakes, they must operate in a way that ensures high success rates. Thus HROs operate under five constructs in which they use to avoid failure: preoccupation with failure, reluctance to simplify, sensitivity to operations, deference to expertise, and commitment to resilience (Weick, et al., 1999).

HRO has been connected to education in the areas of school structures, reform, as well as failure. HRO literature presents teachers and principals with strategies in which they can work to make schools more "Fail-Safe" for students (Bellamy et al., 2005). Specifically, they outline the ideas of improving normal operations, detecting problems early, and recovering from mistakes or

problems in a quick manner. The authors propose that a fail-safe schools framework utilizing

HRO literature should be viewed more as a metaphor than a model (Bellamy et al., 2005).

Drawing from the literature, the following section examines the applicability and relevance of

HRO theory for educational organizations.

School Effectiveness and Reliability

Studies over many years have taken place to examine the relationships between school

process and student outcomes (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000). Over the past few decades, National

Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) testing has shown that U.S. students at ages 9, 13,

and 17 are achieving at almost the same exact levels as 30 years ago. Specifically, NAEP scores

have shown that scores for U.S. 4th graders have increased 12 and 24 points in reading and math

respectively. However, the results of the 2012 NAEP showed student performance in

mathematics and reading have not changed significantly from 2008 to 2012. Student gains in

math and reading only show a one-point gain in those four years (National Center for Education

Statistics Institute of Education Sciences, 2013) . These statistics are troubling and have led

researches to wonder, "If education is increasingly important for success, why hasn't educational

achievement improved accordingly?" (Stringfield & Datnow, 2002). Teacher effectiveness and

school effectiveness has become a focus on overall effect on student performance. It has been

posited that students are inclined to learn more when more effective teachers have taught them

and teachers become more effective when they work in more effective schools (Stringfield &

Datnow, 2002; Teddlie & Stringfield, 1993). Thus, in seeking to become an effective school,

Bellamy et al. (2005) posit that we should not just keep looking at high performing educational

systems, but we should be looking outward to those organizations that function as High

Reliability Organizations. Stringfield et al., (2008) state that the urgency for high reliability in

education advances from the recognition that (1) failures of the system have results that are catastrophic, (2) the variability of current performance levels are unacceptable, and (3) much higher levels of reliability in performance are possible.

Schools continue to be challenged on becoming more reliable and effective in many different areas. First and foremost, the stakes are high for student failure. There was a time when schools were considered successful if most of their students performed well. With the implementation of NCLB (2001), if one child does not achieve proficiency, the school is considered failing as well as if there is an achievement gap between student groups. Schools and HROs are alike when it comes to failures as both organizations end up in the media when there is a failure. Another area of great concern is around school safety. In the wake of the school shootings across our nation, schools have been hard pressed with public expectations for high reliability. With these increased public demands for reliability, it is necessary for the public education system to learn form HRO theory to become highly reliable. Bellamy et al. (2005) posit, "The growing presence of alternatives – charter schools, home schooling, and vouchers – underscores the stakes that are tied to reliable performance" (p. 388).

In schools, much like in HROs, there is often a higher expectation by the public for reliability that is far narrower than the overall goals and mission of the schools. For example, high-stakes expectations for proficiency on state assessments only reflect a part of the learning for which schools are responsible. When the focus is only on summative assessments there is a tendency to overlook other learning of which schools are expected to provide. Additional expectations of which schools are responsible include such things as acculturation, social development, caring, citizenship, and college/career readiness (Bellamy et al., 2005). If too much emphasis is placed only on annual assessments, it can result in inattentiveness to the goals and

operations that are not assessed. While it is hard to measure and assess some of these areas, it is

important for schools to keep a healthy tension on achieving high reliability while still focusing

on other needs and goals. HROs are important because they provide a set of processes that foster

effectiveness under trying conditions (Weick et al., 1999).

Detecting Errors

HRO research identifies and aligns attributes, or characteristics, that are consistent across

a wide variety of organizations. The attributes are not easily separated. "While these

characteristics must be described separately, their effect is multiplicative, not additive. The total

absence of any one can nullify great efforts to obtain others" (Stringfield et al., 2008, p. 413).

There are three attributes that are particularly important in applying an HRO framework and can

begin to explain some of the struggles that school systems encounter. The first attribute is the

process for consistently identifying small errors or lapses before they become a bigger issue.

Stringfield et al. describe, "small failures in key systems are monitored closely, because they can

cascade into major problems" (p. 412).

High reliability organizations have a preoccupation with failure and focus on detecting

errors to prevent catastrophic events. Schools are organizations where student failure should be

viewed as a catastrophic event. Now, more than ever, there is a need for schools to learn from

high reliability organizations and use this theory as a lens to examine the potential benefits to

schools if failure was not an option. "For two decades, scholars in fields as diverse as political

science, organizational behavior, and engineering have studied non-educational organizations

that are required to work under the very unusual demand of functioning correctly 'the first time,

every time'" (Stringfield, et al., 2008, p. 412). Thus HRO theory can and should be applied to

schools to detect errors before failure can happen, getting student achievement right 'the first

time, every time'. Stringfield and Datnow (2002) studied HROs and concluded "HROs evolve when both the larger society and the professionals involved in the organization believe that failure to achieve key goals would be disastrous" (p. 274). "Failures in some areas of our society may involve a threat to life; educational failure creates a powerful threat to life chances" (Stringfield & Datnow, 2002, p. 275). Reliability requires that there is an ongoing alertness to surprises or lapses. The big shift for educators is to view the failure of students not as the shortcoming of the child, but as a failure of the system (Eck, 2011). This involves some major shifts in core beliefs and assumptions. If a young reader has a lack of proficiency, it should be considered a catastrophic event. In a highly reliable school, this catastrophe would be addressed with a process of established and effective interventions. The interventions would be applied immediately when an error is detected in order to improve the reading achievement of that student. Too often, schools wait for summative assessments to find errors in learning and at that point, it may be too late to remediate in a way that proves successful for the student. All attention should be focused on finding the mishaps and errors along the way. This can be accomplished through the use of formative assessments.

High reliability organizations continuously focus on errors and mistakes. However, it does not mean that they become paralyzed by angst about what may possibly go wrong, or that they fear failure. It simply means that instead of only celebrating and focusing on success (which often leads to ignoring failure), the organization is constantly on the lookout for errors that lead to failure. HROs operate under a similar fashion as the slogan conceived by NASA during the near-catastrophic Apollo 13 mission, "failure is not an option". This can be transferred to the school setting by stating that "failure is not an option" in schools that are highly reliable (Eck, 2011).

Standardized Routines

The second attribute of HRO is the use of standard operating procedures that are widely understood and used throughout the organization. "Organizational reliability is thought to be achieved through the development of highly standardized routines. In fact, the notion of repeatability or reproducibility of actions or patterns of activity is fundamental to traditional definitions of reliability" (Weick et al., 1999, p. 86). These routines of practice are based on the strategies that work and are the most effective in overcoming the challenge or undertaking at hand. Stringfield et al., (2008) posit, "this is in part to make 'best practice' universal but also to allow a rich web of peer observation and communication" (p. 413). When standard operating procedures are absent, each member of the organization develops his/her own interpretation of how to approach a task. Inconsistency ensues and does not allow the organization to reach its full potential.

In order to increase the instructional practices in every classroom, highly reliable school organizations develop and establish very clear instructional priorities. These priorities are clearly articulated and are non-negotiable goals for implementing in every classroom across the school. Eck (2011) suggests that, "If we know what works from decades of effective teaching and effective schools research, in terms of research-based best instruction, we must ask ourselves, 'Then why aren't we doing those things consistently?'" (p. 40). However, there is caution in interpreting standard operation procedures for instruction. It is not meant to become a lock-step adherence to rules that results in every teacher being on the same page on the same day. There must still be an appropriate amount of autonomy for teachers to be able to adjust in order to meet the specific needs of their students.

Stringfield et al. (2008) suggest that schools take their regularly repeated tasks and make them their standard operating procedures. In addition to instructional strategies, they also encourage schools to develop time-saving efficiency measures and procedures to identify and provide interventions for students at risk of failure. However, caution is provided so that practitioners remember that it is important that these procedures are applied in relation to the current context and that there must be a natural evolution as circumstances change. Bellamy (2011) points out that there is also another area in schools where standard operating procedures may be applied to support collective decision-making by teacher teams. Applying standard operating procedures "such as protocols for reviewing student work, monitoring progress of individual students, and collectively responding to the first signs of failure, may provide one of the most promising applications of high-reliability processes" (Bellamy, 2011, p. 41). Professional learning communities can be the conduit for effectively breaking apart the silos of teaching and creating a collaborative culture where teachers come together to ask the important questions about student learning: (1) what do students need to know and be able to do? (2) how will we know they have learned it? (3) what will we do when they haven't learned it? and (4) what will we do when they already know it? In addition to breaking down the silos, it is important for schools to incorporate standard operating procedures to keep teachers focused on the goals and mission of the learning organization and to reduce the potential for failure of students.

Professional Development

A third attribute of HRO is the use of targeted professional development and training that is aligned with the goals of the organization (Stringfield et al., 2008). In order to complete the mission and goals of the organization, all group members need to be provided with the skills and

knowledge necessary. In the high-stakes world of education, targeted professional development is essential to equipping teachers with the skills needed to address the demands of educating our youth. If we are to become highly reliable in preventing student failure, teachers will need professional development aimed at improving skills in analyzing data to detect errors, creating and implementing interventions, and monitoring progress toward clear learning goals. A challenge to this attribute is time. Over the past several years, teachers in the State of Washington have lost three days of state funded learning improvement time. The loss of time has created a large gap in our professional development opportunities. Having these three days to devote to system-wide professional development provided districts with a structure to properly train educators to meet the goals of the organization. With the loss of these days, school districts are hard-pressed to find built-in time structures for learning opportunities.

The application of high reliability organization theory to school organizations is not a clear-cut notion. There are many differences between a school organization and those in other fields that are considered to be highly reliable. Bellamy (2011) posits, "Of course, public schools are quite different from most HROs. Educators work in public organizations that are naturally open to outside influences; their work is people and relationship intensive and depends on far less prescriptive knowledge. Thus, while high reliability seems important to leadership for educational change, contextual differences mitigate against uncritical transfer of HRO practices to schools" (p. 24). Eck (2011) recognizes that "educational systems are inherently different from those organizations that have traditionally, and accurately, been identified as demonstrating high reliability. It may be a stretch to think of school districts and schools in terms of 'failure-free' operations, and it may be even more of a stretch to put the HRO principles into practice" (p. 40). However, research has shown that under the umbrella of mindfulness, there are components

of HRO theory that can be transferred to educational organizations. The essence of success or failure in the American school system is dependent on leaders to know which practices to hold on to and which ones to eliminate. Educational leaders are called upon to determine how to considerably improve the implementation of successful research-based instructional practices while external demands and requirements change. Organizing schools to be highly reliable organizations holds promise for leaders to meet this challenge.

Mindfulness

Educational accountability calls for the role of administrators and teachers to shift in order to meet the high demands for student success. Instructional leaders are called upon to provide support for teachers to increase their instructional capacity through professional development. Administrators and teachers should also work together to create a culture in which collaboration is the norm where educators focus on a continual cycle of inquiry and reflection to refine the skills of teaching. The continued reliance on the "routine ways of doing things that worked at one time" (Hoy, 2002) can cause educators to fall into the trap of using ordinary categories and automated responses to events. This can develop into a habit that is considered mindless. Mindlessness is a product of repetition where individuals become accustomed to doing tasks the same way and depends on using standard or automatic responses to events (Hoy, 2002). Education is a profession where clear-cut answers are few and ambiguity and moral dilemmas are prevalent (Wasserman, 1999) causing uncertainty. Wasserman posits that "one reason why uncertainty arises is that organizational reform and restructuring often involves replacing old ways of thinking and working with new ones" (p. 1318). Educators need to have a clear sense of what is expected of them and there is often uncertainty of these expectations when comprehensive changes to their beliefs and practice take place. As a means of bridging this

uncertainty and mindless behavior while working toward increasing student success, mindfulness is an effective strategy for school administrators to incorporate into their work.

