COLLECTIVE MINDFULNESS ON IMPROVING INSTRUCTION:

A SURVEY OF WASHINGTON STATE DISTRICT

LEADERS, PRINCIPALS, AND TEACHERS

By

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Abstract

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Mindfulness practices have shown to benefit the work of teachers, principals, and students, however less is known about mindfulness as it relates to district leaders working with teachers and principals to improve instruction. Current tools for assessing teacher improvement practices, instructional leadership of the principal, or mindfulness provide little specificity to describe mindful instructional improvement and leadership practices of teachers and principals. The study discusses development of two tools: the Teacher Improvement Practices and Sentiments (TIPS) and the Principal Resilience for Educator and Student Success (PRESS). The TIPS measures mindful teacher improvement practices, while the PRESS measures mindful instructional leadership practices of principals. Both surveys focus on preoccupation with failure, reluctance to simplify, sensitivity to operations, commitment to resilience, and deference to expertise as they relate to six elements of instructional leadership: creating a culture, planning with data, aligning curriculum, improving instruction, engaging the community, and closing the achievement gap. Data are analyzed from a representative statewide sample of district leaders, teachers, and principals in Washington State. The study found that district leaders and teachers

viewed collectively mindful teacher beliefs and practices for improving instruction to be most associated with closing the achievement gap and least associated with creating a culture for the continuous improvement of teaching and learning. Principals, on the other hand, viewed their own mindful instructional leadership to be most associated with engaging the community and least associated with planning with data. Nonparametric analysis also concluded that the alignment of district leader and faculty views on collectively mindful teacher beliefs and practices differed based on the years of experience for the central office administrator and did not differ based on the mindful instructional leadership of principals. Discussion and findings explore the use of the tools as part of district leader and principal professional growth as well as further research to examine the relationship between mindfulness and district-level instructional improvement efforts.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In today's school districts, central office administrators, teachers, and principals are challenged to prevent students from dropping out and to close the achievement gaps among student groups. Educators must seek high reliability in learning outcomes for all students. The theme *all students can* learn has characterized the American educational system for the past two decades. The responsibility and challenge of educating all students, including specific aims to decrease achievement and opportunity gaps, became most prevalent with No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation in 2001, which demanded accountability from districts and schools for the academic performance of students. Given the requirement that all students meet standard by 2014, NCLB focused on student achievement in reading and mathematics (Singh & Al-Fadhli, 2011).

Prior to No Child Left Behind (NCLB), schools were considered successful if most of the students did well. Now, district leaders, teachers, and principals are responsible to assure that each and every student performs on established standards, and to eliminate achievement and opportunity gaps (Skrla & Scheurich, 2001, p. 388). Students, parents, and the community to varying degrees, embrace the view that districts and schools help each and every student meet the academic demands measured by state and federal assessments. Accountability demands have pressured school districts to improve instruction system-wide (Gallucci, 2008), resulting in challenges for classroom teachers and for school and district leaders.

In response to continued accountability pressures, teachers, principals, and district leaders have undertaken numerous reform efforts to improve student achievement. Many of the efforts have centered on improving classroom instruction. For example, a number of studies have

examined teacher practices to improve student achievement, including teacher quality as measured by state licensing, content, and performance standards (Heck, 2007), induction and mentoring programs for new teachers (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011), teacher evaluation (Borman & Kimball, 2005), and teacher leadership (Neumerski, 2013). In addition, efforts by principals to lead instructional improvements have been evident in the literature. Some scholars have explored principals working with teachers on student learning goals (Youngs & King, 2002), creating opportunities for shared leadership (Copland, 2003), improving teacher-principal relations around the improvement of instruction (Wahlstrom & Seashore-Louis, 2008), implementing data-driven plans to improve instruction (Kerr et al., 2006), and assisting staff in implementing effective teaching and assessment practices (Huggins, Scheurich, & Morgan, 2011). In sum, for the past three decades, research and policy work have mainly emphasized the classroom and the school as key areas of study, placing tremendous focus on the classroom teacher to improve instruction and the principal in providing leadership to enhance teacher performance and student learning.

The pressure for teachers and principals to improve instruction has led to studies of district administration and calls to transform these roles to support and develop a district-wide teaching and learning focus (Honig, 2008). Numerous district-level initiatives concerned with cultivating the instructional repertoire of educators are present in the literature, including nurturing central office relationships with school staff around evidence-based decision-making (Corcoran, Fuhrman, & Belcher, 2001; Honig, 2012), creating linkages between district offices and schools around reform efforts (Johnson & Chrispeels, 2010), establishing organizational support for professional learning (Gallucci, 2008), and providing coherent professional development (Firestone, Mangin, Martinez, & Polovsky, 2005). Research on the role of district

leaders for achieving reliable student outcomes is in its infancy.

Several other studies in education leadership have attempted to examine reliability as it relates to schools and student outcomes. Some scholars have explored the literature within organizational theory to find system features similar to those found in education. One particular organizational theory, High Reliability Organizations (HROs), has become moderately prevalent in the literature. HROs find their origins in other organizations aimed at outcomes that can result in both beneficial and harmful consequences, including "operating nuclear power plants, industrializing genetic engineering, air-traffic control, identifying dangerous drugs, and assuring the safety of bridges and dams" (Laporte & Consolini, 1991, p. 19). What stands out about the scholarship on HROs and seems relevant to education is a keen focus on preventing failure. HROs possess certain characteristics and structures that increase alertness and responsiveness to problems before they result in harmful outcomes. One of the characteristics of HROs clearly evident in the literature is that of mindfulness. From earlier HRO research, which focused mainly on technical and adaptive organizational features, mindfulness emerged as an attempt to make the research more relevant and palpable to mainstreamed organizations. Scholars like Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (1999) introduced specific mental processes derived from people within the organizations themselves. Examples of such processes included increasing alertness to problems, enhancing learning and creativity, aligning work around the core mission of the organization, recovering from performance errors, and developing competence and skill to achieve reliable outcomes.

The scholarship on mindfulness as a strategy for people within organizations to prevent failure and improve reliability has translated to further exploration in the field of education leadership. For example, researchers have examined mindful structures within schools (Hoy,

2002), the relationship between school mindfulness and faculty trust (Hoy, Gage, & Tarter, 2006), and mindful principal leadership (Kearney, Kelsey, & Herrington, 2013). The role of mindfulness in schools and education leadership is in its beginning stages.

Chapter one of this dissertation continues by offering further development of the study's background needed for understanding the problem and purpose addressed by this investigation, as elaborated in the next three sections below. Following the purpose of the study, the chapter offers an overview of the methods used in gathering and analyzing data. The last section of this introduction presents a chapter summary and outline for the remaining chapters in the dissertation.

Study Background

The principal plays an essential role in improving instruction and because district leaders' roles have adapted to support principals in such endeavors, the background for the study begins by providing a brief description of instructional leadership as relevant to the principalship. Following this presentation, a more extensive treatment of scholarship is offered, focused on how superintendents and central office administrators have been found in research to garner improvement in classroom instruction through support of principals. Embedded in this discussion are a number of personal and professional characteristics that are seen as salient or influential to the success of this work. Finally, the study background examines mindfulness literature to explore organizational functions and cognitive processes aimed at the improvement of reliability. Included in the discussion are several characteristics that positively influence the thought patterns and responses of people inside and outside of education working towards reliability in collective settings.

Instructional Leadership

Generally, instructional leadership involves principals supporting teachers in improving the quality of their classroom teaching (Honig & Rainey, 2014). Most basically, principals demonstrate instructional leadership through direct and frequent monitoring of the work of teachers. Principals also develop the skills of teachers by providing descriptive feedback and resources (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2004). This type of work involves principals directly observing instruction, providing feedback about strengths and areas of improvement, modeling effective instruction, and providing differentiated professional development opportunities (Youngs & King, 2002; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012). In addition, Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, & Cohen (2005) suggest that "instructional leadership demands that principals support high-quality teaching in all classrooms, manage their school's curriculum in ways that support student learning, and ensure that the school organization fosters powerful teaching and learning for all students" (p. 5).

Principals also work with teachers on self-reflection and goal setting. In addition to observing, providing feedback, modeling, and providing professional development for individual teachers, principals work with teams of teachers on curriculum, assessment, and instruction (Bryk et al., 1999; DuFour & Mattos, 2013; Mendels, 2012; Scribner et al., 1999). When working with teams of teachers, principals encourage collaboration and trust among colleagues (Cosner, 2009; Supovitz, Sirinides, & May, 2009; Tschannen-Moran, 2009), co-construct learning with teachers (Neumerski, 2013), support professional learning communities (DuFour & Mattos, 2013; Huggins, Scheurich, & Morgan, 2011), and promote shared decision-making and distributed leadership (Copland, 2003; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008).

District Support of Principals

Knowing that both district leaders and school principals have evolved from managers to instructional leaders, and knowing that other than teachers, principals have the most effect of school factors on student achievement, how do superintendents and other district leaders support principals in their work to improve instruction? This strand of research suggests that improving principals' instructional leadership practices involves supporting principals in their continuous efforts to improve classroom instruction (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPoint, Meyerson, & Cohen, 2005), rather than just evaluating principals' efforts to improve instruction or telling principals how to do such work (Leithwood et al., 2004). Instead, research indicates that principals themselves need to be supported as learners. Continuous professional learning and development of principals are essential in improving leadership in our schools and their abilities to improve instruction, create shared leadership and collaborative processes with teachers in their schools, and promote high expectations for student learning (Spanneut, Tobin, & Ayers, 2012).

However, developing principals who can lead instructional improvements efforts of teachers requires new approaches from district leaders (Barnes et al., 2010). Many principals have participated in preparation programs that lack practical applications, especially around instructional leadership. According to Honig (2012), "Principals' instructional leadership is not a content principals are likely to learn well in traditional pre-service or workshop formats" (p. 737).

Promising research exists on practical supports from district office administrators for the work of principals as instructional leaders (Honig, 2012; Leithwood et al., 2004). Honig (2012) writes about supporting principals during their actual day-to-day work, leading to principals spending more time on matters of instructional leadership. She identified practices of district

leaders that help principals improve the practices of teachers (Honig, 2012). Honig (2012) argued that district leaders must act as teachers of principals. The research findings also suggested that relationships between district leaders and principals are more effective as forms of support, rather than forms of evaluation (Honig, 2012). Such collaborative relationships between district leaders and principals involved professional learning that took place in schools as part of principals' regular days (Gallucci, 2008).

Such an emphasis on learning partnerships (Honig, 2008) between district administrators and principals to improve instruction challenges Weick's (1976) previous conception of American educational systems. Weick (1976) noted that such organizations lack system-wide coordination and standardized rules and regulations and are slow in providing personalized and relevant feedback. He also argued that loosely coupled organizations provide advantages. They allow members of the organization to adapt and solve problems contextually and creatively, and they promote buy-in and engagement from people within the system. Additional research offered that achieving school improvement involved both loose and tight structures and processes to achieve effective organizational outcomes (Orton & Weick, 1990).

In addition, some district offices have adapted the idea of professional learning communities, a strategy seen in the research on teachers' instructional improvement practices, to the work of principals in order to strengthen their instructional leadership (Honig & Rainey, 2014). District leaders are assigned to facilitate such collaboration in order to teach instructional leadership practices within the daily work of principals. While the work seems promising and contributes to the literature on professional learning communities, not for students and teachers but for principals, the research shows that the effectiveness of such efforts relies on the district leader's abilities to teach, rather than dictate or evaluate (Honig & Rainey, 2014).

Sustaining structures and resources that support learning-centered partnerships among district office and principals as instructional leaders such as that proposed above also appears to benefit from broad and sustained support from district leadership who have been able to withstand staff or superintendent turnover and provide consistent support over time (Barnes et al., 2010). Thus, another district-level factor evident in education leadership literature relates to how long superintendents and district office administrators stay in their positions. In relation to this topic, past researchers have examined various concepts, including management tenure's effect on bureaucratic dynamics (Juenke, 2005), the relationship between superintendent tenure and student outcomes (Waters & Marzano, 2006), and reasons for superintendent turnover (Grissom & Anderson, 2012). News stories from the media have also covered the topics of superintendent turnover and tenure, although according to Grissom and Anderson (2012),

> The popular conception of the modern superintendent as a chronic mover in continual public disharmony with a conflict-ridden school board is one developed from media portrayals of prominent cases in the nation's largest urban districts, whose experiences may not be representative of those of the suburban and rural districts that make up the majority of local school governments—or even of the average urban district. (p. 1147)

Juenke (2005) contended that managers with over seven years of experience in their positions demonstrated the ability to network with others within the organization to produce quality outcomes. According to Juenke, management tenure served as an indicator of cooperative behavior in public organizations. Waters and Marzano (2006) contended that positive correlations appeared between superintendent tenure and student outcomes, showing the importance of district leader stability over time. Grissom and Anderson (2012) examined reasons for superintendent turnover and offered that opportunities for advancement and retirements

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actually account for superintendent turnover more than dissatisfied school boards or community pressures. Additionally, the authors conveyed that hiring internal candidates, rather than outside candidates, might increase the stability of the position.

Mindfulness and Reliability

As accountability demands hold educators responsible for preventing school and student failures, lessons from other organizations aimed at reliability may inform efforts to improve instruction (Bellamy et al., 2005). One body of scholarship is of particular interest, known as High Reliability Organizations (HROs), since it offers extensive research on the concept of reliability, mainly from non-educational organizations that "take a variety of extraordinary steps in pursuit of error free performance" (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 1999, p. 84). The types of organizations described in early HRO research engaged in high-risk activities and included examples such as hospitals, air traffic control, naval aircraft carriers, and firefighting (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 1999). "The literature on HROs describes how organizations operate when accidents or failures are simply too significant to be tolerated, where failures make headlines" (Bellamy et al., 2005, p. 385).

In some ways, many of the strategies associated with HROs are like those used in education. Stringfield and Datnow (2002) state, "the HRO emphasis on continuous training, reliance on frontline staff to solve unexpected problems, and extensive use of data are similar to many of the recommended best practices in schools" (p. 387). Student safety is also an area in which to consider high reliability (Bellamy et al., 2005). Despite similarities, Hoy (2002) argues there remain questions about the applicability of HROs to loosely coupled organizations like schools. Studies have been conducted to assess the connection, however. For example, Bellamy et al. (2005) examined HRO research to present a fail-safe schools framework, which focused on

"three important functions applicable to moving schools towards achieving high reliability: (a) improving normal operations, (b) detecting potential problems, and (c) recovering from those problems" (390). Additionally, Stringfield, Reynolds, and Schaffer (2008) identified three structures or systems that may help reform efforts to counteract the low reliability of many schools and school districts: developing a process for consistently identifying small errors or lapses before they become bigger issues, using standard operating procedures that are understood and utilized throughout the organization, and providing targeted professional development or training aligned with the organizational goals. Several studies and conceptual analyses have been conducted to examine relevant connections and potential lessons.

Perhaps one of the more important concepts advanced in HRO theory, which is germane to more mainstream organizations such as schools, is found in collective mindfulness (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 1999). Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (1999) write of collective mindfulness as related to the cognitive and affective responses of people within organizations that lead to adaptive and reliable performance. Building upon Langer's (1989) model of individual mindfulness, the authors extended the concept as applicable to how groups of people think and behave (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 1999). The basic premise of their argument is that interrelated cognitive processes produce an effective way to detect errors and allow organizations to become more reliable. In other words, improved collective mindfulness results in increased reliability.

In a later article, Weick and Sutcliffe (2001) continued the analysis of collective, or what they called organizational mindfulness, by articulating a framework and definition. Their examination of literature outlined five main ideas for collective mindfulness. First, they concluded that mindfulness in organizations is present when people remain alert to problems on

a continuous basis (preoccupations with failure). Second, people can be encouraged through operational and procedural norms to avoid simple responses and therefore open their minds to numerous resolutions (reluctance to simplify interpretations), which also nurtures mindfulness within the organization. Third, people in mindful organizations are focused on day-to-day operations (sensitivity to basic operations), rather than giving too much heed to long-term goals. Fourth, collective mindfulness is developed when people in organizations are supported such that they are able and rewarded for responding to problems (commitment to resilience). Fifth, people in mindful organizations rely on the expertise of others regardless of rank (deference to expertise). These common characteristics of collective mindfulness in organizations together seem to generate dependable processes with minimal and manageable errors (Frankel, Leonard, & Denham, 2006) and are "tied together by their joint capability to induce a rich awareness of discriminatory detail and a capacity for action" (p. 37).

The concept of mindfulness as relevant to what goes on in schools comes from other proponents of reform, besides those interested in high reliability. Hyland (2014) reviewed literature concerned with mindfulness and schooling to argue, "There are direct and practical links between mindfulness strategies and educational practice at all levels" (p. 287) of the education system and called for further research. For example, study findings link mindfulness interventions with improvements in student outcomes (Zenner, Herrnleben-Kurz, & Walach, 2014). Researchers have explored the mindfulness of teachers and administrators to show benefits for coping with student learning challenges (Fabian, 2013; Lyons, 2014; Meiklejohn et al., 2014). Hoy, Gage, and Tarter (2006) found the ability of principals to lead mindfully is associated with others' mindfulness in schools as well as their faculty's trust and ability to take risks. Mindfulness is also seen as helping principals improve their leadership of schools

(Kearney, Kelsey, & Herrington, 2013).

Statement of the Problem

The need for district involvement in instructional improvement efforts to secure the reliability of student outcomes has been demonstrated through research (Honig, 2008). Educational research over the past two decades has revealed practices of central office leaders that lead to successfully closing achievement gaps between students of different groups (Leithwood, 2010). Yet, there remains much room for growth given current outcomes in student achievement. Educational administrators at both the district and building level stand to learn valuable lessons from scholarship concerned with organizing for high reliability, particularly that related to mindfulness, which has been identified to explain how organizations operate in reliable and accountable ways (Hoy, 2002). In examining the literature, it is apparent that researchers are investigating mindfulness at both the individual and organizational level for classroom teachers and building principals as they strive to improve student learning outcomes (Hoy et al., 2006; Lyons, 2014). While such inquiry is important, it leaves unaddressed district level efforts identified in research as critical to supporting, aligning, and developing the instructional capacity within schools necessary for change.

Previous attempts at inquiry have also not addressed two important levels of systemic instructional improvement efforts. First, previous research attempts have not examined the connection between collective mindfulness and teacher instructional practices. As the work of educators is re-conceptualized through various reform efforts, teachers are being asked to work together to mindfully address student-learning needs. Yet their beliefs and practices about such work have not been measured using a concise tool. Second, the role of central office support of principals in nurturing their teachers is noted in literature; however, little is known about the

accuracy of district leader perceptions of teacher beliefs and practices concerned with improving opportunities for student learning. Further, since information from the school to central office is channeled through building administrators, the strengths and weaknesses of the instructional leadership of principals may influence the views of supervisors who are charged with providing support. Other variables can also be seen associated with the perceptions of district leaders about the collective mindfulness of teachers, including the length of their experience as central office administrators. In sum, what is missing in the literature is a fuller examination of how collective mindfulness informs the interwoven and aligned work of district leaders, teachers, and principals toward system-wide instructional improvement.

Research Questions

The study will address the following research questions:

1) What do district leaders and faculty report as being collective teacher beliefs and practices for improving instruction?

2) What is the relationship between district leader and faculty views of collective teacher beliefs and practices related to instructional improvement?

3) How manifest is mindfulness within the instructional leadership of principals?

4) Does the alignment of district leader and faculty views on collective teacher beliefs and practices differ based on years of experience for the district leader?

5) Does the alignment of district leader and faculty views on collective teacher beliefs and practices differ based on the mindful instructional leadership of the associated principal?

Purposes of the Study

Knowledge and skills are needed by district leaders to work with teachers and principals on instructional improvement efforts. Given this general purpose, the study will attend to

educators and schools in Washington State. At the center of recent school reform efforts in the State is a new teacher and principal evaluation system. A significant component of the new system is the establishment of language that describes the actions and behaviors of both teachers and principals. Much of the language, expressed as evaluative criteria, centers on improving classroom instruction and student achievement. Inherent in this reform effort is collaborative work among district leaders, teachers, and principals. Understanding the guidance that district leaders in Washington State need to improve classroom instruction of teachers and instructional leadership of principals is of utmost importance. The information gained from this study may then inform district leaders in their support of principals and teachers working together to improve classroom instruction.

For these reasons, the purposes of this study are as follows:

1) To describe district leader views on collective teacher beliefs and practices for improving classroom instruction.

2) To examine faculty views on collective teacher beliefs and practices related to instructional improvement.

3) To assess the relationship between district leader and faculty views on collective teacher beliefs and practices for improving instruction.

4) To describe principal views on their mindful instructional leadership.

5) To examine the relationship between the alignment of district leader and faculty views on collective teacher beliefs and practices and years of experience for the district leader.

6) To examine the relationship between the alignment of district leader and faculty views on collective teacher beliefs and practices and principals' mindful instructional leadership.

Study Methods

The study occurred to further understanding of the relationship between the perceptions of district administrators and their faculty on the collective instructional beliefs and practices of teachers for improving student outcomes. In order to address the stated purpose and research questions as offered in the statement of the problem, the following research procedures were used. This section briefly introduces key issues related to sampling and design, measurements and instrumentation, statistical procedures, and ethical considerations used to conduct the investigation. Chapter three of the dissertation offers a more complete presentation of the study's methods.

