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The Differences Between the Instructional Leadership Practices of Georgia Reward Highest Performing, Georgia Reward Highest Progress, and Georgia Needs Improvement Elementary Schools

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THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES OF GEORGIA REWARD HIGHEST PERFORMING, GEORGIA REWARD HIGHEST PROGRESS, AND GEORGIA NEEDS IMPROVEMENT ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this quantitative study was to investigate principals' self-perceptions of their instructional leadership practices in Georgia Reward Highest Performing, Georgia Reward Highest Progress, and Georgia Needs Improvement elementary schools. As such, this causal-comparative study was conducted to determine if differences existed between the instructional leadership practices of principals and school success in the designations of schools as perceived by the principals implementing them in high poverty schools. The sample of this study consisted of Georgia elementary school principals in Title I elementary schools, specifically in the categories of Georgia Reward Highest Performing, Georgia Reward Highest Progress, and Georgia Needs Improvement elementary schools. Hallinger's (1983) Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) was utilized to assess the three dimensions of the instructional leadership construct. A series of Kruskal-Wallis ANOVAs were conducted to determine if the mean differences between the principal instructional leadership practices of Georgia Reward Highest Performing, Georgia Reward Highest Progress, and Georgia Needs Improvement elementary schools, as perceived by principals, were significantly different in reference to Defining the School Mission, Managing the Instructional Program, and Developing

the School Learning Climate Program. A significant difference did not exist, but other information was gained in the study on principal instructional leadership.

INDEX WORDS: Principals' perceptions, Principal instructional leadership, Georgia, Leadership practices, Elementary, Improvement, Performing, Progress, Hallinger, High poverty, High performing, Low performing

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (Pub. L. No. 107–110), (No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2002), reauthorized in 2015 as Every *Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)*, was implemented across the United States (US) with two major goals. Goal one was to close the achievement gap between students of privilege and students with lesser means, and goal two was to place greater emphasis on accountability. Under NCLB (2002), accountability meant that the student population as a whole be tested, including student subgroups such as English Language-learners (ELLs), special education students, students of racial minority, and students from low-income families. NCLB (2002) further mandated tests in reading and math be administered in grades three through eight and once in high school (GA DOE, 2014). In addition, the federal government was responsible for providing technical assistance and the necessary resources to local educational agencies (LEA) to ensure that all children receive a high-quality education. A modification to this procedure was enacted with the passing of Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015) as the law seeks to allow states to develop plans that address standards, assessments, school and district accountability, and assistance for struggling schools and students (GA DOE, 2014).

At its inception, NCLB (2002) was acknowledged as an effort to combat the "growing 'achievement gap' between White and African American students … left unaddressed for far too long" (US DOE, 2006, p. 1). According to Konstantopoulos and Hedges (2008), the federal government was intent on closing the achievement gap; reporting that the time to close the Black-White gap in reading could take between 30 and 50 years and between 75 and 100 years to

close the gap in science and math. Subsequently, NCLB (2002) established many provisions aimed to lessen the disparities between Black and White student achievement (Beck & Muschkin, 2012). Yet, in spite of all the federal mandates and provisions, economic disparities still exist due to the number of US students living in poverty.

Based on the U.S. Census Bureau's 2015 estimates, the official poverty rate was 13.5%. This means an estimated 43.1 million Americans fell below the poverty line. Of the 43.1 million Americans living in poverty, the poverty rate for children under the age of 18 was 19.7%; the child poverty rate was among the highest of the most affluent nations in the world (Smeeding et al., 2016). According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2015), one out of five children living in the United States was at or fell below the poverty line (Proctor et al., 2016). At the same time and according to the U.S. Census Bureau (2015), Georgia's poverty level was even higher at 25% when accounting for students under 18.

While the educational environment under ESSA (2015) still calls for every student to succeed, research has shown that low socio-economic students (SES) continue to fall behind their peers. Morgan et al. (2009) found that children who come from low-SES families and communities develop academic skills more slowly when compared to students from higher SES groups, due in part to schools' limited ability to service the individual needs of these students. Aikens and Barbain (2008) emphasized that low-SES students come from communities that are under-resourced and as a result, schools cannot offer students the same educational opportunities. Further, Aikens and Barbain (2008) posited that when students are not adequately prepared, the community at-large is negatively affected. The students' options are limiited to choice of colleges because of their background, and students from lower SES families often have higher rates of not finishing college because of missed skills previousy not taught. The students return

to their communities having to find lower paying occupations. Conversely, students who receive a good education are in a stronger position to acquire different aspects of important life outcomes, including employment, higher SES, good health, and a better quality of life (Bellibaş, 2015). As a result, students who do not receive a high-quality education are at a disadvantage, and therefore, do not experience equality of opportunity in this regard. Schoon et al. (2012) have offered that it is no surprise that a status of low-SES, poor educational opportunities, and under-resourced schools are inextricably linked to an increase in the achievement gap among students

Edmunds (1979) proclaimed over forty years ago that, "Inequity in American education derives first and foremost from our failure to educate the children of the poor" (p. 15). Even with federal and state laws in place to improve the educational outcomes for low-SES students, the ever-increasing number of families living below the poverty level continues to outweigh the efforts made. The needs of these students must be addressed to make sure the achievement gaps do not increase.

Background

Since the implementation of NCLB (2002), accountability for student achievement has been the norm. Under NCLB (2002), the accountability system was a measurement of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) (GA DOE, 2014) and was determined by students' assessment results. Based on yearly performance data, Georgia developed a statewide accountability system by the name of College Based and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI). Even with accountability measures in place, the state of Georgia has seen a significant year-to-year decrease in elementary school scores (GA DOE, 2018), and data show the decrease is related to the missed bonus point opportunities for meeting the needs of the economically-disadvantaged and ELLs. Moreover, schools that serve predominantly low-SES students, known as Title I Schools, receive federal

funds through the US DOE with the goal of helping ensure that all children meet challenging state academic content and student achievement standards (GA DOE, 2018); yet, the achievement gap for low-SES students continues to widen. In addition, it must be noted that with the attainment of federal funds comes additional responsibility and scrutiny; the accountability measures demand production by the schools' leaders.

Accountability Measures

Effective Title I programs are expected to implement effective practices for improving student achievement and include support for parental involvement. Subsequently, school leaders are evaluated as to how effective their leadership practices are that have been put in place, as well as their instructional designs and decisions for classroom implementation. The school CCRPI formula has been adjusted to account for the success of the instructional processes put in place by the leader (GA DOE, 2018). Additionaly, the CCRPI weights have been revised to incentivize and reward student growth and progress towards student proficiency based on the state's higher expectations associated with the Georgia Milestones Assessment System (GA DOE, 2018).

To ensure effective leadership in Georgia, the state introduced a measurement system to evaluate schools' leaders (Ga DOE, 2013). Designed for building leader effectiveness and ensuring consistency and comparability throughout the state, the Leader Keys Effectiveness System (LKES) was implemented to measure leader effectiveness. This system was slightly revised in 2018 and has four dimensions: *Leader Assessment on Performance Standards, Student Growth, School Climate Survey, and Combination of Additional Data* (GADOE, 2018). Although a dearth of research studies has been conducted concerning LKES, the limited research

is still important to examine since LKES is a prominent component of educational accountability in the state of Georgia.

Based on stringent accountability requirements, researchers maintain that instructional leadership is no longer an option, but a non-negotiable for school leaders (Murphy, 2008; Silva et al., 2011). Hallinger and Murphy (2012) concurred that effective leadership must include active, skillful, instructional leadership from the administrators and teachers. The leaders of the school cannot have a passive role in the improvement of student achievement. From a synthesis of literature, principal instructional leadership has been shown to have the strongest empirically verified impact on student learning assessment (Hallinger, 2015). Leadership is seen as the number one factor for the improvement of district schools (Leithwood & Sleegers, 2006).

Solutions for Educational Achievement

Because the ultimate goal for the state of Georgia is to improve the educational achievement for its students, solutions can be found. The state of Georgia Academic Achievement Awards Program honors and rewards P-12 Title I Schools and school districts for significant progress in improving student achievement and making significant progress in closing the achievement gaps (GA DOE, 2014). Schools have the ability to be Highest Performing Reward Schools (GRH-Performing), the High Progress Reward Schools (GRH-Progress), and Georgia Needs Improvement Schools (GNI).

Highest Performing Reward Schools (GRH-Performing) are the top 5% of the Title I Schools in the state. These schools receive this nomination based on the achievement of the "All Students" group in reference to the proficiency on statewide assessments (GA DOE, 2014). The testing is used to gather data in preparation for calculating the content mastery indicator on the CCRPI. The "Meets" and "Exceeds" rate is calculated per subject area. Schools receive points

based upon the “Meets” and “Exceeds” rate. The schools receiving this honor are the schools performing at the highest level and providing all students with the best education possible. This further indicates that the leadership principles are in place and are setting the schools up for success.

High Progress Reward Schools (GRH-Progress) are among the highest 10% of the Title I Schools in the state. The schools are given this distinction based upon the achievement of the “All Students” group in terms of proficiency on the statewide assessments (GA DOE, 2014). The key identifier in this category is Student Growth Percentiles for the calculation progress on the school CCRPI (GA DOE, 2014). The “Progress” component of CCRPI represents 25 points of the 100-point total. The leaders of the school are evaluated as showing progress in the development of the students.

Georgia Needs Improvement schools (GNI) are given the distinction because they are among the lowest 10% of Title I schools in the state that have a subgroup or subgroups with low achievement (GA DOE, 2014). While GNI elementary schools are not part of the rewards program, for purposes of this study they are included as one of the three categories due to the Title I designation. The state examines the size of the gap and the extent to which it is closing or not closing, and these are factors in the CCRPI Achievement GAP calculations (GA DOE, 2014). The leadership for these schools has increased interventions and supports provided by the state in an effort to exit the needs improvement status. It is here that LKES plays a critical role as a means to evaluate leadership for schools that need the strongest leaders.

GRH-Performing and GRH-Progress Schools have garnered the attention of researchers in the field. Spires (2015) researched the principal instructional leadership in Georgia’s high-poverty elementary schools to examine the differences in the principal instructional leadership

practices between GRH-Performing and GRH-Progress Schools as perceived by the elementary school teachers. The schools included in the study were the highest performing Title I Schools in the state. By administering a survey to elementary school teachers, the study allowed for the researcher to focus on the different areas of leadership and make conclusions about the leaders based upon teacher perceptions. Findings from data analysis showed that two of the three instructional categories demonstrated a significant difference in teachers' perceptions of principal instructional leadership practices in GRH-Performing and GRH-Progress elementary schools (Spires, 2015). The instructional leadership categories of *Defining the School Mission* and *Managing the Instructional Program* showed a significant difference in teachers' perceptions of principal instructional leadership systems between GRH-Performing and GRH-Progress elementary schools (Spires, 2015). The third instructional leadership category was *Developing the School Learning Climate* and findings for this category did not demonstrate a significant difference of principal instructional leadership practices between GRH-Performing and GRH-Progress elementary schools based upon teacher perceptions (Spires, 2015). However, the study does provide perceptional information about instructional leadership from participants directly in relationship with principals and serves as a springboard for additional research.

As experts in the field continue to point to the critical role instructional leadership has in the improvement process, it is vital to examine the importance of instructional leadership and the role the principal plays in supporting the teaching and learning environment within an organization (Gurley et al, 2015). To state succinctly, the leadership in the GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress, and GNI elementary schools should be examined to determine similarities and differences among the high-performing schools regarding the effective guidelines the leaders put in place for the success of students in the most need. This study addressed this need.

Statement of the Problem

Due to the increasing number of students living in poverty, the achievement gap continues to widen between students of privilege and students who are low-SES. The process of determining SES is often measured as a combination of education, income, and occupation. One's socioeconomic status is an important indicator because it has been shown that SES can provide access to resources, opportunity, and power, or a lack thereof. Studies have suggested that living in low-income households during early childhood is connected to lower-than-average academic performance that starts in kindergarten and extends through high school; thus, leading to lower rates of school completion. Subsequently, district superintendents of increasing poverty areas are seeking leaders who have the ability to reach low-SES students. Federal laws have placed a significant focus on school systems and their leaders. Leadership is seen as the number one factor for the improvement of district schools. Moreover, leadership to improve learning in high-poverty areas is under intense scrutiny and the principles and the strategies to improve student outcomes with their classroom teachers are analyzed for effectiveness.

While studies have been conducted in the interest of high-poverty, high-performing schools, an area of focus that still needed further attention was to compare and contrast elementary school principals' self-perceptions of their instructional leadership practices between GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress and GNI elementary schools. Georgia is a unique place that offers the need for more research due to the increasing demands of the state to establish and implement new standards and guidelines for showing growth in student achievement. Leadership practices are important considerations for school improvement because the leader's role for school improvement is vital for sustained success.

Purpose Statement

The number of Title I Schools is increasing across the state of Georgia due to the increase in low-SES students who receive an education in Georgia's public schools. Studies have shown that these students are less likely to be successful in their educational life in spite of the fact that Title I Schools receive special funding to allow leaders to promote an environment of equal opportunity for the students (Aikens & Barbain, 2008; Morgan et al., 2009). Because students are expected to show gains in academic achievement every year, the focus on leadership and the leadership practices put in place to ensure students are making adequate educational progress has become a reality. Therefore, the purpose of the causal-comparative research study was to determine what differences exist between principals of GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress and GNI elementary schools as perceived by principals. More specifically, this study examined the self-perceptions of principals from GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress, and GNI elementary schools in reference to *Managing the Instructional Program*, *Developing the School Mission*, and *Developing the School Learning Climate.*

Research Questions

This study focused on GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress, and GNI elementary schools to determine what differences existed between the instructional leadership practices of principals and school success in the designations of schools as perceived by the principals implementing them. From this stance, the study was guided by the following research questions:

1. Within the instructional leadership quadrant of Defining the School Mission, what differences exist in the instructional leadership practices between elementary school principals of GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress and GNI elementary schools as perceived by principals?

2. Within the instructional leadership quadrant of Managing the Instructional Program, what differences exist in the instructional leadership practices between elementary school principals of GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress and GNI elementary schools as perceived by principals?
3. Within the instructional leadership quadrant of Developing the School Learning Climate, what differences exist in the instructional leadership practices between elementary school principals of GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress and GNI elementary schools as perceived by principals?

Theoretical Framework

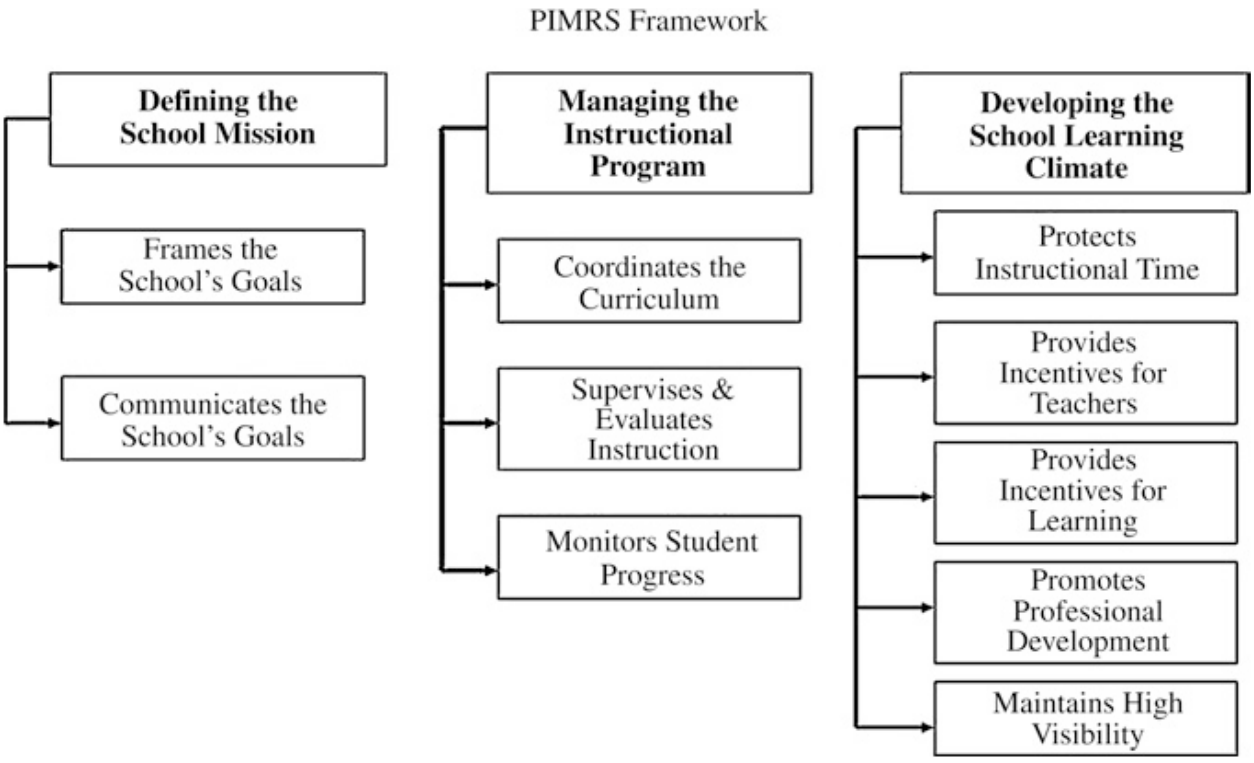
The importance of instructional leadership is continuing to grow in the educational school system. In today's educational environment, instructional leaders are under increased scrutiny to put reforms in place to increase student achievement. Hallinger and Murphy's (1987) conceptual model of instructional leadership was an appropriate framework to ground this study because the framework offers a clear direction for school leaders and leadership that focuses primarily on the improvement of student academic outcomes from which to measure effective schools (Spires, 2015). The model provides three dimensions of the instructional leadership construct: *Defining the School's Mission, Managing the Instructional Program, and Developing the School Learning Cimate* (Hallinger, 2000). The dimensions are then broken down into ten instructional leadership functions that help describe the leadership (see Figure 1).