The construct of mindfulness is a critical part of high reliability organization (HRO) theoretical framework. As defined by scholars, mindfulness includes openness to new perspectives, being aware of the present moment and situation, emphasizing a heightened state of involvement and wakefulness, drawing novel distinctions, and being aware and sensitive to the present perspective of others (Hoy, 2002; Hoy, Gage & Tarter, 2006; Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007). Hyland (2014) states, "Mindfulness simply means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally in a way which nurtures greater awareness, clarity, and acceptance of present-moment reality" (p. 278). Expanding on Langer's (1993) conception of individual mindfulness, Weick and Sutcliffe (2001, 2007) apply mindfulness to the organizational level. Applied in a school setting, mindfulness can increase teacher and administrator effectiveness in addressing and correcting errors in order to eliminate student failure. Mindful organizations work together to identify and correct errors, learn lessons from mistakes, and employ reflective practices that result in change. Mindfulness is about remembering intended objects from the present rather than from the past (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007). Thus mindful principals focus on a current problem and seek new solutions rather than relying on past practices that may continue to be ineffective. Principals, who operate mindfully, are better equipped to respond to student failure at the first sign of error. A significant change is needed in schools where the focus on student success must be replaced with an intentional focus on student failure. This does not mean that schools should not celebrate successes. This should be a continued practice. However, schools that focus too much on student success are not mindful of the failures that occur and therefore may not be effectively working to

find solutions to eliminate those failures. Bellamy et al. (2005) posit the importance of identifying the "need for mindfulness, for constant vigilance that recognizes that problems can occur at any time. A useful mindset that supports this vigilance is an assumption that every program, curriculum, instructional strategy, and teacher is fallible" (p. 401).

In the absence of mindful practices, there is a tendency for an individual or organization to operate in a mindless manner. Hoy et al., (2006) state:

Mindless organizations develop and utilize inhibiting structures and processes. Mindlessness is characterized by a style of mental functioning in which people follow recipes, impose old categories to classify what they see, act with some rigidity, operate on automatic pilot, and mislabel unfamiliar new contexts as familiar old ones. (p. 39)

Operating in a mindless manner continues to perpetuate the problem of student failure. Mindlessness does not allow school organizations to operate in a way in which student failure can be examined and remedied. Hoy (2002) posits:

Individuals take in information either mindfully or mindlessly and in much the same way they act with or without much reflection. Too often our initial mindsets form before we do much reflection, what psychologists call premature cognitive commitment. We seize on standard classifications, use routine rules and procedures, and then proceed to become seduced by our habits. Even when the routine ways do not work, we often respond by simply doing more of the same in belief that more is the key to fixing the problem. (p. 94)

Thus it is important that school administrators and teachers work to develop mindful practices in order to effectively make changes to the school structure that currently exists and allows for student failure. The construct of mindfulness includes five processes that reduce the "inertial blind spots that allow failure to cumulate and produce catastrophic outcomes" (Weick et al,

1999, p. 83). The five processes are: (a) preoccupation with failure, (b) reluctance to simplify, (c) sensitivity to operations, (d) commitment to resilience, and (e) deference to expertise (Kearney & Herrington, 2013; Weick et al, 1999). Hoy (2002) examines these five constructs as they apply to schools. He defines them as: (a) regularly look for problems (b) simplify less and see more (c) focus on teaching and learning (d) resilient to problems and (e) defer to expertise regardless of rank.

Preoccupation With Failure

Preoccupation with failure is a major characteristic of HROs as they view any error within a system to produce catastrophic consequences. At first glance, it is difficult to think of preoccupation with failure as anything but defeating. However, in HROs, failure is viewed as a prerequisite for learning and a means to strengthen the health of an organization. Failure is the measure of the reliability of the organization as a whole. In a mindful organization, employees are attuned to all mistakes, but they are especially sensitive to those that are small (Hoy, 2002). These organizations regularly look for problems in order to eliminate the potential for costly mistakes. Hoy (2002) also states, "mindful leaders and organizations avoid preoccupation with their successes, in part, because success breeds contentment and sometimes arrogance, which ultimately leads to vulnerability. Instead, mindful organizations pay attention to small mistakes and seek to eliminate them" (p. 97). This preoccupation with failure results in the examination of errors in order to catch the early warning of trouble. In order to catch these warnings, practitioners must be alert and continuously open to subtle changes and new information. Many organizations tend to restrict failure while effective HROs tend to see failure as more generalized. Educators can learn from this practice by adhering to the belief that the cumulation of small incidents increases the chances for major problems (Weick et al., 1999).

Another form of failure from which HROs can learn is that of failures that arise as a consequence of success. When an organization trusts that success can demonstrate competence, workers often fall into complacency, inattention and routines that are habitual (Weick et al., 1999). In this scenario, the problem is that this pattern often increases the probability that human error will happen. Weick et al. (1999) warn:

> Complacency is interpreted as a failure of striving, inattention is interpreted as a failure of vigilance, and habituation is interpreted as a failure of continuous adjustment. Attending to potential failures implicit in success is equivalent to acting on the assumption that any current success makes future success less probable. (p. 91)

Mindful leaders and organizations tend to avoid preoccupation with success particularly because success can often lead to arrogance or contentment. This can also lead to vulnerability. Instead, these individuals and organizations pay careful attention to mistakes that are small and strive to eliminate them (Hoy, 2002).

Reluctance to Simplify

The second process of mindfulness is the reluctance to simplify interpretations. Mindful organizations and their leaders are reluctant to simplify as they need to know and understand the subtle details of the situation at hand. This process is a valuable one to be applied in school settings. Student personalities and learning styles present themselves in such a diverse range that it is difficult to apply one solution that will fit every situation. However, many schools tend to do this all too often. Hoy (2002) states:

> A basic goal of mindfulness is to simplify less and see more. Knowing that schools are complex and unpredictable, leaders and participants of mindful schools position themselves to see as much as possible and try to reconcile different interpretations

without destroying the nuances of diversity and complexity. (pp. 97-98)

Members of organizations often simplify the interpretation of complex tasks, also referred to as having worldviews, frameworks, or mindsets, and this can lead to ignoring data while continuing to keep going. Simplifications in HROs are dangerous as they limit the precautions that people take as well as increase the likelihood of surprise. Ultimately, the resulting undesired consequences can grow to become very serious (Weick et al., 1999).

Reflecting the need to keep an awareness of simplifications, HROs often implement a unique form of redundancy. This type of redundancy in HROs takes the form of skepticism. Weick et al. (1999) refer to this as "conceptual slack", or that which "represents concern that when others see what they believe, both their seeing and believing miss a lot" (p. 93). Organizations that are open to the idea of skepticism and double checking, counteract the potential complacency that is often fostered by redundant systems. Furthermore, successful organizations structure themselves to focus on developing a complex understanding of their work because they cannot afford to make mistakes. Thus, the organization becomes more reliable.

Sensitivity to Operations

Sensitivity to operations, or focus on teaching and learning, is the third process of mindfulness that leads organizations to pay attention to information in real time. In much of the HRO literature, sensitivity to operations is reflected in the terminology. Weick et al. (1999) state, "Descriptive words such as struggle for alertness, misinterpretation, overload, decoys, distraction, mixed signals, surprise, vigilance, near misses, warnings, anomalies, lookouts, clues, and neglect, all portray the concern to catch errors in the moment" (p. 94). At any given moment, the members of the organization must pay attention to information and understand what to ignore and on what they need to focus their attention. There is an ongoing concern for that which is

unexpected. The result of this attention is the development of "situational awareness" (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007). Hoy (2002) posits, "Organizational surprises are not unexpected; they are inevitable and mindful decision makers know it. With the unexpected in mind, they try to see the 'big picture'" (p. 98). Mindful organizations are unrelenting in their scan for problems and remain very close to the day-to-day operations.

School leaders must stay close to the day-to-day operations of the school. In the context of this work, the focus of administrators, and teacher alike, needs to be on the classroom of which teaching and learning is the core. Sensitivity to the practice of teaching and learning enables real-time facts for quick information processing (Hoy, 2002) and enables administrators to support teachers in analyzing potential problems before they cause unexpected events such as student failure. Weick et al., (1999) underscore the importance of the integration of all five processes of mindfulness to result in situational awareness, rather than sensitivity to operations by itself. "It is collective knowledge of failures, details, potentials for recovery, and relevant past experience, gathered into mindful processing, that provides the context within which present operations either make sense or are reconstructed to make sense" (p. 95).

Commitment to Resilience

All organizations, including those that are highly reliable, experience failure. However, HROs build in multiple preventative measures in order to minimize the effects or impact of mishaps and "near misses". Whenever errors do take place, HROs are able to demonstrate resiliency by bouncing back quickly. Commitment to resilience is the ability of an organization to bounce back and recover from errors or mishaps. It is about the ability to cope in the moment when surprises present themselves by utilizing problem-solving strategies based on expert knowledge. "They allow for rapid pooling of cognitive knowledge to handle events that were

impossible to anticipate" (Weick et al., 1999, p. 100). Mindful school leaders must develop a capability to discover and bounce back from mistakes because no anticipation will ever prevent mistakes from materializing. Mindful organizations and leaders do not allow failure to paralyze them. They continue to detect, contain and ultimately rebound from mistakes (Hoy, 2002). Thus, schools that focus on becoming more resilient will continue to improve and become more reliable.

Deference to Expertise

The final process of mindfulness is deference to expertise. Organizations acting in a mindful manner avoid the mistake of adhering to rigid hierarchical structures. Instead, they seek out members of the organization who have the expertise to solve the problem. In a mindful organization, there is a fluid decision-making system that defers to expertise rather than to experience or status. Authority in these organizations becomes situational and is anchored in expertise regardless of rank (Hoy, 2002). Weick et al. (1999) posit, "What is distinctive about effective HROs is that they loosen the designation of who is the 'important' decision maker in order to allow decision making to migrate along with problems" (p. 99). The authors go on to say, "When problems and decision rights are both allowed to migrate, this increases the likelihood that new capabilities will be matched with new problems. As a result, a wider range of capabilities and solutions gain access to a wider range of problems" (p. 99). When organizations operate in this flexible and adaptive manner, problems can quickly receive the attention required at all levels of the organization. The authority within the organization is loosened, creating a less hierarchical environment.

School administrators and teachers can benefit from becoming a mindful organization by loosening the hierarchical design and becoming more flexible. As stated in literature, "A culture

that is less mindful and more deferential to hierarchy is less informed by frontline experience and expertise and is more informed by inputs that are colored by hierarchical dynamics such as uncertainty absorption and withholding bad news" (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007, p. 77). There is a lack of mindful exploration and experimenting in tightly coupled organizations. Mindful organizations have shared and collective responsibility while encouraging their employees to share expertise. Whenever surprises occur, the most knowledgeable experts are often those who are "on the front line" and deference to expertise allows for this organizational flexibility in resolving the problem.

The construct of mindfulness is a critical component in the operation of a school in the age of high stakes accountability. As outside pressure continues to mount and school performance is scrutinized, there is a demand on instructional leaders to yield increased student achievement. It is difficult to examine the effectiveness of schools in the wake of unfunded mandates, increased state and federal demands (e.g., Common Core, Teacher and Principal Evaluation, etc.), limited resources and a prevalent negativity about schools. The role of the principal is certainly a daunting challenge that often feels overwhelming and impossible. However, the expectations do not diminish in light of these challenges. The sustainability and success of the educational system is dependent on new considerations on how to function and become a more reliable organization. The concept of mindfulness can provide schools with a structure that supports high levels of student success through preoccupation with failure, reluctance to simplify, sensitivity to operations, commitment to resilience, and deference to expertise. The implementation of these characteristics of HROs can provide a framework for principals to strengthen positive student outcomes and diminish the level of student failure.

Chapter Summary

As school leaders continue to frantically implement new ways of reaching high standards, research is beginning to demonstrate ways in which instructional leaders can produce more highly reliable learning opportunities for students. Applying HRO concepts of mindfulness has been shown to allow for improved awareness, attention, and focus. Mindfulness has also led to greater responses to the needs of students and an overall increase in the culture of the school. All of these lead to higher levels of student outcomes. Mindfulness in education leads to a change from the reliance on the routine process of doing things that worked at one time which can cause educators to fall into the trap of continuing to use automatic responses to events (Hoy, 2003).

The goal of principals and teachers is to improve instruction and create a more reliable learning opportunity for students. With this in mind, there is a clear potential to impact instructional leadership practices by the application of mindfulness. While this concept is still quite new in the literature, there are benefits in encouraging new research to further understand how instructional leadership practices can be improved by using mindfulness concepts. The literature review above necessitates a quantitative study on the mindful instructional leadership practices of elementary school principals and warrants the development of an instrument to measure this practice.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to describe and analyze the mindful instructional leadership of elementary school principals. Specifically, the study addressed the following questions for principals in Washington State: (a) What are their mindful instructional leadership beliefs and practices? (b) How mindful are elementary principals as instructional leaders? and (c) Are there differences in mindful instructional leadership associated with the level of principal experience? The study gathered the self-reported beliefs and practices of elementary principals of their instructional leadership. Understanding how administrators work with their teachers to improve instruction by aligning curriculum and planning with data identify key areas of practice explored in this investigation. It is also important to understand how administrators work with parents and the community to engage them in conversations about teaching and learning to improve instructional opportunities for students. Second, the study assessed elementary school principals' beliefs and practices to determine how mindfulness is integral to instructional leadership. While mindfulness may be a new concept for most principals, understanding how they respond to questions tied to the five cognitive processes of mindfulness provides important clues about the nature and approach to this critical work. As mentioned previously, mindfulness is a concept that can be simply stated as paying attention. It is important to connect mindfulness practices to instructional leadership to help principals pay attention to the components of the leadership framework in order to improve instruction and increase student outcomes. Finally, the study sought to determine the association between mindful instructional leadership and the experience level of the principal.