The study's procedures for selecting and gathering data from administrators and teachers in the state followed a multiphase strategy. First, because no instruments existed that measured collective teachers' instructional improvement beliefs and practices, as well as principals' mindful instructional leadership, the researcher, along with four others, developed the surveys used in the study after an extensive review of literature related to collective mindfulness, instructional improvement practices, and instructional leadership. Following careful crafting of questions and responses and field-testing, the *Teacher Improvement Practices and Sentiments* (TIPS) was developed for teachers and was used to measure teacher and district leader views on collective teacher beliefs and practices to improve instruction. The *Principal Resilience for Educator and Student Success* (PRESS) tool was also developed for principals and assessed self-reported perceptions on their mindful instructional leadership. Both surveys were uploaded to an online survey platform called Qualtrics for data collection. Both survey tools are explained in detail in chapter three.

In the second phase of the design, techniques were followed to create the sampling frame

for Washington schools in order to conduct a cross-sectional design to gather perceptions from district leaders, teachers, and principals about collective mindfulness and instructional improvement. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Schools (OSPI) School Report Card database for 2014 was used to generate the sampling frame. The OSPI database identified public schools across the state by type. Alternative education sites, juvenile detention centers, credit recovery and GED programs, and hospitals were eliminated to form the population of public regular schools. McNamara's (1994) formula for determining sample size was used to calculate the number of schools to be included in the sample. Once schools were randomly sampled, five teachers from each building, the principal, and the central office administrator for the school were selected. Selected respondents were then sent via email access to one of two surveys. District leaders and teachers were sent access to the TIPS, and principals were given access to the PRESS.

Procedures were followed for tracking district leader, teacher, and principal responses by school. Non-respondents were contacted a second and third time to provide assurances of confidentiality, study merit, and to nurture respondent interest. To ensure the requirements of the sample size were met, response activity was monitored throughout the process. In districts where more than one school was identified, only one school was randomly selected. The district leader responsible for supervising and evaluating the principal of the chosen school was sent an invitation to participate.

In the third phase of the study, data in Qualtrics from district leaders, teachers, and principals were downloaded and merged with school data provided by OSPI. Missing data for each respondent was replaced using the median response. Teacher responses per building were averaged to create one collective teacher score per school.

Descriptive analyses on the variables and factors were performed for the TIPS, PRESS, and school data to assess the distribution of the various scores using measures of central tendency and variability. The descriptive analyses answered the first four research questions. Chi-square statistics were performed for the nonparametric analysis to address the final two research questions. The variables used in the nonparametric analysis were a) the difference in district leader and teacher views on collective teacher beliefs and practices to improve instruction, b) the number of years of experience for the central office leader, and c) principals' self-reported views on mindful instructional leadership.

Prior to the administration of the survey, the team of researchers submitted an Exemption Determination Application. The official title of the study, "Mindful Instructional and Leadership Practice: A Survey of Teachers and Administrators in Washington State," was qualified exempt from full review by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the Washington State University Office of Research Assurances, which answered the issues of human rights and informed consent. In addition, subjects were notified that the survey was voluntary, and throughout the study, the researcher kept subject names and contact information confidential.

Chapter Summary and Organization of the Study

As student failure continues to occur in schools, and as achievement gaps persist in the face of increased accountability reform efforts, the role of the district leader is changing. After three decades of focusing on the school and the classroom, policy makers and researchers now understand that schools are part of district organizations. Therefore, it is important to study the relationship among district leadership, teachers, and principals to improve instruction (Johnson & Chrispeels, 2010). While instructional improvement efforts have comprised part of district leaders' work in the past, increased responsibility placed on central offices by accountability

measures and community expectations, combined with more rigorous performance standards for principals and teachers, establishes the need for new knowledge and skills by district leaders to lead collective efforts to improve teaching and learning. District leaders need support in their work to lead instructional improvement system-wide. In response, necessary adjustments in professional learning are required to support district leaders in meeting these new challenges. Part of such professional learning is to develop new understandings of how district leaders, teachers, and principals think and work together to improve reliability of student outcomes.

This dissertation is organized into five chapters, including an introduction, literature review, methodology, findings, and conclusions and recommendations. This introductory chapter has summarized the changing role of the district leader in working with principals and teachers to improve instruction. In addition, the chapter has introduced the concept of collective mindfulness to inform such efforts. The literature review in chapter two will synthesize the extant research by exploring the transformation of the district leader's role in improving system-wide instruction and reliable student outcomes, defining instructional leadership of the principal to focus the work of district leaders, and describing the tenets of collective mindfulness that may influence the work of district leaders. Chapter three, methodology, will describe the *Teacher Improvement Practices and Sentiments* (TIPS) instrument and other data gathered and analyzed for the study. Chapter four, which presents the findings, will articulate trends observed in the survey results. Finally, chapter five will provide discussion and recommendations based on the findings of district leader and faculty perceptions of collective teacher beliefs and practices to improve instruction, as well as principal views on their mindful instructional leadership.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this era of accountability in education, school district leaders are under extreme pressures to realize instructional improvements that result in enhanced student outcomes, as well as to become key supporters of efforts to improve instruction in schools (Honig, 2008). While many schools and districts throughout the nation struggle to address the challenges of accountability policies, mandates, and initiatives, others have made progress on increasing student outcomes. Educational research over the past two decades has revealed practices of district leaders that lead to successfully closing achievement gaps between students of different groups (Leithwood, 2010). For example, many districts have demonstrated improvements in academic achievement as measured by legislative reform efforts (Togneri & Anderson, 2003). Recent literature has begun to identify what districts can do to improve instruction. Examples include "providing vision, focus, support, and policy coordination" (Corcoran, Fuhrman, & Belcher, 2001, p. 78), "coordinating communication and distribution of resources across the system" (Johnson & Chrispeels, 2010, p. 739), and expecting commitment by principals and teachers at the school level. Legislators and researchers have focused for nearly three decades on the school and the classroom as the units of change and now realize that school districts themselves deserve attention (Davis et al., 2005; Johnson & Chrispeels, 2010; Massell & Goertz, 2002). The following chapter offers a review of literature to provide the background for understanding current reforms in district-level leadership and to discuss such reform efforts as they relate to improved student learning. To give appropriate context and background, the chapter is divided into four sections, including a summary as conclusion.

The first section of the chapter provides an overview of the research on district-level work to improve instruction. Included in this section is a brief discussion on organizational improvement approaches. The purpose of this discussion is to provide a background as to the possible implications that may impact or alter current district-level education reform efforts. Also included in this section is an examination of district-level factors that are shown to improve instruction. The purpose of this examination is to identify from previous studies district-level actions and behaviors associated with increased student achievement.

The second section of the chapter offers a deeper exploration of the distinct relationship between the district leader and the school principal. Evident in the literature on district leadership is a keen focus on supporting the principal as instructional leader. The intent of this section is to describe the current research on instructional leadership and to explore the implications of such research on the work practices of district leaders. Part of the discussion includes an examination of specific support features that principals as instructional leaders may need from district leaders. Also within this discussion is a more specific examination of the Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP) Leadership Framework (Kipp et al., 2014), a framework intended to codify the actions and behaviors of principals in the state of Washington to improve student outcomes. The purpose of this particular exploration is threefold: to increase the practical significance of the study, to provide meaningful context behind the data collected in the study, and to determine the implications for district leaders in Washington State as they supervise and support principals.

The third section of the chapter provides an overview of the literature on mindfulness. The purpose of this discussion is to highlight previous research on collective mindfulness and

education to determine possible implications and ramifications for district leaders in their efforts to lead system-wide instructional improvement.

District-level Approaches to Improve Instruction

In the literature, various district-level approaches to improve instruction are presented. In this section of the literature review, two different approaches are discussed and can generally be categorized as centralized and decentralized.

As others have noted, district leaders in the past have focused less attention on matters of instruction (Honig, 2008). Honig (2008) discusses, for example, how they traditionally have played management roles related to state and federal mandates, as well as local issues, such as transportation, budget, facilities, and staffing. District offices originally executed basic business operations and did not support instructional improvement efforts (Honig, 2012; Honig & Rainey, 2014). Accountability-driven policy reforms now demand, however, that superintendents and district office leaders work closely with principals and teachers in schools to improve classroom instruction (Honig, 2008).

While recent literature emphasizes joint work with principals and teachers to improve instruction, some authors have written about increasing administrative control by districts over instructional improvement. Efforts such as aligning curriculum, establishing common assessments, and providing district-sponsored professional development have served as centralized strategies to improve instruction (Hightower, 2002). Many large school districts, for example, have attempted to implement centralized, research-based instructional reforms in schools (Corcoran, Fuhrman, & Belcher, 2001).

Regardless of centralized or decentralized approaches, authors have identified various strategies that districts have used to improve instruction in schools (Togneri & Anderson 2003),

and the most important seem to be "instructional leadership, a system-wide focus on achievement, and consistency of instruction" (Johnson & Chrispeels, 2010, p. 739). Both authors explain how districts leaders also "use district-guided curriculum and aligned assessments, coherent professional development, and frequent progress monitoring and use of data to make decisions and develop a shared vision" (Johnson & Chrispeels, 2010, p. 739).

The exact relationships between the roles of the district office, principals, and teachers in schools in improving instruction have been studied, as well. For example, Datnow, Lasky, Stringfield, and Teddlie (2006) examined several linkages between districts and schools, including communication, resources, structures, relationships, and ideology. Two different approaches have been taken by districts to align the work of principals and teachers in schools with the larger system. The first approach is to increase centralized controls, as mentioned above. The second approach is to increase the professionalism and organizational learning of principals and teachers (DuFour & Mattos, 2013). This approach represents a contrast to greater centralization, as some districts have attempted to increase and support principal and teacher professionalism. This perspective of organizational change places more focus on the professional learning of principals and teachers (Honig & Rainey, 2014). Because some federal, state, and district initiatives promote learning communities for teachers and students, district leaders must provide support for principals to enact and sustain professional learning communities and to use data-driven dialogue to improve instruction (Honig, 2008).

In response to the two perspectives of bureaucratic control and organizational learning, Thompson, Gregg, & Niska (2004) describe instructional leadership as a productive relationship between collaborative and centralized strategies, including an emphasis on professional learning communities across the district.

Studies have been performed to determine the appropriate system linkages (Johnson & Chrispeels, 2010) that the two theoretical organizational perspectives of centralized, bureaucratic control and learning-centric professionalism need to be brought together. Studies have also confirmed that the two perspectives must be combined to achieve successful reform. For example, to promote the development of the professional practice of principals, conceptual frameworks have been referenced in other studies, including sociocultural learning theory (Honig, 2012), sense-making, and knowledge use (Barnes et al., 2010). These relationships have shown to improve the collective work of district leaders, principals, and teachers across various parts of the system. Such frameworks have attempted to show that the development of principals' professional practices as instructional leaders is "a process in which learners become increasingly more competent performers in their complex working conditions and that professional performances include a cognitive, as well as a behavioral, dimension" (Barnes et al., 2010, p. 244). Such frameworks also contend that professional learning communities help principals develop as instructional leaders (Barnes et al., 2010; Honig, 2012). Within such learning communities, principals perceived that they could better make sense of their own learning through guided discussion with knowledgeable others and colleagues (Barnes et al., 2010).

District-level Support of Instructional Leadership

Although debates remain about the systemic reform approaches of districts, the research is clear that certain district-level factors exist to improve classroom instruction. This next passage discusses such factors as outlined by previous studies.

While principals must transform their work practices to support teachers in improving instruction and teachers must improve their instruction so that all students' learning needs are

met, district leaders must also change their work practices to support principals and teachers to improve instruction. For example, as the role of school principal has transformed from one of building management to instructional leadership, school districts have worked to match these changes with principal preparation, recruitment, support, and evaluation systems to improve school leadership and student learning (Corcoran, Fuhrman, & Belcher, 2001). Regardless of the systemic approaches to improve instruction and student outcomes, all depend on the skills and knowledge of the principal (Brown, 2012) to lead such approaches, thus districts stand much to gain in solving achievement gaps if they focus on supporting principals as instructional leaders.

Several district-level organizational factors exist that support principals' instructional leadership specifically and overall teacher instructional reform efforts in schools generally (Leithwood, 2010; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). The first condition is a district-wide focus on improving instruction, which stresses the need for district leaders to focus on quality teaching as the key to improved student achievement. A significant part of the vision includes closing achievement gaps and maintaining high expectations for student learning (Leithwood, 2010). Several studies reviewed by Leithwood (2010) were concerned both with raising overall student achievement and the achievement of students from marginalized and underserved populations.

The second district-level condition to support principals and teachers is district-wide use of data, which includes developing district information management systems with real-time information (Wayman, 2005), providing schools with usable data and assisting principals and teachers to use data effectively, creating collaborative structures and distributed leadership mechanisms (Copland, 2003) for data-driven instructional decisions, and using data for reporting purposes (Leithwood, 2010). Each of these strategies allow people from various parts of the overall system to see the gaps in student performance, so that the third district-wide condition of

targeting and phasing focuses of improvement can be met. By seeing and analyzing various forms of data, teachers can make the necessary improvements and adaptations in their classroom instruction and principals can provide support of learning interventions to decrease the achievement gaps experienced by their students. Districts can support the efforts of principals and teachers by limiting the number of improvement initiatives, sticking with the reform initiatives for multiple years (Togneri & Anderson, 2003), shortening the timeline of the improvement cycles to match the student learning problems, rather than the school calendar, providing resources and funding centered on the achievement gap problems, and continually raising expectations for student achievement (Leithwood, 2010). The final consideration regarding the district condition of targeting and phasing focuses of improvement comes from Skrla and Schuerich's (2001) study. In this study of four districts that demonstrated decreases in achievement gaps for minority and low-income students, the authors argued that the successes depended on district-wide ethics and beliefs about student learning. In other words, educators in these districts truly believed in the ethical and moral imperatives of providing equitable outcomes for all children. The moral and ethic imperatives sensed by district leaders, principals, and teachers drove the work of these school districts.

A fourth district-level factor in improving instruction for all students is investing in instructional leadership by expecting central office leaders to act as instructional leaders, providing training for principals in observing classrooms, providing descriptive feedback, using data (Togneri & Anderson, 2003), encouraging principals to work with district leaders on matters of instruction, and using external expertise to bolster instructional leadership in the district (Leithwood, 2010).

A fifth district-level factor in improving instruction is an emphasis on teamwork and

professional communities, which is done by developing collaborative and congenial relationships with principals and teachers (Leithwood, 2010). "Those in leadership roles are expected to create an environment of caring and support, encouragement, and assistance to ensure that the teachers can be equally successful with all children" (Togneri & Anderson, 2003, p. 32). When safe and caring learning environments are created for teachers, they are more likely to buy into the hard work of aligning curriculum to state and district standards and to district and state assessments, all which reflect student-learning outcomes (Billig, 2005).

A sixth, and final, district-level factor to improve instruction for all students is district-sponsored teacher professional development, which can arise from planned professional learning opportunities and on the job training (Leithwood, 2010). Studies show that districts that avoid the traditional one-time workshop approach and instead create an organized and coherent set of strategies to improve instruction can see gains in achievement in all schools (Togneri & Anderson, 2003). The strategies themselves, which are determined by student needs according to achievement data, connect principals and teachers and are tied to district and school goals.

Principal as Instructional Leader

Evident in the literature is the contention that the principal's leadership to improve instruction is essential. This section of the literature review discusses general findings that stress the important role the principal plays around matters of teaching and learning and describes the implications for district leaders in supporting principals' instructional leadership.

Much of the recent scholarship on the work of superintendents and district office leaders to improve instruction is in response to the research in education leadership on the importance of school principals as instructional leaders. As the role of school principal has transformed from one of building manager to instructional leader, school districts have worked to support these

changes (Corcoran et al., 2001). The principal as instructional leader is emphasized in a study by the Wallace Foundation (Leithwood, Seashore-Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004), which indicated that school leadership is the second most important factor in schools to effect student learning. Good principals are critical elements of good schools, and efforts to raise student achievement without strong leadership from the principal are unlikely to succeed (Tschannen-Moran, 2009). "As leader, the principal is accountable for the continuous growth of individual students and increased school performance as measured over time by state standards and locally determined indicators" (Kipp et al., 2014, p. 1).

According to Leithwood, Seashore-Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004), underperforming schools have succeeded only when principals demonstrated instructional leadership. Generally, instructional leadership involves principals continuously supporting teachers in improving the quality of their classroom teaching (Honig & Rainey, 2014). A large body of knowledge exists regarding the concept of principals as instructional leaders, and various scholars have attempted to define instructional leadership with more specificity, as well as to determine the influence of principals' instructional leadership on student achievement. Enough significant empirical research exists to demonstrate that school leadership indeed has effects on student achievement (Leithwood, Patten, & Jantzi, 2010). While it is generally understood in the research that principal leadership is critical to student learning (Leithwood, Patten, & Jantzi, 2010), it is also widely understood that such influences occur in indirect ways (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999). Most of the research concludes that principals impact teachers, which, in turn, indirectly influences student achievement (Price, 2012). How principals actually effect student achievement is summarized in the findings of Hallinger and Heck's (1996) study. They contended that principals influence school culture and climate, resources,

school improvement goals and plans, decision-making models, instructional programs, teacher attitudes, and community engagement. Research also suggests that principals manage continuous instructional improvement efforts, support teachers with curricular resources, provide support for teachers and students, and provide data to monitor student progress (Hallinger & Heck, 2010).

Additionally, research continues to assert that principals' influence on student learning is established by supporting continuous instructional improvements in the classroom (Hallinger & Heck, 2010). Leithwood and Jantzi (1999) describe the means to improving instruction at the school and classroom level as: 1) Vision – making decisions that improve students outcomes; 2) Governance – involving teachers and building consensus; and 3) Resource allocation – providing fiscal and human resources to improve instruction.

Finally, in the midst of vast research on the principal, several practices are commonly referenced. First, principals focus on the mission and vision of improving instruction and student learning. Second, principals develop trust with their teachers and staff. Third, principals engage regularly in matters of instruction (Supovitz, Sirinides, & May, 2009). What seems to matter most in the research is the quality of instruction that students receive in classrooms. Research on principals' influence of quality instruction also indicates that certain actions and behaviors tend to support teachers' instructional improvements both for all students generally and for students who experience achievement gaps specifically. For example, if a principal creates a school culture of high expectations, then such high expectations benefit not only students who may struggle to learn, but students who have already learned the content, as well. This means that studies examining the effects of principal leadership on student learning assume that classroom instruction by the teacher matters most for all students. "Principals influence classroom instruction directly, by working with teachers in classrooms, or indirectly, through their efforts to

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improve professional capacity, parent involvement, or school climate" (Sebastian &

Allensworth, 2012, p. 630).

The AWSP Leadership Framework

To better delineate the specific actions and behaviors of principals to improve instruction, this section will describe specific scholarship developed by The Association of Washington State Principals (AWSP). The AWSP Leadership Framework (Kipp et al., 2014) describes the following eight performance criteria for principals: creating a culture, ensuring school safety, planning with data, aligning curriculum, improving instruction, managing resources, engaging the community, and closing the gap. Each of the eight criteria are explained in more depth to help the reader understand how such elements better define the role of principals as instructional leaders in the State's schools.

Creating a Culture. The first criterion is *creating a culture*. Culture is often referred to as "the way we do things around here." For principals, this means that in every classroom and throughout the school, instruction is improved in order to help students learn more effectively and reliably. Everything "we do around here" involves the continuous improvement of student learning, so in order to meet the demands of the culture, principals must continuously help to improve the instruction teachers provide students. The principal's job is to lead the efforts to develop and sustain a culture of continuous improvement of instruction.

AWSP drew upon existing literature on the principal's role in creating culture to improve instruction by focusing on four major tenets. First, principals develop and sustain a shared vision and clear mission (Grissom, Loeb, & Master, 2013; Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011). The most important job for school leaders is to form their schools' cultures to continuously improve student learning. To change culture, instructional leadership is required of the principal.

Instructional leadership is defined as administrators taking responsibility for instructional improvement at the classroom level (Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011) and by stimulating conversations and requiring everyone to engage regularly in instruction and learning. In addition, collective commitments are made when principals work with teachers to establish student growth goals (Youngs & King, 2002).

Second, principals create a culture of improved teaching and learning by engaging teachers and others in essential learning conversations (Hoy, Gage, & Tarter, 2006; Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011; Price, 2012; Wahlstrom & Seashore-Louis, 2008). Teachers are more open to talking about instruction when they have trust in their principal (Hoy, Gage, & Tarter, 2006; Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011; Price, 2012; Wahlstrom & Seashore-Louis, 2008). Trust occurs when the principal's actions support the core mission of the school, when principals show competence around instruction, and when principals address poor performance (Youngs & King, 2002).

Third, principals facilitate collaborative practices (Bryk, Camburn, & Seashore-Louis, 1997; Grissom, Loeb, & Master, 2013; Huggins, Scheurich, & Morgan, 2011; Kruse & Louis, 1997; Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011; Scribner et al., 1999) that center on reflective dialogue, de-privatized practice, team norms, commitment to students, and teamwork (Bryk, Camburn, & Seashore-Louis, 1999; Scribner et al., 1999). Principals also take responsibility for providing instructional support to ensure teacher learning and improvement (Huggins, Scheurich, & Morgan, 2011). In addition, principals must make sure all staff are involved, must be attentive to conflict avoidance and the balance between organizational and individual learning needs, and must keep the professional dialogue focused on instructional improvement (Kruse & Louis, 1997; Scribner, Hager, & Warne, 2002).