The first dimension, *Defining the School's Mission*, is based on two functions: framing the school's goals and communicating the school's goals (Hallinger, 2003; Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). The leader must play an important role in making sure the school has clear, measurable goals that have academic growth at the forefront of the thought process. The faculty must vividly

know the goals of the school. The principal has a duty of making sure that the goals of the school are visible throughout the school. The instructional leader must support the goals of the school through the actions put in place to ensure the attainment of the goals. According to Halllinger (2003), the dimension does not call the leader to be the sole determiner of the school's mission; the leader should be the head of the construction of the goals but receive feedback from the school staff. The team will provide daily ways to incorporate activities that support the school's mission. The end goal is to make sure the school has a clear academic mission and to communicate it to the staff (Hallinger, 2003; Hallinger & Murphy, 1987).

Figure 1

PIMRS conceptual framework (Hallinger, 1985; Hallinger & Murphy, 1987)



The second dimension, *Managing the Instructional Program*, places emphasis on coordination and control of instruction and curriculum. The dimension encompasses three leadership functions. The functions include supervision and evaluating instruction, coordinating

the curriculum, monitoring student progress (Hallinger, 2003). Subsequently, the dimension calls for the instructional leader to place a larger focus on the school's instructional development. Hallinger and Murphy (1987) offered the development of the academic core of the school is a key leadership responsibility of the principal. The principal coordinates the development of the curriculum which in turn requires proper pacing and alignment with the standards placed upon the school that are based on the state requirements. When areas of concern are identified, it is that task of the principal to set forth initiatives and interventions to improve school-wide instruction through the development of a school improvement plan. Students' academic success begins with the proper curriculum. The second dimension further calls for the supervision and evaluation of the instruction taking place in the school environment; the supervision is in place to monitor the implementation of teaching and learning. Instructional evaluation requires the leader to ensure that data is used to make decisions on what instructional strategies are beneficial for students or what instructional strategies are not helping the students. In other words, the second dimension includes the importance of monitoring student progress. According to Hallinger (2015), effective leaders must be knowledgeable about the data. The more knowledgeable of the data promotes a feeling within the staff of a leader that is monitoring student progress.

The development of high standards and expectations is a part of Hallinger's (1985) second dimension. The dimension follows the belief that an instructional leader can create an environment of high standards and high expectations and a culture of continuous school improvement. It is important for the instructional leadership to create an environment that supports teaching and learning and this is acccomplished by promoting policies and standards throughout the school building. Hallinger and Lee (2013) believed that it is important for a

principal to model high expectations that include behavioral and academic no matter the demographics of the students.

The third dimension of *Developing the School Learning Climate* includes promoting a positive school learning climate. This function includes protecting instructional time, promoting professional development, maintaining high visibility, providing incentives for teachers, and providing incentives for learning (Hallinger, 2015).

Promoting instructional time is a concept that is important to both administrators as well as teachers. Early theorists, Purkey and Smith (1983), believed that effective schools create an "academic press" through the inclusion of high standards and expectations for pupils and educators. This premise is still followed today. The leader implements practices that help protect instruction time such as the implementation of school-wide procedures and processes to reduce class time being missed. Procedurally, the leadership protects instructional time by limiting the interruptions due to school-wide announcements and implements effective behvior mangagement plans to allow for maximum classroom instruction. Such processes include monitoring tardies, absences, and truancy. The goal is to provide students with the most learning time.

A function of the third dimension also includes the task of promoting professional development and instructional improvement. According to Leithwood et al. (2004), leadership that focuses on building teacher capacity through professional learning, peer-peer training, or peer coaching may yield better results for changing teacher practices and supporting student learning. Principals should provide teachers the opportunity to grow as educators. The leader can accomplish this task by conducting professional development workshops within the building and providing teachers the ability to seek development from professional training. Marks and Printy (2003) offered that effective instructional leadership focuses on building teacher capacity

through professional learning as professional lerarning opportunities often yield better results for changing teacher practices to support student learning.

Finally, the third dimension embraces the belief that principals in effective instructional schools do not leave the task of rewarding students only on individual teachers (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). The leadership should put in place school-wide celebrations for student success. The activities include award celebrations, newsletters, and other forms of recognition for continuous student improvement. The leader is responsible for creating a climate that will promote teaching and learning.

Significance of the Study

The educational field is increasingly becoming an area that is about accountability and inspection. The passing of ESSA (2015) has placed an even greater emphasis on the principal as the instructional leader of the school. Low-income students continue to be more higly represented among students falling below grade level in math and reading content areas. The leadership at low incoome schools is essental for increasing student achievement as well as closing achievment gaps. Principals are in a position to affect an entire school in multiple ways. The accountability for the principal does not only start and end with the academics of the school, principals must take into consideration the school climate to promote academic achievement for students. The decisions in the school are often discussed with other key stakeholders in the school, but the responsibility ultimately falls on the leader of the school. Because effective principal leadership is important for the improvement and sustaining the academic success of all students, the study is significant to highlight effective principal leadership.

The elementary school is unique in the place that it holds in education. Elementary schools are the places where students begin their educational career. The decisions made by

leaders of these schools help develop the basis for continued learning. The stronger the educational foundation provided to elementary students often helps prepare them for future success. Thus, the importance of the elementary school leads to the continued need for an examination of the practices put in place by elementary school principals as perceived through their lens. Therefore, it is important to have an understanding of the role of perceptions in the implementing of instructional practices by the leaders in low socio economic schools.

The study contributes to the research base concerning instructional leadership practices utilized by principals in high poverty, high-performing elementary schools. While research has examined the relationship between instructional leadership and school achievement, there is a continued need to understand the instructional leadership practices being implemented in the highest-performing Title I Schools in the state of Georgia. This research allowed an examination of the principals who implement the instructional strategies that have placed their schools on the GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress, and GNI elementary schools' list as perceived by these leaders.

Procedures

This quantitative study was conducted using a causal-comparative research design utilizing a survey methodology to investigate principals' perceptions of their instructional leadership in GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress and GNI elementary schools. Additionally, the researcher utilized a causal-comparative research design to determine the similarities and differences among principals' perceptions in reference to *Defining the School Mission, Managing the Instructional Program,* and *Developing the School Learning Climate* regarding the effective guidelines the leaders put in place for student success in an attempt to decide if the practices can be connected to school effectiveness. The state of Georgia has 67 GRH-Performing

elementary schools, 117 GRH-Progress elementary schools, and 234 GNI elementary schools. Therefore, the potential participants for the study included 136 principals and assistant principals from GRH-Performing elementary schools, 234 principals and assistant principals from GRH-Progress elementary schools, and 468 principals and assistant principals from GNI elementary schools.

The study utilized Hallinger's Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) to assess the three dimensions of the instructional leadership construct: *Defining the School Mission, Managing the Instructional Program,* and *Developing the School Learning Climate* (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). The participating principals and assistant principals at the targeted schools were invited to participate by means of email; participation was strictly voluntary. Once permission was obtained, the principals and assistant principals who consented received a link to the PIMRS using Qualtrics. All participants were given a two-week period to complete the survey. After the two-week period, an email followed as a reminder to complete the survey within a period of one week.

A series of Kruskal-Wallis ANOVAs were conducted to determine if the mean differences between the principal instructional leadership practices of GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress, and GNI elementary schools, as perceived by principals were significantly different in reference to *Defining the School Mission, Managing the Instructional Program,* and *Developing the School Learning Climate* (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). The Kruskal-Wallis ANOVAs are the non-parametric counterparts to the parametric ANOVA and they were selected because of the small sample size.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following key terms were identified:

Adequate Yearly Progress: Is a process put in place for accountability, which measures states, schools, and districts by the results of state-level test in math and reading. AYP utilizes test data to measure the academic performance of the student, including subgroups such as special education, economic background, and race (GA DOE, 2014).

College and Career Ready Performance Index: Is a tool used to measure how well schools, districts, and the state of Georgia are preparing students for the next educational level (GA DOE, 2016a).

Defining the School Mission: Within the *Defining the School Mission* instructional leadership dimension, principals who serve as instructional leaders must have a clear vision of both the present and future school-wide goals and communicate the information to school and community leaders (Hallinger & Murphey, 2012).

Developing the School Learning Climate: The third dimension includes promoting a positive school

learning climate. This function includes protecting instructional time, promoting professional development, maintaining high visibility, providing incentives for teachers, and providing incentives for learning (Hallinger, 2015).

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA): The Every Student Succeed Act is a federal act passed in 2015 and continued the increased focus on accountability that began under NCLB (2002). The authorization was implemented across the United States (US) with two major goals. Goal one was to close the achievement gap between students of privilege and students with lesser means, and goal two was to place greater emphasis on accountability.

Georgia Highest-Progress School: Among the 10 percent of the state's Title I Schools making the most progress in improving the performance of the "All Students" group over three

years on the statewide assessments (GA DOE, 2014). A school may not be classified as a High-Progress school if it has been identified as a Priority or Focus School.

Georgia Milestones Assessment System: Is a comprehensive summative assessment beginning in grade 3 through high school. The milestones are based on the knowledge and skills of the adopted standards in reading, mathematics, science, and social studies (GA DOE, 2015).

Georgia Reward Highest Performing School: Among the five percent of the state's Title I Schools with the absolute highest performance, over here years, for the "all students" group on the statewide assessments (GA DOE, 2014). A school may not be classified as a Highest-Performing School if it has been identified as a Priority or Focus School.

Leader Keys Effectiveness System: Is a system that is utilized in the state of Georgia to monitor consistency and comparability across districts, based on leader effectiveness. The LKES system includes four dimensions which combined create an overall Leader Effectiveness Measure. The four dimensions are: *Leader Assessment on Performance Standards, Student Growth, School Climate Survey, and Combination of Additional Data* (GADOE, 2018).

Managing the Instructional Program: Managing the Instructional Program places emphasis on coordination and control of instruction and curriculum. The dimension encompasses three leadership functions. The functions include supervision and evaluating instruction, coordinating the curriculum, monitoring student progress (Hallinger, 2003).

Needs Improvement Schools: As defined by the Georgia Department of Education, needs improvement schools selected by achievement gap scores. The schools selected are among the lowest 10 percent of Title I Schools closing the achievement gap among

students. The schools demonstrate a low performance for the group over a span of 3 years (GA DOE, 2012).

No Child Left Behind Act: Is a federal education program that required students to test in reading and math in grades 3-8 and high school. The students are expected to meet or exceed state standards (US DOE, 2006). The focus of No Child Left Behind was to close student achievement gaps by providing all children with a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to gain quality education.

Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS): The scale was developed by Hallinger in 1982 and has been used by researchers to study principal leadership. The PIMRS framework includes three dimensions of instructional leadership. The three dimensions includes *Managing the Instructional Program, Defining the School Mission, and Developing the School Learning Climate.*

Title I: Part A is a part of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). This act provides federal funds through the Georgia Department of Education to local educational agencies (LEAs) and public schools with high percentages of poor children to help ensure that all children meet challenging State academic content and student academic achievement standards (GA DOE, 2016).

Chapter Summary

The No Child Left Behind, later reauthorized as The Every Student Succeeds Act, was put in place to help close the achievement gap between students of different backgrounds. However, the growing trend in the United States shows an increase in childhood poverty. The leadership of Title I Schools serving students of low-SES families is important for the success of all students falling into that category. The state of Georgia distinguishes schools such as GRH-

Performing, GRH-Progress, and Needs Improvement for their proficiency on statewide assessments.

A closer examination of these schools helped gain information about the leadership in these high-achieving schools. The act has also placed an increased focus on accountability of the instructional leadership of each school. The school is given a CCRPI score based on the different categories based on the students performance. The CCRPI emphasizes student growth and progress towards students being proficient.

The principal instructional leadership is a category that is often cited when discussing the performance of schools. The instructional leadership system discussed followed Hallinger's (1982) leadership principles. Hallinger and Murphy's conceptual model of instructional leadership framework was made of three dimensions. The dimensions included *Defining the School Mission*, *Managing the Instructional Program*, and *Developing the School Learning Climate*. The study included the surveying of principals and assistant principals based on the leadership system. The information gained from the survey provided information regarding the leadership principles that are implemented in high-performing Title I Schools in the state of Georgia.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Educational reform over the last two decades has greatly emphasized educational accountability, and in so doing, greater emphasis on the principal as instructional leader (Cosner et al., 2015; Hanselman, 2018) to address the achievement gap that exists between students of varying socioeconomic status (SES). Principal instructional leadership is seen as a crucial factor in improving academic achievement for all students and especially for students of low income (Goddard et al., 2015). From this stance, it is important to explore elementary school principals' self-perceptions of instructional leadership among Georgia Highest Performing (GRH-Performing), Georgia Highest Progress Reward (GRH-Progress), and Georgia Needs Improvement (GNI) elementary schools. Addressing this gap will add to the existing literature on principal instructional leadership and help to point to effective instructional leadership practices with the aim of improving academic achievement, specifically for low-income students.

The purpose of the research study was to determine what differences existed in the instructional leadership practices between principals of GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress, and GNI elementary schools as perceived by elementary school principals. Furthermore, the current study aimed to analyze these perceptions through the three dimensions of instructional leadership as laid out by Hallinger and Murphy (1987): *Defining the School Mission*, *Managing the Instructional Program*, and *Developing the School Learning Climate*.

As a foundation for the proposed research, the relevant studies reported in the literature review range from broad to specific. These categories include research on effective schools with effective leaders, an historical overview of educational accountability, educational accountability in Georgia, the role of the principal, and the existence of poverty. A conclusion follows to

examine how the current study filled an existing gap in the literature regarding principals' perceptions of their instructional leadership practices among GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress, and GNI elementary schools.

Research on Effective Schools

After decades of debates, research has shown that schools can improve student achievement under the guidance of effective leaders (Waters et al., 2003). As early as 1981, Edmonds stated that effective schools have different key characteristics. He believed that leadership of the principal placed substantial attention to the quality of instruction. Effective schools include leaders that understand instructional focus and promoting a safe climate for teaching and learning (Edmonds, 1981). For a long time, other variables were thought to effect achievement and schools had nothing to do with it (Coleman et al., 2006). Early studies focused on a student's home life (Brookover & Lezotte, 1977) and where they lived was the reasons why students did not achieve. Weber (1971) posited that socioeconomic status was a factor as to why students were not meeting standards. More recently, Glikman et al. (2007) offered that effective schools are led by effective leaders who clearly frame the school's goals and others have gone one step further and posited that goals must be clearly communicated to the faculty (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Ubben et al., 2007).