The study employed a quantitative survey design and was theoretically grounded using two bodies of scholarship. The first conceptual model was derived from the Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP) Leadership Framework (Kipp et al., 2014). The framework provides a foundation and rubric for principals in Washington State to follow in order to meet the new expectations for principal evaluation. The second body of research that is evident throughout the study comes from high reliability organizations (HRO) with particular attention given to the application of mindfulness practices for educational leaders (Hoy et al., 2006). The five constructs of mindfulness include preoccupation with failure, reluctance to simplify, sensitivity to operations, commitment to resilience, and deference to expertise.

Five Educational Leadership students from the Washington State University Doctoral Program worked collaboratively to conduct a statewide survey study of the mindful practices of instructional leaders. The composition of the group consistsed of one high school principal, one STEM school principal, one assistant superintendent, one retired elementary principal, this researcher who has been an elementary principal for the past 11 years, and their university professor. While this group worked collaboratively on the development of a survey tool, each of the members will be analyzing the survey results for their own specific study.

The following chapter explains in detail the methods followed in gathering and analyzing the data used in this dissertation. The rational for decisions and techniques employed in this process are also vetted. The chapter continues by providing an overview of survey methods. Next, the sampling procedures are described. The third section covers instrumentation and includes a summary of steps followed in developing the survey instrument used in the study. Following the instrumentation section, a discussion of the analysis will be presented. Next, ethics, limitations and de-limitations will be offered. The chapter concludes with a summary.

Survey Methods

Surveys have long been used in educational leadership and organizational studies to develop and test the theoretical underpinnings of the discipline. McNamara (1994) posits the purpose of surveys is to "serve as aids to planning and decision-making in government, agencies, political organizations, business corporations, and a wide array of not-for-profit institutions… strategic planning, policy studies, and program evaluation… can be used effectively in educational reform efforts" (p. 139). One way surveys contribute to theory is by continuing the process of clarifying concepts of interest. In what way and degree are theoretical concepts measurable or evident in the world? Soliciting the self-reported perceptions of principals about their leadership practices substantiates the choice of this method since two of the research questions in this study pertain directly to such issues. Additionally, surveys are conducted with the goal of making statistical inferences about the population being studied by investigating a sample. Creswell (2009) noted "A survey design provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population." (p. 145). The strength of the design is reflected in or attends to research purposes concerned with generalizable findings (Babbie, 1990). Further, one of the implied intents of this design is for laying the foundation for later studies that test the impact of a specific treatment, or intervention, on an outcome. Surveys are naturally occurring experiments (Weirsma, 2009). Although the current study does not focus attention in ways that surface this characteristic, nor does it fall victim to findings that easily confuse correlation with causation. Survey methods are often used as a feedback tool for educators providing crucial information that can be interpreted and applied to support improvements in teaching and learning. The balance between increased internal validity against external validity tends to error current research in educational leadership on the

side of generalizing findings since improved controls needed for internal validity make replication challenging if not impossible.

Sampling

The 2014 School Report Card database, from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), was used to create the sampling frame for this cross-sectional study. Since this investigation was to examine regular public schools in the State of Washington the alternative schools, special education centers, juvenile detention centers, prisons, and schools for the deaf and blind were eliminated. Examination of agency files resulted in identification of 2097 regular public schools in the State. Sorting of the schools was completed using the variable "grade_span" to create three groups or strata. The first stratum was given the attribute "elementary" and consisted of schools where students were enrolled in pre-kindergarten to grade six or some arrangement within the parameters of these grade levels (e.g., K-6, K-3, PK-5, etc.). The second and third strata, defined as "intermediate" and "secondary", were not used for this study, although they were included for those being conducted by the other members of the research team. The number of schools in the elementary strata was calculated and a percentage generated using the total number of schools. With 58% of the schools identified as elementary, the number of cases to be selected could be calculated for a generalizable sample.

The total number of public regular schools was 2097, which was the sampling frame used for the study. McNamara's (1994) formula was used to calculate the number of subjects needed. The sample size to be collected was calculated using a margin of error of 5% and a confidence level of 99%. Specifically, a sample of 505 schools was identified for the population of all public regular schools in the State, which was then broken down using the proportion of schools from the stratum stated above. The result of this calculation revealed that 293 elementary schools were

needed to create a representative sample of regular public elementary schools. Thus, 293 elementary schools were randomly selected and principals were identified for participation in the survey.

Data Collection Procedures

Utilizing the list of schools provided by OSPI, 293 elementary schools were randomly selected. Contact information was collected in the form of email addresses for principals in the identified schools. Websites were accessed to verify OSPI records. Email information of selected principals was uploaded into Qualtrics, which is a web survey application platform.

Letters were developed to send out to invite principals to participate in the study. A plan was developed to follow research based techniques found to be effective for increasing response rates: advance notice (an obligation factor), follow-up to encourage participation (the guilt factor), incentives, high topic relevance, personalization (cover letter), anonymity assurance, sponsorship for credibility, personal distribution, and internet administration (Anseel, Lievens, Schollaert, & Choragwicka, 2010). Qualtrics did not allow a pre-survey email to be sent prior to the invitation to participate in the survey. Therefore, the first letter provided a brief but concise explanation on the purpose of the study, informed participants that their participation was voluntary, and insured potential respondents of confidentiality (Appendix A). A week later, a second letter was emailed with access to the survey, and again made the ask for voluntary participation, and reminded participants of confidentiality of their responses (Appendix B). Additionally, this letter notified the participants of the deadline for the survey. A third letter, the follow-up to non-respondents, contained a reminder about the survey, the deadline, and encouragement to participate (Appendix C). The surveys were sent in October and November 2014. To insure the requirements of the sample size were met, response activity was monitored.

Instrumentation

The research team performed an extensive search of the literature to identify an instrument that would assess both instructional leadership and mindfulness. This included the M-Scale created by Hoy et al. (2004). Because a survey tool did not exist to measure the perception of principals of their mindful instructional leadership, the group collaboratively developed an instrument based on extensive review of literature pertaining to the two bodies of research. The team selected two conceptual frameworks: one related to mindfulness and the other instructional leadership. The design of the survey tool began in the spring of 2014. The design process took place by cross-referencing the six criterion of the AWSP Leadership Framework (Kipp et al., 2014) with the five constructs of mindfulness as shown on Table 1. There are six specific areas of instructional leadership defined in the framework used in the creation of the survey: creating culture, planning with data, aligning curriculum, improving instruction, engaging communities, and closing the gap. The concept of mindfulness draws on the model of Hoy et al. (2006), which is based on Weick and Sutcliffe's work. There are five cognitive processes identified as contributing to mindfulness in organizing, which include preoccupation with failure, reluctance to simplify, sensitivity to operations, commitment to resilience, and deference to expertise.

The survey tool, *Principal Resilience for Educator and Student Success* (PRESS), was constructed by writing many questions and responses related to the instructional leadership of administrators. Field-testing of the survey tool was completed in August of 2014. The field test was conducted to identify weaknesses. The field test results were analyzed for bias. Participants provided feedback on clarity of the instructions, questions, layout of the survey, and any other concerns that could be possible problems for collecting valid and reliable scores. Over 60 volunteers responded and changes were made given their feedback.

Table 1

PRESS Mapped to Mindfulness and AWSP Frameworks

PRESS	Mindfulness	AWSP
1) Solicit from staff solutions to instructional problems	Expertise	Instruction
2) Raise concerns about student learning with staff	Failure	Culture
3) Express empathy for a teacher who is having a difficult day	Failure	Curriculum
4) Look for signals when talking with students about how they are feeling	Resilience	Instruction
5) Give directives to teachers or students who have repeatedly messed up	Operations	Gap
6) Tire of dealing with the same problem teachers or students	Resilience	Culture
7) Lead data driven dialogues with teachers to keep conversations on track	Operations	Data
8) Feel tension before meeting that involves conflict with staff	Resilience	Instruction
9) Wonder what needs to be done to improve student performance	Simplify	Gap
10) Help my teachers use data to improve their teaching	Operations	Curriculum
11) Treat similar student infractions in a consistent way	Simplify	Culture
12) School's achievement data reflects what students have learned	Failure	Gap
13) Compliance is a big part of my job	Simplify	Curriculum
14) Parents are dismissive of school's responsibility for all students	Simplify	Community
15) I dwell on what I could have done better when teachers don't improve	Failure	Instruction
16) Ask a lot of questions when I meet with parents of students	Expertise	Community
17) First impressions in classroom are frequently wrong	Failure	Data
18) When a student insults me, I stop so he or she can calm down	Resilience	Community
19) Know what needs to be done to improve the performance of students	Expertise	Instruction
20) When teachers react defensively to criticism, I ignore their reactions	Expertise	Culture

The final version of the PRESS included 20 questions that were cross-referenced with one construct of mindfulness and one criterion of the AWSP framework (Kipp et al., 2014). It is important to note that the question design included two categories of response options, the first being a frequency of occurrence reflecting a recent experience while the second was an indication of the degree to which a principal agreed. Likert (1932) developed the idea of measuring attitudes by asking people to respond to statements on a scale to which they agreed. Thus, a four point Likert type scale for items 1-10 related to behavior was used. Responses on this scale ranged from *rarely* (1) to *very often* (4). Items 11-20 tended to cover beliefs and used the Likert type scale of *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5) (Appendix D). The final version of the PRESS was uploaded to Qualtrics in preparation for administration. Principals who were selected for the study were sent email invitations to participate in the study, which included the following directions:

> Below is a brief collection of statements about principal instructional leadership practices and beliefs. Please select the frequency of occurrence that best reflects your recent experience at ${m://School}:

The second part of the survey included questions relating to principal beliefs. The directions for this portion of the survey were as follows:

> Using the Likert scale on the top row, please indicate the degree to which you agree with each statement. Select the response that reflects your recent experience:

As previously mentioned, the two sections of the PRESS included two different ranges of Likert scales thus it will be important to conduct the analysis of the data with this in mind.

The final questions on the PRESS included principal biographical questions per standard survey protocol (Babbie, 1990). Principals were asked their gender, ethnic/racial identification,

years at the school, and years in position. When the data are analyzed, reliability scores will be generated for complete tool, as well as for each AWSP criterion assessed by the PRESS.

Data Analysis

To address research questions posed in the study problem, the gathered data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Before analyzing data, measures of central tendency were computed for each item and the score distributions were examined. A comparison of school variables between the state, selected, and respondent schools was performed to determine the degree that the sample could be generalized. Respondent scores that were missing were replaced with the median response for the item. The selection of the median score occurred since these data are ordinal and the 50 percentile provides the best replacement score. In most cases the median and mode were the same value. Next, negatively scored items were reverse coded. There were nine items that were reverse coded to determine or prevent possible response bias, which often happens on self-report surveys. Factor scores were then calculated for each of the ASWP (Kipp et al., 2014) criteria. Scores for each of the items on a criterion were summed and divided by the total possible score and then multiplied by 100 to create a standard score that was comparable across the criteria since each criterion possessed slightly different number of items and items possessed two different ranges. A mindful instructional leadership (MIL) score was also calculated using a similar formula. All items were added and divided by the total score possible and was then turned into a percentage by multiplying the result by 100. Cronbach's alpha was computed for the tool as a whole and for each of the six AWSP (Kipp et al., 2014) criteria. The resulting data file was then merged with the school level data downloaded from the OSPI School Report Card website.

Data on each school was provided by OSPI. Variables for which information is publically available include student demographics, total enrollment, percentage of minority students, and percentage of students participating in free and reduced price meals. Teacher data reported by OSPI includes students per teacher ratio, average years of experience, and percentage of teachers with at least a master's degree. Measures of student academic performance were also downloaded and included grade 4 and 5 reading and math performance as well as grade 5 science.

Descriptive Analysis

The descriptive analysis included calculating measures of central tendency and variability for the biographic information for the respondents as well as their schools data. The analysis looked at the statistics of respondents and non-respondents as well as the state averages for elementary schools. Specifically, school variables included total enrollment, percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced priced meals, and percentage of minority students. Principal variables included gender, ethnic identity, years in principalship, and years in current position. Part of the reason for examining these data was to ascertain potential response bias.

Descriptive analysis continued with computing the mean, median, and standard deviation for all the PRESS items. The results were sorted by criterion and will be reported using the framework to explain the first purpose of the study, how elementary principals self-reported their beliefs and practices related to instructional leadership. Each factor score's mean and standard deviation were also examined, as well as the normality of their distributions. The MIL score for principals will be analyzed and presented using descriptive procedures to address the second purpose of the study.