Fourth, principals create opportunities for shared leadership (Copland, 2003; Louis &

Wahlstrom, 2011; Scribner et al., 1999; Somech, 2005; Tschannen-Moran, 2009; Youngs & King, 2002). The research on this type of leadership incorporates a range of other leadership activities in schools, mostly enacted by teachers and other informal school leaders who influence instructional practice (Supovitz, Sirinides, & May, 2010).

Democratic administrators also seek input from teachers to solve problems and to learn through collaboration (Somech, 2010). Principals promote personal and team empowerment (Somech, 2005), seek out best ideas from teachers and parents (Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011), show willingness to flex on the traditional role of the principal (Copland, 2003), and build trust to improve teacher-principal relations around the improvement of instruction (Hoy, Gage, & Tarter, 2006; Tschannen-Moran, 2009). Principals also value and practice distributed leadership to solve complex problems associated with instruction and student outcomes (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008).

Ensuring School Safety. Along with creating a culture, principals are expected to ensure school safety. The AWSP Leadership Framework (Kipp et al., 2014) contends that "physical, emotional, and intellectual safety each are necessary conditions for effective teaching and learning to occur" (p. 21). Physical safety pertains to school safety plans to address harassment, bullying, and threats to the school. Such plans are developed by key stakeholders within the school community, including parents, students, staff, and administration. The safety plans are also frequently monitored and adjusted to meet the teaching and learning conditions of the school.

Leading efforts to improve the emotional and intellectual safety of students, staff, and parents is also an expectation of principals. This particular area intersects with other aspects of the leadership framework, including distributed leadership (Copland, 2003; Louis & Wahlstrom,

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2011; Scribner et al., 1999) and collaborative processes based on trust (Hoy, Gage, & Tarter, 2006; Tschannen-Moran, 2009).

Planning with Data. An additional criterion described in the AWSP Leadership Framework that helps define the principal as instructional leader is planning with data. The principal plays a key role in school-level data use (Wayman & Stringfield, 2006). Previous research has examined principal actions when planning with data. First, principals recognize and seek out several sources of data to determine how students are learning and analyze and interpret multiple data sources to inform school-level improvement efforts. Second, principals define and analyze multiple data sources, including student achievement, demographics, perceptions, and school processes. Third, principals as instructional leaders implement data-driven plans for improving teaching and learning (Johnson & Chrispeels, 2010; Kerr et al., 2006). Principals who use data to inform school improvement decisions and efforts model and promote such work for teachers, increasing the likelihood that the teachers themselves will use data to inform their instructional practices in the classroom. Principals model by using data to set clear and measurable goals, establishing time for teachers to examine data, and promoting effective collaboration (Wayman et al., 2012; Wayman & Stringfield, 2006). Finally, principals as instructional leaders assist staff to use data to adapt their instruction (Doll et al., 2005; Huggins, Scheurich, & Morgan, 2011; Wayman et al., 2012). Research is clear that teachers need to use data in meaningful ways (Wayman & Stringfield, 2006). Principals must provide data that is timely, valuable, and presented in a user-friendly manner that can readily benefit teachers in their daily practice.

Aligning the Curriculum. The fourth criterion as part of the AWSP Leadership Framework relevant to the principal as instructional leader is aligning the curriculum. "An

effective leader assumes responsibility such that state and district learning goals align with curriculum, curriculum aligns with best instructional practices, and best instructional practices align with assessment practices" (Kipp et al., 2014, p. 29). Davis et al. (2005) suggest that instructional leadership demands that principals must support high-quality teaching in all classrooms, manage their school's curriculum to support instructional improvement, and ensure that the school organization "fosters powerful teaching and learning for all students" (p. 5). The management of the curriculum usually occurs through the support by the principal of teacher collaborative processes that lead to de-privatized practice, shared work, and reflective dialogue, all centered on the contexts of curriculum, assessment, and instruction (Bryk, Camburn, & Seashore-Louis, 1997; Scribner et al., 1999).

When working with individuals and teams of teachers to align curriculum, principals as instructional leaders assist teachers in matching lessons and units of study to approved learning goals and targets. In addition, principals guide and support teachers in using the information from aligned assessments to determine the adaptations necessary for classroom instruction, especially to meet the needs of those students who have not yet mastered the intended learning outcomes. Embedded in the instructional leadership work of principals is the knowledge required to align the curriculum to the learning needs of diverse populations of students, especially those who represent achievement gaps within the school.

Improving Instruction. The fifth criterion as part of the AWSP Leadership Framework that relates to the principal as instructional leader is improving instruction. This criterion explains in detail the practices that principals perform to improve instruction. First, principals monitor instruction and assessment practices. Such monitoring takes place in the form of classroom walk-throughs (Richardson, 2001) that involve routine observations of multiple

classrooms within a school. The observations, which normally occur with groups of people, lead to the development of a common language around instruction and better the principal's understanding of professional development needs. In addition, principals monitor instruction and assessment practices by directly participating in professional learning communities (Huggins, Scheurich, & Morgan, 2011). Second, principals as instructional leaders assist staff in using research-based instructional and assessment practices (Honig, 2012; Huggins, Scheurich, & Morgan, 2011; Youngs & King, 2002). Principals schedule regular collaborative teacher meetings and use such meetings to focus teachers on becoming reflective about their practices, get them to question such practices (Huggins, Scheurich, & Morgan, 2011), and align professional development needs of teachers with school-based goals (Youngs & King, 2002). Finally, principals evaluate staff in effective instruction and assessment practices. While some scholars argue that supervision and evaluation of teachers by principals may not improve schools (DuFour & Mattos, 2013), consistent feedback on classroom instruction can be empowering to teachers by revealing teachers' strengths and weaknesses and providing targeted professional development (Youngs & King, 2002).

Managing Resources. A sixth criterion from the AWSP Leadership Framework that outlines the responsibilities of the principal is that of managing resources. This criterion is comprised of four components, including: hiring and assignment, professional development, budgeting, and legal responsibilities. Regarding human resources, some studies have presented the importance of induction programs for new teachers (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011), as well as professional development opportunities for all teachers, including professional learning communities (Huggins, Scheurich, & Morgan, 2011), classroom walk-throughs (Richardson, 2001), and coherent training programs aimed at meeting the unique needs of teachers (Youngs &

King, 2002). Related to fiscal resources, Hanushek (1997) discussed the need for principals to align their budgets with student performance outcomes.

Engaging the Community. A seventh criterion from the AWSP Leadership Framework that helps define the principal as instructional leader is that of engaging the community. The principal as a community leader must understand the connection between the school and the community in which students and parents live and develop a genuine partnership between home and school (Kipp et al., 2014). Some studies show that the characteristics of successful schools include positive relations between parents and the principal, aimed at mutual support of students (Teddlie & Stringfield, 1993). In addition, Bryk et al. (2010) identified family and community involvement as one of four key elements of support of student learning. Thus, school leaders are expected to develop school capacity in family and community involvement to improve student achievement.

In relation to family and community involvement, principals lead in two main areas: communication and engagement. Principals develop and sustain a shared vision and clear mission (Grissom, Loeb, & Master, 2013; Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011), and they communicate a focus on improved teaching and learning to all stakeholders, including parents and the greater community. Principals use multiple modes of communication to promote student achievement as the core mission of the school. Communication alone, however, is not enough. Strong community and family relations result in engagement. In order to develop engagement from the community around issues of teaching and learning, the principal must promote shared decision-making and distributed leadership (Copland, 2003; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008), seeking out best ideas from both teachers and parents (Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011). Parents and the community are not left out of discussions and problem solving related to improving instruction.

Instead, parents and the community are genuinely viewed and treated by the principal and teachers as partners in the education of all students.

Closing the Gap. An eighth and final criterion from the AWSP Leadership Framework that helps define the principal as instructional leader is that of closing the gap. This criterion explains what actions principals take that lead to successfully closing achievement gaps between students of different groups (Leithwood, 2010). Of the seven essential factors in improving instruction and achievement as outlined in Togneri and Anderson's (2003) study, the first is to acknowledge that achievement gaps exist and to do something about such gaps. In each of the districts studied, leaders, including principals, looked at accountability measures differently. "They saw low achievement for some students, especially poor and minority students, and they acknowledged poor performance, accepted responsibility, and began seeking solutions" (Togneri & Anderson, 2003, p. 5). Second, principals commit to closing the achievement gap. Some research indicates that principals must be committed to social justice in order to address these gaps in achievement. Principals must lead efforts to improve instruction and achievement in schools with students from marginalized populations (Leithwood, 1994; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008). An integral factor in leading instructional and achievement improvements is a sincere belief that *all students can learn*, as well as the belief that public education must end the inequities experienced by underserved students (Brown, 2012; Foster, 2004; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). Without a system of ethics committed to social justice, school leaders will fail to act on the moral purpose of their jobs and thus fail to meet the unique needs of students from underrepresented groups. In turn, they will use their positions of power and privilege to maintain the status quo (Brown, 2012; Foster, 2004; Skrla & Schuerich, 2001). This type of leadership, one driven by moral purpose and a commitment to social justice, represents the true starting

point for principals as they work to close student achievement and opportunity gaps.

Third, principals provide evidence of growth in the learning of all students and of subgroups of students identified as needing improvement. To improve achievement for all students, and especially for underserved and marginalized students, teachers will need to improve and change their instruction, and principals will need to support teachers in the classroom to make such changes (Togneri & Anderson, 2003). The principal's leadership, in particular, is essential. "As leader, the principal is accountable for the continuous growth of individual students and increased school performance as measured over time by state standards and locally determined indicators" (Kipp et al., 2014, p. 1).

By using the research behind the AWSP Leadership Framework (Kipp et al., 2014), district leaders have a clearer manner in which to define the leadership actions and behaviors of principals that demonstrate a linkage to improved instruction and increased student achievement (Grissom, Loeb, & Master, 2013; Hallinger & Heck, 1996 Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Leithwood, Patten, & Jantzi, 2010; Supovitz, Sirinides, & May, 2009). Although much of the work in outlining such actions came in response to legislative demands centered on teacher and principal evaluation, the language and research findings evident in the framework provide a solid backdrop upon which district leaders can support the development of skills and knowledge necessary to improve principals' practices as leaders of instructional improvement.

Mindfulness

From the review of the literature presented in the previous two sections, it is apparent that district leaders, principals, and teachers each play significant roles in the improvement of teaching and learning in schools. The research is clear that alignment is necessary from each of these stakeholder groups for the continuous and system-wide improvement of instruction. As

instructional improvement reform efforts are examined from a district or organizational level

perspective, much insight may be gained by exploring other organizational constructs, such as

mindfulness. In this section, I review literature on mindfulness as it relates to education. I

provide a brief background on individual mindfulness and then move fairly quickly to the

concept of collective mindfulness in order to address the purposes of this study. The intent of

examining studies on mindfulness is to determine the potential implications for district-level

work in improving instruction system-wide. Given the research on how district leaders work to

improve instruction, especially in relation to the distinct relationship between district leaders and

principals, it is important to determine how the literature on mindfulness may inform such

important collaborative work. Within the context of district support of principals, it is

meaningful to note that empirical studies support the finding that successful leadership does

matter for student learning, albeit not directly (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). This suggests that any

changes principals hope to make in student outcomes must be realized by helping teachers

improve their instruction (Kearney, Kelsey, & Herrington, 2013). I state this point to cement the

notion that the specific collective approach of district leaders assisting principals as they work

with teachers is of utmost importance in improving instruction and student learning.

Mindfulness is defined in a number of ways. For example, mindfulness is a central idea

in Buddhist philosophy and practice and in this context involves attention to the present moment

(Hyland, 2014). Mindfulness has been examined in various studies at the level of the individual

person (Langer, 1993; Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000). Langer (1993) defines individual

mindfulness as "a state of mind that results from drawing novel distinctions, examining

information from new perspectives, and being sensitive to context" (p. 44). Further descriptions

of individual mindfulness highlight key cognitive processes, including seeing any situation from

multiple and alternative perspectives, focusing more on questions than answers, remaining open-minded to creative solutions, and respecting diversity (Langer, 1993; Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000). Hyland (2014) elaborates by defining individual mindfulness as "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). Some studies have applied individual mindfulness to work in education, including mindful principal leadership and student achievement (Kearney, Kelsey, & Herrington, 2013) and the relationship of principal mindfulness to school mindfulness and faculty trust (Hoy, Gage, & Tarter, 2006).

While studies on individual mindfulness are prevalent in the literature, this study aims to examine mindfulness not at the individual level, but at the collective or organizational level. Both individual and collective mindfulness are important to study in relation to education, but for the purposes of this particular study, collective mindfulness will be examined.

Collective Mindfulness

Mindfulness, which relates to the cognitive processes of people, can be examined as a collective property (Hoy et al., 2006) and may also be referred to as organizational mindfulness. Within HRO literature, Hoy (2002) applied Weick and Sutcliffe's (2001) analysis of collective mindfulness in organizations directly to education by outlining the five main ideas of collective mindfulness. His comments spoke to each of the cognitive processes including: regularly looking for problems (preoccupations with failure), simplifying less and seeing more (reluctance to simplify interpretations), focusing on day-to-day functions (sensitivity to basic operations), being resilient to problems (commitment to resilience), and deferring to expertise regardless of rank (deference to expertise). These common characteristics together seem to generate reliably dependable processes with minimal and manageable errors (Frankel, Leonard, & Denham, 2006)

and each process will be examined in detail.

  Preoccupation with Failure. First, people in mindful organizations possess a preoccupation with failure. In education, people in mindful schools focus on mistakes to avoid major failures (Kearney, Kelsey, & Herrington, 2013). People in mindful systems are on high alert for small errors before they become major failures or catastrophes (Bellamy et al., 2005) and avoid routine rules and procedures (Kearney, Kelsey, & Herrington, 2013). Small errors are watched closely by people in the organization, with the goal of detecting errors early, because they can evolve into major problems (Stringfield, Reynolds, & Schaffer, 2008). People in mindful organizations are alert to problems, especially small problems (Hoy et al., 2006). Interestingly, much of the literature around collective mindfulness and this particular concept of preoccupation with failure comes from high risk industries, including health care (Schulman, 2004) and hospitals, as well as nuclear plants, firefighting, and air traffic control, where failure may lead to the high stakes of injury and death (Weick, 1996). The theory looks for people, (as individuals and in various work groups), in each of these industries, including education, to possess a willingness to take risks and confront the failures in open and honest ways, rather than covering up the mistakes (Cannon & Edmondson, 2001). In health care, for example, individuals know that they may speak safely on issues regarding their own actions or those in the environment around them to provide patient care (Frankel, Leonard, & Denham, 2006). Preoccupation with failure helps people avoid complacency. For example, when 90% of students meet state achievement standards, educators in mindful schools focus on the 10% who failed rather than simply celebrate (Hoy et al., 2006). The ideas of psychologically focusing on failure and avoiding complacency serve as key tenets to behaving mindfully as organizations.

Reluctance to Simplify. In addition to demonstrating a preoccupation with failure, people in organizations who operate with mindfulness fight the urge to provide simple answers to unpredictable problems. Mindfulness requires flexible thinking and an open mind (Hoy et al., 2006). HRO writers refer to this idea as *reluctance to simplify* (Hoy, 2002; Schulman, 2004, Weick, 1996). Hoy (2002) states, "Individuals and organizations are easily seduced by routine ways of doing things that worked at one time" (p. 94). A reliance on repetition and single-minded focus on goals results in mindlessness. For example, principals, teachers, and district leaders in educational settings may emphasize outcomes on tests at the expense of the learning process for students. Conversely, mindfulness allows leaders to see and explore as many details as possible about complex issues. Leaders who act mindfully open themselves to new ideas and differing perspectives, and they see problems as chances to get better (Hoy & Sweetland, 2001). A reluctance to simplify encourages reflection to better understand all aspects of a problem. People in schools, for example, need to avoid simple solutions and expose themselves to multiple possibilities (Hoy et al., 2006). Principals, for example, who are open to new ideas, are able to manage different opinions among faculty while respecting various ways of thinking and knowing (Kearney, Kelsey, & Herrington, 2013). Diversity in perspectives among students, for example, should also be offered (Hoy et al., 2006). Because of the complex nature of schools, collectively mindful students, teachers, and principals value multiple opinions and consider and assess various perspectives (Hoy et al., 2006).

In examining the collective mindfulness of educators in districts and schools, it becomes important for adults who support students to diagnose potential errors from a variety of angles to determine the root causes, as well as to provide appropriate remedies before such errors lead to untenable levels. In order to avoid simple solutions to complex problems, teachers, principals,

and district leaders rely on multiple measures and triangulated evidence of student progress, thus resulting in a rich picture of the needs of the given student. By doing so, a deeply informed decision can be made on how to proceed in order to remedy the student's errors. This same type of mindfulness applies to work conditions among teachers and principals within the school or district, as well. People assume that others' perspectives match their own, resulting in narrow reasoning and simple solutions. Again, the process of complex problem solving, one that considers multiple perspectives of stakeholders, takes a back seat to the achievement of goals and outcomes. Instead, educators must engage with one another to solve problems in considerate ways (Hoy et al., 2006). Being mindful helps people in an organization examine issues thoughtfully instead of reacting mindlessly (Kearney, Kelsey, & Herrington, 2013).

  Sensitivity to Operations. A third strategy to improve collective mindfulness is what HRO scholars refer to as *sensitivity to operations* (Hoy, 2002; Kearney, Kelsey, & Herrington, 2013)*.* This means that organizations pay close attention to where the real problem lies and where the core work of the organization gets done. In education, the setting is the classroom and the core work is teaching and learning. Teachers and principals who are mindful notice students who experience deviations from normal learning, for example the achievement of content standards. If students within a given classroom experience anomalies in their learning, then teachers and principals actually pay attention to such occurrences. These anomalies may exist because students already possess normative knowledge and become bored with the content, or because students struggle to meet the learning outcomes established in the lesson or unit of study. By being sensitive to the ground level of teaching and learning, educators may better isolate the problem and respond accordingly in a time-sensitive and tractable manner. Being watchful of problems requires trust between the teachers and principal; teachers unwilling to

think and act with free will create an organization that thinks and responds less effectively (Hoy, 2002). To continuously alert themselves to problems, teachers and principals must operate closely, and if they lack sensitivity to matters of teaching and learning, then the quality of information and communication breaks down (Hoy et al., 2006). It is important for principals specifically to remain connected to the classroom (Hoy, 2002), and to collaborate with teachers (Kearney, Kelsey, & Herrington, 2013). Lack of sensitivity to operations causes communication issues, resulting in response errors (Hoy et al., 2006).

Commitment to Resilience. The first three tenets of collective mindfulness (preoccupation with failure, reluctance to simplify, and sensitivity to operations) lead to the fourth principle of collective mindfulness, a *commitment to resilience*, which means the ability to adapt when the unexpected occurs (Frankel, Leonard, & Denham, 2006). No organization will completely avoid errors, so resilience is a crucial factor (Hoy et al., 2006). In an education context, resilience occurs when principals and teachers develop the know-how and strategies to discover and persevere in response to errors that are part of the natural learning experiences of students. In turn, educators who possess mindfulness become more resilient in their own work, knowing that they themselves are lifelong learners. Most importantly, collectively mindful educators in schools and districts do not rely on error-free learning environments. Because no school or organization is perfect, teachers and principals must be flexible enough to deal with errors and surprises (Hoy et al., 2006). Instead, they disallow errors to defeat or derail the work of educating students. Rather, they learn from errors, rally to make the necessary adjustments, and move on with the intent of using the experiences of error to improve mindfulness.

Deference to Expertise. The fifth and final principle of collective mindfulness is what researchers call *deference to expertise*. This means that problem-solving and decision-making,

rather than taking place at the top level of the system (e.g. the principal in a school or the superintendent in a district), is actually pushed down and around to the level where the experts actually reside. In an education context, district and school leaders avoid becoming insulated from the day-to-day operations and happenings in schools and classrooms. A form of hierarchy still exists, but as Hoy (2002) suggests, the key is to avoid the type of centralization that results in dysfunction and enable the type of centralization where "members feel confident and are able to exercise power in their professional roles" (p. 90). Structures are put in place to allow all members of the organization to contribute to reliability, and problems are solved by listening to experts at all levels of the system (Hoy, 2002; Hoy & Sweetland, 2001). In the case of a school district, district leaders rely on the knowledge, skills, and expertise of principals and teachers within the school to respond to errors in student learning and adult performance. In the case of a school itself, the principal and perhaps the leadership team push decisions and problems down and around to the classroom level, because teachers provide expertise related to both the students in their classrooms and the content that is taught. Finally, in the case of the classroom as an organizational entity, teachers push down and around problems and solutions to the students, because the students have expert knowledge in what works for them to learn and grow. Students also provide important information about the errors and accompanying complexities they experience and the potential strategies to rectify such errors before they lead to failure. At all levels of a school system, ranging from the student to the teacher to the principal to the superintendent, the capacity to rely less on formal authority and to defer to expertise at the ground level of teaching and learning builds collective mindfulness throughout the system, thus resulting in an organization that is more reliable and trustworthy in educating its students.