It was not until research that focused on schools in low-income areas of London, England, that the presence of strong school leadership, especially in the instructional area, was evident in the descriptions of effective schools given by Rutter et al. (1979). Today, the Effective School Research Movement is still ongoing and one comprehensive analysis built on a body of research offers that effective schools begins with effective principals (The Wallace Foundation, 2013). From the Wallace perspective, effective principals promote effective schools by:

- Shaping a vision of academic success for all students.
- Creating a climate hospitable to education.
- Cultivating leadership in others.
- Improving instruction.
- Managing people, data and processes to foster school improvement. (p. 4)

In his 1985 article, Deal discussed the creation of the effective schools' movement and its early emphasis on researched efficacy programs and practices. He suggested that school administrators must acknowledge the existing research and use it to reexamine and revise their schools and school culture. With this suggestion, Deal further emphasized the significance of instructional leadership as the basis for effective schools as the responsibility was placed upon school administrators. Based on this premise of effective schools and their attributes, Günal and Demirtasli (2016) were concerned with educational accountability and the relationship between the characteristics of effective schools and student achievement. The researchers sought to examine the perceptions of secondary school students toward school efficacy in light of given effective school characteristics, such as the provision of a secure and regular environment, the presence of high academic expectations, quality instructional leadership, advanced learning opportunities, the monitoring of school learning, and the presence of positive school-parent relationships. They also sought to determine the predictive power of these perceptions for student achievement. Participants included 4,472 students in grades five through eight in 13 secondary schools during the 2012-2013 school year. Utilizing the Scale for Effective School as an instrument to provide data on student perceptions of school efficacy and student achievement, the researchers found that the effective school characteristics accounted for 27% of students' academic achievement scores. They suggested that the efficacy of schools depends on the

efficacy of their leaders, and as such, an examination of principals is essential to determining how to improve school efficacy.

Due to the ever-increasing educational accountability to develop effective schools with effective leaders, studies have been conducted to examine what factors have been found that contribute to effective schools. Rai and Prakash (2014) were interested in what makes schools effective and conducted a meta-analysis on research that spanned the last twenty years. Specifically, the purpose of the research was to understand and develop criteria of assessing school effectiveness, focusing on attributes such as enrollment, retention of students, and students not completing high school. In addition, the researchers examined studies that included student learning outcomes such as literacy rates and achievement in mathematics, and public scrutiny of results. Based on a review of research from the field, Rai and Prakash concluded that school effectiveness included effective leadership from school administrators, positive school culture, and an effective teaching and learning environment.

Historical Overview of Accountability

Educational accountability has been greatly emphasized by educational reform for the last two decades (Nichols & Berliner, 2007). Due to the passing of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2001), reauthorized in 2015 as The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), an intense focus on educational outcomes for all students ensued. NCLB (2002) and ESSA (2015) set the nationwide goal for improved academic achievement, largely through various formal accountability measures that evaluate both student achievement and teacher and leadership effectiveness. Essentially, the federal government introduced the process of assessing schools' effectiveness based on standardized test scores from state-authored assessments and holding schools accountable for every student's academic success as defined by proficiency targets on the

state-authored assessments (Nichols & Berliner, 2007). As a result, the principal's role of instructional leader became more scrutinized because of the connection to effective schools.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

NCLB was implemented in 2002 primarily to improve educational outcomes, particularly among disadvantaged students. With the passing of the federal law, responsibility was placed upon leaders at multiple levels to improve academic achievement for all students, and this improvement was meant to be achieved by varying measures of accountability, including standardized testing, teacher evaluations, principal evaluations, and other sanctioned programs (Arp & Hand, 2015). These accountability measures called for the implementation of new systems of evaluation and new standards, such as Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) (NCLB, 2002). Specifically, each state developed yearly proficiency targets for schools to achieve concerning subgroups and overall school performance; if a school met each of the required proficiency targets, the school was credited with making AYP (Dee & Jacob, 2011). If the school did not satisfy state-outlined yearly proficiency goals, the school would be considered as not making AYP and would be subject to consequences and sanctions as defined by the state (Nichols & Berliner, 2007). The most significant consequence of not making AYP for three or more years was the prospect of government intervention. If the state intervened, the state could close schools, convert public schools into charter schools, dismiss staff and hire new employees, or implement a school turnaround strategy (Nichols & Berliner, 2007).

Before NLCB (2002), the premise of a government intervention without local school board consent and direction would never have occurred. However, and by 2011, approximately half of all schools across the nation were failing with numbers above 50% depending on the school district (User, 2015). As a result, increased dissatisfaction for NCLB (2002) among all

stakeholders, including teachers, administration, and parents of many school communities developed as a byproduct due to failure to make AYP.

NCLB's Financial Burden

Ladd (2017) described the financial burden placed on schools as negative and punitive for school improvement. The researcher examined the pressure of Title I funds for Title I Schools throughout the country because the acceptance of Title I funds come with stipulations and accountability measures. Ladd (2017) concluded that the accountability measures, including the pressure to achieve AYP, were perceived as negative if achievement goals were not met and the outcome of not meeting goals led to punitive procedures to remove principals from their role.

Given the emphasis on NCLB (2002), Hayes (2015) was concerned with the varying effects of NCLB (2002) on states' educational funding, with a particular focus on states that had binding school district tax and spending limitations. He noted that binding school district tax and spending limitations restricted school districts' capacities to raise additional funds when needed. Having reviewed a state-level panel dataset from 1992-2009, Hayes found that after the passing of NCLB (2002), states with binding school district tax and spending limitations had at least 4.3% higher state shares of total education funding compared to states without these limitations. These findings indicated that state governments increased funding assistance to school districts with these limitations to account for variance in funding. Hayes concluded that NCLB (2002) provided a financial shock to state governments, and as such, there was an increased pressure placed upon states in the provision of public education as they worked to mitigate the effects of school districts' financial limitations.

NCLB's Effect on Curriculum

Ladd (2017) conducted a study to examine what and if any effects on schools' curricula resulted due to the implementation of NCLB (2002). Having surveyed 349 schools, the data showed that districts increased learning time in English and math (two subjects assessed for NCLB), while reducing instructional time for the other content areas. Additionally, the data showed that not only was the curriculum narrowed and instructional time was reduced, but more time was spent on test-taking strategies to promote passing of the multiple-choice tests. The findings furthered showed that teachers were steered by leadership to focus on students near the cutline for proficiency. Ladd concluded that NCLB (2002) unintentionally reduced the educational opportunities for all students, but particularly for students believed to be unable to show proficiency on mandated assessments – often students who were disadvantaged. This finding is directly opposite of what NCLB (2002) was supposed to achieve – to close the achievement gap for disadvantaged students.

Failure to Meet AYP

Pruitt and Bowers (2014) sought to discover the factors that were greatly associated with the likelihood of high schools failing to meet AYP under NCLB (2002). Their sample included all public and charter high schools in Texas (n = 1,721) and examined data from 2003-2011. The research findings showed that rural schools failed less often while schools with more African American and Hispanic students and with larger class sizes and enrollment (as found in urban locations) failed to meet AYP more often. Pruitt and Bowers ultimately concluded that school failure was still prevalent throughout the first decade of implementation of NCLB (2002) and was not achieving the intended outcomes of leaving no child behind, especially minority, ethnically diverse, and low-SES students.

Sears and Baker (2014) researched NCLB's (2002) effects on educators who did and did not make AYP. Teachers were surveyed to gain an understanding of the two groups. The survey included *work environment*, *professional identity*, and *career satisfaction*. The results showed unintended consequences such as increased frustration and lower motivation in the workplace for failure to not make AYP. Moreover, teachers who did not make AYP had very low morale and poor professional identity. Finally, Sears and Baker found that educators who did not make AYP, as well as teachers who did achieve AYP, questioned their career choice, school placement, and even going into new career fields.

Similarly, Nunda et al. (2017) worked with a group of teachers in one high school through a university-urban high school partnership on the academic achievement of the school's students. The high school had failed to meet AYP four years in a row and had a male graduation rate of less than 25%. Utilizing a professional learning community (PLC) venue, the researchers established four main issues that impacted failure to meet AYP for this school. These issues were 1) students consistently earning low test scores; 2) continual principal turnover; 3) low faculty morale and subsequent poor teaching; and 4) a lack of effective disciplinary or accountability measures for students. However, Nunda et al. found that when the teachers were given the opportunity to participate in professional development on instructional pedagogy and practice, the collaborative nature of the PLC promoted teacher agency, professionalism, and ethics of care.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

In December of 2015, the United States Congress passed The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). ESSA (2015) was passed in order to improve equality and quality of education, largely through accountability measures. The act focuses on programs targeting under-served and low-income students, holds all students to the same high standards, utilizes statewide

assessments to ensure accountability of educators, and encourages innovative reform and practices. Emphasis on accountability echoes that same emphasis that was present in NCLB (2002) and increased scrutiny on all stakeholders, including teachers, administration, and student academic achievement.

ESSA Impact on Educational Leadership

Young et al. (2017) sought to examine the impact of ESSA (2015) on educational leadership. In conducting their literature review, the researchers found that significant emphasis is justifiably placed on educational leadership roles and that the strength of leadership pipelines are also significant in achieving academic goals set by the act. The researchers suggested that such support for educational leadership may be undermined at both the state and federal levels and that programs adopted by some states may be ill-fitted to different states' specific needs and current standing. Young et al. posited that the support by school districts to continue funding educational leadership training and development must continue and the funds must not be diverted to other needs of the schools. As such, the researchers noted that because effective educational leadership is indeed critical, school districts should implement programs in ways that meet schools where they are and help to improve leadership based on specific standing and needs.

Shirrell (2016) also examined the impact of ESSA (2015) on educational leadership by studying principals' perceptions in low performing schools. The study included 12 first-year principals in a large urban district. From data analysis that included a series of surveys and personal interviews, the study found that principals often begin their service at a school with strong support of accountability but often the support changes after the first year at the school. The findings showed that leaders believed that continuous support beyond the first year is

important to success. Given the findings the researcher suggested an improvement that aimed to increase principal preparation by training them in specific challenges that may be encountered when working with teachers at low-income and low-performing schools. Shirrell also suggested that central offices should lessen the demands placed on novice principals in their first year in order to increase length of service and support for educational accountability measures.

Central Office Leadership

A plethora of research has been conducted on educational accountability pertaining to central office leadership under ESSA (2015). Rigby et al. (2018) conducted a case study in the state of Washington to assist central office leaders for putting systems in place to achieve instructional improvement, as well as implementing more definitive and stricter standards. The purpose was to encourage the state's school systems to examine the challenges and complexities of policy design and implementation when the perceived gap between policy goals and current practice is great. After a careful review of central office policies throughout the state, Rigby et al. explicated that a coherent framework was lacking and must be put in place relating to standards of excellence for instructional improvement and must be communicated with principals, teachers, and students. Due to the increased pressure to close the achievement gap under ESSA , the researchers concluded there has to be a stronger connection between policy goals and current leadership expectations, and instructional practice.

Fink and Silverman (2014) examined one school district that consisted of 39 schools that served diverse multicultural students and included a high percentage of free and reduced-price lunch students to gain insight into the leadership practices that would empower all teachers to develop proficient learners. The district in the study had faced difficulties closing the achievement gap between its affluent students and low-income students. Fink and Silverman

found it critical for central office to permit instructional leaders to receive professional development and time to collaborate with other instructional leaders to engage effective teaching strategies for their faculty. The researchers concluded that central office support was essential for effective leadership.

Impact on Public Education

Fisher-Ari et al. (2017) took a broader look at recent educational reform and considered NCLB (2002) and ESSA (2015) in relation to each other. They noted that many studies address the impact of these federal reforms directly upon students' achievement; however, research was needed to address the impacts of such reforms on teachers. The researchers were generally interested in the impact of accountability-era policies on urban teachers, but specifically, the researchers were concerned that many of the reform policies had harmful effects on classroom teachers, such that teacher performance was impacted and subsequently student learning outcomes could not be achieved. As a result, the researchers were interested in how the participants responded to the federal laws, state and school district policies, and what if any tactics were taken to circumvent the negative impacts from these reforms.

The perceptions of 38 Teach for America Corps Members were examined to determine how the reform policies oppress teachers (Fisher-Ari et al., 2017) and found that the majority of the participants changed curricular pedagogy and instructional practices even when not explicitly approved by district or school leadership. The researchers concluded that the teachers' diversion tactics were implemented as ways to mitigate the potentially harmful effects of accountability-era policies placed on them in order to promote student achievement.

Croft et al. (2015) sought to examine education reform policies and specifically noted the potential harmful effects of such reforms upon public education. Using the state of Georgia as an

example, they sought to show how particular education reforms occur through three different systematic and related fronts that included political climate change, the testing industrial complex, and an evaluation system. They cited the benefits of Governor Barnes' (2000-2002) A+ Education Reform Act that resulted in positive results including legislating financial and structural support to enhance student learning. The reform was also responsible for decreasing class sizes, increased funding for the anticipation of the need for additional classrooms and included provisions for the introduction of early intervention programs for all students K-12. Conversely, Croft et al. reported the failure of Governor Perdue (2003-2010) who stunted this growth with such acts as creating charter schools, the allowance of charter school flexibility, and the provision for tax credits and exemptions for private schools; all of which disproportionately affected minority and low-income students. Additionally, they noted the inequities inherent in standardized testing and the combination of these factors accumulating to greatly disadvantage some students. Through the discussion of these factors, the researchers challenged previous research that suggested that such reforms improve academic achievement and global competitiveness.

Accountability in Georgia

Educational reform for improving overall academic achievement in Georgia increased significantly under President Obama's Race to the Top (RT3) initiative created in 2010 (Howell, 2015). RT3 was a four-billion-dollar grant provided by the U.S. Department of Education to schools that implemented effective and innovative educational reforms (Russell et al., 2015). Georgia was one of nineteen states that received funding and was awarded $400 million to increase accountability at the district level and school level (GA DOE 2016). The four main reforms were: 1) adoption of rigorous standards and assessments; 2) development of data

systems that measured student growth and informed teachers' and principals' instructional practices; 3) rewarding teachers and administrators based on student performance; and 4) the use of innovative strategies to turn-around the lowest performing schools. Because RT3 required that school success would be determined by students' test scores, significant educational changes have occurred in Georgia to ensure the improvement of student achievement.

First, Georgia replaced the Adequate Yearly Progress measure with the College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) in 2012 to rate schools (Arp & Hand, 2015). Additionally, Georgia introduced a test-based retention assessment known as Georgia Milestones Assessment (GMAS). Currently, this means that students face retention if they do not receive passing scores on assessment. As a result, the state wanted to have an accountability measure for the leaders of each school and the teachers. Subsequently, the state implemented the Leader Keys Effectiveness System (GA DOE, 2018) to monitor principal leadership and the state also implemented the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (GA DOE, 2016b) to evaluate teacher performance. The accountability measures put in place combined to create an environment of heighten pressure on schools' principals.

College Based and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI)

One accountability measure that is in effect in Georgia is the College Based and Career Ready Performance Index **(**CCRPI). The CCRPI is a report that allows stakeholders to monitor the progress of every school in the state. The report shows how students are being prepared for their next educational steps and is a tool that allows schools to be compared across the state of Georgia. The elementary school report focuses on content mastery; i.e. students' abilities to master state standards, students' readiness and progress, and schools' ability to close existing achievement gaps. CCRPI helps ensure the school is meeting the needs of all the students within

the school and is comprehensive platform for educators to assess school improvement, accountability, and communication with the aim of improving college and career readiness among students attending Georgia public schools (GADOE, 2016a).

Research Relating to CCRPI

Moore et al. (2016) studied teachers' perceptions of instructional leadership alongside CCRPI ratings of their schools. The researchers sought to examine variances in perceptions from schools whose scores were below, at, and above the state averages. The study examined elementary schools in one rural school district in Georgia that had received varying scores according to CCRPI and included 78 teachers. Their findings indicated that CCRPI ratings correlated with perceived strong instructional leadership. Additionally, the research findings showed that there was a significant difference between teachers' perceptions of principal instructional leadership at schools with above-average CCRPI scores and teachers' perceptions from schools whose scores were at or below the state average. The researchers suggested that principals from schools with scores at or below the state average should maintain high visibility within the school and school functions, provide learning incentives for students, and actively support teachers in recognizing and rewarding student academic achievement.