Inferential Analysis

An independent samples t test was then performed using MIL as the dependent variable and years in principalship as the independent variables. The number of years in principalship was examined and two groups were created. The first group consisted of one to 7 years while the second was eight or more years. The assumptions of sample size, number of attributes, linearity, and normality of distribution was explored before proceeding. Cohen's d was computed on the results to determine the observed effect if the results were found statistically significant.

Ethics

Prior to conducting this study, an Exemption Determination of Application for the official title of the study, "Mindful Instructional Leadership Practice: A Survey of Teachers and Administrators in Washington State," was submitted to the Washington State University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The study was qualified as exempt from the need for IRB review by the WSU Office of Research Assurances. In addressing the ethics of this study, Roberts (2010) suggests paying close attention to human rights (including informed consent and confidentiality), collection of data, analysis/interpretation, and sharing research results. Reflecting the importance of human rights, informed consent is an important factor in a research study. Through the use of email invitations, this study addressed informed consent, voluntary participation, and assurance of confidentiality. All data, including subject names and contact information, were collected and analyzed by the researchers so that no other persons had access. Participants were notified via email communications that although the results of the study would be made available, identities would remain confidential.

Delimitations and Limitations

Delimitations of the study were addressed. First, the study only examined school principals currently serving in public elementary schools. As such, the results of the study should only be viewed as a description of public school elementary principals, which may not represent other types of principals who serve other levels or categories of schools. Thus, the study cannot be generalized to private, charter, alternative, juvenile detention, or other schools. Secondly, the survey for the study was only administered to elementary principals in the State of Washington. Therefore, the results of the study can only be generalized to the population of elementary school principals within the State. The results of the survey should not be generalized to instructional leadership in other states. A third delimitation was the timeline of the survey. This survey took place in the fall of 2014 thus it was a cross-sectional survey of one point in time. Possibilities exist for responses to be different based on the time of school year in which the survey took place.

Limitations can negatively impact a study and cause problems with generalizing the findings (Roberts, 2010). There were three limitations affecting this study. First, the descriptive study was limited by the self-reported perceptions of principals of their experience in instructional leadership and mindfulness. While it was hoped that the self-reported results reflect an accurate measure of beliefs and behaviors, other factors may have impacted the results. Some factors considered were honesty, response bias, and lack of self-reflection. One factor considered was that principals may have responded in a way that was not an honest depiction of their actual work resulting in an over-inflation or under-inflation of their responses. Another factor was in regards to response bias that may have caused respondents to simply mark answers on the outer edges of the responses in order to quickly fill out the survey. Response bias was addressed in the

design of the survey tool by reversing the language on nine of the twenty questions in hopes that responses would be accurate.

Second, while careful attention was given to the number of principals selected, another limitation was that of non-respondents. The selection of principals was limited by the accuracy, or inaccuracy, of the contact information on OSPI and school district websites. While several email communications were sent to encourage participation, non-respondents can impact the overall results of a study if a large enough response rate was not attained to generalize the study to the population.

Finally, a limitation existed in examining the relationship of principal expertise and mindful instructional leadership. Defining expertise is difficult because "years of experience in administration" is a weak assessment of expertise. For example, there may be principals with many years of experience who may still demonstrate novice practices. Conversely, there may be principals with very limited years of experience who may be considered experts in the field.

Chapter Summary

Mindful instructional leadership practices of elementary school principals can lead to the improvement of instruction in the State of Washington. In this chapter, the methodology of the mindful instructional leadership practices of elementary principals was presented to address the following questions. What are the mindful instructional leadership beliefs and practices as self-reported by elementary principals in the State of Washington? How mindful are elementary principals as instructional leaders? Are there differences in mindful instructional leadership associated with the level of principal experience?

 The data used in this study was obtained from a statewide survey of elementary principals in the State of Washington. Participants were invited to share self-reported perceptions

of their beliefs and participant data was obtained from OSPI and school district websites. A

survey instrument was created, based on the conceptual frameworks of mindfulness and the

AWSP (Kipp et al., 2014) leadership framework, to collect the perceptions of mindful

instructional leadership of principals in the state. The medians and standard deviations of the

sample were calculated to provide the descriptive analysis. An independent t test was calculated

to provide the inferential analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Instructional leadership has been recognized as an essential component of the shared

responsibility of student achievement. The requirement to improve student learning has become

the main responsibility of principals. Within the context of improving outcomes for students in

this high stakes, high accountability environment, increased attention on improving school

operations is warranted. Principals can learn from the rising new interests in mindfulness to

provide reliable learning opportunities for students. The focus of this dissertation was to describe

and analyze the mindful instructional leadership of elementary school principals. A survey was

developed and distributed to obtain the self-reported perceptions of elementary school principals

in Washington State. There were three questions the study addressed:

> (a) What are the mindful instructional leadership beliefs and practices as self-reported by
> elementary principals in the State of Washington?
> (b) How mindful are elementary principals as instructional leaders?
> (c) Are there differences in mindful instructional leadership associated with the years of
> principal experience?

The following chapter will present the statistical analysis and discussion of the data

gathered from a representative sample of building level administrators. The analysis addressed

questions pertaining to the mindful instructional leadership practices and beliefs of Washington

State elementary principals. In reporting the findings of the study, this chapter is organized in the

following manner. First, the descriptive analysis of the data will be presented. Within this section

the schools administered by the principals selected for the study are described. These data were

provided by the Office of Superintendent for Public Instruction (OSPI) for educational

accountability purposes. Also included in this section will be the demographics of the responding

elementary school principals. In the second section, the means, medians, and standard deviations for each of the 20 questions offered on the *Principal Resilience for Educator and Student Success* (PRESS) as well as the factor scores generated from the PRESS using the six Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP) Leadership Framework (Kipp et al., 2014) criteria and overall MIL. The third section offers the findings from the independent samples *t* test, which was the inferential analysis to answer the third research question in this dissertation. Finally, a chapter summary will be provided as a conclusion in preparation for the last chapter.

Descriptive Analysis of Schools and Responding Principals

According to the OSPI database, there were 1,201 schools identified as regular elementary schools in Washington State in 2013. Following the random stratification process described in chapter three, 293 regular elementary schools were identified as the sample size needed for this study. The descriptive analysis provided in this section reports the measures of central tendency and variability for key variables on these randomly selected schools as well as a description of the kind of principal that administers these schools. The means, medians, and standard deviations from the randomly selected 293 cases were compared to the parameters provided from the data on the 1,201 regular elementary schools identified by OSPI for the purpose of checking the representativeness of the sample. Additionally, the means, medians, and standard deviations were also offered for the survey respondents. Seventy-eight elementary school principals responded to the request to answer PRESS questions. The variables examined for the 2013 academic year include total student enrollment, percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced price meals, percentage of white students, student per teacher ratio, average years of teaching experience, and percentage of teachers with a master's degree. Also examined

were the variables for the percentage of students meeting standard in fifth grade reading and math as well as fifth grade reading, math, and science. Table 2 and Table 3 below contain the descriptive analysis for the means, medians, and standard deviations for these variables.

The school demographic statistics and school personnel variables on Table 2 show that the sample and respondent data appears to be generalizable to the population. The student enrollment among the State, selected, and responded schools was relatively similar with the average student enrollment falling within twenty students while the median student enrollment was within ten students. The standard deviation for total enrollment was higher for the reported state schools thus the range of school size was larger in the state than in the sample. Selected schools had a 5% lower percentage of minority student population and a 5% higher number of students qualifying for free or reduced price meals than the state average while the remaining variables were closely aligned within a one to two percent range. The responded schools showed a 10% lower percentage for minority student population and a 6% higher number of students

Table 2

Demographics of Washington State Elementary Schools

| | State | | | Selected | | | Responded | | |
| | (*n* =1201) | | | (*n* = 293) | | | (*n* = 78) | | |
	M	*Mdn*	*SD*	*M*	*Mdn*	*SD*	*M*	*Mdn*	*SD*
Total Enrollment	401.8	432.0	201.5	429.7	439.0	147.4	427.1	429.5	145.1
% Low SES	47.2	47.8	27.8	51.9	53.3	25.3	52.5	55.3	23.2
Percent White	52.5	58.7	27.1	57.6	61.5	22.6	62.3	62.4	20.4
Students/Teacher	17.6	17.0	4.3	17.3	17.0	3.2	17.6	17.0	2.7
Teaching Exp.	10.3	11.6	4.6	11.8	12.2	3.1	12.3	12.2	3.1
% Master's	71.1	70.0	24.5	68.6	68.3	16.7	70.0	70.6	15.2

qualifying for free or reduced price meals than the state. The teachers in the responded schools

had an average of two more years of experience than the state average and were highly educated,

similar to the population, with an average of 70% holding a master's degree.

The student performance data shown on Table 3 contain the results of the 2014

Measurement of Student Progress (MSP). It is important to note that the *n* for these data was

lower than the demographics compared previously in table. In the spring of 2014, schools in the

State of Washington were offered the chance to pilot the Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA),

the new assessment for Common Core State Standards. Schools that chose to pilot the SBA were

given permission to bypass the administration of the MSP. In examining the assessment results

for the spring of 2014, there were similarities between the State scores and those of the sample

Table 3

Student Performance Data of Washington State Elementary Schools

Variable		*n*	*M*	*Mdn*	*SD*
4th Grade Reading	Met Standard - State	642	68.8	71.4	15.8
	Met Standard - Selected	141	69.2	70.1	14.6
	Met Standard – Responded	34	65.3	66.4	17.2
4th Grade Math	Met Standard - State	647	58.8	60.0	19.4
	Met Standard - Selected	143	59.0	61.5	19.2
	Met Standard - Responded	34	55.0	52.2	19.9
5th Grade Reading	Met Standard - State	617	70.2	72.3	15.8
	Met Standard - Selected	137	72.5	75.0	15.0
	Met Standard - Responded	32	73.0	77.6	15.1
5th Grade Math	Met Standard - State	631	61.2	62.3	19.1
	Met Standard - Selected	142	62.5	64.5	18.4
	Met Standard - Responded	33	62.6	66.0	19.2
5th Grade Science	Met Standard - State	1011	64.7	67.2	18.2
	Met Standard - Selected	258	65.2	68.1	18.5
	Met Standard - Responded	70	65.5	68.4	17.4

schools. The statistics for the responded schools showed fourth grade performance lower than that of the state and selected schools, in both reading and math. Conversely, the responded schools showed an overall higher performance of fifth grade students.

The number of responding principals to the statewide survey was 78. Three of the responding principals did not share demographic information on the survey resulting in an *n* of 75 for the demographic data. Table 4 below displays demographic information of the responding principals. The ethnic/racial identity of the principals showed that 95% of respondents were white, 3% were Hispanic, 1% were Asian Pacific Islander, and 1% were multiracial.

Table 4

Demographics of Responding Principals

Variable	Frequency	Percent
White	71	94.7
Hispanic Origin	2	2.7
Asian or Pacific Islander	1	1.3
Multiracial	1	1.3
Female	40	53.3
Male	35	46.7

Additionally, 53% were female and 47% were male. The average number of years of principal experience was 9.5 years with a median of 8 years and a standard deviation of 6.4. The educational background of the principals indicated 96% hold a master's degree while 4% hold a doctorate degree.

Descriptive Analysis of PRESS

The mindful beliefs and behaviors of elementary school principals were measured through the administration of the PRESS. As mentioned previously, the PRESS was developed with twenty questions relating to the mindful beliefs and behaviors of principals in instructional leadership. Scores that were missing for any items were replaced with the median score for that item so the data were complete. The survey results were separated into two tables reflecting the different Likert type scales. Table 5 below displays the first ten questions based on the self-reported behaviors of principals. The questions had a Likert type scale ranging from *rarely* (1) to *very often* (4). Respondents were asked to respond to the statement, "Please select the frequency of occurrence that best reflects your recent experience at your school." The questions are shown with the corresponding instructional leadership factor and are organized on the table from the strongest mindful behavior to the weakest. It is important to point out that item numbers 5, 6, and 8 were negatively worded questions so the low median scores displayed actually appear to represent mindful behaviors in those areas.