Chapter Summary

In summary, education leadership research cites numerous critical components of the work of district leaders to improve instruction within classrooms and schools. From the literature, four main themes seem to emerge. First, district leaders themselves are called upon to lead instructional improvement efforts. With the current emphases in policy and practice on all students demonstrating high levels of learning, no longer are schools alone held accountable for student achievement. The responsibility has extended to the district office and its leadership. Second, various theories exist in the research on how district administrators lead system-wide instructional improvement. There seem to be two main approaches. First, districts increase centralized control to improve instruction (O' Day, 2002). Second, districts increase the professionalism and organizational learning of principals and teachers (DuFour & Mattos, 2013). Most likely, a combination of both approaches will be required to result in improved instruction. Third, the concept of instructional leadership of the principal is so prevalent in the research that district leaders are called on more than ever to support such work. Fourth, modern accountability policies have pushed the articulation of more clearly defined performance expectations for principals to improve instruction. Just as principals themselves must build their knowledge and skills of research-based best practices of instructional leadership, so must district leaders know, model, monitor, and support such skills and knowledge. Just as it is the responsibility and challenge of principals to support teachers to improve instruction, so is it the responsibility and challenge of district leaders to support principals' instructional leadership.

Ultimately, with the goal of district leaders working together with teachers and principals to improve instruction, student learning will become more reliable. The literature on HROs and mindfulness stands to inform such collective efforts. Organizational features and cognitive

processes outlined in the HRO/mindfulness scholarship provide potential strategies for educators

at all levels of the system to prevent failure of student learning through the improvement of

instruction.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The study builds upon previous studies of instructional leadership and mindfulness to inform efforts in educational leadership, specifically with a focus on district office support of principals to improve teacher classroom instruction. Knowledge and supports are needed to assist district leaders in working with principals and teachers to improve teaching and learning. Better understanding is needed to guide district leaders in Washington State to support principals and teachers to strengthen learning opportunities and outcomes in schools. The study addressed the following questions: (a) What do district leaders and faculty view as collective teacher beliefs and practices to improve instruction; (b) What is the relationship between the differences in district leader and faculty views on collective teacher beliefs and practices to improve instruction; (c) What do principals report as their mindful instructional leadership; (d) Does the alignment of district leader and faculty views on collective teacher beliefs and practices differ based on years of experience for the district leader; and (e) Does the alignment of district leader and faculty views on collective teacher beliefs and practices differ based on principals' mindful instructional leadership?

In this chapter I present the methodology for conducting the study to address the above questions. The remainder of the chapter is divided into seven sections. The first section provides a discussion of the study's design and procedures. Next, the sampling strategies followed will be presented. The third section of the chapter explains the measurement related issues for the study, including the validity and reliability of the scores provided by the two instruments developed for the study. The fourth section explains the statistical procedures used to analyze the data and includes a discussion on response bias. The fifth section presents the researcher ethics followed

in conducting the study. The sixth section offers the delimitations and limitations of the study. The chapter concludes with a summary.

Design and Procedures

Using standard survey methods, the study gathered the perceptions of district leaders, teachers, and principals in Washington State about their instructional improvement efforts. Surveys are frequently used in research to assess the occurrence of a particular construct of interest, in a population of interest, through sampling a relatively small number of subjects (Kelley, Clark, Brown, & Sitzia, 2003). Creswell (2009) shared that cross-sectional designs are effective in gathering data that reflect the current state of affairs. Survey research was chosen because of its advantages of rapid data collection, the benefits of generalization, and the low cost to the researcher in terms of time and effort as compared to other potential designs that could have been used as a beginning study for understanding how district leaders support principals in improving teacher instructional practices.

The study's procedures for selecting and gathering data from administrators and teachers in the state followed a multiphase strategy. First, because no instruments existed that measured collective teachers' instructional improvement beliefs and practices, as well as principal's mindful instructional leadership, the researcher, along with four others, developed the surveys used in the study after an extensive review of literature related to collective mindfulness, instructional improvement practices, and instructional leadership. The description of the research tools used for the study will be provided its own section later in the chapter. It is sufficient to share that questions and responses were carefully crafted using survey protocols (Schaeffer & Presser, 2003; Schwarz, 1999) and that both tools were field-tested. Two parallel instruments were developed. The first was the *Teacher Improvement Practices and Sentiments* (TIPS) to

assess teachers' collective beliefs and practices concerned with instructional improvement. The second tool developed was the *Principal Resilience for Educator and Student Success* (PRESS), which assessed principals' self-reported perceptions for being mindful instructional leaders.

Procedures for sampling district leaders, teachers, and principals were developed and are explained below in a section that allows for full disclosure of the steps followed. District leaders, teachers, and principals were selected according to the schools they represent. In other words, the responses of teachers, the principal, and the district level supervisor were connected to specific schools, facilitating analysis for the purposes of this study. Once subjects were identified, teachers and district leaders were sent the TIPS and principals were sent the PRESS using a web-based software platform. Specifically, messages were sent to the work email addresses of selected subjects. Email addresses were obtained from published information on school and district websites, as well as the OSPI webpage. Participants were notified of the study's purposes and given assurances of confidentiality as well as informed of other human subject rights. One week after sending the first invitation, a follow up correspondence was sent to non-respondents. Within this particular email, each participant was notified of the survey deadline. A third email was sent the next week as follow-up communication to non-respondents, reminding them about the survey and encouraging them to participate. The cover letters to subjects are found in the appendix for district leaders (see Appendix A, B, and C), for teachers (see Appendix D, E, and F) and for principals (see Appendix G, H, and I). The team monitored respondent activity throughout the process to ensure sufficient response rate was obtained to reduce the threat of sampling bias and strengthen arguments related to sample size.

Once the TIPS and PRESS data were collected via Qualtrics, the data were downloaded and files merged using the school identification number created by merging the county district

and building number provided by OSPI for each campus. School data were then downloaded from OSPI and these files, which included information on student demographics, teacher data, and measures of student academic achievement, were merged with the survey data.

Sampling

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) School Report Card database for 2014 was used to create the sampling frame of the study. The OSPI report indicated 2097 regular schools in the State, excluding alternative education sites, juvenile detention centers, credit recovery and GED programs, and hospitals. Starting with a sampling frame of 2097 public schools, McNamara's (1994) formula for determining sample size with a margin of error of 5% and a confidence interval of 99% was used to calculate the number of subjects. A sample of 505 schools was calculated. The 505 schools were then stratified by level of school (i.e., elementary, intermediate, and secondary) and a proportional stratified random sample was selected. Since 58% of the schools in the State were classified as elementary, 293 elementary campuses were selected. Twenty-six percent of schools were defined as intermediate, junior, or junior high schools, resulting in choosing 131 intermediate schools. Eighty-one high, senior high, or comprehensive schools were selected to represent the 15% of schools in the State that have such classification.

Additional procedures were followed to select teachers from each school to represent their colleagues. For the elementary schools, a first, third, fifth, resource room, and one other teacher were selected by chance. Names and email addresses were found on school websites. A similar process was used for the intermediate and secondary schools. A teacher from the following departments was selected for these buildings: arts, English, math, science, and other. When no teaching position information was offered, which was typically for only small schools,

every other teacher listed was selected. There were a number of small schools included in the study with fewer than five teachers. For schools selected where no teacher information was offered via the web, the process of random replacement was used. Following these procedures, the total number of elementary teachers surveyed was 1465. For intermediate schools that number was 655, and 405 teachers in secondary schools were surveyed.

Schools of the largest districts in the State were present in the sample. Frequently, one or two district administrators are responsible for overseeing many schools. For example, in Spokane Public Schools, one central office supervisor is responsible for 35 schools. Procedures were followed to prevent surveying the same district leader more than once. In medium to large sized districts, the researcher identified the supervisor for only one of the principals in the district whose school was randomly selected. The total number of district leaders surveyed was 184 and 64 responded. Twenty-three principals matching such district leaders responded to the PRESS.

Instrumentation

The first survey instrument, referred to as the *Teacher Improvement Practices and Sentiments* (TIPS), was developed for teachers and measured district leader and faculty views on collective teacher beliefs and practices to improve instruction. The second tool, referred to as the *Principal Resilience for Educator and Student Success* (PRESS), was developed for principals and measured self-reported perceptions on their mindful instructional leadership. Because no instruments existed that measured collective teachers' instructional improvement beliefs and practices, as well as the mindful instructional leadership of principals, the research team created both surveys through extensive research using two conceptual frameworks from the literature, which included collective mindfulness, as well as instructional improvement and leadership practices. In addition, the group looked closely at other instruments aimed at examining

mindfulness, including Hoy, Gage, and Tarter's (2006) *School Mindfulness Scale* (M-Scale). The first conceptual framework was based on Weick and Sutcliffe's (2001) contributions to the codification of practices and behaviors of collective mindfulness, including preoccupation with failure, reluctance to simplify, sensitivity to operations, commitment to resilience, and deference to expertise. The second conceptual framework was based on the Association of Washington School Principal's Leadership Framework (Kipp et al., 2014), which contained eight specific criteria upon which Washington State principals are evaluated. The eight criteria were creating a culture, ensuring school safety, planning with data, aligning curriculum, improving instruction, managing resources, and closing the achievement gap. Given that not all of the eight criteria specifically defined instructional leadership practices, the team of researchers selected six of the eight in building their tools. The six criteria included creating a culture, planning with data, aligning curriculum, improving instruction, engaging the community, and closing the achievement gap.

Following careful study and analysis of the two conceptual frameworks, the research team drafted survey items that cross-referenced the five tenets of mindfulness from Weick and Sutcliffe (2001) and the six criteria from the AWSP Leadership Framework (Kipp et al., 2014). In developing the instruments, the researcher team was supported by their professor.

In August 2014, initial field tests of the survey instruments were administered to teachers, principals, and district leaders. Field-testing allowed participants to test the survey instrument and provide feedback on the language, layout, usability, and clarity of instructions. The researchers reviewed the results of the field test to determine any potential biases or complications for data analysis in the future. Approximately sixty-five individuals served as field test participants. From this field test the tools were revised and improved as suggested by the

feedback of the participants. The researchers made final revisions and uploaded the survey tool to Qualtrics for administration. It is important to note that response bias is often present in surveys, especially self-report surveys like the PRESS. To address the potential for response bias, several questions on the TIPS and PRESS surveys were reverse scored. On the TIPS survey for example, eleven of the eighteen questions were positively worded, and seven of the questions were negatively phrased. On the PRESS, eleven of the twenty questions were positively worded, and nine of the items were negatively phrased.

TIPS Instrument. The TIPS survey included 18 items on collective teacher beliefs and practices for instructional improvement. As shown in Table 1, each of the items on the instrument cross-referenced one of the criterion on the AWSP Leadership Framework (i.e., creating a culture, planning with data, aligning curriculum, improving instruction, engaging the community, and closing the gap) with one of the five tenets of collective mindfulness (i.e., preoccupation with failure, reluctance to simplify, sensitivity to operations, commitment to resilience, and deference to expertise).

District leaders and teachers who were selected for the study were given the following directions when they clicked on the link in the email invitation: "Below is a brief collection of statements about teacher instructional practices and beliefs. Using the scale on the column for questions 1-10, please indicate the proportion of teachers at ${m://School} that you believe would agree with each statement." After answering those questions, they were then told "For questions 11-18, please indicate the frequency that teachers at ${m://School} would say they practice each statement. Please answer according to what accurately reflects your recent experience rather than what you think their responses should be." The question design included two response scales. For items 1-10, subjects were given five choices. The anchors of "a few" (1)

through to "almost all" (5) were provided. For items 11-18 subjects were given the choices of "less than once a month" (1) through to "daily" (6).

Table 1

TIPS Mapped to Mindfulness and AWSP Framework

TIPS Items	Mindful	AWSP
5) Maintaining order in the classroom is a high priority	Simplify	Curriculum
9) Not enough PLC time is used for refining instruction	Operations	Curriculum
15) Use checks for understanding students learning	Failure	Curriculum
2) Teachers spend much time solving students' learning problems	Failure	Gap
13) Modify classroom procedures for struggling learners	Simplify	Gap
17) Brainstorm with others about ways to get students to standard	Operations	Gap
1) Students should be responsible for their learning	Simplify	Culture
7) Avoidance is a practical way to handle difficult colleagues	Expertise	Culture
14) Share critical comments about school and colleagues	Failure	Culture
18) Hear colleagues offer praise to unmotivated students	Resilience	Culture
4) Parents do the best they can to support their students	Simplify	Community
6) Students' motivation is dependent on their home	Resilience	Community
11) Talk with students to know what is going on at home	Expertise	Community
10) Student data provided to teachers is not useful for interventions	Failure	Data
16) Analyze data to inform their instructional practice	Operations	Data
8) A teacher can get through to even the most difficult student	Resilience	Instruction
3) PLCs help teachers to know better their strengths and weaknesses	Failure	Instruction
12) Contribute to school-wide instructional decisions	Expertise	Instruction

PRESS Instrument. The principal tool, the *Principal Resilience for Educator and Student Success* (PRESS), included ten items that ask principals to rate their views of their own

instructional leadership behaviors and another set of ten items to rate their views of their mindful

instructional leadership beliefs. Each of the twenty questions was cross-referenced with one

construct of mindfulness and one criterion of the AWSP framework as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2

PRESS Mapped to Mindfulness and AWSP Framework

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

Principals who were selected for the study were given the following directions when they clicked on the link in the email invitation:

Below is a brief collection of statements about principal instructional leadership behaviors and beliefs. For items 1-10, please select the frequency of occurrence that best reflects your recent experience at ${m://School}. For items 11-20, please select the degree to which you agree with the statements, based on your recent experience at ${m://School}.

The question design included two response scales. For items 1-10, subjects were given five choices. The anchors of "rarely" (1) through to "very often" (5) were provided. For items 11-20 subjects were given the choices of "strongly disagree" (1) through to "strongly agree" (5).

Validity and Reliability. To strengthen the construct validity of the measurement methods of the study, the researcher collaborated extensively with other members of the research team and the aforementioned university research expert during the development stage. The research team met on several occasions to review and match items on the instruments to the literature on collective mindfulness and instructional improvement and leadership. The researchers made numerous revisions to the wording and categorizing of the survey items. In addition, to strengthen concurrent validity of the survey tools, the researchers conducted factor analysis tests to determine the accuracy of how collective mindfulness items and AWSP Leadership Framework criteria correlated. To strengthen the content validity of the instruments, field-testing occurred for the TIPS and PRESS. By getting feedback from the field test respondents on both the content and clarity of the instruments, the researcher was able to show increased content validity when the final surveys were administered.

To assess the reliability of the survey scores, the researcher was concerned with internal

consistency, which means that different survey items intended to measure the same construct resulted in similar scores. In the study, for example, multiple questions measured the construct of *preoccupation of failure.* Do determine internal consistency, the researcher ran Cronbach's alpha scores on both instruments.

Data Analysis

The purpose of the analysis is to summarize the data from the survey so that it is easily understood and provides the answers to the research questions identified in the statement of the problem. Given that two instruments were used in the study, several phases were used to analyze the data. Prior to data analysis, all variables were examined for missing values as well as the distribution of scores, including outliers, linearity, and normality. The scales used on the instruments were ordinal in nature, so missing scores on survey items were replaced by median scores. To determine the factors scores, teacher responses per building on the TIPS were averaged and then multiplied by 100 to create one factor score per school. The average was used to reduce any biases or skewed results from the perspectives of one teacher. To calculate district leader scores by factor on the TIPS and principal scores by factor on the PRESS, item scores were averaged and multiplied by 100 for both tools respectively.

To address the descriptive purposes of the study, analyses were conducted on school, district leader, teacher, and principal demographic variables. School variables included total enrollment, the percentage of students who received free or reduced lunches, the percentage of transition/bilingual students, and the percentage of students who met standard on spring 2014 state assessments in 5th grade for reading, mathematics, and science. District leader variables included level of school, gender, ethnicity, highest degree earned, years as a district administrator, and years in current position. Teacher variables included students per teacher,

average years of teacher experience, and the percentage of teachers with at least a Masters degree. Principal variables included gender, ethnicity, and years as a principal. In addition, district leader and teacher variables included the specific item and factor scores on the TIPS, and principal variables included the specific item and factor scores on the PRESS. For each variable, measures of central tendency and variability were calculated, including mean, median, and standard deviation scores. The descriptive analyses addressed the study's first four research questions.

To address the fifth and sixth research questions, chi-square analyses were conducted to determine the relationship between the alignment of district and teacher views on collective mindfulness with a) the years of experience for the district leader and b) the principal's degree of mindfulness as instructional leader. Three variable transformations were performed to conduct these analyses. First, the variable for the difference between central office administrator view of teacher collective mindfulness and teacher perception of their collective mindfulness was recoded. The recoded variable was dichotomous. Scores of 1 indicate the central office administrator scored higher or lower than the teachers (i.e., 6 to 18 and -6 to -21) and scores of 2 indicate agreement or alignment between the two (i.e., 5 to -5). Since the distribution was fairly normal, two equal groups were created. Second, the variable of experience as central office administrator was recoded into three equal groups. Novice district leaders (scored as a 1) possessed 0 to 6 years, administrators with 7 to 10 years were considered intermediate (scored as a 2), and administrators with 11 plus years were considered veteran district leaders (scored as a 3). Three district leaders did not indicate their years of experience and were given the median score of 8 years, placing them in the middle category. Finally, the variable of principals' mindful instructional leadership was recoded to create a dichotomous variable. Principals whose MIL

scores were between 54 and 61 were placed in the low mindfulness group, while those whose scores ranged from 62 to 68 were placed in the higher category.

All assumptions for the use of chi-square, Phi, and Cramer's V were checked and were met. Chi-square helps test whether or not there exists a statistically significant relationship between the two variables, while Phi and Cramer's *V* provide tests of the strength of the association or effect size. Cohen's (1992) formula for determining sample size necessary for representativeness was utilized, with a confidence level of 95% and a large effect size at power = .80. For 2 *df*, the necessary sample size is 39, and for 1 *df,* the necessary sample size is 26. The first analysis performed was a 2x3 chi-square, which assessed the relationship with the first variable being alignment of district leader and teacher views and with the second variable being years of experience as a central office administrator. Cramer's V was calculated as a measure of effect size for this relationship. In the second analysis a 2x2 chi-square was performed. One of the variables used was the alignment of district and teacher views of collective mindfulness with the other variable being principals' mindful instructional leadership. Phi was calculated as the effect size for this analysis of two dichotomous variables.

Ethics

Ethical issues arise in all aspects of research. Such areas include attention to human rights, data collection, analysis, and interpretation, writing, and sharing the research results (Roberts, 2010). In relation to human rights, informed consent plays a significant role. This means that participants must be fully informed about the purpose, procedures, and risks of the study before they take part. Participation must also be voluntary. Assuring confidentiality of the participants is also critical. In the majority of surveys, the respondent should be fully informed about the purposes of the survey, and the respondent's consent to participate in the survey must

be obtained and recorded (Kelley, Clark, Brown, & Sitzia, 2003). Prior to the actual administration of the survey, an Exemption Determination Application was submitted. The official title of the study, "Mindful Instructional and Leadership Practice: A Survey of Teachers and Administrators in Washington State," was qualified as exempt from the need for Institutional Review Board (IRB) review by the Washington State University Office of Research Assurances.

As stated previously, survey participants were also contacted by email, notifying them of their selection for the study and outlining the purpose of the study. The researcher notified study participants that their participation was voluntary. Assurances were made in the formal email communications that the results of the study would be released, but their identities would remain confidential. Throughout the study, the researcher kept subject names and contact information confidential.

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Delimitations and Limitations

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The study faced three significant delimitations related to sampling. First, because of the nature of the sample, generalizations beyond the state of Washington cannot be made. As such, the results should be viewed as descriptive and nonparametric for Washington teachers, principals, and district leaders, which may not be representative of educators in other states. Second, because of the nature of the sample, generalizations beyond public schools and districts cannot be made. As such, the descriptive and nonparametric results may not be representative of other educational contexts, such as private and charter schools. Third, due to the sampling frame, generalizations beyond basic education schools cannot be made, thus results may not be representative of alternative learning education settings, including juvenile detention centers, credit recovery and GED programs, and hospitals.

Limitations are particular features of a study that may negatively affect the results or the

researcher's ability to generalize the finding (Roberts, 2010). The study faced three significant limitations. First, the researcher experienced challenges in garnering high survey response rates, especially because the surveys were sent out electronically. It is important to note that the researcher used strategies to combat low response rates, including university sponsorship, incentives in the form of gift cards, pre-notifications, and offers to share the results of the study. While a large sample size was generated to offset non-response trends in online surveys, finalizing lists of subjects proved to be difficult at times. For example, identified schools did not list teacher names and e-mail addresses on their websites. In addition, names of districts did not match with names of cities and towns on the initial SPSS spreadsheet, so some district leaders received surveys regarding schools located in other districts. The researcher fixed the error for subsequent online survey requests, but subjects may have been dissuaded from responding due to the original error.