Georgia Milestones Assessment System

One specific formal accountability measure implemented in the state of Georgia in 2014 is the Georgia Milestones Assessment System (GMAS) (GADOE, 2014). This system is meant to be a comprehensive assessment program that assesses students from third grade through high school. The GMAS is designed to provide information about student mastery of the knowledge and skills taught through the state-adopted content standards in English Language Arts, mathematics, science, and social studies (GADOE, 2014). Additionally, the GMAS were

constructed to provide students with key information about their own mastery levels and their readiness for their next grade level. The results from the GMAS are used to inform parents, community, local school districts, and boards of education of the quality of schools within the state. Moreover, the GMAS are utilized as a key component to determine a school's CCRPI (GADOE, 2014).

Research Related to the GMAS

In order to clarify Georgia's test-based grade retention policy (an accountability measure) in reading, Huddleston (2015) utilized Bourdieu's (1986) concepts of field, capital, and habitus in order to examine how students, parents, teachers, and administrators were responding to the aforementioned test-based grade retention policy in reading at one elementary school in Georgia. The sample included ten fifth graders, their parents, their teachers, and their administrators. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis. The researcher found that students and parents accepted the grade retention tests (GMAS) and felt that they were reliable and that retention was equitable. Teachers and administrators, however, were found to perceive grade retention as reproducing inequities among students, and as such used appeals to mitigate the sole reliance on test scores. Additionally, the researcher found that teachers did not believe that the implementation of the grade retention policy improved student performance. This study suggests the danger in over-reliance upon the meeting of formal standards within accountability-era policies and as such, extends the discussion on the multi-faceted role of principal leadership in educational reform.

Georgia Leader Keys Effectiveness System

As leaders, particularly principals, have been emphasized as significant actors in promoting academic achievement, the state of Georgia implemented an accountability measure

to examine leader effectiveness. The Leader Keys Effectiveness System (LKES) helps the state government to ensure consistency among leader efficacy across districts and provides comparable data between these districts (GADOE, 2013). This system, which was slightly revised in 2018, has four dimensions: *Leader Assessment on Performance Standards, Student Growth, School Climate Survey, and Combination of Additional Data* (GADOE, 2018). Although a dearth of research studies has been conducted concerning LKES, the limited research is still important to examine since LKES is a prominent component of educational accountability in the state of Georgia.

Research Related to LKES

Thomas (2015) investigated principals' perceptions of LKES's ability to evaluate their effectiveness, align to their day-to-day operations, and inform their professional growth. The study involved 83 principals from a large metropolitan area in Georgia utilizing a mixed methods design. Based on survey results that collected both quantitative and qualitative data, the researcher found the majority of the respondents reported they were effective principals regardless of LKES and LKES did not contribute to their professional growth. However, the majority of principals did report that much of the criteria contained in LKES did align to their day-to-day leadership practices. According to Stronge et al. (2013), principal evaluation systems should be based on valid guided performance standards such as instructional leadership, school climate, human resource leadership, organizational management, communication and community relationship, and professionalism. Because 70% of a leader's evaluation score is tied to students' academic achievement and growth data relating to the school, LKES places additional accountability on principals to be effective leaders.

Georgia Teacher Keys Effectiveness System

The Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) is a teacher evaluation tool designed for building teacher effectiveness and ensuring consistency and comparability throughout the state (GA DOE, 2016b). TKES has four dimensions: *Teacher Performance Standards, Professional Growth, Student Growth, and Teacher Effectiveness Measure (*GADOE, 2016b). The principals in Georgia utilize this system as a way to give teachers feedback on their instructional practices and the feedback is viewed as a means for teachers to reach the goal of increasing academic learning and achievement for all students (GA DOE, 2016b). Because students' needs are continuously changing, TKES is seen as a process that allows teachers to adapt to their needs. The overarching goal of TKES is to support continuous growth and development of individual teachers (GA DOE, 2016b).

Research Related to TKES

Warnock (2015) conducted a study to understand the perceptions and experiences of principals' who have implemented TKES. The participants in the study included principals from Race to the Top school districts as well as other Georgia school districts that participated in the full implementation of the Georgia's teacher evaluation system. The qualitative study provided both positive and negative information regarding principals' experiences regarding teacher evaluation through the use of TKES. On the positive side, Warnock (2015) found that professional learning opportunities have increase since the implementation of TKES. Additionally, school principals saw positive increases in data-driven decision-making for instructional purposes utilized by classroom teachers. On the negative side, Warnock (2015) found that the time requirements for principals to complete the teacher evaluation process was not equitable and could have negative effects on the school climate.

The Principal as the Instructional Leader

The role of the school principal has been under scrutiny given increased accountability measures enacted by the No Child Left Behind Act (2002) (Gardiner et al., 2009; Lock & Lumis, 2014). Recently, The Every Students Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015) has also redefined and clarified the roles and responsibilities of principals (Pollitt, 2016). Expectations are that the principal should demonstrate competency and leadership in matters concerning teaching and learning and effective instructional leadership is presumed to lead to improved student academic achievement (O'Doherty & Ovando, 2013). Many studies have been conducted to understand instructional leadership and the factors that lead to effective leadership in school settings in order to meet these expectations. Such studies have examined principals' length of service (Babo & Postma, 2017); trust in instructional leadership and school efficacy (Brown, et al., 2017; Goddard, et al., 2015); and the importance of distributive leadership (Cosner et al., 2015; Gedik & Bellibas, 2015).

Length of Service

To determine the extent of principal effectiveness, Babo and Postma (2017) examined the potential impact of elementary school principals' length of service on student performance in language arts, literacy, and mathematics. Student performance was measured by a mandated high-stakes assessment in New Jersey. The sample consisted of 172 elementary school principals who were randomly selected from economically diverse public-school districts in New Jersey. The overall school assessment performance data from these principals' locations were also analyzed. The researchers found that principals' length of service did impact student performance in both fields of interest (language arts literacy and mathematics) when demographic indicators were controlled. They concluded from the findings that the longer a

principal is with their school, the more positive of an influence they have on students' academic performance within that school. The researchers further suggested that given that 12% of first year principals in high-needs schools leave after one year and 11% leave after two years, school districts need to strategize ways to promote longer term of principal service, especially high-needs schools.

Trust in Instructional Leadership

Also concerned with principal performance and effective leadership, Brown et al. (2017) conducted a study to determine if trust in principals might be a factor in student achievement. The researchers were concerned with the effects of school leadership on the performance of low-income students in particular. Through this study, Brown et al. examined principals' practices in six low-income elementary schools. Three of the six schools in question had achieved statewide or national recognition for closing the achievement gap between low-income and higher-income students. The other three schools examined in the study were low-performing schools. Thus, the study showed comparative results between high-performing and low-performing elementary schools that were related to their principals' practices.

A survey was utilized among 120 teachers. Many teachers reported that principals provided necessary indirect support through instructional leadership in the high-performing schools. Teachers in the high-performing schools also reported significantly more confidence and trust in their principals' abilities to facilitate and encourage the schools' visions. Brown et al. (2017) concluded that principal performance and trust in principal performance did indeed impact student achievement.

Goddard et al. (2015) suggested that principals' instructional leadership can also impact teacher collaboration in the improvement of instruction and can additionally affect school

efficacy by strengthening collective efficacy beliefs when given opportunities to collaborate. The researchers drew their sample from the first year of the School Leadership Improvement Study data. The sample represented 93 elementary schools in rural, high-poverty areas in a northern Midwestern state. The findings showed that strong instructional leaders had a direct effect on teachers' collaborative efforts to improve instruction such as utilizing assessment results to discuss appropriate instructional strategies that will be most effective on student learning. Additionally, the findings showed that leadership and collaboration levels predicted collective efficacy beliefs, and that collective efficacy beliefs further directly predicted achievement differences among schools. Given these findings, the researchers concluded that effective instructional leadership forms collaborative structures that promote teachers' instructional practices and build organizational belief systems that subsequently improve student learning.

Distributive Leadership

A basic tenet of distributed instructional leadership implies that leadership should be distributed among teachers. According to Glickman (1989), the role of principal can be viewed as the "leader of instructional leaders" (p. 6). Gedik and Bellibas (2015) sought to examine differences in distributed instructional leadership in elementary and secondary schools. Because school leadership consists of many responsibilities, it was assumed that successful student outcomes cannot be achieved without principals sharing responsibility especially when the focus is on the improvement of instruction and classroom teachers are involved in the decision-making process regarding effective instruction. The study took place in a total of 124 schools across the United States and included 4,311 school administrators, classroom teachers and other support school staff. Participants were surveyed on the following domains to determine what differences existed on distributive leadership between elementary and secondary schools. The areas were: 1)

focusing on learning, 2) monitoring teaching and learning, 3) building nesting learning communities, 4) acquiring and allocating resources, and 5) maintaining a safe and effective learning environment. The results of an independent t-test showed that the elementary and secondary schools differed in the specific leadership practices pertaining to the monitoring of teaching and learning, suggesting that elementary teachers are more frequently observed than their secondary counterparts and more engaged with their elementary principals to better teaching and learning outcomes. Gedik and Bellibas concluded that in the context of increased accountability, there is a need for secondary principals to distribute instructional leadership in order to enhance motivation for learning from others through classroom observations.

Cosner et al. (2015) added to the discussion that principals need adequate resources to support their endeavors as the instructional leaders of their leadership programs given the demands of educational accountability reforms. The study examined one such responsibility – teachers' evaluations because they noted that as important as teacher evaluations are, they largely depend on the effectiveness of the principals as principals are their primary evaluators. Cosner et al. concluded that the amount of time it took to execute teachers' evaluations directly impacted principal performance. As a result, the researchers suggested that principals remain evaluators but that they should be supported by other administrative evaluators. They also suggested the implementation of more strategic evaluation systems, such as allowing effective teachers to have less evaluations than novice or struggling teachers.

Principals' Perceptions of Effective Instructional Leadership

As the current study seeks to explore principals' perceptions of effective instructional leadership practices, it is crucial to examine current research since effective leadership is an important aspect of student achievement and the overall success of schools. The degree to which

principals rate themselves can have important implications toward the goal of improving academic achievement, particularly in low-performing schools.

Gurley et al. (2016) were concerned with teachers' and principals' perceptions of principal instructional leadership behaviors within K-12 education. The study was conducted in a medium-sized school district in the Southeastern portion of the United States that included 17 principals and 407 teachers within these principals' schools. The researchers utilized the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985) in this study that revolved around the frequency of instructional leadership behaviors performed in daily leadership. The principals' perceptions and self-reports were compared with the teachers' perceptions. Overall, principals' and teachers' perceptions of instructional leadership practices were largely in alignment with each other with only small differences found in the perceptions of the two groups within individual schools. Gurley et al. concluded from their research that principals may now be engaging in instructional leadership practices more frequently. They noted the increasing accountability of principals to show higher levels of student achievement.

While Gurley et al. (2016) had positive findings regarding principal instructional leadership, Wieczorek (2017) had negative results regarding teacher leadership and development. The researcher examined principals' perceptions of professional development implementation in their schools and found that teachers seemed to be less involved in the planning and presentation of professional development since NCLB (2002), despite improved principal instructional leadership. The surveys included 21,000 principal responses across all levels of education. The researcher examined public school principals' reports of professional development change at both the state and local levels. The researcher sought to examine reported changes in teacher involvement and the alignment of professional development with state standards, student

learning outcomes, overall school goals, resources, and district-wide goals. Data were collected from the Schools and Staffing Survey, conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in 2000, 2004 and 2007. The researcher found that there was a reported decrease in teachers' planning and presentation of professional development at all levels, showing a decrease in overall teacher participation in professional development. The researcher suggested that schools' locations, socioeconomic status, and demographics may impact how principals interpret educational accountability. Ultimately, the researcher concluded that principal instructional leadership should encourage and facilitate teacher participation in professional development for the purpose of improving student performance. This demonstrates the significant role that principals play in the academic context and the need for strengthened instructional leadership.

Dissimilar from these findings, Balyer (2014) was concerned with school principals' priorities and their impact on school performance and found that principals within the sample prioritized the "leading the school" role above the others in a typical day's work. The study utilized a qualitative research design. Principal views were gained through interviews with semi-structured questions. The participants included 20 principals including primary and secondary schools. Based on the findings, the researcher suggested that more emphasis be placed on academic and pedagogic goals in the day-to-day work experience of principals to subsequently improve school performance.

Poverty

Poverty has significant impacts on quality of life and specifically educational opportunity. Schools funded by local taxes in low-income areas will subsequently have less funding than schools in medium to high-income areas. Additionally, low-income students face

greater adversity in dealing with poor quality schools and teachers while simultaneously taking on economic or other stressors from their home lives (Wise, 2016).

As of 2016, 16% of Georgia's population was in poverty, suggesting negative effects for its low-income student population (US Census Bureau, 2016). This report highlights the prevalence of child poverty in Georgia and provides a precedent for the current study that relates child poverty to poor academic performance. Further, the report provides a base for the current study to expand upon by assessing principals' instructional leadership methods and efficacy to address low-income students' needs. This is the group that the current study seeks to indirectly address and eventually benefit through improved principal instructional leadership.

Highest Performing Reward Schools (GRH-Performing) are the top 5% of the Title I Schools in the state. These schools receive this nomination based on the achievement of the "All Students" group in reference to the proficiency on statewide assessments (GA DOE, 2014). The testing is used to gather data in preparation for calculating the content mastery indicator on the CCRPI. The "Meets" and "Exceeds" rate is calculated per subject area. Schools receive points based upon the "Meets" and "Exceeds" rate. The schools receiving this honor are the schools performing at the highest level and providing all students with the best education possible. This further indicates that the leadership principles are in place and are setting the schools up for success.

High Progress Reward Schools (GRH-Progress) are among the highest 10% of the Title I Schools in the state. The schools are given this distinction based upon the achievement of the "All Students" group in terms of proficiency on the statewide assessments (GA DOE, 2014). The key identifier in this category is Student Growth Percentiles for the calculation progress on the school CCRPI (GA DOE, 2014). The "Progress" component of CCRPI represents 25 points of

the 100 point total. The leaders of the school are evaluated as showing progress in the development of the students.

Georgia Needs Improvement schools (GNI) are given the distinction because they are among the lowest 10 percent of Title I Schools in the state that have a subgroup or subgroups with low achievement (GA DOE, 2014). The state examines the size of the gap and the extent to which it is closing or not closing the gap and these are factors in the CCRPI Achievement GAP calculations (GA DOE, 2014). The leadership for these schools has increased interventions and supports provided by the state in an effort to exit the needs improvement status. It is here that LKES plays a critical role as a means to evaluate leadership for schools that need the strongest leaders.

GRH-Performing and GRH-Progress Schools have garnered the attention of researchers in the field. Spires (2015) researched the principal instructional leadership in Georgia's high-poverty elementary schools to examine the differences in the principal instructional leadership practices between GRH-Performing and GRH-Progress Schools as perceived by the elementary school teachers. The schools included in the study were the highest performing Title I Schools in the state. By administering a survey to elementary school teachers, the study allowed for the researcher to focus on the different areas of leadership and make conclusions about the leaders based upon teacher perceptions. Findings from data analysis showed that two of the three instructional categories demonstrated a significant difference in teachers' perceptions of principal instructional leadership practices in GRH-Performing and GRH-Progress elementary schools (Spires, 2015). The instructional leadership categories of *Defining the School Mission* and *Managing the Instructional Program* showed a significant difference in teachers' perceptions of principal instructional leadership systems between GRH-Performing and GRH-

Progress elementary schools (Spires, 2015). The third instructional leadership category was *Developing the School Learning Climate* and findings for this category did not demonstrate a significant difference of principal instructional leadership practices between GRH-Performing and GRH-Progress elementary schools based upon teacher perceptions (Spires, 2015). However, the study does provide perceptional information about instructional leadership from participants directly in relationship with principals and serves as a springboard for additional research.