Further examination of the items provides details of the perceived behaviors of elementary principals. On item number four, "I look for little signals when talking with students about how they are feeling" the average principal scored "very often" which resulted in this item appearing as the strongest mindful behavior perceived by the responding principals on the survey. The frequency of scores on this item showed 95% of principals rating their behavior on this item as either "often" or "very often." While monitoring instruction and assessment practices of teachers, principals need to focus on the instructional core – the classroom. Principals who are focused on the instructional core mindfully engage their students in conversations about learning. In doing so, principals include students as an important member of the learning community and

69

Table 5

PRESS Questions Relating to Behaviors (n = 78)

PRESS Survey Items	Factor	*M*	*Mdn*	*SD*
4) Look for little signals when talking with students about how they are feeling (Resilience)	Improving Instruction	3.7	4	0.6
3) Express empathy for a teacher who is having a difficult day (Failure)	Aligning Curriculum	3.5	3	0.6
2) Raise concerns about student learning with staff (Failure)	Creating a Culture	3.3	3	0.7
1) Solicit from staff solutions to instructional problems (Expertise)	Improving Instruction	3.3	3	0.6
10) Help my teachers use their student data to improve their teaching (Operations)	Aligning Curriculum	3.2	3	0.7
7) Lead data driven dialogues with teachers to keep conversations on track (Operations)	Planning with Data	2.9	3	0.7
5) Give directives to teachers or students who have repeatedly messed up (Failure)	Closing the Gap	2.7	3	0.8
9) Wonder what needs to be done to improve student performance (Operations)	Closing the Gap	2.6	3	1.0
8) Feel tension before meeting that involves conflict with staff (Resilience)	Improving Instruction	2.2	2	0.9
6) Tire of dealing with the same problem (Resilience)	Creating a Culture	2.0	2	0.7

pay careful attention to the signals from students to monitor instructional practices. Paying close attention to student learning is an important component in this work requiring conversations and actions centered on an unremitting attention to student learning (Grissom et al., 2013; Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011).

Principals reported they "Express empathy for a teacher who is having a difficult day" "very often" suggesting that principals support high levels of teaching and learning. Paying attention to teacher mistakes may serve as a way of measuring teacher success and the development of high-quality teaching for all students. When teachers have trust and know their principals support them, they are found to be willing to take risks and be open to serious reviews of their instructional practices (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990; Hoy et al., 2006; Kruse & Louis, 1997; Price, 2012; Strahan, 2003; Youngs & Kings, 2002).

In keeping with the focus on teacher trust, principals reported they "sometimes" "Feel heightened tension before going into a meeting that involves a conflict with staff." However, the frequencies of scores on this item showed a wide range that indicated a variance in principal mindful behaviors regarding conflict. Specifically, 36% of the responding principals reported feeling heightened tension "often" or "very often" when meeting with teachers. In contrast, 23% "rarely" feel heightened tension before entering a meeting involving conflict. Mindful principals must manage conflict effectively and proactively in order to foster high levels of trust among colleagues (Tschannen-Moran, 2009; Youngs & Kings, 2002). Developing high levels of trust can enable open dialogue and conversations, providing a culture where teachers feel safe to take risks and engage in discussions about their instructional practices.

The weakest mindful behavior perceived by principals was that of "I wonder what needs to be done to improve student performance". Principals reported their frequency of behavior as "often" on this item. Although this score was not necessarily "weak" (median score of 3 out of 4 on the Likert scale), principals perceived their behavior on this particular item of closing the achievement gap to be lower than other items. Furthermore, the frequency of scores showed that principals had a wide range of responses on this item. While 65% of responding principals rated

themselves as engaging in this behavior "sometimes" or "often," there were 18% of principals who stated they wonder what needs to be done "very often." Principals who ask questions of their faculty, students, and parents about what needs to be done can be seen as both paying closer attention to problems of practice that are the source of concern and encouraging others to clarify their understandings of operational procedures, key contextual factors, etc., that influence teaching and learning. It is in this way that wonder is seen as supporting mindful practices needed to increase learning opportunities for all students. Increasing awareness and attention to the complexities of the instructional core provides opportunities for principals and teachers to analyze instruction and assessment practices to make improvements and close the achievement gap.

Table 6 below presents the second set of ten questions and factor scores based on the self-reported beliefs of principals. Questions 11-20 on the survey correspond to the beliefs of elementary principals. The questions had a Likert type scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). Respondents were asked to respond to the statements, "Please indicate the degree to which you agree with each statement. Select the response that reflects your recent experience." The questions are shown with the corresponding instructional leadership factor and are organized on the table from the strongest mindful beliefs to the weakest.

Principals "agree" they "Treat similar student infractions in a consistent way" but the frequency of responses again showed a variance in their perceptions of mindful beliefs. Ninety-five percent of the principals scored "agree" or "strongly agree." Principal responses to this item indicated that there appears to be a belief that student infractions should be handled with a prescribed set of outcomes in every situation. However, mindful practice in this area would

Table 6

PRESS Questions Relating to Beliefs (n = 78)

PRESS Survey Items	Factor	*M*	*Mdn*	*SD*
11) Treat similar student infractions in a consistent way (Simplify)	Creating a Culture	4.2	4	0.6
19) Know what needs to be done to improve the performance of students (Expertise)	Improving Instruction	4.0	4	0.6
18) When a student insults me, I stop so he or she can calm down (Resilience)	Engaging Communities	3.9	4	0.8
16) Ask a lot of questions when I meet with parents of students (Expertise)	Engaging Communities	3.8	4	0.6
13) Compliance is a big part of my job (Simplify)	Aligning Curriculum	3.7	4	1.0
12) School's achievement data reflects what students have learned (Simplify)	Closing the Gap	3.6	4	0.9
15) I dwell on what I could have done better when teachers don't improve (Failure)	Improving Instruction	3.4	4	0.9
14) Parents are dismissive of school's responsibilities for all students (Simplify)	Engaging Communities	2.5	2	0.9
20) When teachers react defensively to criticism, I ignore their reactions (Expertise)	Creating a Culture	2.3	2	0.8
17) My first impressions in classroom are frequently wrong (Operations)	Planning with Data	2.0	2	0.7

support understanding all of the nuances involved in each individual student's specific case and then dealing with infractions in a manner that is best for that particular student. In the literature on HRO mindfulness, reluctance to simplify refers to the hesitancy to accept simplification due to the need to understand the subtleties in a situation (Hoy, 2002).

Engaging in conversations is important for principals and teachers in developing a culture of trust. Item number 20, "When teachers react defensively to criticism, I ignore their reactions" represented this importance. Principal responses to this reverse coded question resulted in the

average principal selecting "disagree" while the frequency of scores showed 69% of principals either "strongly disagree" or "disagree" with this statement. Additionally, 23% of principals perceived themselves as neutral, neither disagreeing nor agreeing. Furthermore, it was interesting to find that there were 8% of the respondents who say they "agree" that they ignore reactions of teachers when reacting defensively. Louis and Wahlstrom (2011) state that principals who are effective in creating culture for improved student learning stimulate conversations and have a shared expectation to attend to instruction and learning. Effective principals develop a practice of shared norms and values and build a culture of trust where instructional quality is a visible priority. If principals ignore the reactions of teachers who get defensive to criticism, they are not establishing a trusting environment where conversations can occur to improve student outcomes.

Item number 19, "I know what needs to be done to improve the performance of students" was also a reverse coded statement and resulted in a high average score. The frequency of responses on this item sheds light on another area in which principals vary in their beliefs. Eighty-seven percent of principals "agree" or "strongly agree" with the belief that they know what to do to improve student performance. When principals self-reported that they know what needs to be done to improve student learning, this suggests an approach to leadership that is less dependent on deferring to the expertise of others for improving instruction. Weick et al. (1999) posit, "What is distinctive about effective HROs is that they loosen the designation of who is the 'important' decision maker in order to allow decision making to migrate along with problems" (p. 99). Principals can learn from this approach to allow a more loosely coupled organization in which more mindful problem solving can take place from those who are on the front line. The findings of this item relate to the responses to the item "I wonder what needs to be done to improve student performance." Both of these items had similar responses in that principals who

74

don't do a lot of wondering, or are not sensitive to operations, may also believe that they know what needs to be done to improve student learning. In addition, principals may not be mindful of the importance of engaging their teachers in essential learning conversations (Hoy et al., 2006; Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011; Price, 2012; Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008) or utilizing practices around collaboration with others where the mutual commitment is on student learning (Bryk et al., 1999).

Factor scores were created for each of the six AWSP (Kipp et al., 2014) criteria of creating a culture, planning with data, aligning curriculum, improving instruction, engaging communities, and closing the gap. Each factor was comprised of at least two questions on the survey to represent mindfulness (Hoy et al., 2006) and the instructional leadership criteria presented in the AWSP Leadership Framework (Kipp et al., 2014). Because each criterion possessed a slightly different number of items and two different ranges on the survey instrument, a standard score was needed for comparison purposes. The scores for each item were summed and divided by the total possible score and then multiplied by 100 to create the standard scores. The factor scores could then be compared for each of the six AWSP criteria. Likewise, an overall MIL score was computed using a similar formula. The reliability coefficients for these factors are also provided on the table, as the scores on the factors were not as consistent as expected from the AWSP (Kipp et al., 2014) framework. Reliability limitations may have occurred due to items covering multiple concepts or wording of questions that did not fully match the criteria of the instructional leadership framework or the constructs of mindfulness. Continued development of the survey instrument is warranted to increase reliability.

Table 7 below presents the factor scores for each of the six AWSP (Kipp et al., 2014) criteria as well as the MIL score for overall mindful instructional leadership. The factors are

displayed in order from highest to lowest based on the factor score for the criterion. The highest

rated criterion was Engaging Communities on which the average principal scored 74.8%. The

AWSP Leadership Framework (Kipp et al., 2014) contains two critical elements: communicating

with the community and partnering with families and the school community. Interactions and

collaborations with families and surrounding community can have an overall impact on school

climate (Sweetland & Hoy, 2000). A deeper analysis of the PRESS items will help explain the

overall factor score. Item 16 "I ask a lot of questions when I meet with parents of students"

resulted in 72% of principals marking "agree." Bryk et al. (2010) identified a framework of

essential supports for schools and posit that community involvement in schools is one of four

key elements to support student learning. Principals are encouraged to engage parents in

important conversations about student learning in order to improve achievement. Item number 18

stated, "When a student insults me, I stop so he or she can calm down." The frequency of scores

on this item show 76% of principals "agree" or "strongly agree" with this belief. However, it is

interesting to point out that there were 19% of principals who responded, "neither disagree nor

agree" representing a neutral response to this belief. Furthermore, 5% stated that they "strongly

Table 7

Mindful Instructional Leadership Factor Scores (n = 78)

	α	M	Mdn	SD	Min.	Max.
Engaging Communities	0.2	74.8	73.3	9.0	53	93
Aligning Curriculum	0.2	68.9	69.2	10.6	46	100
Creating a Culture	0.1	65.4	66.7	7.7	39	83
Improving Instruction	0.3	62.7	63.6	7.1	41	77
Closing the Gap	0.1	58.8	53.9	10.7	38	85
Planning With Data	0.1	45.7	44.4	10.7	22	78
MIL	0.3	63.9	63.3	4.2	53	73

disagree" or "disagree" which could lead to an assumption that these principals believe the conversation should not stop for a cool down period but rather continue in a heated exchange with the student. The third PRESS item tied to engaging communities was item number 14, "Parents are dismissive of school's responsibilities for all students." On this reverse coded statement, 61% of the principals said they "strongly disagree" or "disagree." Twenty-four percent of the principals responded that they "neither disagree nor agree" showing some feelings of neutrality on this item. In contrast, 15% of responding principals either "agree" or "strongly agree" that parents are dismissive showing a possible disconnect between the relationship of these principals and their families.

Following Engaging Communities, the second highest factor score was Aligning Curriculum. While this factor showed an average of 69%, the scores were spread over a wide range from 46% to 100%. Reflecting this wide range of factor scores is the variance of responses to two of the corresponding PRESS items, specifically item number 10, "I help my teachers use their student data to improve their teaching" and item number 13, "Compliance is a big part of my job." Eighty-six percent of principals said they help their teachers use their student data either "often" or "very often" to improve teaching. Principals who are regularly practicing this behavior are assuming responsibility for effective strategies in curriculum alignment. Monitoring student progress is an important step of aligning curriculum with instructional practices (Hallinger, 2007). The frequencies of scores on item number 10 were widely varied. Principals who responded, "strongly disagree" or "agree" made up only 13%. Additionally, 18% of the principals were neutral on this item. Stating that they either "agree" or "strongly agree" with this belief were 69% of the principals indicating that principal beliefs in aligning curriculum may appear to be viewed as more of a checklist of things required than tasks that are important for the

improvement of student learning. The item was tied to the mindfulness construct of reluctance to simplify. In the literature on HRO mindfulness, reluctance to simplify refers to the hesitancy to accept simplification due to the need to understand the subtleties in a situation (Hoy, 2002). Principals engaging in mindful beliefs and practices would not view their job as simply being compliant but seek to understand all of the subtleties and nuances involved in aligning curriculum to improve student learning.

Creating a Culture had a factor score of 65%. The AWSP Leadership Framework (Kipp et al., 2014) provides elements of focus for principals on developing a culture. First, principals develop a shared mission and clear vision for improving leaning and teaching. Second, principals engage in essential conversations for ongoing improvement. Third, principals facilitate collaborative processes that lead toward continued improvement. Finally, principals create opportunities for shared leadership. One of the common threads in each of these elements is the component of trust. Principals who are effective build a culture of trust within their schools where instructional quality is a visible priority (Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011) to students, staff, and parents.