Second, although the researcher sent various emails to preview and remind subjects to respond, the non-response rate from subjects could be misleading and only representative of those who responded. Several factors may have contributed to lower response rates, especially for district leaders. For example, some subjects were unsure of the relevance of the survey to their roles as district leaders. Several district leaders e-mailed the researcher back, asking if their surveys should be sent to principals instead. This means that either the subjects lacked clarity about what the survey asked or they were not aware of the happenings of the identified schools in the study. It is also important to know that when web survey results are less salient or important to the respondents, response rates tend to be slightly lower (Cook, Heath, & Thompson, 2000). Perhaps certain subjects did not find the potential survey results important, or they were not familiar with the conceptual frameworks (collective mindfulness and instructional

leadership) that generated the specific language present in the survey instruments.

Third, in the case of the PRESS survey, principals were required to self-report. In other words, they were asked to reflect on and respond to their own actions and beliefs related to mindful instructional leadership. One factor to consider is honesty. Some subjects may inflate their responses to bolster their images, especially on matters of instruction. Another factor is response bias. Some respondents may have gravitated to the outer edges of the continuous and frequency scales, while others hovered to the center. It is important to note that the researcher made efforts to combat response bias by reversing questions on the survey. On the PRESS survey for example, nine of the eighteen questions were positively worded, and nine of the questions were negatively worded. A final factor related to self-reporting is the difficulty some respondents may have to be introspective. Subjects, while honest, may lack the ability to reflect accurately on their actions and beliefs.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to describe the research methodology for conducting this study. In the chapter, the researcher first restated the purposes and questions of the study. The researcher then introduced the design of the study, the sampling methods, and the procedures for data collection. In the chapter, the researcher also explained the measurements and instrumentation of the study and described the statistical procedures used to analyze the data. The researcher closed the chapter with a discussion of the research ethics conducted in the study and explained the delimitations and limitations of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Given the continued problems around providing reliable learning outcomes for all students who receive public education, knowledge and skills are needed by district leaders to work with teachers and principals on instructional improvement. At the center of recent school reform efforts in Washington State is a new teacher and principal evaluation system aimed at improving teaching and learning in the classroom. A significant component of the new system is the establishment of language that describes the actions and behaviors of both teachers and principals to improve instruction and student achievement. Inherent in this reform effort is collaborative work among district leaders, teachers, and principals, all centered on common language for improving instruction and leadership. This dissertation was interested in gleaning the insights of district leaders as to what they considered to be current beliefs and practices of teachers for improving classroom instruction. The study also aimed to explore what teachers themselves perceived about the current beliefs and practices of fellow teachers within their schools. In addition, the study intended to examine the alignment between the views of district leaders and teachers within the same system to determine potential implications for practice and research. Finally, the study explored how the length of service as a central office administrator, as well as the instructional leadership of principals, might influence the views of district leaders about teacher beliefs and practices. By examining the views of district leaders and teachers, and by including the principal as a key player in the dynamic and interwoven work between schools and districts, the study hoped to provide guidance for district leaders in Washington State to improve classroom instruction of teachers and instructional leadership of principals. The information gained from this study may provide insights for district leaders as they supervise and

support principals and teachers working together to improve classroom instruction.

This chapter will present the statistical analysis and discussion of the study results. The analysis will address the following purposes: 1) To describe district leader views on collective teacher beliefs and practices for improving instruction; 2) To examine faculty views on collective teacher beliefs and practices related to instructional improvement; 3) To compare and contrast district leader and faculty views on collective teacher beliefs and practices for improving instruction; 4) To describe principals' views on their mindful instructional leadership; 5) To assess the alignment between district leader and faculty views of collective teacher beliefs and practices and years of experience for the district leader; 6) To assess the alignment between district leader and faculty views of collective teacher beliefs and practices and principals' mindful instructional leadership. To report the findings of the study, the chapter is organized as follows. First, descriptive analyses of school, district leader, teacher, and principal variables will be provided. The descriptive analyses address the study's first four research questions. To address the final two research questions, the findings determined by the chi-square analyses will be discussed. Finally, a chapter summary will be provided.

Description of Schools

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) School Report Card database for 2014 was accessed to identify 2097 regular schools in Washington State, excluding alternative education sites, juvenile detention centers, credit recovery and GED programs, and hospitals. A random sample of 184 out of the 2097 schools was calculated. Once the sample was determined, the study intended to assess the views of district leaders who oversee such schools on collective teacher beliefs and practices for improving instruction. Therefore, surveys were sent out to a list of district leaders who represented the sample of 184 schools. Out of the surveys

that were sent to district leaders, 64 responded. Also included in this section is a description of

the 64 schools associated with the district leaders who responded to the survey. The descriptive

analysis provided in this section reports the means, medians, and standard deviations on

variables concerned with student and teacher demographics, as well as student academic

achievement for the randomly selected sample of schools and the schools associated with the 64

district leader respondents. Further, the measures of central tendency and variability from the

184 schools were compared to parameters provided from data on the 2097 schools identified by

OSPI, to check for the sample's representativeness. The same data from the responded schools

(those associated with the district leaders who responded to the survey) are provided for further

comparison.

The variables examined for the 2014 academic year included total enrollment, the percent

of students who received free or reduced lunches, the percent of transition/bilingual students, the

students per teacher, the average years of teacher experience, and the percent of teachers with at

least a Masters degree. In addition, 5th grade state assessment results in reading, mathematics,

and science were examined. Table 3 provides a comparison of the 184 sample schools to the

overall population of 2097 schools in Washington State. The sample schools showed a similar

mean total enrollment of 488 in comparison to the mean total enrollment of 486 in the overall

population of schools. The sample schools had 8.6% more students who received free or reduced

lunches and .7% more transition/bilingual students than the State. In addition, teacher variables

were similar between the sample schools and the State. For example, the average years of teacher

experience was 17.0 for the sample schools and 17.6 for the State, and 74.1% of teachers in the

sample schools earned at least a Masters degree in comparison to 72.5% of the teachers in the

overall State population. While slight differences occurred on some student and teacher

demographic variables, normal distribution occurred throughout, which shows that the 184

sample schools generally resemble the overall population of 2097 schools in the State of

Washington.

Table 3

Comparison of Sample to Population by School Variables

Variable		*N*	*M*	Mdn	*SD*
Total Enrollment	State	2079	486	450	385
	Sample	184	488	428	364
	Responded	64	532	430	401
% Free and Reduced Lunches	State	2079	45	46	27
	Sample	184	54	54	23
	Responded	64	50	50	19
% Transition/ Bilingual	State	2079	9	4	13
	Sample	184	10	4	14
	Responded	64	5	2	8
Students Per Teacher	State	1777	18	18	5
	Sample	174	17	17	6
	Responded	63	18	17	8
Ave. Years of Teacher Experience	State	2070	11	12	5
	Sample	184	12	12	4
	Responded	64	13	13	3
% Teachers With Masters Degree	State	1775	73	71	24
	Sample	172	74	73	22
	Responded	62	80	75	24

To show the comparisons of school achievement data from the sample to the overall State population of schools, Table 4 provides information on the percentage of 5th grade students who met standard in reading, mathematics, and science on state assessments in the spring of 2014. Included in the table are assessment results of the respondent schools, as well. The highest scores for each group of schools occurred in reading, and the lowest scores occurred in mathematics. Mean academic achievement scores for the sample schools on the three 5th grade assessments were similar to State schools. For example, 64.7% of the 5th grade students in both the sample and State schools met standard on the state science assessment. The academic variables were all normal in distribution, showing that the sample of schools generally resembles the larger population. An attempt was made to determine comparisons of similar assessments at the 10th grade level, but the available data was too incomplete to use.

Table 4

Comparison of Sample to State by School Achievement Data

Variable		N	M	Mdn	SD
5th Grade Reading	% Met Standard - State	617	70.2	72.3	15.8
	% Met Standard - Sample	155	72.1	74.2	14.8
	% Met Standard – Responded	41	69.4	71.6	15.0
5th Grade Math	% Met Standard - State	631	61.2	62.3	19.1
	% Met Standard - Sample	160	62.3	63.7	18.2
	% Met Standard - Responded	41	60.2	61.8	17.0
5th Grade Science	% Met Standard - State	1011	64.7	67.2	18.2
	% Met Standard - Sample	280	64.7	67.1	18.2
	% Met Standard - Responded	72	61.0	64.9	19.4

Description of District Leader Data

To address the first purpose of the study, the descriptive analysis turns to examine the district leaders who responded to the survey. Sixty-four district leaders within the sample of schools responded to the *Teacher Improvement Practices and Sentiments* (TIPS). The response rate was also analyzed by school level. Nearly 38% of the respondents presented their views of elementary teachers, while 43.8% reflected on intermediate teacher beliefs and practices, and 18.8% issued responses relevant to secondary school teachers. Of the 64 respondents, 3 failed to complete the demographics section of the survey. Of the 61 remaining district leaders, 20% were female and 80% were male. 92% of the district leaders were white, 3% Hispanic, and fewer than 2% were Asian or Pacific Islander, American Indian or Alaskan Native, and multiracial. Sixty seven percent of the district leaders obtained Masters degrees, and 33% earned Doctorates as their highest degrees. Twenty-six percent of the respondents were in their first three years of central office administration, 41% had between four and ten years of experience, 28% had eleven to nineteen years of experience, and 5% had served for twenty or more years. Forty-three percent of the district leaders had one to four years of experience in their current district, 44% had served in their current district for five to nineteen years, and 13% had worked in their current district for twenty or more years.

To glean the views of central office administrators on the beliefs and practices of their teachers for improving instruction, the 64 district leaders responded to eighteen items on the TIPS survey instrument. Table 5 describes district leader responses to items 1-10 and displays means, medians, and standard deviations by item. The table also includes two important constructs from the literature. The first column highlights the connection of the survey item to

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one of the five tenets of Weick and Sutcliffe's (2001) framework on collective mindfulness. The second column indicates which of the six AWSP Leadership Framework (Kipp et al., 2014) criteria pertain directly to the survey items. The ten items relate specifically to collectively mindful teacher beliefs and ask the subjects to respond to the question, "What percentage of teachers in your school would agree with the following statements." The items included a Likert like scale with the anchors of *a few* (1) through to *almost all* (5). Five of the ten items were reverse coded to address response bias. The items are listed in order from the highest to the lowest median scores to more clearly show which teacher beliefs seem more or less prevalent to district leaders.

District leaders scored the highest on the statement "maintaining order in the classroom is a high priority" (item 5), with 47% of district leaders reporting that almost all the teachers in the selected schools believed that maintaining order in the classroom was a high priority. This particular finding may show that teachers place too much emphasis on standard classroom management approaches and not enough emphasis on the flexibility required for student learning in the classroom (Kearney, Kelsey, & Herrington, 2013) and the advantage of differentiated approaches to meet the unique needs of students (Hoy et al., 2006). In addition, teachers should regularly adapt and change their instruction based on the feedback they receive from informal and formal assessments, especially in order to meet the needs of those students who have not yet mastered the intended learning outcomes. Finally, this finding contrasts with the research on collective mindfulness and preoccupation with failure in that people in mindful organizations avoid routine rules and procedures (Kearney, Kelsey, & Herrington, 2013).

District leaders also scored highly on the statement "students should be responsible for their own learning" (item 1). Thirty-six percent of district leaders shared that almost all teachers

agree that students should be responsible for their learning. This particular finding may mean

that teachers need to hold themselves more accountable for the reliability of student learning.

Too much emphasis placed on learning landing on the shoulders of students themselves contrasts

with the literature on creating a culture of continuous improvement of teaching and learning.

School cultures that lead to improved student achievement focus on improved instruction in

every classroom and throughout the school, so that students learn more effectively and reliably.

To meet the collective commitments developed by the faculty and administration, teachers

themselves work to improve the instruction they provide their students, especially those students

who experience learning difficulties. In addition to best instructional practices for teachers,

studies on instructional leadership recommend that administrators take responsibility for

instructional improvement at the classroom level (Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011) by stimulating

conversations and requiring everyone to engage regularly in instruction and learning. In addition,

collective commitments are made when principals work with teachers to establish, monitor, and

meet student growth goals (Youngs & King, 2002).

In keeping with the focus on teacher responsibility for student learning, it is interesting to

note that district leaders viewed that the majority of their teachers agreed with the next statement,

"With hard work a teacher can get through to even the most difficult student" (item 8). This

particular finding, in contrast to the preceding finding on students should be responsible for their

own learning (item 1), implies that teachers are willing to accept responsibility to meet the needs

of even the most difficult students. Teachers' beliefs regarding this item are more in line with the

literature that describes how in schools that have experienced overall gains in student outcomes

and decreases in achievement gaps, "They saw low achievement for some students, especially

poor and minority students, and they acknowledged poor performance, accepted responsibility,

and began seeking solutions" (Togneri & Anderson, 2003, p. 5). An integral factor in increasing educator responsibility for student outcomes is a commitment to the belief that all students can learn, as well as the belief that public education must end the inequities experienced by underserved students (Brown, 2012; Foster, 2004; Togneri & Anderson, 2003).

The highest variability in district leader responses occurred on parents in this school do the best they can to support their students (item 4), avoidance is a practical way to handle difficult to work with colleagues (item 7), and not enough PLC time is used for improving instruction (item 9). These findings may indicate inconsistencies in how teachers mindfully engage their communities and create cultures of collaboration and shared leadership towards the continuous improvement of teaching and learning. It is also important to note that district leaders perceived that about half the faculty agreed with the statement, "Students' performance and motivation are dependent on their home environment; teachers cannot do much to overcome this" (item 6). This finding may indicate that teachers lack knowledge and skills in engaging the community towards increased student performance and motivation. The faculty may stand to gain much from the research showing that teachers and principals improve teaching and learning through engagement of the greater community by developing and sustaining a shared vision and clear mission (Grissom, Loeb, & Master, 2013; Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011), and by communicating a focus on improved teaching and learning to the greater community. In order to develop engagement from the community around issues of teaching and learning, the principal and teachers must promote shared decision-making and distributed leadership (Copland, 2003; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008), seeking out best ideas from both teachers and parents (Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011).

Table 5

District Leader Views on TIPS Items 1-10 – Collectively Mindful Teacher Beliefs (N =64)

TIPS Survey Item	Factor	*M*	Mdn	*SD*
5) Maintaining order in the classroom is a high priority (reluctance to simplify) [a]	Align Curriculum	4.3	4	0.8
1) Students should be responsible for their learning (reluctance to simplify) [a]	Create Culture	4.2	4	0.9
8) With hard work a teacher can get through to even the most difficult student (commitment to resilience)	Improve Instruction	3.6	4	0.8
4) Parents in this school do the best they can to support their students (reluctance to simplify)	Engage Community	3.5	4	0.9
2) Teachers spend much time on solving student-learning problems (preoccupation with failure)	Close Gap	3.5	4	1.0
3) Participation in PLCs has helped teachers know better their strengths and weaknesses in instruction (preoccupation with failure)	Improve Instruction	3.5	4	1.1
9) Not enough PLC time is used for improving instruction (sensitivity to operations)	Align Curriculum	2.9	3	1.2
6) Students' performance and motivation is dependent on their home environment: teachers cannot do much to overcome this (commitment to resilience) [a]	Engage Community	2.7	3	1.2
7) Avoidance is a practical way to handle difficult to work with colleagues (deference to expertise) [a]	Create Culture	2.6	3	1.2
10) Student data provided to teachers is not useful for developing interventions (preoccupation with failure) [a]	Plan with Data	2.1	2	1.0

[a] Reverse coded item.

Table 6 describes district leader responses to items 11-18 on the TIPS and displays means, medians, and standard deviations. The last eight items ask district leaders to reflect on collectively mindful teacher practices. For items 11-18, district leaders were asked the question,

"How frequent would most teachers say they." District leaders responded by using a scale with the choices of *less than once a month* (1) through to *daily* (6). The items are listed in order from the highest to lowest median scores to more clearly show which teacher practices seem to occur more or less frequently in the views of district leaders.

District leaders reported that their teachers most frequently (2-3 times per week) use checks for understanding (item 15) and next most frequently modify classroom procedures to accommodate struggling learners (item 13). Over 70% of the district leaders indicated that their teachers use some type of formative assessment (item 15) at least 2-3 times per week or more. Nearly 60% of district leaders stated teachers modify and adapt their classroom instruction to accommodate struggling learners (item 13) at least weekly. These responses may show that teachers are perceived to be frequently using strategies to assess student learning problems and may demonstrate that teachers are mindful of potential failures of student learning and their own practices. The finding matches the research on best practices to close achievement gaps. Such research shows that teachers who examine evidence of growth in the learning of all students and of subgroups of students identified as needing improvement then can make the necessary changes in their instruction. To improve achievement for all students, and especially for underserved and marginalized students, teachers should work to improve their instruction, and principals should work to support teachers in the classroom to make such changes (Togneri & Anderson, 2003).

In contrast, district leaders reported that teachers least frequently (2-3 times per month) contribute to school wide instructional decisions (item 12). Such responses suggest that teachers are not being asked to provide their expertise toward decisions that impact classroom instruction. Teacher involvement in school-wide efforts was less than their reported involvement (at least

once per week) in brainstorming with others about ways to get students to standard (item 17).

The most variability in district leader views occurred on modifying classroom procedures for struggling learners (item 13) and colleagues offering praise to unmotivated students (item 18). Such differences in scores may indicate inconsistent approaches throughout classrooms and schools at supporting students who experience learning difficulties.

Table 6

District Leader Views on TIPS – Collectively Mindful Teacher Practices (N = 64)

TIPS Survey Item	Factor	*M*	Mdn	*SD*
15) Use checks for understanding to see where students are in their learning (preoccupation with failure)	Align Curriculum	4.9	5	1.2
14) Share concerns with colleagues about student behaviors or school/teacher practices (preoccupation with failure) [a]	Create Culture	4.5	5	1.2
13) Modify classroom procedures and norms to accommodate struggling learners (reluctance to simplify)	Close Gap	4.1	4	1.6
17) Brainstorm with other teachers about ways to get students to standard (sensitivity to operations)	Close Gap	3.9	4	1.2
11) Talk with students to know what is going on at home (deference to expertise)	Engage Community	3.8	4	1.2
18) Hear colleagues offer praise to unmotivated students (commitment to resilience)	Create Culture	3.8	4	1.6
16) Analyze data to inform their instructional practices (sensitivity to operations)	Plan with Data	3.6	4	1.2
12) Contribute to school wide instructional decisions (deference to expertise)	Improve Instruction	3.4	3	1.3

[a] Reverse coded item.

To further describe district leader views on collective teacher beliefs and practices for improving instruction, items were combined to create factors for analysis. The factors, expressed in Table 7, reflect instructional improvement criteria according to the AWSP Leadership Framework (Kipp et al., 2014). Each factor contained at least two items from the TIPS. For example, parents in the schools do the best they can to support their students (item 3), students' performance and motivation are dependent on their home environment (item 4), and talk with students to know what is going on at home (item 12) comprise the collective mindfulness to engage community factor. Included in the description of the six factors are the reliability coefficients, means, medians, standard deviations, and maximum and minimum scores. The scores represent percentages on a 100% scale. The table shows the lowest mean score of 48.5 on collective mindfulness to create culture. The highest mean score of 72.2 occurred on collective mindfulness to close gap.

Table 7

District Leader Views on TIPS – Collective Mindfulness by Factor

TIPS Factors	α	*M*	Mdn	*SD*	Min	Max
Collective mindfulness to close gap	0.5	72.2	70.6	15.6	41.2	100.0
Collective mindfulness to improve instruction	0.5	68.2	68.8	12.7	43.8	93.8
Collective mindfulness to align curriculum	0.4	64.4	65.6	10.3	43.8	93.8
Collective mindfulness to engage community	0.2	53.5	53.1	11.9	31.3	93.8
Collective mindfulness to plan with data	0.6	51.4	54.5	12.6	27.3	81.8
Collective mindfulness to create culture	0.9	48.5	50.0	8.7	31.8	68.2
Collective mindfulness total score	0.3	59.6	58.7	6.0	46.9	73.5

Based on the factor results, district leaders perceived that their teachers are most mindful in their beliefs and practices associated with closing the achievement gap. This finding may indicate to district leaders that their work with principals will be to continue to build upon the strengths of their teachers to improve instruction and achievement in schools with students from marginalized populations (Leithwood, 1994; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008). District leaders viewed that their teachers are also mindful in their beliefs and practices to improve instruction. Again, district leaders may reflect on such a finding by building on the current strengths through further development of the instructional leadership of principals as they assist staff in using research-based instructional and assessment practices (Honig, 2012; Huggins, Scheurich, & Morgan, 2011; Youngs & King, 2002).

Based on their perceptions that collective mindfulness to create culture was weakest in regards to teacher beliefs and practices, district leaders may want to work with principals on instructional leadership behaviors that help to build professional cultures focused on the continuous improvement of teaching and learning. District leaders may want to emphasize professional development for principals centered on developing and sustaining a shared vision and clear mission (Grissom, Loeb, & Master, 2013; Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011) of improving teaching and learning, engaging teachers and others in essential learning conversations (Hoy, Gage, & Tarter, 2006; Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011; Price, 2012; Wahlstrom & Seashore-Louis, 2008), facilitating collaborative practices (Bryk, Camburn, & Seashore-Louis, 1997; Grissom, Loeb, & Master, 2013; Huggins, Scheurich, & Morgan, 2011; Kruse & Louis, 1997; Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011; Scribner et al., 1999) that center on reflection, commitment to students, and teamwork (Bryk, Camburn, & Seashore-Louis, 1999; Scribner et al., 1999), and creating opportunities for shared leadership that allow for improved teaching and learning throughout all

classrooms (Copland, 2003; Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011; Scribner et al., 1999; Somech, 2005; Tschannen-Moran, 2009; Youngs & King, 2002).