Poverty in the United States

Proctor et al. (2015) provided a comprehensive report on income and poverty in the US. The official poverty rate in 2015 was reported to be 13.5%, accounting for 43.1 million people. The 2015 child poverty rate was reported to be 19.7%. Demographically, poverty rates were reportedly 9.1% for Whites, 24.1% for Blacks, 11.4% for Asians, and 21.4% for Hispanics. These findings show an alarming discrepancy in poverty rates, disadvantaging Blacks and Hispanics according to this report based off the U.S. Census Bureau's statistics.

Providing a more historical perspective, Fox et al. (2015) sought to examine poverty trends spanning multiple decades in order to suggest mitigating practices. They utilized data from the Consumer Expenditure Survey and the March Current Population Survey to provide poverty estimates for the period of 1967-2012, based on a historical supplemental poverty measure. During these years, the researchers found that poverty had increasingly been mitigated by government policies. The policies were found to play a particularly significant role in alleviating child poverty and deep poverty, specifically during times of significant economic downturn. Specific policies of influence included the implementation of the Earned Income Tax Credit and food and nutrition programs. The researchers suggested that given that poverty rates overall are not much lower now than they were in 1967, the aforementioned successful

government programs should be strengthened and added to in order to provide a more significant improvement in poverty rates. The researchers suggested the particular significance and prevalence of child poverty and the need to create more programs that target this problem specifically, perhaps by assisting their parents through minimum wage increases and similar mitigating efforts.

Effect on Health

Wise (2016) also noted the specific prevalence of child poverty and asserted that childhood was a foundation for healthy aging. Through a review of the literature, he sought to determine the effects of child poverty on adult morbidity and mortality. He found that child poverty was associated with later cardiovascular disorders, obesity, diabetes, some cancers, mental health conditions, osteoporosis, and dementia. These may be due to a number of circumstances, including problems in fetal development, stress reactivity, the development of bad health habits, and limited access to effective care and development during childhood. Such conditions may also inhibit children's learning capabilities in that their attention and stress is divided between home life and school (Yang, et al., 2018).

Effect on Cognitive and Emotional Development

Smeeding and Thevenot (2016) noted the need to address child poverty and emphasized the impact of childhood care on future cognitive development, emotional development, and health outcomes. They sought to examine how the US compared with other nations in terms of child poverty and found that, overall, the US underinvests in its children and families. Household composition and parents' labor market participation were determined to be significant factors of child poverty and correspond to children's poor cognitive and emotional development. They

advised the US follow other wealthy nations and implement public policies that support parents who are at risk of poverty, such as single mothers and assist them in finding gainful employment.

Effects on Student Achievement

In addition to poor health outcomes and cognitive and emotional development, child poverty has significant effects on student performance and access to quality education (Yang et al., 2018). Yang et al. determined that the material hardship of students increased their likelihood of grade retention by 40%. Additionally, this material hardship was found to impact school engagement which further impacted grade retention. The researchers concluded that elementary school students experiencing material hardship require services that directly address this hardship, as well as services that can improve their school engagement. These services could greatly impact student success.

Hanselman (2018) conducted a study concerned with whether equal educational opportunities were sufficient for closing the achievement gap among variances in economic standing and racial background. The researcher sought to test the hypothesis that low-income and minority students benefit less from effective elementary school teachers than their higher-income, white counterparts. Sourced from public elementary schools in North Carolina, 1.5 million student-year observations for grades three through five were utilized to determine value-added measures of effective teachers and to examine benefits for students of varying economic and racial backgrounds. The researcher found that varying levels of benefit provided by effective teachers, depending on economic and racial backgrounds of students, widened the achievement gap specifically between Black and White students. Disparities in benefit based on race were small relative to total group benefit, were not explained by differences in prior achievement, and were largest for low-performing students. The researcher suggested that overall, effective

teachers were significant for improved student learning, but there is a gap between learning opportunities and low-performing minority students. This study contributes to the current study by adding to foundational knowledge of factors of disparities in academic performance. Given these factors, the current study is better equipped to address the effects of principal leadership on student learning through principal perception of instructional leadership.

Implications for Schools

Child poverty has many impacts on schooling that extend beyond the students' experiences and performance. Ullucci (2015) sought to review common misconceptions of poverty that impact student-teacher relationships and to offer more accurate and productive insight on how to effectively educate low-income students. To do this, the researchers designed anchor questions for teachers to consider and discuss with novice teachers. Some of the common misconceptions the researchers sought to debunk included the notion that anyone can succeed if they work hard enough, that people in poverty choose that route due to laziness and irresponsibility, that poorer children are less intelligent, and that poverty constitutes its own culture. By working to debunk such myths, the study provided proactive ways for teachers to engage their low-income students. This study provides for the current study insight into common misconceptions about poverty that may impact teacher performance. This may have implications for principal instructional leadership in that leadership should work to debunk such myths within their schools.

Tyler (2016) examined principals' successful communication skills in Title I Schools in Virginia. The ability to motivate teachers is an important leadership principle for school leaders. The study included principals and aspiring school leaders, self-reporting communication strategies of these principals at high-performing Title I elementary schools. The researcher

conducted semi-structured interviews with eight principals among these schools in addition to surveys and found five themes in effective communication among principals. These themes included a student-centered approach to decision-making, transparency of decision-making, shared decision-making among principals and teachers, the significance of faculty trust, and principal preparation. The significance of face-to-face meetings between principals and teachers was also reported by the participants. The researcher suggested further emphasis and mentorship programs and school-division level training in communication development to instill these themes of effective communication among principals in lower-performing Title I Schools. Improvement of principal communication builds trusting relationships that are important for leading teachers to effective instruction for students being served in Title I Schools.

Woods and Martin (2016) examined what leadership behaviors were present within Title I high-poverty, high achieving rural elementary schools in Missouri. Through surveys and interviews, the researchers identified two major themes: 1) *educating the whole child*, which entailed the provision of basic needs, academic interventions based on data, an emphasis on reading, extended academic time, and a focus on the building of relationships; and 2) *synergy of expectations,* which entailed consistency in student expectations, increased accountability among staff, and community involvement. Woods and Martin further found that strong leadership behaviors allowed teachers and other staff members to be able to improve and sustain academic achievement of low-income students as well as higher-income students. The researchers concluded that principal leadership was effective for Title I high poverty, high-achieving schools when their roles were highly integrated in proactive and authentic ways, as opposed to a detached adaption of varying formal programs.

Academic achievement efforts also exist outside of formal governmental and Title I school programming. Walsh et al. (2014) sought to examine the academic achievement of students who were participating in City Connects, which was a student support intervention for students in high-poverty elementary schools in Boston, Massachusetts. They found that students in City Connects had better grades and later scored higher on middle school language arts and mathematics tests. Based on these findings, the researchers concluded that this intervention was effective in improving academic achievement for students in high-poverty elementary schools, and furthermore, that similar interventions that target out-of-school factors may also be successful. This study suggests for the current study the many approaches to improving academic performance among low-income students, some of which may fall outside of the bounds of formal academic improvement procedures.

Chapter Summary

A review of the literature has demonstrated the negative effects of poverty on student achievement and has addressed educational reform and measures that work to mitigate these harmful effects and improve student achievement. Educational reform over the last two decades has greatly emphasized the importance of educational accountability. It has also emphasized the significance of principal instructional leadership, which is seen as a crucial factor in improving academic achievement for students of low SES.

While many studies have examined principal instructional leadership, few have examined principals' self-perceptions specifically at Georgia elementary Title I Reward Schools and Needs Improvement schools. The current study works to fill this gap in the literature, and in so doing,

will add to the existing literature on principal instructional leadership and help to point to effective instructional leadership practices, working towards the aim of improving academic achievement. The current study examines instructional leadership practices among principals of GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress, and GNI elementary schools through principals' perceptions. Furthermore, the current study aims to analyze these perceptions through the three dimensions of instructional leadership: *Defining the School Mission, Managing the Instructional Program,* and *Developing the School Learning Climate*. Chapter Three discusses the research methods for the current study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

As experts in the field continue to point to the critical role instructional leadership has in the improvement process, it is vital to examine the importance of instructional leadership and the role the principal plays in supporting the teaching and learning environment within an organization (Gurley et al., 2015). Therefore, the purpose of the proposed causal-comparative research study was to determine what differences existed in the instructional leadership practices between principals of Georgia Reward Highest Performing elementary schools, Georgia Reward Highest Progress elementary schools, and Georgia Needs Improvement elementary schools as perceived by the schools' principals. More specifically, this study examined the self-perceptions of principals from Georgia Reward Highest Performing, Georgia Reward Highest Progress, and Georgia Needs Improvement elementary schools in reference to *Defining the School Mission, Managing the Instructional Progra*m, and *Developing the School Learning Climate* to determine similarities and differences among the high-performing schools regarding the effective guidelines the leaders put in place for student success. Due to the increasing number of students living in poverty, the achievement gap continues to widen between students of privilege and students who are low-SES in the state of Georgia. Therefore, it was critical to examine principals' perceptions of their leadership practices because the leader's role for school improvement is vital for sustained success.

Georgia Department of Education determines the titles given to Title I Schools based on their performance. Georgia Reward Highest Performing schools are categorized as the top 5% of Title I Schools in the state. The schools have shown the highest performance in the category of All Students over three years; the schools met AYP requirements in 2011 and were not given

titles as a priority school, focus school, or an alert school (GA DOE, 2012). For the purpose of this research, Georgia Reward Highest Performing elementary schools will be referred to as GRH-Performing. Georgia Reward Highest Progress elementary schools are schools that are in the top 10% of Title I Schools in making progress in the "All Student" category over a select number of years on the statewide assessments and may not have significant achievement gaps of not improving across subgroups (GA DOE, 2012). George Reward Highest Progress elementary school will be referred to as GRH-Progress. Georgia Needs Improvement elementary schools are among the lowest 10% of Title I Schools not closing the achievement gap among students (GA DOE, 2012). Georgia Needs Improvement schools will be referred to as GNI.

The following chapter begins with a review of the research questions, followed by a discussion of the research design as well as the operational variables. The chapter continues with a discussion of the study's population identified for the research study, the instrumentation, and the processes for data collection and data analysis. The researcher concludes the chapter with a summary discussion.

Research Questions

While studies have been conducted in the interest of high-poverty, high-performing schools (e.g., Kannapel & Clements, 2005; Mulford & Silins, 2011; Togneri & Anderson, 2003); an area of focus that still needs further attention was to determine what differences existed in instructional leadership practices between GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress and GNI elementary schools as perceived by the schools' principals. As a result, the research was guided by the following research questions:

1. Within the instructional leadership dimension of Defining the School Mission, what differences, if any, exist in the instructional leadership practices between elementary

school principals of Georgia Reward Highest Performing, Georgia Reward Highest Progress, and Georgia Needs Improvement schools as perceived by principals?

2. Within the instructional leadership dimension of Managing the Instructional Program, what differences, if any, exist in the instructional leadership practices between elementary school principals of Georgia Reward Highest Performing, Georgia Reward Highest Progress, and Georgia Needs Improvement schools as perceived by principals?
3. Within the instructional leadership dimension of Developing the School Learning Climate Program, what differences, if any, exist in the instructional leadership practices between elementary school principals of Georgia Reward Highest Performing, Georgia Reward Highest Progress, and Georgia Needs Improvement schools as perceived by principals?

Research Design

This quantitative study was conducted using a causal-comparative research design that utilized a survey methodology to investigate elementary school principals' perceptions of their instructional leadership in GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress and GNI elementary schools. Additionally, the researcher utilized a causal-comparative research design to determine the similarities and differences among principals' perceptions in reference to *Defining the School Mission*, *Managing the Instructional Program*, and *Developing the School Learning Climate* regarding the effective guidelines the leaders put in place for student success. The rationale for utilizing a causal-comparative research design aligned to the purpose of the study that was based on principals' perceptions of their leadership practices, and therefore, the perceptions were in place and could not be manipulated. According to Gall et al. (2007), the causal-comparative research design is an appropriate quantitative method of research that permits the researcher to

identify a cause and an effect relationship between two or more groups. Participants are not randomly assigned to groups and the independent variable cannot be manipulated (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). The independent variable in the study was school performance type (GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress, and GNI) and the dependent variable in this study was the leadership practices that were determined by numerical values based on the principals' perceptions. To answer the research questions, a series of Kruskal-Wallis ANOVAs were conducted to determine if the mean differences between the principal instructional leadership practices of GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress, and GNI elementary schools, as perceived by principals were significantly different in reference to *Defining the School Mission, Managing the Instructional Program,* and *Developing the School Learning Climate Program*. The Kruskal-Wallis ANOVAs are the non-parametric counterparts to the parametric ANOVA and they were selected because of the small sample size.

Population and Setting

The target population of this study included Georgia principals and assistant principals in Title I Schools, specifically in the categories of GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress, and GNI elementary schools comprised of pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. For purposes of this study, a convenient population was identified due to the fact that the researcher is an elementary school teacher in one of the GNI elementary schools. The state of Georgia has 67 GRH-Performing elementary schools, 117 GRH-Progress elementary schools, and 234 GNI elementary schools. Therefore, the potential participants for the proposed study included 136 principals and assistant principals from GRH-Performing elementary schools, 234 principals and assistant principals from GRH-Progress elementary schools, and 468 principals and assistant principals from GNI elementary school

s.

Instrument

Because the study sought to determine what differences existed in the instructional leadership practices among principals of GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress, and GNI elementary schools, Hallinger's (1983) Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) was used to assess specific, essential behaviors utilized by principals in an attempt to provide information about instructional leadership (see Appendix A). The scale includes three dimensions including: *Defining the School Mission, Managing the Instructional Program, and Developing the School Learning Climate* (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987).

The PIMRS content validity is based on a review of the instrumental leadership literature. The content of the survey has been validated through expert review. The review among raters was 0.80 for each item for inclusion in the rating scale. The rating class for construct validity is shown by higher correlations among items within a subscale than for the same items for other subscales (Hallinger, 2008).

The three dimensions are supported by ten individual leadership functions that are representative of the instructional leadership skills discussed within this study and offer an instrument that is closely aligned to the aspirations of the study. The PIMRS has been utilized widely to gain understanding about the frequencies of instructional practices school leaders are engaging in with their staff (Hallinger et al., 2013). For the purpose of this study, PIMRS was implemented to assess elementary school principals' perceptions of their own instructional leadership practices.

Data Collection Procedures

Permission was requested from the school district superintendents for GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress, and GNI elementary schools to meet the requirements for each district's IRB requirements. The superintendents received a letter that included an introduction from the researcher as a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership Program at Georgia Southern University, an explanation of the purpose of the study, and permission to contact elementary schools' principals from the targeted population. The letter contained a Superintendent Consent Form for the superintendents to sign and return to the researcher. The researcher emphasized that principals would not be contacted personally, only through email, and that all principals and assistant principals who agreed to participate in the research study would not be identified and that all principals' and assistant principals' responses to the survey would be kept confidential.

In compliance with Georgia Southern University's Institutional Research Board's (IRB) guidelines, permission to conduct the research were petitioned. No data were collected until IRB permissions was obtained through the process. Official permission to use the PIMRS was obtained electronically from Dr. Phillip Hallinger through email.

Permissions were sought from the 45 superintendents of the Title I schools designated in this study. Of the 45 superintendents, six granted their permission to conduct the study and approval was also received from the Institutional Research Board (IRB) (see Appendix B). The researcher contacted the six district offices in each school system to obtain the schools' principals' and assistant principals' email addresses. The researcher then emailed 36 principals and assistant principals from the approved districts a copy of the Superintendent Consent Form, a Principal Consent Form, an explanation of the significance of the research, an assurance of anonymity, and a link to an online survey. The principals and assistant principals were informed

that their participation in the study was strictly voluntary and there would be no negative consequences for non-participation. The principals and assistant principals were further informed that by completing the survey through *Qualtrics*, it was understood they would be providing passive consent.