Closing the Gap had a factor score of 59%. In addition to item 9 mentioned above, item 5 was tied to closing the gap. The item asked principals to score their behavior in regards to "Giving directives to teachers or students who have repeatedly messed up." On the item, the average principal scored 2.7, between "sometimes" and "often." However, the frequency of scores revealed that 54% of the principals responded by saying they engage in this behavior "often" or "very often." Giving directives to teachers or students who have messed up may indicate that principals may not be attuned to the complex issues faced by students and teachers. Giving directives shows an absence of problem solving and reflection to come up with

alternative solutions. In 2003, Strahan's study of elementary schools indicated that there has been a significant rush to improve quickly resulting in the frantic implementation of practices that have not been successful. Engaging in short-term, hurried work may often hamper the efforts of principals and teachers to engage in reflective practice, resulting in attitudes toward learning and students that are negative (Bryk, Camburn, & Louis, 1999). Efforts to increase mindful behaviors related to these items may have an impact on the practice of principals in improving their efforts of closing the achievement gap, which has been a challenge for principals for many years. As schools are increasingly faced with new demands of reliability for student achievement, principals must engage in instructional leadership in a clear and focused manner and close the gap.

Planning With Data was the lowest scoring factor with principals reporting an average score of 46%. Comprising this factor were two PRESS items, numbers 7 and 17. First, "I lead data driven dialogues with teachers to keep conversations on track" resulted in a wide range of frequency scores. While 77% of principals engage in this behavior "very often" or "often," 23% lead data driven dialogues "rarely" or "sometimes." Literature supports the practice of principals using data in a systemic way to provide insight into the thinking of students thus informing classroom instruction (Wahlstom et al., 2010). With effectiveness of schools being measured on student performance measures, using data for improvement decisions is important (Datnow et al., 2007). Second, "My first impressions of what's happening in a classroom are frequently wrong" resulted in 77% of principals reporting they "strongly disagree" or "disagree" with this belief. It is important for principals to monitor and assess teaching by frequent visits to classrooms, yet first impressions should not be relied upon to make judgments of the complexities of teaching and learning. Youngs and King (2002) speak of the importance of cycles of feedback and

reflection for improvements in teaching. Reflecting on this importance, principals need to spend time monitoring classrooms rather than falling into a pattern of mindlessness by relying on first impressions. Planning with data is an area for improvement and professional development can assist principals in utilizing mindful practices, which could lead to more effective practices of improving instruction and increasing student achievement.

The overall mindful instructional leadership (MIL) score showed an average score of 64%. The factor of overall MIL showed a range of 20 points between the minimum score of 53% and the maximum score of 73%. While mindfulness is still a fairly new concept in the application to education, the findings of this study help to describe how mindfulness can be applied to instructional leadership to help principals create more highly reliable learning outcomes for students. Eck (2011) suggests that, "If we know what works from decades of effective teaching and effective schools research, in terms of research-based best instruction, we must ask ourselves, 'Then why aren't we doing those things consistently?'" (p. 40). However, keep in mind that the continued reliance on the routine ways of doing things that worked at one time can cause educators to fall into the trap of using standard categories and automatic responses to events (Hoy, 2002). Thus principals are advised to work to develop mindful practices in order to effectively make changes to the school structure that currently exists. Mindfulness includes being open to new perspectives, being aware of the present moment and situation, emphasizing a heightened state of involvement and wakefulness, drawing novel distinctions, and being aware and sensitive to the present perspective of others (Hoy, 2002; Hoys et al., 2006; Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007). Applying mindfulness to instructional leadership can allow for improved awareness, attention, and focus and help principals understand how to improve student achievement. Mindfulness shows promise for

principals to increase effectiveness of their instructional leadership in creating culture, aligning curriculum, improving instruction, planning with data, engaging communities, and closing the gap.

Inferential Analysis

The third question of the study was, "Are there differences in mindful instructional leadership associated with the years of principal experience?" The variable of principal experience was examined based on research that has shown principals with more years of experience often have the capacity to attend to and make sense of things in their field of work (Johnson et al., 2011). Additionally, Hargreaves et al. (2003) posit principals need to be in principalships for five to seven years to build relationships and trust. Thus a study of principal experience and the relationship on mindful instructional leadership was of interest. In order to address this research question, inferential analysis was completed. For this analysis, an independent samples *t* test was conducted. Researchers use independent samples *t* tests to compare two independent or non-related variables on an approximately normal dependent variable. In this case, the two unrelated variables (independent) were 0-7 years of experience and 8 and above years of experience while the dependent variable was MIL. Table 8 below displays the group statistics for MIL and years of experience. There were 34 respondents in Group 1 (0-7 years experience) and 41 in Group 2 (8 plus years experience). The respondent principals in Group 1 self-reported an average MIL score of 64.6% with a standard deviation of 4.4 and Group 2 reported an average MIL score of 63.2% with a standard deviation of 4.0.

Table 8

Group Statistics for MIL and Years of Experience

Years of experience	*n*	*M*	*SD*
Group 1 (0-7 years)	34	64.6	4.4
Group 2 (8 plus years)	41	63.2	4.0

When performing an independent samples *t* test, there are assumptions that must be considered. First, a critical assumption is that the variances of the two groups are approximately equal. The results of the independent samples *t* test are shown in Table 9 below. Levene's Test for equality of variances provided scores that are not statistically significant (F = 1.382, *p* = 0.244) therefore the assumption was not violated so the Equal Variances Assumed data was used to interpret the *t* test. The results of the *t* test were *t*(73) = 1.504, *p* = 0.137 indicating that there was not a significant difference between Group 1 MIL (*M* = 64.6) and Group 2 MIL (*M* = 63.2). Therefore, the difference is not statistically significant. The difference between the mindful

Table 9

MIL and Years of Experience t Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		*t* test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Diff.	Lower	Upper
MIL	Equal var. assumed	1.382	0.244	1.504	73	0.137	1.47	0.977	-0.478	3.418
	Equal var. not assumed			1.489	67.266	0.141	1.47	0.987	-0.5	3.44

instructional leadership of principals with fewer years of experience (0-7) is not significantly different than that of principals with more years of experience (8 or more).

Day and Bakioglu (1996) studied career stages in which they posit principals go through an "Initiation" and "Development" phase between one and eight years of experience. Day and Bakioglu suggest that principals who are in these two phases of their career may be developing the skills to be more effective. Additionally, Johnson et al. (2011) and Marczynski and Gates (2013) add to the literature that experience addresses areas in which principals notice more or are more aware when they have more years of experience. The quality of mindfulness would attend the intentional effort by respondents at this point in their career as they grapple with sense making to build or strengthen their skills. Spillane and Lee (2013) explained principals who are novices are often overwhelmed with all of the responsibilities that they are ineffective in performing. The heightened attention of respondents who were in the initial phases of their career can be appreciated in this manner. Additionally, principal preparation programs over the past decade have been more refined and focused on instructional leadership, leading to the possibility that principals who are newer to the profession have the awareness of the importance of these skills and knowledge for becoming effective in the position. Therefore, the results of the *t* test suggesting there is no significant difference on MIL scores between those principals with 0-7 years of experience and those with 8 or more years may be understood. Principals who are in the first years – the initiation or development phases – would show comparable mindful behaviors in their instructional leadership as colleagues who have been in the field for eight or more years.

Chapter Summary

Chapter four provided the statistical analysis and discussion of the study results. The purposes of the study were addressed by providing a descriptive analysis of the self-perceived beliefs and practices of elementary principals of their mindful instructional leadership. The chapter also assessed the relationship between years of experience of principals and mindful instructional leadership.

Statistics obtained from the OSPI report card included school, student, and teacher demographics. Student achievement data were also analyzed. All of these statistics were analyzed to compare the sample of elementary schools and the regular public elementary schools in the State. The analysis showed insignificant differences between the two, thus the findings from this study could be generalized to the population of regular public elementary schools in the State of Washington meaning that the results of the statewide survey represent the beliefs and practices of elementary principals throughout the State.

The dissertation focused on two conceptual frameworks: instructional leadership and mindfulness. The initial tasks were to examine the theoretical and empirical components of each concept. First, instructional leadership was defined by using the AWSP Leadership Framework (Kipp et al., 2014). The framework was developed in the State in order to create a new set of principal responsibilities to assist principals in addressing the new requirements of student achievement outcomes. The study specifically addressed the six criterion of the AWSP Leadership Framework directly related to principals as instructional leaders rather than managers. Again, the six criteria are creating a culture, planning with data, aligning curriculum, improving instruction, engaging communities, and closing the gap. Second, HRO mindfulness (Hoy et al., 2006) was intersected with the criterion of instructional leadership. Mindfulness constructs

included preoccupation with failure, reluctance to simplify, sensitivity to operations, commitment to resilience, and deference to expertise. A factor analysis on these measures resulted in the instructional framework showing 70% of the variance. The results showed stable and consistent structures and supported the validity of combining these factors for the measurement instrument.

The PRESS items were analyzed to provide descriptions of principal mindful instructional behaviors and beliefs. There were two key points that emerged from the behaviors of principals. First, principals responded that their most frequent behavior was "Looking for signals when talking with students about how they are feeling." This finding indicates that principals may demonstrate a commitment to resilience while engaging in important conversations with students around their learning. Second, principals indicated they "Wonder what needs to be done to improve student performance." This finding suggests that principals are not being sensitive to operations to see and be attentive to the all of the complexities of teaching and learning that are taking place.

Emerging from the data on the beliefs of principals were two more key findings. First, principals agreed the most that they "Treat similar student infractions in a consistent way." This finding suggests that principals are not engaging in the reluctance to simplify and therefore they may rely on a one-size-fits-all approach rather than being open minded to alternative solutions. Second, principals "Know what needs to be done to improve the performance of students." When principals rely on their own expertise, they miss the opportunity to listen to and include the expertise of others who may be closer to front lines of the operation.

In relation to the mindful instructional leadership factors, the scores were the highest on engaging communities. Principals viewed themselves to have the highest mindful instructional

leadership behaviors and beliefs when they engage the community. This finding may indicate that further professional development and support is needed to continue to build upon principal strengths to engage their parents, students, and community to improve teaching and learning for students. The lowest factor score was on planning with data. Principals viewed themselves as less mindful in instructional leadership behaviors and beliefs when planning with data. This indicated that principals may not be paying close attention to the operations of teaching and learning and therefore do not engage in mindful practices of utilizing data with their teachers to improve instruction.

The inferential analysis on the relationship between mindful instructional leadership and the years of experience of principals did not result in a statistically significant relationship. While the literature supports the notion that principal experience could be a factor in increased mindful instructional leadership, the inferential analysis showed there was no statistical significance between those principals with zero to seven years of experience and those with eight or more years of experience.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS

Principals in Washington State, like their peers throughout the country, continue to address the challenges associated with improving teaching and learning in order to increase student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2004; Louis et al., 2010). No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was enacted in 2001 to focus attention on increasing student academic performance. The expectations attached to this and subsequent reforms have created changes for educator standards with student failure becoming increasingly considered an unacceptable outcome. While public education fell far short of the goal of 100% of students across the nation to score proficient on state assessments by 2014 imposed within the law (Bellamy et al., 2005), perhaps the more profound and meaningful result of this legislation has been its assault on the professionalism and lack thereof of teachers and administrators. Educators in the past have let students fail and as public outcry for high reliability in schools increases, many educators continue to let students fail abdicating their responsibilities and violating public trust.

Principals continue to be faced with the increased pressures of state and federal mandates while the responsibilities to provide instructional leadership have risen to be key aspects of the position (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2010; Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011). While scholars have tried to provide interpretations of instructional leadership that are effective, principals are still faced with the challenge of developing a clear model from which to lead. Within the context of making schools better for students, literature has been presented to provide principals with areas of focus, saying that successful schools have similar characteristics such as a strong focus on instruction, a climate that is conducive to learning, a clear and focused mission, high expectations for all students, consistent monitoring of classrooms, and positive relationships

with parents (Levine & Lezotte, 1990). Utilizing the instructional leadership framework

developed by AWSP (Kipp et al., 2014) provides principals with a framework for implementing

practices that support effective instructional leadership practices in these areas. The framework

provides focus on the areas of creating a culture, aligning curriculum, planning with data,

improving instruction, engaging communities, and closing the gap. Additionally, principals can

utilize the cognitive processes of mindfulness in order to increase their effectiveness in

instructional leadership. Principals who develop processes and structures for their staff to be

preoccupied with failure allow for staff to admit to mistakes and work together to eliminate

future errors. A culture of trust is essential in this process along with the development of the

skills for staff to be able to bounce back from mistakes and strengthen their capacity for

resilience. Additionally, when making decisions, it is important that principals consider the

knowledge of teachers and parents. Deference to expertise allows for those with the knowledge

to be a part of the important decisions that need to take place to support teaching and learning.