Description of Teacher Data

Of the 184 schools selected for the study, 46 schools had teachers who responded to the TIPS and were matched to district leaders. These data were examined to address the second and third purposes of this study. This particular section will describe teacher responses to the TIPS, as well as compare their responses to those of their district leaders. The survey contained eighteen questions focused on collective teacher beliefs and practices to improve instruction. Table 8 displays teacher responses to the first ten items of the survey, which relate to collectively mindful teacher beliefs. The ten items asked the teachers to respond to the question, "What percentage of teachers in your school would agree with the following statements." Each question asked the teachers to respond by using a Likert like scale with the anchors of *a few* (1) through to *almost all* (5). Four of the ten items consist of negatively worded language to address response bias. The table includes means and medians by item, along with standard deviations. Although scores vary by item, all were approximately normally distributed.

Several key findings present themselves as displayed in Table 8. The highest level of teacher agreement occurred on the statement, "students should be responsible for their learning" (item 1), which addressed reluctance to simplify (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001) and creating a culture (Kipp et al., 2014). This item also resulted in the highest amount of agreement for district leaders. Both groups of respondents seem to agree that teachers place much responsibility on students for their learning, which may indicate that teachers and district leaders need to become more mindful about the complexity of solutions needed to improve student achievement, including the responsibility that teachers and principals hold in facilitating reliable student

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outcomes. Faculty also indicated that most teachers in their schools believed that maintaining order in the classroom is a high priority (item 5). District leaders responded with the same sentiments. Such beliefs about order may show that teachers place undue emphasis on classroom management as opposed to the learning of students in their classrooms (Kearney, Kelsey, & Herrington, 2013) and the advantage of differentiated approaches based on the unique needs of students (Hoy et al., 2006).

The largest discrepancy in views between district leaders and teachers occurred on the statement "parents in this school do the best they can to support their students" (item 4). The score of 2.6 is a feature of the averaging of teacher scores per school. Teachers reported less than about half of their colleagues would agree with the statement, whereas district leaders reported that more than about half of their teachers would agree with the statement. The implication of this particular finding is that misalignment seems to be occurring between what district leaders and teachers perceive as collective teacher beliefs and practices associated with engaging the community to improve teaching and learning within schools. The differences in views may represent the need for district leaders to work with principals to create and sustain strategies that more effectively connect what teachers and parents are doing to partner around the educational attainment of students.

The research on community and family engagement may assist district leaders as they guide and support principals to understand the connection between the school and the community in which students and parents live and develop a genuine partnership between home and school (Kipp et al., 2014). In order to develop engagement from the community around issues of teaching and learning, the principal must promote shared decision-making and distributed leadership (Copland, 2003; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008), seeking out best ideas from

both teachers and parents (Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011). If principals model behaviors that promote true partnerships between the faculty and community, then teachers may be more apt to do the same within the context of their classrooms.

Table 8

Teacher Views on TIPS – Collectively Mindful Teacher Beliefs (N = 46)

TIPS Survey Item	Factor	*M*	Mdn	*SD*
1) Students should be responsible for their learning (reluctance to simplify) [a]	Create Culture	4.3	4.5	0.7
5) Maintaining order in the classroom is a high priority (reluctance to simplify) [a]	Align Curriculum	4.2	4.0	0.8
2) Teachers spend much time on solving student-learning problems (preoccupation with failure)	Close Gap	3.9	4.0	0.7
8) With hard work a teacher can get through to even the most difficult student (commitment to resilience)	Improve Instruction	3.6	3.8	1.0
3) Participation in PLCs has helped teachers know better their strengths and weaknesses in instruction (preoccupation with failure)	Improve Instruction	3.2	3.0	1.1
9) Not enough PLC time is used for improving instruction (sensitivity to operations)	Align Curriculum	3.0	3.0	1.1
6) Students' performance and motivation is dependent on their home environment: teachers cannot do much to overcome this (commitment to resilience) [a]	Engage Community	2.9	3.0	1.1
4) Parents in this school do the best they can to support their students (reluctance to simplify)	Engage Community	2.8	2.6	1.0
10) Student data provided to teachers is not useful for developing interventions (preoccupation with failure) [a]	Plan with Data	2.6	3.0	1.1
7) Avoidance is a practical way to handle difficult to work with colleagues (deference to expertise) [a]	Create Culture	2.2	2.0	1.0

The second section of the survey assessed faculty views on collectively mindful teacher practices. Table 9 displays teacher responses to the last eight items of the TIPS. For items 11-18 subjects were asked the question, "How frequently would most teachers say they…" The

teachers were asked to respond to each question by using a Likert like scale with the choices of *less than once a month* (1) through to *daily* (6). The table shows means and medians by item, along with standard deviations. The eight survey item scores on Table 9 vary in median scores from a low of 2-3 times per month on contribute to school wide instructional decisions (item 12) to a high of 2-3 times per week on use checks for understanding to see where students are in their learning (item 15). Standard deviation scores range from a low of .9 on the statement "use checks for understanding to see where students are in their learning" (item 15) to a high of 1.4 on six items, including the statement "hear colleagues offer praise to unmotivated students" (item 18). Although scores vary by item, all were approximately normally distributed.

Several key findings occurred when analyzing faculty views on collective teacher practices shown on Table 9 below, especially in comparison to district leader views on the same survey items. Like the district leaders, teachers indicated that fellow faculty use checks for understanding to see where students are in their learning (item 15) 2-3 times per week. This finding may mean that teacher practices are in alignment with what the literature discusses as the use of strategies that provide evidence of growth in the learning of all students, as well as subgroups of students identified as needing improvement. For example, Togneri and Anderson (2003) indicate that to improve achievement for all students, and especially for underserved and marginalized students, teachers need to investigate and change their instruction. The use of formative assessment strategies, or continuous checks for understanding, provide teachers with information to help them adapt or create new teaching strategies for students who have not yet attained learning outcomes. Faculty also reported that teachers most frequently (2-3 times per week) share concerns with colleagues about student behaviors (item 14). This particular finding on a negatively worded item shows misalignment with the research behind creating a culture as

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expressed in the AWSP Leadership Framework (Kipp et al., 2014). Research indicates that rather than complaining about or blaming students, school cultures that focus on improved teaching and learning engage teachers and others in essential learning conversations (Hoy, Gage, & Tarter, 2006; Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011; Price, 2012; Wahlstrom & Seashore-Louis, 2008) and center on reflective dialogue, de-privatized practice, team norms, commitment to students, and teamwork (Bryk, Camburn, & Seashore-Louis, 1999; Scribner et al., 1999). School cultures that focus on the improvement of teaching and leaning also schedule regular collaborative teacher meetings and use such meetings to focus teachers on becoming reflective about their practices, getting them to question such practices (Huggins, Scheurich, & Morgan, 2011).

Teachers also agreed with district leaders when they reported that their peers modify classroom procedures to accommodate struggling learners (item 13) 2-3 times per week. This particular improvement practice matches the literature on teachers using data to adapt their instruction in meaningful ways (Doll et al., 2005; Huggins, Scheurich, & Morgan, 2011; Wayman et al., 2012; Wayman & Stringfield, 2006). Checks for understanding provide the information teachers need to inform their instructional practices. Additionally, the use of formative assessment requires modifications and adaptations to instructional practices in order to assure reliable student outcomes. This finding also relates to the research on closing achievement gaps. For example, in Togneri and Anderson's (2003) study of the seven essential factors in improving instruction and achievement, the first is to acknowledge that achievement gaps exist and to do something about such gaps. The views of teachers indicate that their peers are indeed doing something, in this case 2-3 times per week, about achievement gaps for struggling students.

Finally, district leaders and faculty also agreed that teachers in their schools least

frequently (only 2-3 times per month) contribute to school wide instructional decisions (item 12). This particular view from teachers and district leaders connects to the literature on distributed leadership. The research shows that school cultures centered on improving teaching and learning garner input from teachers to solve problems and to learn through collaboration (Somech, 2010). Such school cultures promote personal and team empowerment (Somech, 2005) and seek out best ideas from teachers (Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011). Principals also help establish school culture by valuing and practicing distributed leadership to solve complex problems associated with instruction and student outcomes (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008). This particular finding may indicate that school leaders stand to rely more on the expertise of classroom teachers to improve instruction (Hoy, Gage, & Tarter, 2006).

In response to the low frequencies of teacher contributions to school wide instructional decisions, district leaders may want to support principals in their own capacities to create school cultures that honor shared leadership approaches to improve teaching and learning. Central office administrators may want to rely on instructional leadership scholarship to determine professional development for their principals. Potential areas of growth include principals making sure all staff are involved in matters of teaching and learning, attending to conflict avoidance and the balance between organizational and individual learning needs, and keeping the professional dialogue focused on instructional improvement (Kruse & Louis, 1997; Scribner, Hager, & Warne, 2002). Additionally, district leaders may want to work with and guide principals to realize that school leaders must be willing to flex on their traditional roles (Copland, 2003) and build trust to improve teacher-principal relations around the improvement of instruction (Hoy, Gage, & Tarter, 2006; Tschannen-Moran, 2009). Finally, district leaders may want to advise and assist principals with placing increased value on distributed leadership practices to solve

complex problems associated with instruction and student outcomes (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008).

Table 9

Teacher Views on TIPS – Collectively Mindful Practices (N = 46)

TIPS Survey Item	Factor	*M*	Mdn	*SD*
15) Use checks for understanding to see where students are in their learning (preoccupation with failure)	Align Curriculum	5.1	5.4	0.9
14) Share concerns with colleagues about student behaviors or school/teacher practices (preoccupation with failure) [a]	Create Culture	4.8	5.0	1.4
13) Modify classroom procedures and norms to accommodate struggling learners (reluctance to simplify)	Close Gap	4.7	5.0	1.4
18) Hear colleagues offer praise to unmotivated students (commitment to resilience)	Create Culture	4.3	4.5	1.4
16) Analyze data to inform their instructional practices (sensitivity to operations)	Plan with Data	4.0	4.0	1.4
17) Brainstorm with other teachers about ways to get students to standard (sensitivity to operations)	Close Gap	4.0	4.0	1.3
11) Talk with students to know what is going on at home (deference to expertise)	Engage Community	3.9	4.0	1.4
12) Contribute to school-wide instructional decisions (deference to expertise)	Improve Instruction	2.8	3.0	1.4

[a] Reverse coded item.

To further describe faculty views on collective teacher beliefs and practices for improving instruction, items on the survey were synthesized for factor analysis. At least two survey items comprised a single factor to express collective mindfulness (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001) and instructional improvement criteria according to the AWSP Leadership Framework

(Kipp et al., 2014). For example, student data provided to teachers is not useful for developing interventions (item 10), use checks for understanding to see where students are in their learning (item 15), and analyze data to inform their instructional practices (item 16) comprised the collective mindfulness to plan with data factor. All item responses according to specific factors were added together and divided by the number of respondents to create an average score. For schools with more than one teacher respondent, scores were averaged to derive a single school score. Multiplying the average item scores by 100 resulted in overall percentage scores.

Table 10 represents such percentages scores and show means and medians, along with standard deviations and minimum and maximum scores by factor. The 46 respondents expressed a wide range of views. For example, a range of >50% on minimum and maximum scores occurred on three of the seven factors (collective mindfulness to improve instruction, collective mindfulness to close gap, and collective mindfulness to engage community). The lowest mean score of 47.3 and median score of 47.7 occurred on collective mindfulness to create culture, and the highest mean score of 75.8 and median score of 79.4 occurred on collective mindfulness to close gap. The lowest variability in scores ($SD = 5.9$) occurred on collective mindfulness total, and the highest variability ($SD = 16.0$) occurred on collective mindfulness to close the gap. Again, all scores by factor were normally distributed.

When comparing and contrasting the factor analyses of teacher and district leaders, several key findings emerged. Both groups had the highest mean scores ($M = 72.2$ and 75.8 respectively) on collective mindfulness to close the gap, which may indicate that collective efforts in their schools may be occurring to address achievement gaps. The lowest mean scores of both groups ($M = 48.5$ and 47.3 respectively) occurred on collective mindfulness to create culture, which may mean that further work is needed to develop collaborative processes and

shared leadership structures and practices aimed at improving teaching and learning. The largest discrepancy in scores between the groups occurred in relation to collective mindfulness to plan with data. District leaders indicated a mean score of 51.4, while teachers indicated a mean score of 60.1. The difference in perceptions may represent the need for agreements on what constitutes the appropriate use of data to inform instruction and provide meaningful interventions for students.

Table 10

Teacher Views on TIPS by Factor

TIPS Factors	α	*M*	Mdn	*SD*	Min	Max
Collective mindfulness to close gap	0.6	75.8	79.4	16.0	41.2	100
Collective mindfulness to improve instruction	0.6	64.5	62.5	15.7	31.3	93.8
Collective mindfulness to align curriculum	0.4	63.8	62.5	8.9	43.8	81.3
Collective mindfulness to plan with data	0.5	60.1	63.6	11.6	36.4	81.8
Collective mindfulness to engage community	0.6	53.0	51.6	10.8	18.8	75.0
Collective mindfulness to create culture	0.6	47.3	47.7	7.9	27.3	65.9
Collective mindfulness total score	0.3	60.1	60.2	5.9	41.8	70.9

Description of Principal Data

In order to address the fourth purpose of the study, this section describes the self-reported views of principals on their mindful instructional leadership. From the sample of 184 schools, 23 principals responded to the *Principal Resilience for Educator and Student Success* (PRESS), including 8 female and 15 male principals. Principal respondents were 96% white and 4% multiracial. Thirty percent of the respondents served for seven or less years as principals, while 48% have been principals for eight to fifteen years, and 22% have served as principals for

sixteen years or more. Four of the principals did not provide any demographic information.

The PRESS tool measured the mindful behaviors and beliefs of principals to lead instructional improvements. This section will first describe principals' views on their own mindful instructional leadership behaviors and then describe principals' perceptions of their own mindful instructional leadership beliefs. Table 11 describes principal responses to PRESS items 1-10, which assess their mindful instructional leadership behaviors. Each of the ten items asked the principal to respond to the prompt "how frequently do you" by using a 4-point Likert like scale with the anchors of *rarely* (1) to *very often* (4). Measures of variability and central tendency were calculated, including means, medians, and standard deviations. The items are listed in order from the highest to lowest median scores to show the frequency of mindful instructional leadership behaviors.

Of the ten items, the 23 principals reported that they very often look for signals when talking with students (item 4), which may indicate that principals feel they are mindfully engaging their students as key members of the community. Paying attention to signals from students may serve as a form of monitoring instructional practices throughout their schools. The information gained by the principals may lead to the development of a common language around instruction and better principals' understanding of professional development needs of teachers.

Principals also reported a high level (also nearing very often) of expressing empathy to teachers who experience difficulties (item 3). This particular finding may relate to research from Davis et al. (2005), who suggest that instructional leadership demands that principals support high-quality teaching in all classrooms, including those in which teachers need additional support. In addition, the research shows that teachers are more open to talking about instruction when they have trust in their principal (Hoy, Gage, & Tarter, 2006; Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011;

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Price, 2012; Wahlstrom & Seashore-Louis, 2008), and trust is enhanced when the principal

shows empathy towards teachers and addresses poor performance (Youngs & King, 2002).

Table 11

PRESS Items Related to Behaviors (N=27)

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

[a] Negatively worded questions to limit response bias.

Table 12 describes responses to PRESS items 11-20, which assessed their mindful instructional leadership beliefs. Each of the ten items asked the principal to respond to the statement "to what degree do you agree with the following statements" by using a 5-point Likert like scale with the anchors *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). Measures of variability and central tendency were calculated, including means, medians, and standard deviations. The items are listed in order from highest to lowest median scores to show the level of agreement principals have with certain mindful instructional leadership beliefs.

The 23 principals most agreed with the statement "ask a lot of questions when they meet with parents and students" (item 16), indicating that the 23 principals believe they mindfully engage their communities. This particular finding matches the research from Bryk et al. (2010), who identified family and community involvement as one of four key elements of support of student learning. Parents and the community are not left out of discussions and problem solving related to improving instruction. Instead, parents and the community are genuinely viewed and treated by the principal and teachers as partners in the education of all students. Thus, school leaders are expected to develop school capacity in family and community involvement to improve student achievement.

The principals also expressed the most agreement with the statement "know what needs to be done to improve the performance of students" (item 19). This particular finding may show that principals are not being mindful of the importance of engaging teachers and others in essential learning conversations (Hoy, Gage, & Tarter, 2006; Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011; Price, 2012; Wahlstrom & Seashore-Louis, 2008) around teaching and learning, rather than relying on what they consider to be their own expertise. In addition, principals may not be responding mindfully to the benefits of collaborative practices built on mutual commitments to students and

teamwork (Bryk, Camburn, & Seashore-Louis, 1999; Scribner et al., 1999). Lastly, perhaps principals are not being mindful to the types of behaviors that engage the greater community, such as students and parents, towards improved performance of students. District leaders might find it beneficial to support principals with professional learning experiences in order to develop their capacities to involve other key stakeholders in instructional improvement efforts. The research is clear that schools focused on continuous improvement of teaching and learning create and sustain systems, structures, and processes that are collaborative and reflective in nature ((Bryk, Camburn, & Seashore-Louis, 1999; Scribner et al., 1999) and establish distributed leadership practices that result in shared accountability for reliable student outcomes.

Finally, principals reported the least agreement on the statement "my first impressions in classrooms are frequently wrong" (item17), which may indicate that principals are not being mindful to the complexities of teaching and learning. Their beliefs may not be in line with the research that shows improved instructional practices come from consistent monitoring, feedback, and reflection on classroom instruction, rather than independent and isolated classroom observations that lead to compulsory and surface-level conversations. Cycles of feedback and reflection can be empowering to teachers by revealing teachers' strengths and weaknesses and providing targeted professional development (Youngs & King, 2002). The principals may also not mindfully realize that their understanding of any given environment around them is contextual and comes from an iterative process centered on the exploration of new knowledge (Hoy et al., 2006; Kearney et al., 2013). First impressions can actually result in mindless interpretations of events and circumstances, reducing themselves to limited knowledge at one point in time. Just as with best practices of research methods, initial classroom observational data gained by principals must be confirmed or denied through the use of multiple measurements to

assess their reliability and validity.

Table 12

PRESS Items Related to Beliefs (N = 27)

PRESS Survey Items	Factor	*M*	*Mdn*	*SD*
11) Treat similar student infractions in a consistent way (reluctance to simplify) [a]	Create Culture	4.2	4	0.6
19) Know what needs to be done to improve the performance of students (deference to expertise) [a]	Improve Instruction	4.0	4	0.6
18) When a student insults me, I stop so he or she can calm down (commitment to resilience)	Engage Communities	3.9	4	0.8
16) Ask a lot of questions when I meet with parents of students (deference to expertise)	Engage Communities	3.8	4	0.6
13) Compliance is a big part of my job (reluctance to simplify) [a]	Align Curriculum	3.7	4	1.0
12) School's achievement data reflects what students have learned (reluctance to simplify)	Close Gap	3.6	4	0.9
15) I dwell on what I could have done better when teachers don't improve (preoccupation with failure)	Improve Instruction	3.4	4	0.9
14) Parents are dismissive of school's responsibilities for all students (reluctance to simplify) [a]	Engage Communities	2.5	2	0.9
20) When teachers react defensively to criticism, I ignore their reactions (deference to expertise) [a]	Create Culture	2.3	2	0.8
17) My first impressions in classrooms are frequently wrong (sensitivity to operations) [a]	Plan with Data	2.0	2	0.7

[a] Negatively worded questions to limit response bias.

To further describe principal views on their mindful instructional leadership, items on the survey were synthesized for factor analysis, as shown on Table 13. At least two survey items comprised a single factor to express mindfulness (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001) and instructional leadership criteria according to the AWSP Leadership Framework (Kipp et al., 2014). All item

responses according to specific factors were added together and divided by the number of

respondents to create an average score. Multiplying the average item scores by 100 resulted in

overall percentage scores. Included in the description of the seven factors are means, medians,

standard deviations, and minimum and maximum scores. Alpha reliability scores are also

provided on the table. Scores by principals were not consistent on the factors as expected given

the AWSP framework. The limitations around reliability may have occurred because the items

considered relevant to the criteria of the AWSP framework may cover concepts related to other

issues. Another reason for the low reliability of scores may relate to the wording of the questions,

which may not fully match the mindfulness and instructional leadership constructs. Further

development of the survey instrument is called for.

The table shows that principals scored themselves highest ($M = 70.4$) on mindfulness to

engaging the community. Based on the factor results, principals perceived that they are most

mindful in their behaviors and beliefs associated with engaging the community. This finding may

indicate to district leaders that their work with principals will be to further build upon the

strengths of their principals in working with parents, students, and the greater community to

improve teaching and learning for all students.

In contrast, principals scored themselves lowest ($M = 50.2$) on mindfulness to planning

with data. In this case, district leaders may want to work with principals on using data to improve

instruction. District leaders may consider focusing on those practices identified in the scholarship

to guide the support they provide principals, including recognizing and seeking out several

sources of data to determine how students are learning, analyzing and interpreting multiple data

sources, implementing data-driven plans for improving teaching and learning (Johnson &

Chrispeels, 2010; Kerr et al., 2006), using data to set clear and measurable goals (Wayman et al.,

2012; Wayman & Stringfield, 2006), and providing data that is timely, valuable, and presented in a user-friendly manner to teachers in order to inform their daily practice.