For anonymity purposes of the research, three survey links were distributed. The first survey link was used for GRH-Performing elementary schools; the second survey link was used for GRH-Progress elementary schools; and the third survey link was used for GNI elementary schools. Each survey was initially scheduled to remain open for two weeks. After the two-week period, a follow-up email was sent inviting the participants to complete the survey within a period of one week. A total of 14 Georgia principals in high poverty elementary schools, specifically in the categories of GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress elementary schools, GNI elementary schools, responded to the online survey.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of the research study was to determine what differences existed in the instructional leadership practices between principals of GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress, and GNI elementary schools as perceived by elementary school principals. A further purpose of the study was to analyze the perceptions of principals' use of instructional leadership practices by using an anonymous online survey. The study was conducted across the state of Georgia at designated Georgia Title I Schools. Therefore, the potential participants for the study included 136 principals and assistant principals from GRH-Performing elementary schools, 234 principals and assistant principals from GRH-Progress elementary schools, and 142 principals and assistant principals from GNI elementary schools.

In actuality, six superintendents out of the 45 designated Title I school districts granetd permission to conduct the study. Permission to conduct the study and approval was also received from the Institutional Research Board (IRB). A total of 14 Georgia principals in high poverty elementary schools, specifically in the categories of GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress elementary schools, GNI elementary schools, responded to an online survey.

Hallinger's (1983) leadership form 2.0 of PIMRS was utilized to assess the three dimensions of the instructional leadership construct: *Defining the School's Mission, Managing the Instructional Program, and Developing the School Learning Climate Program.* The Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA was used to decide whether significant differences existed between the means of principal instructional leaership practices, as percieved by principals, in GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress, and GNI elementary schools schools.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS FROM DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of the causal-comparative research study was to investigate elementary school principals' perceptions of their instructional leadership in Georgia Reward Highest Performing (GRH- Performing), Georgia Reward Highest Progress (GRH-Progress), and Georgia Needs Improvement (GNI) elementary schools. The study identified what differences existed between the perceived instructional leadership practices in an attempt to decide if the practices were connected to school effectiveness between principals of GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress, and GNI elementary schools.

A total of 14 Georgia principals in high poverty elementary schools, specifically in the categories of GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress elementary schools, GNI elementary schools, responded to an online survey. Hallinger's Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) was utilized to assess the three dimensions of the instructional leadership construct: *Defining the School Mission*, *Managing the Instructional Program*, and *Developing the School Learning Climate* (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). The survey was administered via Qualtrics and utilized three web link collectors for the purpose of comparison.

This chapter begins by first returning to the research questions. The chapter then presents the research design and continues with a discussion on the response rate and a description of the respondents. The chapter continues with a discussion on data analysis. The findings from data

analysis are then reported by the research questions and concludes with a summary of the chapter.

Research Questions

This study focused on GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress, and GNI elementary schools to determine what differences existed between the instructional leadership practices of principals and school success by schools' designations as perceived by the principals implementing them. From this stance, the study was guided by the following research questions:

1. Within the instructional leadership quadrant of Defining the School Mission, what differences exist in the instructional leadership practices between elementary school principals of GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress and GNI elementary schools as perceived by principals?
2. Within the instructional leadership quadrant of Managing the Instructional Program, what differences exist in the instructional leadership practices between elementary school principals of GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress and GNI elementary schools as perceived by principals?
3. Within the instructional leadership quadrant of Developing the School Learning Climate Program, what differences exist in the instructional leadership practices between elementary school principals of GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress and GNI elementary schools as perceived by principals?

Research Design

This quantitative study was conducted using a causal-comparative research design to investigate principals' perceptions of their instructional leadership in GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress and GNI elementary schools. Additionally, the researcher sought to determine the similarities and differences among principals' perceptions in reference to *Defining the School Mission, Managing the Instructional Program,* and *Developing the School Learning Climate* regarding the effective guidelines the leaders put in place for student success. The independent

variable in the study was the presence of elementary school principals' perceptions (GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress, and GNI) and the dependent variable in this study was the leadership practices that were determined by numerical values based on the principals' perceptions. Because the study sought to determine what differences existed in the instructional leadership practices among principals of GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress, and GNI elementary schools, Hallinger's (1983) Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) was used to assess specific, essential behaviors utilized by principals in an attempt to provide information about instructional leadership. The scale includes three dimensions including: *Defining the School Mission*, *Managing the Instructional Program*, and *Developing the School Learning Climate* (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). The three dimensions are supported by ten individual leadership functions that are representative of the instructional leadership skills discussed within this study and offer an instrument that is closely aligned to the aspirations of the study. The PIMRS utilized a 5-point Likert scale to measure teacher perceptions including: (1) Almost Never, (2) Seldom, (3) Sometimes, (4) Frequently, and (5) Almost Always.

Description of Respondents

The study population consisted of Georgia principals in high poverty elementary schools. The three categories of reward schools are designated by the Georgia Academic Achievement Award Program that honors and rewards K-12 Title I Schools and school districts for significant progress in improving student achievement. Highest Performing Reward Schools (GRH-Performing) are the top 5% of the Title I Schools in the state. These schools receive this nomination based on the achievement of the "All Students" group in reference to the proficiency on statewide assessments (GADOE, 2014). High Progress Reward Schools (GRH-Progress) are among the highest 10% of the Title I Schools in the state. The schools are given this distinction

based upon the achievement of the "All Students" group in terms of proficiency on the statewide assessments (GADOE, 2014). Georgia Needs Improvement schools (GNI) are given the distinction because they are among the lowest 10 percent of Title I Schools in the state that have a subgroup or subgroups with low achievement (GADOE, 2014).

Response Rate

The researcher provided the survey to all schools' principals (N = 14) where permission had been obtained. The survey was shared and opened for participants to complete for a period of two weeks with an email reminder at the end of the two-week period. In the category of GRH-Performing, the researcher calculated a response rate of 50% after receiving six responses out of a possible 12. In the category of GRH- Progress, the researcher calculated a response rate of 42% based on receiving completed surveys from five respondents out of 12 and a response rate of 25% for GNI elementary principals based on the completed responses of three out of 12. The response rate excluded incomplete responses to any component of the survey delivered via *Qualtrics*.

Data Analysis

Responses to the PIMRS were first entered into the most current version of the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) to calculate means and standard deviations. A series of Kruskal-Wallis one-way ANOVAs were conducted. The Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA test for independent samples was used to decide whether significant differences existed between the means of principal instructional leaership practices, as percieved by principals, in GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress, and GNI elementary schools schools in reference to *Defining the School Mission, Managing the Instructional Program*, and *Developing the School Learning*

Climate (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). The Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA is the non-parametric counterparts to the parametric ANOVA, and it were selected because of the small sample size.

Findings

The overarching research purpose was to investigate principals' self-perceptions of their instructional leadership practices in GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress, and GNI elementary schools by determining the frequency of principals' instructional leadership practices. The PIMRS utilized a 5-point Likert scale to measure principals including: (1) Almost Never, (2) Seldom, (3) Sometimes, (4) Frequently, and (5) Almost Always. Responses to the PIMRS were first entered into the most current version of the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) to calculate means and standard deviations. A series of Kruskal-Wallis ANOVAs were conducted.

Results for Research Question 1: Defining the School Mission

Research Question 1 asked: Within the instructional leadership quadrant of Defining the School Mission (DSM), what differences exist in the instructional leadership practices between elementary school principals of GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress, and GNI elementary schools as perceived by principals? Means and standard deviations were calculated to measure principals' perceptions for the ten behavioral statements that are delineated by the two leadership functions: Frames the School Goals (FSG) and Communicates the School Goals (CSG) (see Table 1).

Frame the School Goals

Within the *Defining the School Mission* instructional leadership dimension, principals who serve as instructional leaders must have a clear vision of both the present and future school-wide goals and communicate the information to school and community leaders (Hallinger &

Murphey, 2012). The behavioral statement Staff Input on Goal Development showed the most agreement in means across the three categories of elementary principals (GNI = 4.67, GRH-Progress = 4.60, GRH-Performing =4 .50) with an overall mean score of 4.48. However, the behavioral statement Frame the School's Goals in Terms of Staff Responsibilities for Meeting Them demonstrated a variety of responses from the principals (GNI = 4.33, GRH-Progress = 4.60, GRH-Performing = 4.17). Specifically, one elementary principal from GNI schools

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics for Defining the School Mission

Functions and Behavior Statements	[GNI-School]		[GRH-Progress]		[GRH-Performing]	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Frame the School Goals						
Develop School-wide Goals	4.67	0.47	4.60	0.49	4.33	0.75
Frame School Goals-Staff	4.33	0.47	4.60	0.49	4.17	0.69
Staff Input on Goal Development	4.67	0.47	4.60	0.49	4.50	0.76
Student Performance Data	4.33	0.47	4.80	0.40	4.50	0.76
Develop Clear and Implement Goals	4.33	0.47	4.80	0.40	4.50	0.50
Communicate the School Goals						
Communicate School's Mission	4.33	0.94	4.25	0.83	4.00	1.10
Discuss School's Academic Goals	3.33	1.25	4.25	0.83	4.33	0.75
Refer to Academic Goals in Decisions	4.33	0.47	4.50	0.50	4.17	0.90
Ensure Goals Are Visible	3.67	0.47	3.00	0.71	2.67	1.11
Refer to Goals in Forums with Students	4.67	0.47	3.75	0.83	2.50	1.38

responded, "Almost Always" and two selected "Frequently." For the elementary principals from GRH-Progress schools, three responded "Almost Always," and two responded "Frequently." Similarly, two elementary principals from GRH-Performing schools responded, "Almost Always," three responded "Frequently," and one responded "Sometimes."

Communicate the School Goals

According to Hallinger and Murphy (1987), the leader must play an important role in making sure the school has clear, measurable goals that have academic growth at the forefront of the thought process and the faculty must vividly know the goals of the school. Within the

dimension of Communicate the School Goals, the mean responses were lower and showed greater variance based upon standard deviations. For example, the behavioral statement Ensure Goals are Visible demonstrated a variety of lower responses from the principals (GNI = 3.67, GRH-Progress = 3.00, GRH-Performing = 2.67) and resulted in an overall mean of 3.11. Similarly, there were varied responses for the behavioral statement, Refer to Goals in Forums with Students (GNI = 4.67, GRH-Progress = 3.75, GRH-Performing = 2.50).

Other behavioral statements reported some differences between the respondents. The behavioral statement Discuss the School's Academic Goals with Teachers at Faculty Meetings found that the GNI elementary principals reported moderate findings such as "Sometimes" or "Seldom" on the survey question, whereas the GRH-Progress and GRH-Performing elementary principals surveyed reported "Almost Always" and "Frequently." The behavioral statement Refer to the School's Academic Goals when Making Curricular Decisions with Teachers reported some differences based upon the survey results. The GNI and GRH-Progress participants reported "Frequently" and "Sometimes" on the survey; however, the GRH-Performing participants responded "Seldom" and "Almost Never."

To measure the significance of *Defining the School Mission*, the Kruskal-Wallis test was performed to compare the means of the independent samples of the principals of GRH-Performing elementary schools, GRH-Progress elementary schools, GNI elementary schools in terms of their instructional leadership for the ten behavioral statements that are delineated by the two leadership functions: Frames the School Goals (FSG) and Communicates the School Goals (CSG). The Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA test for indepenedent samples determined there was no statistically significant difference (see Table 2).

Table 2

Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis for Defining the School Mission (DSM)

	N	Test Statistic	df	p value
DSM	12	.558[a,b]	2	.756

Results for Research Question 2: Managing the Instructional Program

Research Question 2 asked: Within the instructional leadership quadrant of Managing the Instructional Program (MIP), what differences exist in the instructional leadership practices between elementary school principals of GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress, and GNI elementary schools as perceived by principals? Means and standard deviations were calculated to measure principals' perceptions for ten behavioral statements that describe principal job practices in the following two instructional leadership functions: Coordinate the Curriculum (CC) and Monitor Student Progress (MSP) (see Table 3).

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Managing the Instructional Program

Functions and Behavior Statements	[GNI-School]		[GRH-Progress]		[GRH-Performing]	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Coordinate the Curriculum						
Make Clear Who Coordinates Curriculum	4.67	0.47	4.75	0.43	3.50	0.87
Use Test Results for Curricular Decisions	4.67	0.47	4.75	0.43	4.25	1.30
Monitor Classroom Curriculum	5.00	0.00	4.50	0.50	3.25	0.83
Assess Curriculum Overlap	4.33	0.94	4.33	0.94	3.75	1.09
Participate in Review of Curriculum	4.67	0.47	3.75	1.09	3.00	1.22
Monitor Student Progress						
Meet with Teachers to Discuss Students	4.00	0.82	4.00	0.71	3.50	1.12
Discus Student Performance	4.00	0.82	4.00	0.00	4.25	0.83
Use Tests to Assess Progress	4.33	0.47	4.75	0.43	4.25	0.83
Inform Teachers of School Performance	3.67	0.94	4.50	0.50	4.25	0.83
Inform Students of School Progress	3.57	0.94	3.25	0.43	2.75	1.79

Coordinate the Curriculum

Within the instructional leadership of MIP, the role of the principal is expected to extend the role to the development and management of the curriculum and instructional practice of the teachers (Hallinger & Murphey, 2012). The behavioral statement Use the Results of School-Wide Testing when Making Curricular Decisions showed high consistency across the three different levels of schools with a mean score of 4.62 (GNI = 4.67, GRH-Progress = 4.75, GRH Performing = 4.25). The responses showed that the majority of the survey participants responded either "Almost Always" or "Frequently." The behavioral statement showed the importance of this leadership principle. However, the behavioral statement Participate Actively in the Review of Curricular Materials showed more variance between participants' responses. The mean score was 3.80 (GNI = 4.67, GRH-Progress = 3.75, GRH-Performing = 3.00). The majority of responses from the GRH-Performing and GNI elementary schools recorded "Frequently" and "Almost Always." Yet, the GRH-Progress participants did show lower Likert responses with the inclusion of "Sometimes" and "Almost Never" choices.

Monitor Student Progress

The behavioral statement Use Tests and Other Performance Measure to Assess Progress toward School Goals showed consistency across GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress elementary schools, GNI elementary schools. The mean score was 4.44 (GNI = 4.33, GRH-Progress = 4.75, GRH-Performing = 4.25). The participants selected "Almost Always" and "Frequently" more often than the other choices, implying that principals consider using test and other measures to measure progress of considerable importance in their schools. However, the behavioral statement Inform Students of School's Academic Progress showed some variety across GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress, and GNI elementary school principals. The findings indicated that GNI

elementary school principals responded “Almost Always” or “Frequently” that they inform students on school’s academic progress. The GRH-Performing elementary principals’ responses indicated “Almost Never” in terms of informing students of progress.

To measure significance of *Managing the Instructional Program*, the Kruskal-Wallis test was performed to compare the means of the independent samples of the principals of GRH-Performing elementary schools, GRH-Progress elementary schools, GNI elementary schools. The Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA test for independent samples determined there was no statistically significant difference (see Table 4).

Table 4

Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis for Managing the Instructional Program (MP)

	N	Test Statistic	df	p value
MP	9	.154[a,b]	2	.926

Results for Research Question 3: Developing the School Learning Climate

Research Question 3 asked: Within the instructional leadership quadrant of *Developing the School Learning Climate* (DSLC), what differences exist in the instructional leadership practices between elementary school principals of GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress, and GNI elementary schools as perceived by principals? Means and standard deviations were calculated to measure principals’ perceptions for 25 behavioral statements that describe principal job practices in the following five instructional leadership functions: Protect Instructional Time (PIT); Maintain High Visibility (MHV); Provide Incentives for Teachers (PIFT), Promote Professional Development (PPD); and Provide Incentives for Learning (PIL) (see Table 5).