Deferring to the experts can also provide principals with the skills to keep a close eye on the

front line – teaching and learning. Being sensitive to the daily operations in the school is a

process in which all constituents should have focus.

Principals as instructional leaders face challenges of accountability and they must operate

schools in a way that ensures high success rates and avoids failure of students. Hoy (2002) posits

that educators tend to fall into the trap of using standard categories and automatic responses to

events. Wasserman (1999) believes that education is a profession where clear-cut answers are

few and ambiguity and moral dilemmas are prevalent causing uncertainty. As a means of

bridging this uncertainty and mindless behavior while increasing student success, mindfulness is

an effective strategy for school administrators to incorporate into their work. Applied in a school

setting, mindfulness can increase teacher and administrator effectiveness in addressing and correcting errors in order to eliminate student failure. Mindful practice allows principals to work collaboratively with staff to identify and correct errors, learn lessons from mistakes, and employ reflective practices that result in change. Mindful principals focus on a current problem and seek new solutions rather than relying on past practices that may continue to be ineffective. Hoy et al. (2006) state, "Mindfulness in schools warrants more attention and has strong potential to increase our understanding of effective school organizations. We suspect that positive school leadership is pivotal in promoting mindful and productive school operations" (p. 253). The challenge of improving outcomes for students in this high stakes, high accountability environment warrants increased attention on improving school operations. More importantly, principals can learn from the theory of high reliability organization (HRO) and applying the concepts of mindfulness for instructional leadership may lead to improved student outcomes.

Thus the purpose of this study was to address the following three questions pertaining to mindful instructional leadership. What are the mindful instructional leadership beliefs and practices as self-reported by elementary principals in the State of Washington? How mindful are elementary principals as instructional leaders? Are there differences in mindful instructional leadership associated with the years of principal experience? The answers to these questions were examined by analyzing data collected through the collaborative development of a new instrument used to administer a statewide survey to elementary principals. The data were collected from a stratified random sample of 293 elementary schools from the State. Principals in 78 elementary schools responded to the survey.

The following chapter provides the conclusion for the dissertation. Specifically, the chapter is divided into four sections. Following the introduction, the second section provides an

overview of the study including a review of the literature and research methods. Section three presents a summary of the key findings in the study. The fourth section includes implications and significance. Finally, recommendations for further research which will conclude the dissertation.

A Study on Mindful Instructional Leadership

The literature reviewed for the study's background helped to frame and deepen understanding of instructional leadership, high reliability organizations, and mindfulness as it relates to the work of principals, particularly in Washington State. The Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP) Leadership Framework (Kipp et al., 2014) adopted by the State in 2010 provided a major portion of the conceptual underpinnings for the study. The six criteria of the framework used in the study were creating a culture, planning with data, aligning curriculum, improving instruction, engaging communities, and closing the gap. First, school culture is often referred to as the beliefs, perceptions, relationships, and rules that shape the functions of a school. Culture is the way the school functions and is comprised of a shared mission and clear vision; engagement in essential conversations, collaboration and trust; collaborative processes that lead toward ongoing improvement; and opportunities for shared leadership. Second, data is defined by AWSP as any type of information, both quantitative and qualitative, that can be used to develop and implement a data-driven plan for increasing student achievement. Research shows that principal leadership is crucial to the effective use of data to drive instruction within schools. It is important for principals to lead the efforts of analyzing and interpreting these multiple sources of data in order to inform the improvement efforts of the school. When principals use data in a systemic way, it can provide insight into the thinking of students thus informing classroom instruction. Third, AWSP defines aligning curriculum with a focus on three elements: aligning curriculum to state and local district learning goals, aligning

best practices to state and district learning goals, and aligning assessment practices to best instructional practices. Principals are charged with the important task of managing the instructional program, which includes supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating curriculum, and monitoring student progress. Fourth, addressing the efforts of improving instruction, principals monitor instruction and assessment practices by focusing on the instructional core – the classroom. They assist staff in developing student growth plans while identifying valid, reliable sources for evidence of effectiveness. Principals can also directly shape school conditions and teaching practices through their convictions and behaviors regarding the professional development of teachers. Fifth, engaging communities is an important factor in developing an understanding of the work of the school. The two critical elements of the AWSP framework are communicating with the community to promote learning and partnering with families and the school community. Principals and teachers are challenged to move beyond the typical communication efforts of newsletters, emails, and notes home to engaging parents and the community in deeper conversations about teaching and learning. Finally, closing the achievement gap has been a challenge for educators for decades. Principals who are committed to closing the achievement gap: identify barriers to achievement and know how to close resulting gaps, demonstrate a commitment to close the achievement gap, and provide evidence of growth in student learning. Successful leaders align school goals with student learning and teacher practice. These leaders are also effective in developing a school culture where multiple measures of evidence of student learning are collected throughout multiple times of the school year. Instructional leaders demonstrate a commitment to closing the achievement gap.

The AWSP Leadership Framework (Kipp et al., 2014) was developed by the state to help synthesize research on the role of principals specifically in improving instruction. The

framework includes four major components to support instructional leaders in their work: skills and knowledge characteristic of successful principals, evidence used for measures, support principals need to be successful, and the command that principals need to find success in each responsibility. Second, this framework is part of the practice of Washington State principals, which makes this study more relevant to potential readers – specifically principals and administrators from our State. Using this framework in the study provides common terminology and language for Washington State practitioners who are looking for practical and relevant ways to improve teaching and learning.

Literature on HRO and mindfulness (Hoy et al., 2006) names the other source from which constructs were borrowed for the study. There are five constructs of mindfulness addressed in the study. First, preoccupation with failure is a major characteristic of HROs as they view any error within a system to produce catastrophic consequences. Mindful organizations pay attention to mistakes that are small and look for ways to eradicate them. The second process of mindfulness is the reluctance to simplify interpretations. Mindful organizations and their leaders are reluctant to simplify, as they need to know and understand the subtle details of the situation at hand. This process is a valuable one to be applied in school settings. Student personalities and learning styles present themselves in such a diverse range that it is difficult to apply one solution that will fit every situation. Third, sensitivity to operations, or focus on teaching and learning, is a process of mindfulness that leads organizations to pay attention to information in real time. At any given moment, the members of the organization must pay attention to information and understand what to ignore and on what they need to focus their attention. There is an ongoing concern for that which is unexpected, or situational awareness. Fourth, commitment to resilience is the ability of an organization to bounce back and

recover from errors or mishaps. All organizations, including those that are highly reliable, experience failure. However, HROs build in multiple preventative measures in order to minimize the effects or impact of mishaps and "near misses". Whenever errors do take place, HROs are able to demonstrate resiliency by bouncing back quickly. The final process of mindfulness is deference to expertise. Organizations acting in a mindful manner avoid the mistake of adhering to rigid hierarchical structures. Instead, they seek out members of the organization who have the expertise to solve the problem. In a mindful organization, there is a fluid decision-making system that defers to expertise rather than to experience or status.

Three research questions were investigated through the study: (a) What are the mindful instructional leadership beliefs and practices as self-reported by elementary principals in the State of Washington?; (b) How mindful are elementary principals as instructional leaders?; and (c) Are there differences in mindful instructional leadership associated with the years of principals experience? Data were gathered by drawing a cross-sectional representative randomly selected sample to be able to gather the perceptions of principals in Washington State about their instructional leadership efforts. Researchers use surveys with the goal of making statistical inferences about the population being studied by investigating a sample. Surveys are often used to assess the occurrence of particular concepts, within a population of interest, through the sampling of a relatively small number of subjects (Kelley, Clark, Brown, & Sitzia, 2003). Creswell (2009) notes "A survey design provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population." (p. 145). The strength of the design is reflected in or attends to research purposes concerned with generalizable findings (Babbie, 1990). Further, one of the implied intents of this design is for laying the foundation for later studies that test the impact of a specific treatment, or intervention, on an

outcome. Survey research was chosen for this study as a feedback tool for educators providing crucial information that can be interpreted and applied to support improvements in teaching and learning.

Official school data were located and downloaded from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction's (OSPI) School Report Card website. The *Principal Resilience for Educator and Student Success* (PRESS), a web-based survey, was administered to elementary principals in the State. The instrument was collaboratively developed by a team of researchers in the Educational Leadership program in Washington State University's doctoral program. The group consisted of an elementary school principal, a high school principal, a STEM school principal, an assistant superintendent, a retired principal, and their university professor. Variables were defined and described and data was managed to provide an understanding of the independent and dependent variables used in the dissertation analysis.

The stratified random sample of elementary schools resulted in 293 regular elementary schools identified as the sample. The representativeness of the sample was analyzed by comparing the means, medians, and standard deviations of the state, selected, and responded schools. The descriptive analysis consisted of examining the means and standard deviations of the mindful beliefs and behaviors of principals in their work as instructional leaders. Principals who responded to the survey were described using the demographic information obtained from the survey. This information included ethnic identification, gender, years of experience as a principal, years of experience in the current assignment, and highest degree held. The inferential analysis of the study included conducting an independent samples t test to determine if a relationship existed between the mindful instructional leadership of principals and years of experience.

Key Research Findings

Statistical analysis of the data in this study confirmed the mean and standard deviations on the selected variables conform to the parameters of the elementary schools population in the State of Washington. Therefore, the research findings of the study can be generalized to Washington State regular public elementary schools given the representative random selection process of selecting study subjects. To check for the representativeness of the sample, measures of central tendency and variability from the 293 schools were compared with the parameters from OSPI data on the 1201 elementary schools in the State. The variables for this comparison were pulled from the 2013-2014 school year and included total enrollment, percentage of low SES, percentage of minority students, number of students per teacher, years of teaching experience, and percentage of teachers with a master's degree. The descriptive analysis of the data confirmed that the means and standard deviations of the sample met the parameters for the regular school population of the State.

To address the first purpose of the study, the descriptive analysis of the 293 elementary schools in the State of Washington examined the principals of said schools. Seventy-eight elementary principals responded to the statewide survey. The average size of an elementary school in the sample was 430 students, with 42% of the students being minority and 48% low SES. Of the 78 responding principals, 5% were minority, 53% were female, and 47% were male. The responding principals self-reported their perceptions of mindful beliefs and behaviors in their instructional leadership practice. The analysis of data provided insights into the work of principals across the State of Washington based on their responses to the PRESS, which measured the two theoretical frameworks of mindfulness (Hoy et al., 2006) and the AWSP Leadership Framework (Kipp et al., 2014).

Emerging from the principal responses on their behaviors and beliefs were several key findings. First, principals indicated that they most frequently look for little signals when talking with students about how they are feeling. This response suggests that principals are demonstrating a commitment to resilience by being attuned to the needs of their students and are engaging students as important members of the school community while assessing teaching and learning. Conversely, principals indicated the belief they are most in agreement with was treating similar student infractions in a consistent way. Principals who are considered mindful look at all of the subtleties of each situation rather than relying on the simple solution of doling out the "one-size-fits-all" consequence. Being mindful in these types of situations would call for a principal to look at each individual student's situation in isolation. A focus on reluctance to simplify would find the principal being aware of nuances such as student home life, prior discipline history, family support, and other important factors to better understand the situation, stay away from simple solutions, and open themselves to understanding subtleties that exist (Hoy et al., 2006).

Second, in keeping with the theme of student interactions, principals indicated they treat similar student infractions in a consistent way. This finding suggests principals have a belief that student infractions should be addressed the same for every student pointing to a lack of an open minded approach to look for creative solutions to problems. Mindful principals have a hesitancy to accept simplification because of the desire to comprehend the subtleties in each situation (Hoy, 2002). One-size-fits-all approaches to student discipline suggest that principals are not being mindful in their attempts to create school cultures that support improving instruction.

Third, principals indicated they know what needs to be done to improve the performance of students indicating that principals are not deferring to the experts in their buildings in making

important decisions about teaching and learning. Additionally, principals reported that they do not wonder what needs to be done to improve student performance suggesting an absence of being sensitive to operations to understand the complexities involved in teaching and learning. Increased mindfulness in engaging staff members in self-evaluation of practice, engaging teachers in essential learning conversations, and assigning low-performing students to high-performing teachers may help address the improvement of instruction and closing the gap in schools. Deferring to the experts in teaching will allow principals to shift to a decision making process that migrates with each problem that may arise as they work to improve the practice of teaching. As principals become more attentive to the operations of the school, they may become more aware of the complexities that exist and begin to wonder more about options for what needs to be done rather than relying on the repetition of the same practices that give the same results.

To address the second purpose of the study, factor scores were created. The factor scores for each of the six AWSP Leadership Framework (Kipp et al., 2014) criteria were compared and ranked. The descriptive analysis of the factor scores resulted in the following key findings. First, principals indicated Engaging Communities as the area in which they have the most mindful behaviors and beliefs. It is important for principals to communicate and partner with families and community to improve instruction and develop cultures of learning in their schools. The climate and culture of schools are impacted by interactions and collaborations with families and community (Sweetland & Hoy, 2000). While Engaging Communities was the most mindful factor, I wonder if principals have structures in place to fully engage their communities in ways that build common focus and collaboration to enhance student learning or if the communication is at the surface level such as through newsletters, PTO meetings, open house nights and the like.