Table 13

PRESS Factors (N = 27)

	a	M	Mdn	SD	Min	Max
Engaging Community	0.3	70.4	73.3	7.2	60	87
Aligning Curriculum	0.1	63.3	61.5	8.6	46	77
Creating Culture	0.1	62.8	61.1	9.3	44	83
Improving Instruction	0.3	62.0	63.6	5.8	50	73
Closing the Gap	0.1	59.5	61.5	10.1	38	85
Planning with Data	0.1	50.2	44.4	12.1	33	78
MIL	0.3	62.2	62.2	3.3	54	68

Chi-square Analysis

This next section addresses the final two purposes of the study. To investigate whether the alignment of district leader and faculty views on collective teacher beliefs and practices is related to the years of experience of the district leader, a chi-square analysis was conducted. Assumptions were checked and were met. The variable for the difference between district leader views of teacher collective mindfulness and teacher perceptions of their collective mindfulness was recoded as a dichotomous variable. Scores of 1 indicate that district leaders scored higher or lower than teachers (i.e., 6 to 18 and -6 to -21) and scores of 2 indicate agreement or alignment between the two groups (i.e., 5 to -5). Two equal groups were created. The variable of years of experience of the district leader was recoded as a nominal variable, resulting in three equal groups or categories. Novice district leaders (scored as 1) possessed 0 to 6 years of experience, while administrators with intermediate experience of 7 to 10 years were scored as a 2 and district

leaders with 11 or more years of experience were coded as 3 to indicate their status as veteran administrators. Three district leaders did not indicate their years of experience and were given the median score of 8 years, placing them in the middle category.

The following analysis reports the chi-square statistic using years of experience and alignment between district leader and teacher views of collective mindfulness. Pearson chi-square results indicated that the years of experience of district leaders are statistically significant on whether or not their views align with teachers on collective mindfulness ($\chi2 = 6.69$, $df = 2$, $N = 45$, $p = .035$). No cells had expected counts of less than 5. This means that the analysis met a key condition of the chi-square test. Finally, the symmetric measures of effect size for the years of district leader experience and alignment between district leader and teacher views on collective mindfulness were calculated. Cramer's V, which can be interpreted as equivalent to a correlation coefficient reflecting the degree of association between the variable years of experience for the district leader and the variable district leader and teacher alignment, was .368. Operational definitions for interpreting the ES of x^2, as suggested by Cohen (1992) are as follows: $ES = 0.10$ (small), 0.30 (medium), and 0.50 (large). Thus, Cramer's V of .368 is of moderate practical importance, which means that the effect is noticeable to the naked eye. In other words, as years of district leader experience increase so too are they better able to assess teacher practices and beliefs.

To investigate whether the alignment of district leader and faculty views on collective teacher beliefs and practices differ based on principal's mindful instructional leadership, a chi-square analysis was conducted. Assumptions were checked and were met. The variable for the difference between district leader views of teacher collective mindfulness and faculty perceptions of their collective mindfulness was recoded as a dichotomous variable. Scores of 1

indicate that district leaders scored higher or lower than teachers (i.e., 6 to 18 and -6 to -21) and scores of 2 indicate agreement or alignment between the two groups (i.e., 5 to -5). The variable of principals' mindful instructional leadership was also recoded as a dichotomous variable. Principals whose mindful instructional leadership (MIL) scores were between 54 and 61 were categorized as the low mindfulness group and those principals whose scores ranged from 62 to 68 were placed in the high mindfulness group.

The following analysis reports the chi-square statistic using principals' mindful instructional leadership and alignment between district leader and teacher views of collective mindfulness. Pearson chi-square results show that principals' mindful instructional leadership is not significantly associated with whether or not district leaders' views align with teachers on collective mindfulness ($\chi2 = .048$, $df = 1$, $N = 23$, $p = .827$). It appears that no matter how mindful principals are in their instructional leadership, they are not able to translate that understanding to their district leaders. District leaders appear to be less influenced by what their principals tell them about what is happening in the schools they supervise and more reliant on their experience. The implications of this particular finding may relate to research that recommends the encouragement of principals to work with district leaders on matters of instruction (Leithwood, 2010).

One of the major premises of the literature review is the need for principals and district leaders to work in partnership with teachers to improve instruction. Key to this arrangement is the relationship of the principal and district leader. Continuous professional learning and development of principals are essential in improving leadership in our schools and their abilities to improve instruction, create shared leadership and collaborative processes with teachers in their schools, and promote high expectations for student learning (Spanneut, Tobin, & Ayers, 2012).

The district leader plays a critical role in providing assistance and support to the principal so that such development occurs. This finding shows the potential need for increased alignment between principal and district leader perceptions of effective instructional improvement practices.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided the statistical analyses and discussions of the study results. The analyses addressed purposes of the study by describing district leader and faculty views of collective teacher beliefs and practices for improving instruction. Comparisons and contrasts were made between district and teacher perceptions, and principals' views on their own mindful instructional leadership behaviors and beliefs were described. Finally, the chapter assessed the relationship between district leader and faculty views on collective teacher beliefs and practices and two nominal variables, the number of years of experience for district leaders and the principals' mindful instructional leadership.

The statistics for school demographics, including student, teacher, and student achievement variables, showed general similarities between the sample of schools and regular public schools derived from the OSPI report card. Therefore, the study's sample of schools can be said to generally resemble the population of regular schools in Washington.

This inquiry focused on two constructs: collective mindfulness and instructional improvement. Validity and reliability measures were taken to assure that the *Teacher Improvement Practices and Sentiments* (TIPS) and *Principal Resilience for Educator and Student Success* (PRESS) survey instruments provided accurate and consistent measures of the two theoretical frameworks outlined in the literature review: Weick and Sutcliffe's (2001) five tenets of collective mindfulness (preoccupation with failure, reluctance to simplify, sensitivity to operations, commitment to resilience, and deference to expertise) and the AWSP Leadership

Framework (Kipp et al., 2014) criteria associated with instructional improvement (creating a culture, planning with data, aligning curriculum, improving instruction, engaging the community, and closing the gap).

The survey results point out several key findings. First, district leaders scored certain TIPS factors more strongly than others. District leaders perceived that more teachers in their schools possess mindful beliefs and demonstrate mindful practices centered on closing the achievement gap of students, improving instruction, and aligning curriculum. Such findings may indicate that teachers are more cognizant of these particular instructional improvement strategies. Conversely, district leaders perceived that fewer teachers believe in and practice collective mindfulness as it relates to planning with data and creating a culture. These two particular instructional improvement practices may need additional attention and development. District leaders may want to focus specifically on the criteria of planning with data and creating a culture when they support principals and their professional development and collaborative opportunities as instructional leaders.

When analyzing specific survey items, district leaders seemed to think that most of their teachers believe in maintaining order in the classroom. This finding contrasts with the research on collective mindfulness and preoccupation with failure in that people in mindful organizations avoid routine rules and procedures (Kearney, Kelsey, & Herrington, 2013). District leaders also perceived that most of their teachers hold their students responsible for their own learning. The research on collective mindfulness highlights the need for people to see and explore as many details as possible about complex issues, such as student learning problems. Educators, for example, need to avoid simple solutions and expose themselves to multiple possibilities (Hoy et al., 2006). District leaders also viewed that half of their teachers believe that students' motivation

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and performance is dependent on their home environment and that teachers cannot do much to overcome this dependence. This finding may point to the need for continued work around mindfully engaging the community, especially given that some studies show that successful schools include positive relations between parents, teachers, and the principal, aimed at mutual support of students (Teddlie & Stringfield, 1993). In addition, Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, and Easton (2010) identified family and community involvement as one of four key elements of support of student learning.

On specific items related to mindful teacher practices, 70% of the district leaders expressed that their teachers use checks for understanding to see where students are in their learning 2-3 times per week or daily, and 60% of the district leaders indicated that their teachers modify classroom procedures and norms to accommodate struggling learners one time per week. Both of these items relate to preoccupation with failure and reluctance to simplify and show that their teachers may be alert to small errors (Bellamy et al., 2005) in student learning before they result in failures. Using formative assessment strategies and modifying classroom procedures and norms may detect and adapt responses to errors early before they evolve into major problems (Stringfield, Reynolds, & Schaffer, 2008), for example student outcomes as measured on summative assessments. These strong scores contrasted with district leader views related to teacher contributions to school wide instructional decisions. District leaders most often indicated that such contributions occur only 2-3 times per month. This finding points to the contention in the literature on collective mindfulness that structures are put in place to allow all members of the organization to contribute to reliability, and problems are solved by listening to experts, like teachers, at all levels of the system (Hoy, 2002; Hoy & Sweetland, 2001). Finally, increased variability of district leader scores occurred on items related to modifying classroom procedures

for struggling learners and colleagues offering praise to unmotivated students. Such findings point to the need for consistent application of mindful approaches for teachers to understand and address the learning problems of struggling students and develop strategies to discover and persist in response to student errors in their learning.

Teacher views on the TIPS also point to key findings. Many similarities occurred between teacher and district leader scores on the factors that express both collective mindfulness and instructional improvement constructs. Like district leaders, teachers scored highly on collective mindfulness as it relates to closing the gap, improving instruction, and aligning the curriculum, and teachers scored collective mindfulness and creating a culture as the lowest factor. Upon analyzing items relevant to collective teacher beliefs, teacher respondents agreed with district leaders that almost all teachers feel that students should be responsible for their own learning and that maintaining order in the classroom is a high priority. Again, such findings may point to an over-emphasis placed by teachers on standard operating procedures and the need for more mindful approaches centered on flexibility and responsiveness. Regarding beliefs, teachers responded that less than half of their teachers believe that parents in the school do the best they can to support students. Teacher respondents differed on this item from district leaders, who indicated that most of the teachers believe in this sentiment. This finding points to the need for further agreement between district leaders and teachers as they enlist community engagement in matters of teaching and learning.

In contrast, similarities between teacher and district leader views occurred on items that addressed collective teacher practices. Both groups perceived that teachers in their schools use checks for understanding, share concerns with their colleagues, and modify classroom procedures to accommodate struggling learners between once and 2-3 times per week. Teachers

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also agreed with district leaders that teachers in their schools contribute to school wide

instructional decisions only 2-3 times per month. The development of strategies to increase

shared leadership practices and collaborative processes are certainly warranted.

Because principals work closely with teachers to improve instruction, it is important to

note the views of principals as they assessed their own mindful instructional leadership behaviors

and beliefs. Two key findings seemed to emerge from the principals' responses on items related

to behaviors. First, principals noted that they most frequently look for signals when talking with

students about how they are feeling, which may demonstrate commitment to resilience. They

also indicated that they give directives to teachers or students who have repeatedly messed up.

This finding suggests that principals may not be fully alert to the complexities of the problems

that teachers and student experience and may want to rely on alternative solutions, rather than

directives. When reflecting on their beliefs, principals responded that they most agree that they

ask a lot of questions when they meet with parents and students. This finding suggests that

principals may be engaging the community by listening to the expertise of students and parents.

Principals also agreed that they treat similar student infractions in a consistent way and know

what needs to be done to improve the performance of students. Both of these findings point to

the need for principals to open their minds to alternative solutions, rather than rely on one-size-

fits-all approaches. By gleaning creative solutions to problems from teachers and students, and

relying less on their own knowledge and expertise, principals may create cultures more adept at

improving instruction.

In relation to factors that associate mindfulness with instructional leadership, principals

scored differently than did district leaders and teachers. Principals viewed that they are most

mindful in their instructional leadership behaviors and beliefs associated with engaging the

community. In contrast, principals considered themselves less mindful as instructional leaders when it comes to planning with data to improve teaching and learning. Such findings point out what principals consider to be their strengths and weaknesses and provide direction for district leaders as they consider the support and guidance needed by principals.

Finally, the chapter assessed the relationship between district leader and faculty views on collective teacher beliefs and practices and two nominal variables, the number of years of experience for district leaders and principals' mindful instructional leadership. The findings from the chi-square analyses were discussed. The Pearson chi-square results indicated that the years of experience of district leaders were statistically significant on whether or not their views align with teachers on collective mindfulness ($\chi2 = 6.69$, $df = 2$, $N = 45$, $p = .035$). Conversely, Pearson chi-square results indicated that the principal's mindful instructional leadership was not associated with the degree of alignment between district leader and teacher views on collective mindfulness ($\chi2 = .048$, $df = 1$, $N = 23$, $p = .827$).

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

As student failure continues to occur in schools, and as achievement gaps persist in the face of increased accountability reform efforts, the role of the district leader is changing. After three decades of focusing on the school and the classroom, policy makers and researchers now understand that schools are part of district organizations. Therefore, it is important to study the relationships among district leadership, teachers, and principals to improve instruction (Johnson & Chrispeels, 2010). While instructional improvement efforts have comprised part of district leaders' work in the past, increased responsibility placed on central offices by accountability measures and community expectations, combined with more rigorous performance standards for principals and teachers, establishes the need for new knowledge and skills by district leaders to lead collective efforts to improve teaching and learning. District leaders need support in their work to lead instructional improvements system-wide. In response, necessary adjustments in professional learning are required to support district leaders in meeting these new challenges. Part of such professional learning is to develop new understandings of how district leaders, teachers, and principals think and work together to improve reliability of student outcomes.

The need for district involvement in instructional improvement efforts to secure the reliability of student outcomes has been demonstrated through research (Honig, 2008). Educational research over the past two decades has revealed practices of central office leaders that lead to successfully closing achievement gaps between students of different groups (Leithwood, 2010). Yet, there remains much room for growth given current outcomes in student achievement. Educational administrators at both the district and building level stand to learn valuable lessons from scholarship concerned with organizing for high reliability, particularly that

related to mindfulness which has been identified to explain how organizations operate in reliable and accountable ways (Hoy, 2002). In examining the literature, it is apparent that researchers are investigating mindfulness at both the individual and organizational levels for classroom teachers and building principals as they strive to improve student learning outcomes (Hoy et al., 2006; Lyons, 2014). While such inquiry is important, it leaves unaddressed district level efforts identified in research as critical to supporting, aligning, and developing the instructional capacity within schools necessary for change.

Previous attempts at inquiry have also not addressed two important levels of systemic instructional improvement efforts. First, previous research attempts have not examined the connection between collective mindfulness and teacher instructional practices. As the work of educators is re-conceptualized through various reform efforts, teachers are being asked to work together to mindfully address student-learning needs. Yet their beliefs and practices about such work have not been measured using a concise tool. Second, the role of central office support of principals in nurturing their teachers is noted in literature; however, little is known about the accuracy of district leader perceptions of teacher beliefs and practices concerned with improving opportunities for student learning. Further, since information from the school to central office is channeled through building administrators the strengths and weaknesses of the instructional leadership of principals may influence the views of supervisors who are charged with providing support. Other variables can also be seen associated with the perceptions of district leaders about the collective mindfulness of teachers, including the length of their experience in central office administration and the instructional leadership shown by the principal. In summary, what is missing in the literature is a fuller examination of how collective mindfulness informs the interwoven and aligned work of district leaders, teachers, and principals towards system-wide

instructional improvement.

Knowledge and skills are needed by district leaders to work with teachers and principals on instructional improvement efforts. Given this general purpose, the study attended to educators and schools in Washington State. At the center of recent school reform efforts in the State is a new teacher and principal evaluation system. A significant component of the new system is the establishment of language that describes the actions and behaviors of both teachers and principals. Much of the language, expressed as evaluative criteria, centers on improving classroom instruction and student achievement. Inherent in this reform effort is collaborative work among district leaders, teachers, and principals. Understanding the guidance that district leaders in Washington State need to improve classroom instruction of teachers and instructional leadership of principals is of utmost importance. The information gained from this study may then inform district leaders in their support of principals and teachers working together to improve classroom instruction.

For these reasons, the purposes of this study were as follows:

1) To describe district leader views on collective teacher beliefs and practices for improving classroom instruction.

2) To examine faculty views on collective teacher beliefs and practices related to instructional improvement.

3) To assess the relationship between district leader and faculty views on collective teacher beliefs and practices for improving instruction.

4) To describe principals' views on their mindful instructional leadership.

5) To examine the relationship between the alignment of district leader and faculty views on collective teacher beliefs and practices and years of experience for the district leader.

6) To examine the relationship between the alignment of district leader and faculty views on collective teacher beliefs and practices and principals' mindful instructional leadership.

The following chapter provides a conclusion for the dissertation. The chapter is divided into four sections. Following this introduction, the second section of the chapter, a brief overview of the study, including the review of literature and research methods, is presented. Section three provides a summary of the study's key findings. Finally, implications for practice and recommendations for further research and professional development are presented.

Literature Review and Research Methodology

Chapter two, the literature review, provided the background for understanding the salient issues relevant to the study's research problems and purposes. The review of previous scholarship first focused on the essential role the principal plays in improving instruction and the subsequent adaptations of the district leader's role to support the principal in such endeavors. The background for the study began by providing a brief description of instructional leadership as relevant to the principalship. Following this presentation, a more extensive treatment of scholarship was offered on how superintendents and central office administrators have been found in research to garner improvements in classroom instruction through support of principals. Embedded in this discussion were a number of personal and professional characteristics that were seen as salient or influential to the success of this work. Finally, the study background examined mindfulness literature to explore organizational functions and cognitive processes aimed at the improvement of reliability. Included in the discussion were several characteristics that positively influence the thought patterns and responses of people inside and outside of education working towards reliability in collective settings.

Chapter three provided a detailed explanation of the research methodology used to

conduct the study. The study's procedures for selecting and gathering data from administrators and teachers in the state followed a multiphase strategy. First, because no instruments existed that measured collective teachers' instructional improvement beliefs and practices, as well as principals' mindful instructional leadership, the researcher, along with four others, developed the surveys used in the study after an extensive review of literature related to collective mindfulness, instructional improvement practices, and instructional leadership. Following careful crafting of questions and responses and field-testing, the *Teacher Improvement Practices and Sentiments* (TIPS) was developed for teachers and was used to measure teacher and district leader views on collective teacher beliefs and practices to improve instruction. *Principal Resilience for Educator and Student Success* (PRESS) was also developed for principals and assessed self-reported perceptions on their mindful instructional leadership. Both surveys were uploaded to an online survey platform called Qualtrics for data collection.

In the second phase of the design, techniques were followed to create the sampling frame for Washington schools in order to conduct a cross-sectional design to gather perceptions from district leaders, teachers, and principals about collective mindfulness and instructional improvement. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) School Report Card database for 2014 was used to generate the sampling frame. The OSPI database identified public schools across the state by type. Alternative education sites, juvenile detention centers, credit recovery and GED programs, and hospitals were eliminated to form the population of 2097 public regular schools. McNamara's (1994) formula for determining sample size was used to calculate the number of schools in the sample. Once schools were randomly sampled, five teachers from each building, the principal, and the central office administrator for the school were selected. Selected respondents were then sent via email access to one of two surveys.

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District leaders and teachers were sent access to the TIPS, and principals were given access to the PRESS.

Procedures were followed for tracking district leader, teacher, and principal responses by school. Non-respondents were contacted a second and third time to provide assurances of confidentiality, study merit, and nurture respondent interest. To ensure the requirements of the sample size were met, response activity was monitored throughout the process. In districts where more than one school was identified, only one school was randomly selected. The district leader responsible for supervising and evaluating the principal of the chosen school was sent an invitation to participate.

In the third phase of the study, data in Qualtrics from district leaders, teachers, and principals were downloaded and merged with school data provided by OSPI, including student and teacher demographics, as well as student achievement data. One hundred eighty-four schools were drawn to make up the random sample used for the study. The representativeness of the sample was analyzed using descriptive statistics, including means, medians, and standard deviations.

Descriptive analyses on the variables and factors were performed for the TIPS, PRESS, and school data to assess the distribution of the various scores using measures of central tendency and variability. Missing data for each respondent was replaced using the median response. Teacher responses per building were averaged to create one collective teacher score per school. The descriptive analyses answered the first four research questions. Chi-square statistics were performed for the nonparametric analysis to address the final two research questions. For the nonparametric analyses, the dependent variable of the study was the difference in district leader and faculty views on collective teacher beliefs and practices to improve

instruction, and the independent variables were the number of years of experience for the central office leader and principals' self-reported views on mindful instructional leadership.

Key Findings

Because of the representative random selection process for determining study subjects, the research findings from the study can be said to generally infer to regular public schools in Washington State. To check for the sample's representativeness, measures of central tendency and variability from the 184 schools were compared to parameters provided from data on the 2097 schools identified by OSPI. The variables examined for the 2014 academic year included total enrollment, the percent of students who receive free or reduced lunches, the percent of transition/bilingual students, the students per teacher, the average years of teacher experience, and the percent of teachers with at least a Masters degree. Descriptive analysis of the data confirmed that means and standard deviations on selected student, teacher, and achievement variables met the parameters for the State's regular school population.