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics for Developing School Learning Climate (DSLC)

Functions and Behavior Statements	[GNI-School]		[GRH-Progress]		[GRH-Perfroming]	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Protect Instructional Time						
Limit Interruptions of Instructional Time	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	4.60	0.49
Ensure Students Are Not Called to Office	4.67	0.47	3.75	0.83	3.80	1.17
Tardy/Truant Students Have Consequences	3.00	0.00	2.50	1.12	2.40	1.36
Encourage Teachers to Practice Skills	4.67	0.47	5.00	0.00	4.80	0.40
Limit Extra-Curricular Activities	4.67	0.47	4.50	0.50	4.00	1.55
Maintain High Visibility						
Talk Informally With Students/Teachers	5.00	0.00	4.00	0.71	4.40	0.80
Visit Classrooms to Discuss Issues	5.00	0.00	4.00	0.71	4.40	0.49
Attend/Participate in Extra-Curricular Activities	5.00	0.00	4.50	0.87	4.80	0.40
Cover Classes for Teachers	4.33	0.94	2.75	1.48	3.60	1.36
Tutor Students/Provide Direct Instruction	4.33	0.94	2.25	1.09	2.60	1.36
Provide Incentives for Teachers						
Reinforce Teacher Performance in Meetings	4.67	0.47	3.75	0.43	4.00	1.22
Compliment Teachers' Efforts Privately	4.67	0.47	4.50	0.50	4.50	0.50
Acknowledge Teacher Performance	3.67	0.94	2.00	1.22	3.75	1.64
Reward Teacher Efforts with Recognition	4.00	0.82	3.50	0.87	4.25	0.83
Create Teacher Growth Opportunities	4.00	0.82	3.50	1.12	3.75	1.30
Promote Professional Development						
Ensure In-Service Activities Are Attended	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	4.75	0.43
Support In-Service Skills in Classroom	4.67	0.47	4.67	0.47	4.00	1.22
Obtain Staff Participation in Activities	4.67	0.47	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00
Lead/Attend In-Service Instructional Activities	4.33	0.47	5.00	0.00	4.50	0.50
Allow Sharing of Skills/Information at Meetings	4.33	0.47	4.33	0.94	3.50	0.87
Provide Incentives for Learning						
Recognize Students with Formal Rewards	4.67	0.47	5.00	0.00	3.75	1.30
Honor Students in Assemblies	4.67	0.47	4.33	0.94	4.25	0.83
Recognize Students in Office	4.00	0.82	3.67	0.94	3.50	1.66
Contact Parents to Communicate Performance	4.33	0.94	3.67	0.94	3.25	1.79
Support Teachers in Student Recognition	4.67	0.47	4.33	0.47	4.25	0.83

Protects Instructional Time

Within the *Developing the School Learning Climate* instructional leadership dimension, principals influence the attitudes and norms of students and teachers while also promoting student growth (Hallinger & Murphey, 2012). The behavioral statements Ensure that Tardy and Truant Students Suffer Specific Consequences for Missing Instructional Time, Encourage Teachers to Use Instructional Time for Teaching and Practicing New Skills and Concepts, and Limit the Intrusion of Extra- and Co-Curricular Activities on Instructional Time showed some consistencies across the three groups of principals.

Maintain High Visibility

The response for behavioral statement Visit Classrooms to Discuss School Issues with Teachers and Students demonstrated consistency across the groups. The GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress, and GNI elementary school principals responded, “Almost Always” and “Frequently” to the instructional leadership practice of visiting classrooms to have discussions concerning the issues within the school. However, the response for the behavioral statement Cover Classes for Teachers Until A Late or Substitute Teacher Arrives recorded a variety of responses. The GRH-Performing elementary principals elected “Almost Always” and “Frequently” more often. The GNI and GRH-Progress elementary school participants more often chose the options of “Sometimes,” “Seldom,” and “Almost Never.”

Provide Incentives for Learning

The response for behavioral statement Recognize Students Who Do Superior Work with Formal Rewards Such as An Honor Roll or Mention in The Principal's Newsletter showed inconsistency between the three groups of principals. The GNI and GRH-Progress elementary school participants selected “Almost Always” when responding to the behavioral statement;

however, the GRH-Performing school principals selected “Sometimes” and “Seldom.” In addition, the response for the behavioral statement Contact Parents to Communicate Improved or Exemplary Student Performance or Contributions was inconsistent across two groups. The GNI and GRH-Progress elementary principals selected “Almost Always” and “Sometimes.” The GRH-Performing participants indicated “Seldom” and “Almost Never” as responses for the behavioral statement.

Promotes Professional Development

The response for behavioral statement Ensure that In-service Activities Attended by Staff Are Consistent With the School's Goals showed the greatest consistency among the three groups. The GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress elementary, and GNI elementary school principals selected “Almost Always” and “Frequently.” The principals of the schools perceive that they are ensuring that in-service activities attended by staff are consistent with the school’s goals. Secondly, the response for behavioral statement Obtain the Participation of the Whole Staff in Important Inservice Activities showed strong consistency as well. The majority of GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress elementary, and GNI elementary schools’ principals selected “Almost Always” and “Frequently.” The principals of the schools perceive that they are obtaining the participation of their staff for key training activities.

To measure significance of *Developing the School Learning Context*, the Kruskal-Wallis test was performed to compare the means of the independent samples of the principals of GRH-Performing elementary schools, GRH-Progress elementary schools, GNI elementary schools in terms of their behavioral statements that describe principal job practices in the following five instructional leadership functions: Protect Instructional Time (PIT); Maintain High Visibility (MHV); Provide Incentives for Teachers (PIFT), Promote Professional Development (PPD); and

Provide Incentives for Learning (PIL) (see Table 6). The Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA test for independent samples determined there was no statistically significant difference (see Table 6).

Table 6

Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis for Developing the School Learning Context (DSLC)

	N	Test Statistic	df	p value
DLSC	9	.196[a,b]	2	.907

Chapter Summary

It is important to note that none of the Kruskal-Wallis ANOVAs reached statistical significance, and hence, none of the differences in principals' perceptions regarding the three dimensions of the PIMRS (*Managing Instructional Programs*, *Defining the School Mission*, and *Developing the School Learning Climate*) of interest to the present study between school performance type (GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress, and GNI elementary) were noted. Thus, principals' perceptions of their leadership role in the present sample of school leaders does not appear to have any influence.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Summary

Since the implementation of NCLB (2002), accountability for student achievement has been the norm. Under NCLB (2002), the accountability system was a measurement of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) (GA DOE, 2014) and was determined by students' assessment results. Based on yearly performance data, Georgia developed a statewide accountability system by the name of College Based and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI). Even with accountability measures in place, the state of Georgia has seen a significant year-to-year decrease in elementary school scores (GA DOE, 2018), and data show the decrease is related to the missed bonus point opportunities for meeting the needs of the economically-disadvantaged and ELLs.

Moreover, schools that serve predominantly low-SES students, known as Title I Schools, receive federal funds through the U.S. DOE with the goal of helping ensure that all children meet challenging state academic content and student achievement standards (GA DOE, 2018); yet, the achievement gap for low-SES students continues to widen. Effective Title I programs are expected to implement effective practices for improving student achievement and include support for parental involvement. Subsequently, school leaders are evaluated as to how effective their leadership practices are that have been put in place, as well as their instructional designs and decisions for classroom implementation.

To ensure effective leadership in Georgia, the state has implemented a measurement system to evaluate schools' leaders. The Leader Keys Effectiveness System (LKES) is the evaluation system designed for building leader effectiveness and ensuring consistency and comparability throughout the state (GA DOE, 2018). Specifically, the system is designed to

provide feedback and support for school leaders based on four dimensions within LKES; *Leader Assessment on Performance Standards, Student Growth, School Climate Survey, and Combination of Additional Data* (GA DOE, 2018).

Because the ultimate goal for the state of Georgia is to improve the educational achievement for its students, solutions can be found. The state of Georgia Academic Achievement Awards Program honors and rewards K-12 Title I Schools and school districts for significant progress in improving student achievement and making significant progress in closing the achievement gaps (GA DOE, 2014). Schools have the ability to be Highest Performing Reward Schools (GRH-Performing), High Progress Reward Schools (GRH-Progress), or Georgia Needs Improvement Schools (GNI).

Therefore, the purpose of the causal-comparative research study was to determine what differences exist between principals of GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress and GNI elementary schools as perceived by principals. More specifically, this study examined the self-perceptions of principals from GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress, and GNI elementary schools in reference to *Defining the School Mission, Managing the Instructional Program*, and *Developing the School Learning Climate.*

This study focused on GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress, and GNI elementary schools to determine what differences existed between the instructional leadership practices of principals and school success in the designations of schools as perceived by the principals implementing them. From this stance, the study was guided by the following research questions:

1. Within the instructional leadership quadrant of Defining the School Mission, what differences exist in the instructional leadership practices between elementary school principals of GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress and GNI elementary schools as perceived by principals?

2. Within the instructional leadership quadrant of Managing the Instructional Program, what differences exist in the instructional leadership practices between elementary school principals of GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress and GNI elementary schools as perceived by principals?
3. Within the instructional leadership quadrant of Developing the School Learning Climate, what differences exist in the instructional leadership practices between elementary school principals of GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress and GNI elementary schools as perceived by principals?

Chapter Five is organized by a brief discussion on the analysis of the research findings, followed by a discussion of the findings related to the three instrucional leadership dimmensions identifyed by Hallinger and Murphy (1985): *Defining the School Mission* (DSM), *Managing the Instructional Program* (MIP), and *Developing the School Learning Climate* (DSCL). The chapter continues with a discussion on the limitations, delimitations, and research assumptions, followed by a dicussion on the implications of the findings. The chapter continues with a discussion on recommendations for future research and plans for dissemination of the research findings.

Analysis of Research Findings

It is important to note that none of the Kruskal-Wallis ANOVAs reached statistical significance, and hence, none of the differences in principals' perceptions regarding the three dimensions of the PIMRS (*Defining the School Mission, Managing Instructional Programs*, and *Developing the School Learning Climate*) of interest to the present study between school performance type (GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress, and GNI elementary) were noted. Thus, principals' perceptions of their leadership role in the present sample of school leaders does not appear to have any influence.

Discussion of Research Findings

The following discussion compares the survey findings of this study to research presented in the review of literature based upon the three instrucional leadership dimmensions identifyed by Hallinger and Murphy (1985): *Defining the School Mission* (DSM), *Managing the Instructional Program* (MIP), and *Developing the School Learning Climate Program* (DSCLP).

Defnining the School Mission

The first dimension, *Defining the School's Mission*, is based on two functions: Frames the School Goals (FSG) and Communicates the School Goals (CSG) (Hallinger, 2003; Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). Hallinger and Murphy (1987) offered that the leader must play an important role in making sure the school has clear, measurable goals that have academic growth at the forefront of the thought process. Additionally, Glickman et al. (2007) explicated that the faculty must vividly know the goals of the school. The principal has a duty of making sure that the goals of the school are visible throughout the school, and the instructional leader must support the goals of the school through the actions put in place to ensure the attainment of the goals. In other words, effective schools are led by effective leaders who work with faculty to set goals and goals are clearly communicated (Hallinger & Murphey, 1985; Ubben et al., 2007).

The findings of the current study support the findings of Hallinger and Murphy (1987), Glickman et al. (2007), and Ubben et al. (2007). The results from the current study showed consistency between the leaders of the GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress and GNI-elementary schools. The connection betweeen framing the school goals and being able to communicate them has been a long standing emphasis for effective schools and this function was made evident. The behavoral statement Developing Clear Goals and Implementing Goals was rated the highest frequency across the three groups of schools. This indicates that the instructional leaders who

participated in the study do understand the importance and support the premise that in order to have effective schools, instructional leaders need staff buy-in to reach the school's goals (Hallinger & Murphey, 1987). Additionally, the current study found that GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress, and GNI-elementary school principals perceived it is important to consider academic goals when making decisions. This finding aligns to the Leader Keys Effectiveness System (LKES) dimension 1: *Leader Assessment on Performance Standards.* Specifically, LKES helps the state government to ensure consistency among leader efficacy across districts and provides comparable data between these districts. The fact that the elementary school principals in the three categories consistently agreed that academic goals must be considered when making decisions is manifested through the first dimension of LKES.

Managing the Instructional Program

Hallinger and Murphy (2012) offered that principal instructional leadership is a mechanism that includes the strategic planing of instructional strategies. The instructional dimension of *Managing the Instructional Program* (MIP) in this study focused on two functions: Coordinate the Curriculum (CC) and Monitor Student Progress (MSP). In 2014, Ediger posited that is important for school leaders to aquire a broad understanding of currciulum and instruction and leaders must become well-versed in these vital areas. Similarly, Woods and Martin (2016) found that leadership behaviors allowed teachers and staff members to gain knowledge and bolster academica achievement of low-income scholars as well as high-income scholars. Woods and Martin (2016) conluded that principal leadership is effective when principals' roles are infused with proactive and genuine ways in the management of the instructional program. Goddard et al. (2015) found that strong instructional leaders had a direct effect on teachers'

collaborative efforts to improve instruction, such as utilizing assessment results to discuss appropriate instructional strategies that will be most effective on student learning.

The findings of the current study support the findings of Edinger (2014), Woods and Martin (2016), and Goddard et al. (2015). The findings of this study from data analysis of survey responses showed high conistency for the behavioral statement Use the Results of School Wide Testing when Making Currcular Decisions. Principals across the three groups perceived this to be an important practice. Additionally, the findings of the current study showed the principals felt strongly regarding the practice of monitoring classroom currriculum. The principals from the three groups of elementary schools believed that it was important to make clear who was coordinating curriclum for the teachers to follow. Survey findings from the current study also showed that the three groups of elementary principals' perceptions regarding the behavioral statement Use of Tests to Access Student Progress was in agreement. The principals perceived that the use of assessments was important to monitor student achievement in order to make decisions going forth and discussions about the performance results of assessments taken by students were important. Subsequently, this finding is supported by Leader Keys Effectiveness System (LKES) dimension 3: *Planning and Assessment*. The dimension focuses on effectively gathering, analyzing, and using different forms of data when planning and decision-making situations with established guidelines and procedures.

Developing the School Learning Climate

Within the *Developing the School Learning Climate* instructional leadership dimension, principals influence the attitudes and norms of students and teachers while also promoting student growth (Hallinger & Murphey, 2012). The third dimension of *Developing the School Learning Climate* includes promoting a positive school learning climate. According to Gulsen

and Gulenay (2014), a principal affects the school climate through emotional encouragement, the advocacy of positive relationships, and the implmenation of leadership practices.

Early theorists, Purkey and Smith (1983), believed that effective schools create an "academic press" through the inclusion of high standards and expectations for pupils and educators. This premise is still followed today. The leader implements practices that help protect instruction time such as the implementation of school-wide procedures and processes to reduce class time being missed.

A function of the third dimension also includes the task of promoting professional development and instructional improvement. According to Leithwood et al. (2004), leadership that focuses on building teacher capacity through professional learning, peer-peer training, or peer coaching may yield better results for changing teacher practices and supporting student learning. Principals should provide teachers the opportunity to grow as educators. The leader can accomplish this task by conducting professional development workshops within the building and providing teachers the ability to seek development from professional training. Marks and Printy (2003) offered that effective instructional leadership focuses on building teacher capacity through professional learning as professional lerarning opportunities often yield better results for changing teacher practices to support student learning.

Similarly, Nunda et al. (2017) worked with a group of teachers in one high school through a university-urban high school partnership on the academic achievement of the school's students. The high school had failed to meet AYP four years in a row and had a male graduation rate of less than 25%. However, Nunda et al. (2017) found that when the teachers were given the opportunity to participate in professional development on instructional pedagogy and practice, the collaborative nature of the PLC promoted teacher agency, professionalism, and ethics of care.

Fink and Silverman (2014) examined one school district that consisted of 39 schools that served diverse multicultural students and included a high percentage of free and reduced-price lunch students to gain insight into the leadership practices that would empower all teachers to develop proficient learners. The district in the study had faced difficulties in trying to close the achievement gap between its affluent students and low-income students. Fink and Silverman (2014) found that is critical for central office to permit instructional leaders to receive professional development and time to collaborate with other instructional leaders to engage effective teaching strategies for their faculty. The researchers concluded that central office support was essential for effective leadership.

The findings of the current study support the findings of Gulsen and Gulenay (2014), Purkey and Smith (1983), Leithwood et al. (2004), Nunda et al. (2017), and Fink and Silverman (2014). The findings of this study from data analysis of survey responses showed high consistency for the behavioral statement Limit Extra-Curricular Activities to be an important practice. Also, the findings of the current study showed the principals felt strongly about the practice of Encourage Teachers to Practice Skills and Concepts. The principals from the three groups of elementary schools believed that it was important to maintain high-visibility by talking informally with students and teachers; principal behaviors that build a positive school learning climate. The survey findings from the current study also showed that the three groups of elementary principals' perceptions regarding the behavioral statements Ensuring In-service Activities Are Attended and Principals Seek to Obtain Staff Participation in Activities were important for developing school learning climate. The principals perceived that leading and attending in-service instructional activities were important for the promotion of the teaching and learning process. Overall, the findings of the current study align to the Leader Keys

Effectiveness System (LKES) dimension 2: *School Climate Survey,* indicating the elementary principals perceived that an important leadership role was to promote a positive school learning climate.