Mindful principals break down barriers between school and community to engage families and community members in developing school improvement plans, have structures in place to collect feedback on student learning from parents, and use relevant data regarding community input on student learning to improve instruction.

Second, principals reported they have the least mindful behaviors and beliefs in the area of Planning with Data. The practice of using data to inform instruction is of importance for principals and teachers. Professional development support is needed to help principals increase their mindful practice in leading their teachers in planning with data. Areas on which to focus include the capacity to seek out multiple data sources, analyze and interpret those sources to inform school-level improvement efforts, implement data-driven plans for improving teaching and learning, and assist staff to use data to guide and modify their instruction. When principals use data in a systemic way with their staff, it can provide insight into the thinking of students thus informing classroom instruction (Wahlstrom et al., 2010).

To address the third question of the study, the inferential analysis included an independent samples *t* test to determine if there was a difference between years of principal experience and mindful instructional leadership. The results of the test showed that there was not a statistically significant difference between the mindful instructional leadership of principals with 7 or less years of experience and those with 8 or more years of experience. The key finding for this part of the study indicated that principal experience had little or no effect on overall mindful instructional leadership. However, further research is welcomed to further study the relationship of principal experience on individual factors of instructional leadership. For example, the difference in the mean scores of principals with zero to seven years experience and those with eight or more on Planning with Data showed that the principals with fewer years (0-7)

experience were more mindful than those with more years (8 or more). This indicates the possibility that principal preparation programs have become more focused on instructional leadership practices over the past decade thus new principals are more adept at utilizing data to improve practice. The literature on principal experience used in this dissertation supports the notion of principals within the first eight years of their career often become more aware, notice more, and attend to the complexities of instructional leadership while they grapple with sense making to build or strengthen their skills. As principals are developing through the initial stages of their career, the heightened attention and awareness to instructional leadership skills and knowledge can be improved through the professional development of mindfulness practices.

The dissertation has a potential impact on improving the processes and outcomes in schools as awareness of the constructs of mindfulness increases. When principals engage in instructional leadership practices that increase their preoccupation with failure, reluctance to simplify, sensitivity to operations, commitment to resilience, and deference to expertise, principal effectiveness can increase in addressing and correcting errors to eliminate student failure. The study found that principal perceptions around mindfulness are strong in engaging communities, aligning curriculum, and creating a culture. As principals also learn to become more mindful in their work with teachers in the areas of planning with data, improving instruction, and closing the gap, improvements may follow resulting in increased learning outcomes for students. Utilizing the findings of this study may help principals, school districts, and principal preparation programs align professional development opportunities to nurture and advance the concept of mindfulness as it applies to instructional leadership practice. State associations, such as AWSP, may also use the findings of the study to inform professional development opportunities and guidance for elementary principals. Additionally, the PRESS may

be used in the future as a tool to measure the effectiveness of principal training and professional development to determine if there have been any improvements in mindful instructional leadership.

Implications and Significance of the Study

The cross-sectional survey study faced delimitations that related to sampling. First, the study only examined school principals who are currently serving in public elementary schools. As such, the results of the study should only be viewed as a description of public school elementary principals, which may not represent any other types of principals who serve other levels or categories of schools. Second, the survey for this study was only administered to elementary principals in the State of Washington. Thus the results of the study can only be generalized to the population of regular public elementary school principals within the State.

Through attending to the mindfulness practices of elementary principals as instructional leaders the study addressed practical, theoretical, and substantive significance. The practical significance emanating from the study findings speak to how principals in the State go about their instructional leadership. There is a potential impact on improving the processes and outcomes in schools as awareness of the constructs of mindfulness increases. Increased preoccupation with failure, reluctance to simplify, sensitivity to operations, commitment to resilience, and deference to expertise can increase principal effectiveness in addressing and correcting errors in order to eliminate student failure. The study is timely for Washington State principals as the newly introduced Teacher and Principal Evaluation Project (TPEP) focuses on the accountability and professional growth for the improvement of instructional practices. Principals will find the study useful in guiding their work through self-reflection of their own practices as instructional leaders and applying these practices to the criterion of the AWSP

Leadership Framework (Kipp et al., 2014) to improve school-wide efforts of improving instruction by teachers in their buildings.

In terms of theoretical significance, the study cross-referenced instructional leadership (Kipp et al., 2014) and HRO research (Hoy et al., 2006) to further address the gap in the research of the application of mindfulness to instructional leadership. Research has shown that mindfulness can be applied to the educational setting to create fail-safe schools (Bellamy et al., 2005). The findings in this study will advance theory, relevance, and application of mindfulness to education given specific interest in the expression or presences of mindfulness to the instructional leadership of principals for improving instruction. While research in instructional leadership has tried to clarify and narrow focus areas for strengthening teaching and learning, it is hoped that the findings from this study can assist researchers in answering questions about how educators can better work to meet student needs.

There is substantive significance that emerged from this study. First, through attending to mindful instructional leadership practices, the culture of elementary schools may be improved through positive relationships, increased trust and overall satisfaction for teachers, students, and parents (Hoy et al., 2006). Reflective practices around mindfulness can provide administrators with a greater ability to cope with difficult situations, improved recognizing skills to notice when things go wrong, and increased attentiveness to know what to do when student performance is lagging. Furthermore, the findings of this study may lead to professional development offerings across the state that more closely meet the needs of principals as instructional leaders to become more mindful in their practice. State associations, such as AWSP, as well as principal preparation programs, may use the information from the study to inform professional

development opportunities and guidance for principals. In addition to guiding professional

development needs, this study may also inform those who make educational policy.

Implications for Further Research

The findings of this study include empirical research that may lead to further studies on

the improvement of instructional leadership practices through understanding the mindful beliefs

and practices of elementary principals. Because this specific study only examined elementary

principals in public schools from the State of Washington, data from other school levels and

types of schools is needed to broaden the understanding of mindful instructional leadership

practices. While careful attention was given to the number of principals selected, a limitation

existed from the number of non-respondents. The selection of principals was limited by the

accuracy of the contact information on OSPI and school district websites. Additional studies may

improve the response rate and provide a larger response rate to generalize to the population. The

benefits of further study could also lead to policy changes to guide school reform efforts. In fact,

it is important for the legislature, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI),

communities, and school districts to have an appropriate framework from which they can more

fully understand and evaluate the effectiveness of instructional leaders in the improvement

efforts of teaching and learning.

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Appendix A

Survey Invitation

Dear ${m://FirstName} ${m://LastName},

One of the top priorities for principals in K-12 education today is developing effective teachers who demonstrate high-quality instruction. We are serious about this priority – and we need your help to guide our efforts. We are inviting you to participate in a study on instructional leadership in Washington's schools. The *Principal Resilience for Educator and Student Success (PRESS)* survey will take less than 10 minutes of your time, which we know as school leaders ourselves, is valuable.

The survey asks for your opinions on a range of topics, such as student motivation and staff collaboration. We will use the results of the survey to help identify current instructional leadership practices in our schools, as well as opportunities for improvements that might make our schools even better at meeting the needs of our students.

PRESS is available now and can be accessed by following the link: ${l://SurveyLink?d=Take the PRESS}

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:
${l://SurveyURL}

We will share with you our summary of findings from principals across the state. The survey administration, data analysis, and report preparation will be overseen by Washington State University. WSU routinely works with confidential data and will respect and protect your identity. Results will only be reported in summary form – in no case will it be possible to determine an individual's identity or responses.

In addition, all respondents will be entered into a drawing for a $25 gift card. Further, we can provide those who respond with aggregated results from a companion teacher survey administered to some of your school's teachers. Your participation is completely voluntary, but we hope you take the time to share your opinions. For results to be meaningful and useful, everyone needs to participate and give their honest and thoughtful answers.

If you have any questions about the survey, please feel free to contact Gordon Gates, resilientschools@comcast.net. Thank you in advance for sharing your opinions with us. We look forward to analyzing and sharing the results on your continuous efforts to improve education within our state.

Sincerely,

Joshua Meek, Principal, Moses Lake School District
Kevin Peterson, Principal, Mead Public Schools

Jenny Rodriquez, Principal, Delta High School
Ken Russell, Assistant Superintendent, Mead Public Schools
Gary Spencer, Doctoral Student, Washington State University
Gordon Gates, Professor, Washington State University

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Appendix B

Second Survey Letter

Input on leading ${e://Field/School} requested

Dear ${m://FirstName},

Recently you received an invitation to participate in an important study on instructional leadership. As an elementary school principal, I often get bombarded with such requests. Just like you, I always have good intentions about sharing my opinion, but then get busy with the demands of the job. I am asking that you take a few minutes of your time to answer 20 brief questions. Of the principals who started to reply, 87% completed—but I need your input.

Share your opinion by following the link: ${l://SurveyLink?d=Take the PRESS}

I have worked as a teacher and school principal in both the Spokane and Mead school districts. As a practitioner, I know the important contribution that this study will make and am confident that with your participation the findings will provide insight and direction on strengthening school improvement practices. The power of this message, however, is contingent on your involvement.

As promised in previous emails, your identity and that of your school will remain confidential. You were purposefully selected to participate. Therefore, it is important that I gather your input. Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Respectfully,

Kevin Peterson
Principal
Midway Elementary School
Ed.D. Educational Leadership Candidate, Washington State University

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Appendix C

Third Survey Letter

Final Opportunity to Provide Input for Instructional Leadership Study

Dear ${m://FirstName},

The deadline for participating in the ***Principal Resilience for Educator and Student Success (PRESS)*** study is just a few days away! We have not yet received your responses. Your contribution is completely voluntary, but if you have been meaning to respond, time is running out! To date, over 50% of high school principals and 30% of elementary school principals invited have participated in the study. While that gives us a lot of information, we are missing your opinion, which we believe is important. It will take about 3 minutes of you time to answer our questions. We want to encourage you to make sure your input is included.

Share your opinion by following the link: ${l://SurveyLink?d=Take the PRESS}

Please be assured, your identity and that of your school will remain confidential. You were purposefully selected to participate. Therefore, it is important that we gather your input. Thank you in advance for your assistance and we look forward to sharing our analyzed findings with you.

Respectfully,

Gordon Gates, Professor, Washington State University
Kevin Peterson, Doctoral Student, Washington State University
Josh Meek, Doctoral Candidate, Washington State University

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Appendix D

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

Principal Resilience for Educator and Student Success

Instructions: Below is a brief collection of statements about principal instructional leadership practices and beliefs. Please select the frequency of occurrence that best reflects your recent experience at ${m://School}:

	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
I solicit from staff solutions to instructional problems.	○	○	○	○
I raise concerns about student learning with staff.	○	○	○	○
I express empathy for a teacher who is having a difficult day.	○	○	○	○
I look for little signals when talking with students about how they are feeling.	○	○	○	○
I give directives to teachers or students who have repeatedly messed up.	○	○	○	○
I tire of dealing with the same problem teachers or students.	○	○	○	○
I lead data driven dialogues with teachers to keep the conversation on track.	○	○	○	○
I feel heightened tension before going into a meeting that involves a conflict with staff.	○	○	○	○
I wonder what needs to be done to improve student performance.	○	○	○	○
I help my teachers use their student data to improve their teaching.	○	○	○	○

Using the Likert scale on the top row, please indicate the degree to which you agree with each statement. Select the response that reflects your recent experience.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I treat similar student infractions in a consistent way.	○	○	○	○	○
My school's student achievement data					
accurately represents what our students have learned.	○	○	○	○	○
Compliance is a big part of my job.	○	○	○	○	○
Parents of my students who have gotten into trouble are dismissive of the school's responsibility to look after the welfare of all students.	○	○	○	○	○
When things are not going well in improving a teacher's performance, I tend to dwell on what I could have done better.	○	○	○	○	○
I ask a lot of questions when I meet with parents of students.	○	○	○	○	○
My first impressions of what's happening in a classroom are frequently wrong.	○	○	○	○	○
When a student insults me, I stop the conversation so he or she can calm down.	○	○	○	○	○
I know what needs to be done to improve the performance of students in my school.	○	○	○	○	○
When teachers react defensively to criticism, I ignore their reactions.	○	○	○	○	○

Please provide the following demographic information:

Your gender:

○ Female

○ Male

Your ethnic/racial identity:

○ White

○ Black

○ Hispanic origin

○ Asian or Pacific Islander

○ American Indian or Alaskan Native

○ Multiracial

Number of years in principalship:

[▼]

Number of years at current school:

[▼]

Highest degree earned:

○ Masters

○ Doctorate

I would like to receive a summary of the study findings:

○ Yes

○ No

Thank you, ${m://FirstName} ${m://LastName} for taking these few minutes to answer our questions. Your participation is appreciated.