To address the first purpose of the study, the descriptive analysis of the sample of 184 schools examined the district leaders who represented such schools. 64 district leaders within the sample of schools expressed their views on collective teacher beliefs and practices for improving instruction by responding to the *Teacher Improvement Practices and Sentiments* (TIPS) survey. Based on analysis conducted to assure validity and reliability, the TIPS instrument provided accurate and consistent measures of the two theoretical frameworks outlined in the literature review: Weick and Sutcliffe's (2001) five tenets of collective mindfulness (preoccupation with failure, reluctance to simplify, sensitivity to operations, commitment to resilience, and deference to expertise) and the AWSP Leadership Framework (Kipp et al., 2014) criteria associated with instructional improvement (creating a culture, planning with data, aligning curriculum,

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improving instruction, engaging the community, and closing the gap).

District leader survey results pointed out several key findings. District leaders indicated increased teacher agreement and frequency on certain factors and decreased teacher agreement and frequency on other factors. District leaders considered collectively mindful beliefs and practices associated with closing the achievement gap to be in most agreement and occur most frequently with their teachers. Item analysis indicates that nearly 83% of the district leaders felt that their teachers spent much time on solving student-learning problems. This particular item emphasized what mindfulness scholars would consider preoccupation with failure by focusing on mistakes to avoid major failures (Kearney, Kelsey, & Herrington). In addition, 63% of the district leaders perceived that their teachers modify classroom procedures and norms to accommodate struggling learners from 2-3 times per week to daily. According to their district leaders, teachers demonstrate reluctance to simplify by avoiding a reliance on repetition. Finally, 69% of the district leaders indicated that their teachers brainstorm with other teachers about ways to get students to standard. This practice may mean that teachers work closely to solve student problems by being sensitive to matters of teaching and learning (Hoy et al., 2006).

The high scores on mindfulness and closing the gap support the research that shows in order to address achievement gaps, teachers, principals, and district leaders must first recognize that gaps exist and then demonstrate an action-orientation to resolve such gaps. Teachers recognize achievement gaps through continuous progress monitoring in the form of multiple assessment strategies. Based on the information gained by effective assessment strategies, teachers adapt or create new instructional approaches to meet the unique learning needs of students. They develop their skills at addressing gaps in student learning through constant self-reflection and collaboration with their colleagues, including principals. Continued support from

district leaders is needed in working with principals to develop professional cultures aimed at removing achievement gaps in schools.

Conversely, district leaders considered collectively mindful beliefs and practices associated with creating a culture to be in least agreement and happen least frequently with their teachers. Analysis of associated items shows that 82.9% of the district leaders indicated that most or almost all of their teachers believe that students should be responsible for their own learning. The implication from this particular finding is that people in organizations who operate with mindfulness fight the urge to provide simple answers to unpredictable problems (Hoy, 2002). Instead of placing the responsibility on students, mindfulness encourages reflection from teachers to better understand all aspects of the problem, avoid simple solutions, and expose themselves to multiple reasons why the problem exists (Hoy et al., 2006). By being mindful to the responsibility they, as teachers, hold for student learning, the reliability of outcomes stands to improve. Nearly 60% of district leaders also reflected that teachers hear colleagues offer praise to unmotivated students at maximum once per week and at minimum less than one time per month, while only 15% of the district leaders indicated that teachers hear colleagues offer praise daily. This particular item implies that teachers may stand to become more committed to resilience, especially as they work with students who experience problems in their learning. Resilience occurs when teachers develop the strategies to discover and persevere in response to errors that are part of the natural learning experiences of their students.

The low scores on collective mindfulness and creating a culture may be informed by the research in education leadership on creating a culture of continuous improvement of teaching and learning. Schools with these types of cultures have teachers and principals who develop and sustain a shared vision and clear mission (Grissom, Loeb, & Master, 2013; Louis & Wahlstrom,

2011) for improving student outcomes, use collaborative practices (Bryk, Camburn, & Seashore-Louis, 1997; Huggins, Scheurich, & Morgan, 2011; Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011) that center on reflective dialogue, de-privatized practice, team norms, commitment to students, and teamwork (Bryk, Camburn, & Seashore-Louis, 1999; Scribner et al., 1999), and create opportunities for shared leadership (Copland, 2003; Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011; Scribner et al., 1999; Somech, 2005; Tschannen-Moran, 2009; Youngs & King, 2002) to solve teaching and learning problems.

To address the second and third purpose of the study, teacher views on the TIPS also pointed to key findings. Like district leaders, faculty considered collectively mindful beliefs and practices associated with closing the achievement gap to be in most agreement and occur most frequently with their fellow teachers. When reflecting on the beliefs of their colleagues, teachers responded that more than half believe they spend much time on solving student-learning problems. Teachers also reported that their colleagues modify classroom procedures and norms to accommodate struggling learners and use checks for understanding to see where students are in their learning 2-3 times per week. Such findings may demonstrate that teachers are often thinking about problems and potential failures and that teachers are trying new strategies to solve student problems.

Like district leaders, teachers indicated that collective mindfulness and creating a culture resulted in the least agreement and happened least frequently with their teachers. When assessing the beliefs of their colleagues, teachers responded that most or almost all believe that students should be responsible for their own learning. Again, this finding implies that teachers may be acquainting simple solutions to the complexities of student learning problems, rather than accepting their own responsibilities to educate their students.

To address the third purpose of the study, descriptive analysis was conducted on

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principals' views on their own mindful instructional leadership. Two key findings seemed to emerge from the principals' responses on items related to behaviors. First, principals noted that they most frequently look for signals when talking with students about how they are feeling, which may demonstrate commitment to resilience. They also indicated that they give directives to teachers or students who have repeatedly messed up. This finding suggests that principals may not be fully alert to the complexities of the problems that teachers and student experience and may want to rely on alternative solutions, rather than directives. When reflecting on their beliefs, principals responded that they most agree they ask a lot of questions when they meet with parents and students. This finding suggests that principals may be mindfully engaging the community by listening to the expertise of students and parents. Principals also agreed that they treat similar student infractions in a consistent way and know what needs to be done to improve the performance of students. Both of these findings point to the need for principals to open their minds to alternative solutions, rather than rely on one-size-fits-all approaches. By gleaning creative solutions to problems from teachers and students, relying less on their own expertise, principals may create mindful cultures more adept at improving instruction.

Finally, to address the last two purposes of the study, nonparametric analyses were conducted to assess the relationship between district leader and faculty views on collective teacher beliefs and practices and two nominal variables, the number of years of experience for district leaders and the principals' mindful instructional leadership. The findings from the chi-square analyses are discussed here. The Pearson chi-square results indicated that the years of experience of district leaders were statistically significant on whether or not their views align with teachers on collective mindfulness ($\chi2 = 6.69$, $df = 2$, $N = 45$, $p = .035$). Cramer's V of .368 showed that while the association between years of district leader experience and alignment of

district leader and faculty views of collective teacher beliefs and practices for improving

instruction is statistically significant, it also has moderate practical significance. This means that

the effect of years of experience of district leaders on their views of collective teacher beliefs and

practices is an effect worth giving attention. This finding demonstrates the importance that

experience plays in helping district leaders understand what is occurring in classrooms to

improve instruction for students and leads to two major considerations from a practical

standpoint. First, if experience helps district leaders more clearly understand the current state of

affairs in schools around instructional improvement efforts, then supports are certainly needed

for those district leaders with less experience to improve their understanding of efforts to

improve teaching and leaning. Second, given that new district leaders often immediately

supervise and evaluate principals, how might understanding of teacher practices and beliefs, or

lack thereof, influence the support principals receive from more novice district leaders?

Professional development efforts are called for to support novice district leaders as they prepare

to supervise, support, and guide principals' instructional leadership.

Additionally, Pearson chi-square results indicated that principals' mindful instructional

leadership was not statistically significant on whether or not district leaders' views align with

teachers on collective mindfulness ($\chi 2 = .048$, $df = 1$, $N = 23$, $p = .827$). This finding also has

practical implications. Given the emphasis in the literature on the importance of the relationship

between district leaders and principals to improve instruction, this finding shows instead a

possible disconnect between what principals are saying and doing about their instructional

leadership and the perceptions of district leaders about the practices and beliefs of their teachers

around instructional improvement. The finding implies one of several conclusions. First, perhaps

the district leaders and principals are not talking regularly about matters of teaching and learning.

Second, the district leaders and principals may not possess common understanding of what constitutes best instructional improvement and leadership practices. Finally, district leaders and principals may have different experiences in working with teachers in the selected schools. The interpretations of what is happening with teachers may be different because of the context in which each leader works with teachers. For each possible consideration, the implication for practice is that continued emphasis must be placed on the collaborative work of district leaders and principals to lead instructional improvement efforts. As district administrators are called to transform their roles to support and develop a district-wide teaching and learning focus (Honig, 2008), the relationship with the principal is of utmost importance. Because this strand of research also suggests that improving principals' instructional leadership practices involves supporting principals in their continuous efforts to improve classroom instruction (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPoint, Meyerson, & Cohen, 2005), rather than just evaluating principals' efforts to improve instruction or telling principals how to do such work (Leithwood et al., 2004), it will be important to continue to focus on the development and use of common language to understand and improve teaching and learning. Principals and those district leaders who support and supervise them must each focus keenly on what is going on within classrooms to improve teaching and learning. Increasing mutual understanding by district leaders and principals of the beliefs and practices of teachers may lead to more targeted professional development and resource allocation, as well as more effective collaboration that leads to improved instructional leadership.

Implications for Further Research

The study initially faced three significant delimitations, all related to sampling. First, due to the nature of the sample, generalizations beyond the state of Washington cannot be made. As

such, the results should be viewed as descriptive and nonparametric for Washington district leaders, teachers, and principals, which may not be representative of educators in other states. Second, because of the nature of the sample, generalizations beyond public schools and districts cannot be made. As such, the descriptive and nonparametric results may not be representative of other education contexts, such as private and charter schools. Third, due to the sampling frame, generalizations beyond basic education schools cannot be made, thus results may not be representative of alternative learning education settings, including juvenile detention centers, credit recovery and GED programs, and hospitals. Due to such delimitations, further research in the area of collective mindfulness on improving instruction may be extended to other states, other types of schools, such as private and charter schools, and alternative education settings.

Furthermore, the study only described student, teacher, and achievement variables. Because of the theoretical connections of collective mindfulness to High Reliability Organizations (HROs), opportunities for future research exist to examine the relationship of collective mindfulness for improving instruction and reliable student outcomes. The testing and development of theory pertaining to changes in student performance may provide insights into necessary changes to assist district leaders, teachers, and principals in achieving student outcomes commensurate with federal and state mandates. For example, given the persistent achievement gaps experienced in districts and schools, further research stands to explore how collective mindfulness for improving instruction may inform the work of educational leaders and teachers in closing achievement gaps.

Additionally, research that uses other variables could be pursued to explore relationships. The focus of this study on district leader, teacher, and principal perceptions opens the doors to additional research using perceptual data. For example, the study only described views on

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collective mindfulness as it relates to six of the eight AWSP Leadership Framework criteria. Given the relevancy of the study to Washington State, perhaps educational leaders may be interested in exploring perceptions on the other two principal evaluative criteria: ensuring school safety and managing resources.

Finally, the methodology of the study, namely the development of two instruments that measure constructs of collective mindfulness and instructional improvement and leadership practices, also presents opportunities for further study. Researchers interested in survey methodology may expand on or revise the tools to examine various constructs and content relevant to education leadership. Improved strategies to increase response rates, a limitation of this particular study, may also be explored as important components of the methodology used for further research.

Professional Development and Impact

Mindfulness should play an important role in the collective work of district leaders, teachers, and principals as they strive to provide reliable learning outcomes for each and every student. The five tenets of collective mindfulness (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001) should help district and school administrators in their efforts to improve teaching and learning. The scholarship on mindfulness is especially relevant and timely as principals and central office administrators develop their knowledge and skills in working with teachers to improve their classroom practices and to assess their beliefs about instruction. While instructional improvement efforts have comprised part of district leaders' work in the past, increased responsibility placed on central offices by accountability measures and community expectations, combined with more rigorous performance standards for principals and teachers, establishes the need for new knowledge and skills by district leaders to lead collective efforts to improve teaching and learning.

Intentionally embedded in the study is the examination of collective mindfulness as it relates to actions and behaviors codified in the AWSP Leadership Framework (Kipp et al., 2014). This examination provides solid theoretical grounds upon which to create professional development offerings in Washington State. Perhaps the Association of Washington School Principals itself may read the study to determine its applicability to existing or new professional learning opportunities for superintendents, district leaders, and principals. The original intent of the research was to produce usable information for practitioners, as well as to add to existing research on mindfulness and education leadership. The most compelling consumers for this study may be Washington district leaders who support and evaluate principals, especially considering the explicit connections to the language of principals' performance criteria and the suggestions that principals and district leaders may be experiencing misalignment in their understanding of current practices that lead to the improvement of teaching and learning. Special attention may also be given to novice district leaders, given that years of experience had a noticeable effect on central office administrators' understanding of what was going on in classrooms and schools to improve instruction.

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Pre-Survey E-Mail to District Leaders

Dear NAME:

We would like to invite you to participate in a very important survey about instructional leadership in Washington's schools.

One of the top priorities in K-12 education today is to provide support for principals in developing high-quality teachers. We are serious about this priority, and we ask for your help to guide our efforts.

In about a week, you will get an email asking you to participate in the *Teacher Improvement Practices and Sentiments (TIPS)* survey.

The survey asks for your opinions on a range of topics, such as classroom management, collaboration, and student motivation. 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.

We will report the results, so you will be able to see and discuss the overall findings. You will also have the opportunity to view data collected from teachers within your schools and district, as well as from principals, superintendents, and central office leaders across the state, in order to assess next steps for your own professional practice.

Washington State University will administer the survey, analyze the data, and prepare the reports. **WSU routinely works with confidential data and will respect and protect your identity.** The survey data will be stored in a secure location, and results will NOT include any information that personally identifies you (e.g., your name, school, district, etc.). Results will only be reported in summary form – in no case will it be possible to determine an individual's identity. Your supervisor will never see any individual responses to the survey.

Your participation is completely voluntary, but we hope you take the time to share your opinions. For results to be the most 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 Dr. Gordon Gates, gates@wsu.edu. Thank you in advance for sharing your opinions with us. We look forward to analyzing and sharing the results in our continuous efforts to improve education within our state.

Sincerely,
NAMES / TITLES

Survey E-Mail to District Leaders

Dear NAME:

Recently I sent you an invitation to participate in an important study of instructional leadership in our state. As a fellow school district leader, I know you are bombarded by e-mail and many other tasks. I often receive surveys myself, and I typically toss them in the trash of my e-mail. I am asking that you take just a few minutes to complete the survey below. I really appreciate your time.

The survey takes less than 10 minutes to complete for most participants, and we hope the results will provide valuable insights into instructional leadership practices in our schools and districts. I am excited about the potential of what this data and study can tell us. With just a few minutes of time you can add your voice and perceptions about your district's schools to our growing bank of research.

As promised in our previous emails, your identity will remain confidential. Both you and your district were selected for participation in this study. This is not a blanket e-mail going to all district administrators across our state. As a result it is very important that we solicit your input.

I have worked as a teacher, principal, and now as an assistant superintendent in the state of Washington. As a practitioner I know the important contribution this study will provide to our work in serving our students. I am confident that with your participation we will be able to provide insight and direction to many issues we grapple with as educators. I believe that our work will have a place in upcoming conferences and publications. The power of this message, however, is contingent upon your participation.

I humbly ask that you take a few minutes to complete the survey below.

LINK

Thank you so much,

Ken Russell
Assistant Superintendent
Mead School District
Doctor of education student at Washington State University

P.S. *Completion of the survey enters you into a drawing for a Starbucks gift card!*

Follow the link to opt out of future e-mails: Click here to unsubscribe

Follow-up Email to Non-respondent District Leaders

Dear NAME:

Happy Holidays!

A couple of weeks ago, I sent you an invitation to participate in an important study on instructional practices of teachers. I am writing to ask you humbly if you may be willing to take a few minutes of your time to answer 20 brief questions. The questions focus on what you perceive or know about teacher practices in *Name of School*. I am gathering these data for my dissertation and will use the results to help identify ways that district leaders may help support principals in their instructional leadership efforts in Washington State schools.

***Teacher Improvement Practices and Sentiments* can be accessed by following the link:** Take the TIPS

As promised in my previous e-mails, your identity and the identity of your district will remain confidential. I would greatly appreciate your opinions.

Thank you so much for your consideration,

Ken Russell
Assistant Superintendent
Mead School District
Doctor of Education student at Washington State University

P.S. *Completion of the survey enters you into a drawing for a Starbucks' gift card!*

Follow the link to opt out of future e-mails: Click here to unsubscribe

Survey E-mail to Teachers

Dear Name:

One of the top priorities in K-12 education today is effective 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 practices in Washington's schools. The *Teacher Improvement Practices and Sentiments (TIPS)* survey will take less than 3 minutes of your time, which we know 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.

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

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

We will report the results, so you'll be able to see and discuss the overall findings for your school, as well as from teachers 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 responses or identity.

In addition, to show our appreciation **all respondents will be entered into a drawing for a $25 gift card**. For results to be most 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 the ongoing effort by educators to improve teaching and learning 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
Follow the link to opt out of future e-mails: Click here to unsubscribe

Survey E-mail to Non-respondent Teachers

Dear Name:

One of the top priorities in schools today is effective instruction. We are serious about this priority – and we need your participation to understand teacher practices in Washington's schools. The *Teacher Improvement Practices and Sentiments (TIPS)* survey will take less than 3 minutes of your time.

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

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

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 and that of your school.**

To show our appreciation **all respondents will be entered into a drawing for a $25 gift card**. For results to be most 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 at gates@wsu.edu. Thank you in advance for sharing your opinions with us.

Sincerely,

Gordon Gates, Professor, Washington State University
Teena McDonald, Clinical Assistant Professor, Washington State University

Follow the link to opt out of future e-mails: Click here to unsubscribe

Appendix F

2nd Survey E-mail to Non-respondent Teachers

Dear Name:

One of the top priorities in schools today is effective instruction. We are serious about this priority – and we need your participation to understand teacher practices in Washington's schools. The *Teacher Improvement Practices and Sentiments (TIPS)* survey will take less than 3 minutes of your time.

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

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

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 and that of your school.**

To show our appreciation **all respondents will be entered into a drawing for a $25 gift card**. For results to be most 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 at gates@wsu.edu. Thank you in advance for sharing your opinions with us.

Sincerely,

Gordon Gates, Professor, Washington State University
Teena McDonald, Clinical Assistant Professor, Washington State University

Follow the link to opt out of future e-mails: Click here to unsubscribe

Appendix G

<u>Survey E-mail to Principals</u>
Dear Name:

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

Follow the link to opt out of future e-mails: <u>Click here to unsubscribe</u>

Second Survey E-mail to Principals

Dear Name:

We want to know how your practice reflects components of the AWSP Leadership Framework. Please complete the *Principal Resilience for Educator and Student Success (PRESS)* survey, which will take less than 3 minutes of your time. Your responses will remain confidential.

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, as well as enter your name in a drawing for a $25 gift card.

If you have any questions about this request, please feel free to contact Gordon Gates at gates@wsu.edu.

Sincerely,

Gordon Gates, Ph.D., Professor, Washington State University
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, Principal, Retired

Follow the link to opt out of future e-mails: Click here to unsubscribe

Third Survey E-mail Invitation to Principals
Input on Leading ${e://Field/School} Requested

Dear Name:

Recently you received an invitation to participate in an important study on instructional leadership. As a principal myself, I know you are bombarded with such requests. Often, I have good intentions about sharing my opinion, but then get busy with other things. I suggest you respond right now, as it will take less than 3 minutes of your time to answer a few 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 ------- and -------- 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,

Josh Meek
Principal
Moses Lake High School
Ed.D. Educational Leadership Candidate, Washington State University

Follow the link to opt out of future e-mails: Click here to unsubscribe

TIPS Mapped to Mindfulness and AWSP Framework

TIPS Items	Mindful	AWSP
5) Maintaining order in the classroom is a high priority	Simplify	Curriculum
9) Not enough PLC time is used for refining instruction	Operations	Curriculum
15) Use checks for understanding students learning	Failure	Curriculum
2) Teachers spend much time solving students' learning problems	Failure	Gap
13) Modify classroom procedures for struggling learners	Simplify	Gap
17) Brainstorm with others about ways to get students to standard	Operations	Gap
1) Students should be responsible for their learning	Simplify	Culture
7) Avoidance is a practical way to handle difficult colleagues	Expertise	Culture
14) Share critical comments about school and colleagues	Failure	Culture
18) Hear colleagues offer praise to unmotivated students	Resilience	Culture
4) Parents in this school do the best they can to support their students	Simplify	Community
6) Students' motivation and performance is dependent on their home	Resilience	Community
11) Talk with students to know what is going on at home	Expertise	Community
10) Student data provided to teachers is not useful for interventions	Failure	Data
16) Analyze data to inform their instructional practice	Operations	Data
8) A teacher can get through to even the most difficult student	Resilience	Instruction
3) PLCs help teachers to know better their strengths and weaknesses	Failure	Instruction
12) Contribute to school-wide instructional decisions	Expertise	Instruction

PRESS Mapped to Mindfulness and AWSP Framework

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

8) Feel tension before meeting that involves conflict with staff	Resilience	Instruction
19) Know what needs to be done to improve the performance of students	Simplify	Instruction