Conclusions

Based on stringent accountability requirements, researchers maintain that instructional leadership is no longer an option, but a non-negotiable for school leaders (Murphy, 2008; Silva et al., 2011). Hallinger and Murphy (2012) concurred that effective leadership must include active, skillful, instructional leadership from the administrators and teachers. The leaders of the school cannot have a passive role in the improvement of student achievement. From a synthesis of literature, principal instructional leadership has been shown to have the strongest empirically verified impact on student learning assessment (Hallinger, 2015; Leithwood & Sleegers, 2006).

However, the increased accountability spawned by NCLB (2002) and ESSA (2015) has brought forth additional challenges for students of poverty. The push for improved academic achievement for economically-disadvantaged students and their schools has heightened. Coupled with federal mandates, students who attend high poverty schools are held to the same state standards and expectations as students who attend schools from affluent districts (Bellibaş, 2015). In spite of all the federal mandates and provisions, economic disparities still exist due to the number of US students living in poverty. Research has found that poverty has significant effects on student performance and access to quality education (Yang et al., 2018). As a result, the state of Georgia has responded with an increased emphasis on achievement and an intense focus has been placed on schools' leaders.

Although this study did not find statistically significant differences from a series Kruskal-Wallis ANOVAs in principals' perceptions regarding the three dimensions of the PIMRS

(*Managing Instructional Programs*, *Defining the School Mission*, and *Developing the School Learning Climate Program*), it is good to know the leadership in the GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress, and GNI elementary schools did have many similarities in common regarding the effective leadership practices for the success of students in the most need. While the study did not find statistically significant differences, the study did show differences between GRH-Performing and GRH-Progress in comparison with GNI elementary schools in some function and behavior statements.

Limitations, Delimitations and Assumptions

The study sought to show the perceptions of principals of their instructional leadership effectiveness in GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress, and GNI elementary schools. As a result, one limitation of the proposed study was that instructional leadership was based on principals' perceptions, rather than through researcher observations. Self perceptions can include the emphasis of social desirability where participants answer survey questions in ways to make them appear to be more inline with the expectations of implementing effective leadership practices.

In addition, the survey was completed on a voluntary basis and there was a probability that the participants who declined to participate in the study might have had different responses from those who chose to participate. Therefore, the study was limited in terms of capturing diverse perceptions. The potential for bias existed in that the participating instructional leaders' responses may have varied based upon job security, job satisfaction, as well as school environment. The job security of the participants of this study included half of the participants who have been principals between two to four years, while the other half of principals have been in their positions of five years or more. The years of service may have played a role in terms of

the leadership behaviors principles put in place for newer roles and the sustainability of the leadership behaviors for more established leadership.

Also, the survey was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic which limited the amount of participation of the study. During the time of the survey the educational school system was in a state of flux. Superintendents and principals were facing school closures, new implementation of virtual school option and overall health and safety.

The study was delimited by the fact that the participants were only from Georgia Reward schools. The selection of these schools narrowed a number of participants. The study was further delimited because the study targeted only Georgia Reward elementary schools; the exclusion of middle and high schools limited the amount of transferable information on those types of institutions.

For purposes of this research study, it was assumed that participants provided valid responses to the survey (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). The information provided by principals in GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress and GNI elementary schools met the criteria for proficient leaders on LKES. In addition, the principals completed the surveys online anonymously; thus, it was assumed any bias from the researcher was eliminated.

Implications

The definition of the role for principals as instructional leaders is constantly changing. Principals receive new information constanly from school stakeholders, boards of education, and legislative demands. The demands are even higher when it comes to high poverty schools. The view that principals are disciplinarians and overseers is no longer relevant in the education world. Principals are now expected to create a mission for the school, manage the curriuculm, and create positive work environments. The construct of principal leadership can vary, but

research shows a connection exist between leadership practices and effective leadership behaviors.

One implication from this study is principals in high poverty schools self-report a clear mission with clearly defined school goals. The leader must play an important role in making sure the school has clear, measurable goals that have academic growth at the forefront of the thought process. Coupled with this implication is that principals must engage their faculty and staff in the development of their schools' goals and communicate the goals to all stakeholders. Effective leadership aligns school goals to all academic goals. The principal has a duty of making sure that the goals of the school are visible throughout the school and apprise all stakeholers of the goals.

Secondly, principals in high poverty school coordinate the curriculum and this implies that effective leaders engage teachers in data-driven decision-making. In other words, effective principals know how to use test results to drive curricular decisions. The principal coordinates the development of the curriculum which in turn requires proper pacing and alignment with the standards placed upon the school that are based on the state requirements. When areas of concern are identified, it is that task of the principal to set forth initiatives and interventions to improve school-wide instruction through the development of a school improvement plan. Students' academic success begins with the proper curriculum. Subsequently, another implication is that effective leadership must include active, skillful, instructional leadership from the administrators and teachers. The leaders of the school cannot have a passive role in the improvement of student achievement.

A final implication is that an effective instructional leader promotes a positive school learning climate. Principals in high poverty schools must protect instructional time and implement school-wide procedures and processes to reduce class time being missed. Moreover,

effective leaders understand the importance promoting professional development for teachers for the purpose of improving student performance.

Recommendations for Future Research

As the increase of students living below the poverty line continues to increase, continued research regarding the instructional leadership practices of principals in high-povertry elementary schools is critically important to gather information that provides knowledge of the leadership practices that have the highest impact on student acheivement and growth. Instructional leadership functions in the study have been recognized to have a coorelation with student achievment (Hernandez & Darlling-Hammond, 2022). Further studies that focus on principal instructional leadership and student achievment in high-poverty schoools is a necssary research goal and deserves continued interest from educational reseach, educationl stakeholders, and educators in the field. The following are recommendations for future study.

The research was completed during the Covid-19 pandemic that limited the amount of particpants able to participate in the study. Further research will allow for a larger participant pool to gain knowledge about the topic. The study included only GRH-Performing, GRH-Progress, and GNI elmentary schools principals. Further research could be conducted with a larger, more diverse sample to possibly permit the generalizabilty of the results.

The study was completed as previously stated only in the elementary school setting. Further research should be conducted to include middle and high schools. This study analzyed the self-perceptions of principals in instructional leadership practices in quantitative format. Further studies could include qualitative aspects. The qualitative approach could address how principals perceive their role as an instructional leader and to describe what are the important instructional leadership practices. The mixed method approach would allow for interviews with

principals; this research method could provide more clarity in regards to actual principal instructional leadership practices that have been implemented in schools. While this study examined the principals' self perceptions on instructional leadership practices, future research could seek to compare princpals' self-perceptions and teachers' self-perceptions on effective instructional leadership. Finally, it would be beneficial to examine the correlation between students' achievement scores in the GMAS and the years as a principal.

Dissemination

The findings of this research study will be shared with superintendents and principals of the participating schools as the findings would provide information regarding Hallinger and Murphey's (1987) framework: *Managing Instructional Programs*, *Defining the School Mission*, and *Developing the School Learning Climate.* The researcher will share the study's findings with leadership preparation programs in hopes that the findings provide knowledge of best practices for instuctional leadership practices most frequently implemented in Title I Schools. Additionally, this study will be placed in Digital Commons at Henderson Library at Georgia Southern University and will be dissiminated in an online database.

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APPENDIX A

THE PRINCIPAL INSTRUCTIONAL MANAGEMENT RATING SCALE

PART I: Please provide the following information if instructed to do so by the person administering the instrument:

1) Indicate your current role
    a. Principal
    b. Assistant Principal

2) Number of school years you have been principal at this school.
    a. 1
    b. 2-4
    c. 5-9
    d. 10-15
    e. More than 15

3) Indicate your highest level of education.
    a. Baccalaureate
    b. Masters
    c. Education Specialist (Ed.S.)
    d. Doctorate (Ed.D. or Ph.D.)

4) What is your gender Identity?
    a. Male
    b. Female

PART II: This questionnaire is designed to provide a profile of your leadership. It consists of 50 behavioral statements that describe principal job practices and behaviors. You are asked to considereach question in terms of your leadership over the past school year.

Read each statement carefully. Then circle the number that best fits the specific job behavior or practice as you conducted it during the past school year. For the response to each statement:
5 represents *Almost Always*

4 represents *Frequently*

3 represents *Sometimes*

2 represents *Seldom*

1 represents *Almost Never*

In some cases, these responses may seem awkward; use your judgement in selecting the most appropriate response to such questions. Please circle only one number per question. Try to answer every question.

Thank you.

To what extent do you . . . ?

	ALMOST NEVER				ALMOST ALWAYS
I. FRAME THE SCHOOL GOALS					
1. Develop a focused set of annual school-wide goals	1	2	3	4	5
2. Frame the school's goals in terms of staff responsibilities for meeting them	1	2	3	4	5
3. Use needs assessment or other formal and informal methods to secure staff input on goal development	1	2	3	4	5
4. Use data on student performance when developing the school's academic goals	1	2	3	4	5
5. Develop goals that are easily understood and used by teachers in the school	1	2	3	4	5
II. COMMUNICATE THE SCHOOL GOALS					
6. Communicate the school's mission effectively to members of the school community	1	2	3	4	5
7. Discuss the school's academic goals with teachers at faculty meetings	1	2	3	4	5
8. Refer to the school's academic goals when making curricular decisions with teachers	1	2	3	4	5
9. Ensure that the school's academic goals are reflected in highly visible displays in the school (e.g., posters or bulletin boards emphasizing academic progress)	1	2	3	4	5
10. Refer to the school's goals or mission in forums with students (e.g., in assemblies or discussions)	1	2	3	4	5
III. SUPERVISE & EVALUATE INSTRUCTION					
11. Ensure that the classroom priorities of teachers are consistent with the goals and direction of the school	1	2	3	4	5
12. Review student work products when evaluating classroom instruction	1	2	3	4	5

	ALMOST NEVER				ALMOST ALWAYS
13. Conduct informal observations in classrooms on a regular basis (informal observations are unscheduled, last at least 5 minutes, and may or may not involve written feedback or a formal conference)	1	2	3	4	5
14. Point out specific strengths in teacher's instructional practices in post-observation feedback (e.g., in conferences or written evaluations)	1	2	3	4	5
15. Point out specific weaknesses in teacher instructional practices in post-observation feedback (e.g., in conferences or written evaluations)	1	2	3	4	5

IV. COORDINATE THE CURRICULUM

16. Make clear who is responsible for coordinating the curriculum across grade levels (e.g., the principal, vice principal, or teacher-leaders)	1	2	3	4	5
17. Draw upon the results of school-wide testing when making curricular decisions	1	2	3	4	5
18. Monitor the classroom curriculum to see that it covers the school's curricular objectives	1	2	3	4	5
19. Assess the overlap between the school's curricular objectives and the school's achievement tests	1	2	3	4	5
20. Participate actively in the review of curricular materials	1	2	3	4	5

V. MONITOR STUDENT PROGRESS

21. Meet individually with teachers to discuss student progress	1	2	3	4	5
22. Discuss academic performance results with the faculty to identify curricular strengths and weaknesses	1	2	3	4	5
23. Use tests and other performance measure to assess progress toward school goals	1	2	3	4	5

	ALMOST NEVER				ALMOST ALWAYS
24. Inform teachers of the school's performance results in written form (e.g., in a memo or newsletter)	1	2	3	4	5
25. Inform students of school's academic progress	1	2	3	4	5
VI. PROTECT INSTRUCTIONAL TIME					
26. Limit interruptions of instructional time by public address announcements	1	2	3	4	5
27. Ensure that students are not called to the office during instructional time	1	2	3	4	5
28. Ensure that tardy and truant students suffer specific consequences for missing instructional time	1	2	3	4	5
29. Encourage teachers to use instructional time for teaching and practicing new skills and concepts	1	2	3	4	5
30. Limit the intrusion of extra- and co-curricular activities on instructional time	1	2	3	4	5
VII. MAINTAIN HIGH VISIBILITY					
31. Take time to talk informally with students and teachers during recess and breaks	1	2	3	4	5
32. Visit classrooms to discuss school issues with teachers and students	1	2	3	4	5
33. Attend/participate in extra- and co-curricular activities	1	2	3	4	5
34. Cover classes for teachers until a late or substitute teacher arrives	1	2	3	4	5
35. Tutor students or provide direct instruction to classes	1	2	3	4	5
VIII. PROVIDE INCENTIVES FOR TEACHERS					
36. Reinforce superior performance by teachers in staff meetings, newsletters, and/or memos	1	2	3	4	5
37. Compliment teachers privately for their efforts or performance	1	2	3	4	5

	ALMOST NEVER				ALMOST ALWAYS
38. Acknowledge teachers' exceptional performance by writing memos for their personnel files	1	2	3	4	5
39. Reward special efforts by teachers with opportunities for professional recognition	1	2	3	4	5
40. Create professional growth opportunities for teachers as a reward for special contributions to the school	1	2	3	4	5

IX. PROMOTE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

41. Ensure that inservice activities attended by staff are consistent with the school's goals	1	2	3	4	5
42. Actively support the use in the classroom of skills acquired during inservice training	1	2	3	4	5
43. Obtain the participation of the whole staff in important inservice activities	1	2	3	4	5
44. Lead or attend teacher inservice activities concerned with instruction	1	2	3	4	5
45. Set aside time at faculty meetings for teachers to share ideas or information from inservice activities	1	2	3	4	5

X. PROVIDE INCENTIVES FOR LEARNING

46. Recognize students who do superior work with formal rewards such as an honor roll or mention in the principal's newsletter	1	2	3	4	5
47. Use assemblies to honor students for academic accomplishments or for behavior or citizenship	1	2	3	4	5
48. Recognize superior student achievement or improvement by seeing in the office the students with their work	1	2	3	4	5
49. Contact parents to communicate improved or exemplary student performance or contributions	1	2	3	4	5
50. Support teachers actively in their recognition and/or reward of student contributions to and accomplishments in class	1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX B

IRB APPROVAL

GEORGIA SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY
RESEARCH INTEGRITY

Institutional Review Board (IRB)
Veazey Hall 3000
PO Box 8005 • STATESBORO, GA 30460
Phone: 912-478-5465
Fax: 912-478-0719
IRB@GeorgiaSouthern.edu

To: Price, Allen

Approval Date: August 18, 2020

Subject: Approval with Conditions from the Georgia Southern University Institutional Review Board – Exempt/Limited Review

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After a review of your proposed research project numbered: "**H20461**" titled: **"The Differences Among Instructional Leadership Practices of Principals of Georgia Reward Highest Performing, Georgia Reward Highest Progress Elementary Schools, and Needs Improvement Elementary School,"** it appears that (1) the research subjects are at minimal risk, (2) appropriate safeguards are planned, and (3) the research activities involve only procedures which are allowable.

Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that the Institutional Review Board has approved your proposed research **with the understanding that you will abide by the following conditions:**

- **You are approved to conduct research at the following schools for which you have obtained letters of cooperation:**
  - **Ware County Schools**
  - **Brantley County Schools**
  - **Lumpkin County Schools**
  - **Chattahoochee County Schools**
  - **Franklin County Schools**

Additional schools may be added to this study by submitting additional letters of cooperation.

According to the Code of Federal Regulations Title 45 Part 46, your research protocol is determined to be exempt from full review under the following exemption category(s):

Exemption 2 — Research involving only the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, if: Information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human participants cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to them. Please visit our FAQ's for more information on anonymous survey platforms; Any disclosure of the human participant's responses outside the research could not reasonably place the participant at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the participant's financial standing, employ-ability or reputation; Survey or interview research does not involve children; The research project does not include any form of intervention.

Any alteration in the terms or conditions of your involvement may alter this approval. *Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that your research, as submitted, is exempt from IRB approval. You will be asked to notify the IRB upon project completion. If you alter the project, it is your responsibility to notify the IRB and acquire a new determination of exemption.*

Sincerely,