6-2021

Best Practices for Instructional Coaching Feedback Strategies As Perceived by Effective Principals of High At-Risk Schools

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Recommended Citation

This dissertation, directed and approved by the candidate's committee, has been accepted by the College of Graduate and Professional Studies of Abilene Christian University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

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the College of Graduate and
Professional Studies

Date: March 30, 2021

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Best Practices for Instructional Coaching Feedback Strategies

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by

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June 2021

Dedication

First and foremost, I dedicate this work to Father God. I truly thank You Abba for this incredible opportunity to start and finish my doctoral program. This honor is beyond what I could have ever imagined. I would also like to thank my family and close friends for their patience, understanding, and support during this rigorous endeavor that often pulled me away from many celebrations and gatherings. Many thanks to you for all of the encouragement, inspiration, and support provided to me along this journey. Words cannot express the love and appreciation that I have for each of you. I hope and pray that my work serves as an inspiration to each of you to recognize that all things are possible and can be achieved with faith, prayer, effort, and determination.

Lastly, I dedicate this finished work to the three individuals who have influenced my life the greatest: my husband, my mother, and my aunt. To my husband Edwin Steward, Jr., your love and support kept me going so many times when I questioned whether or not I should be doing this. Since we met, you have always been my biggest supporter and I love you without measure. Furthermore, I dedicate this finished work to the memory of my mother Macklin L. Pickett and my aunt Morra L. Pickett. I thank both for instilling within me the morals and values that I needed to live this life and run my race despite all obstacles that could have slowed me down or stopped me all together. Though they are both gone now, they will live forever in my heart and never be forgotten.

Acknowledgments

Heavenly Father, I acknowledge You in all things. Thank You for Your grace and Your mercy during this journey. I have stood on this scripture a long time: Galatians 6:9 says, "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." Thank You God for not letting me give up or give in. I would never have attempted to do this without You.

To my committee members Dr. Scott Bailey and Dr. Clementine Msengi, I am forever grateful for your willingness to join my team to help prepare and support me. To my Dissertation Manager Dr. Dana McMichael, thanks for the numerous check-ins and the inspiring words as I journeyed along the way to completion. To my Dissertation Chair Dr. Sandra Harris, you are such an amazing person and a complete joy to work with. I thank God for sending you in my direction. You always knew exactly what to say to encourage me when I had many questions and many doubts about this process.

Many thanks to the principals who shared their experiences to make my study happen despite their struggles during the pandemic. Thank you for your passion for your students, staff, and school. What you contributed was so valuable. I learned so much about how to be both an instructional leader and a transformational leader in the most challenging of environments and especially how to transform student and teacher weaknesses into strengths. Truly, you are appreciated for helping to bring my study to fruition.

Countless thanks to the friends that I met along my journey at ACU. Thanks to Dr. Kenyatta Farmer, Dr. Shenita Alsbrooks, Dr. Janiece Garrard, Toni Smith, Tia Stevens-Hicks, Michael Snapp, and many others whom I have had the pleasure to learn with and to learn from. A special thanks to Dr. Sarina Willis for your listening ear and keen advice, I am so glad that our paths crossed.

To my school family, I thank all who offered their encouragement and support to me throughout the years. I thank you and I appreciate each of you. Your kindness matters so much more than you know.

To my family and friends, thank you for your love, encouragement, and support which persuaded me to keep pushing forward. I can only hope that I have made you proud. Special thanks to Agnes, Sa'Ona, Gwen, Monica D., Trina, Claudia, Kylan, Teylon, Monica M., Bryan, Joseph Jr, Nanny Faye, and Pastor Melissa. All of you have a special place in my heart. Thank you for never letting me forget that I could do this with God's grace and His mercy. If I have left out any names, please forgive me, and charge it to my head and not my heart. Please know that I love you all and I appreciate everything that you did to assist me, from the smallest, seemingly, insignificant smile to the grandest gesture. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

To my darling husband Edwin Jr., thank you for always praying for me and for us. Look what the Lord has done!

Abstract

High-poverty schools have historically been low-performing schools. However, with the right strategies and leadership, these schools can have improved student achievement. The purpose of this qualitative instrumental case study was to describe best practice instructional coaching feedback strategies as perceived by effective principals of high at-risk schools in Louisiana. This study was framed around the transformational leadership theory by principals who utilize instructional leadership methods in their respective schools. Participants in this case study included eight high school principals. All the principals had been on their respective campuses for a minimum of two years, including the last years that data were generated by the state. The participants were asked questions based on the four categories of transformational leadership: intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, and idealized influence. Data were collected through semistructured interviews which provided descriptions of the strategies and the experiences of the principals. The data were transcribed, member checked, and coded. Findings indicated that coaching, peer mentoring, and analyzing walkthrough results were best-practice coaching feedback strategies. This study contributes to describing the instructional coaching and feedback strategies that have been perceived to be successful by effective principals of high at-risk schools.

Keywords: coaching, feedback, high at-risk populations, history and roles of principals, leadership, instructional leadership, principals, professional development, Title I, and transformational leadership

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The growing fear that the United States might be dropping far behind the rest of the world led to reform efforts in public schools, such as increased accountability through standardized testing (Meyer & Werth, 2016). However, Schwebel (2012) contended that the U.S. public-school system is not now, nor has it ever been, in crisis for the majority of students. Instead, Schwebel (2012) argued that it is the poor minority students whose schools are unacceptable. For example, the average achievement levels of minority students fall well below the levels of the more affluent students. Despite years of educational restructuring, almost all high at-risk schools in the United States are performing below proficiency on standardized tests (Wieczorek & Manard, 2018). Despite the generational data, there are some schools that defied the odds and destroyed the myth that a lower socioeconomic background of students results in automatic academic failure (Finn & Rock, 1997).

As a result of these findings, principals are expected to demonstrate and use their skills as instructional leaders to promote higher student achievement (Shaked, 2018). In addition, for more than a decade, No Child Left Behind (NCLB), Race to the Top (RT3), and Common Core State Standards (CCSS) personified federal and state education reform that was allegedly designed to address inequities for the global majority and for low-income students (Croft et al., 2015).

Test scores have become a reflection of schools and, ultimately, how they are led (Preston et al., 2017). As a result, improving school test scores is front and center in this age of accountability (Kaniuka, 2017; Preston et al., 2017). Academics have a direct bearing on future student success, which has often been lacking in high-poverty environments (Stosich, 2016). Schwebel (2012) advocated the need for focused supervision in the form of coaching new

teachers for a minimum of a year to strengthen and support them to manage the difficulties encountered in poor schools with the intention of reducing the high teacher turnover rate. This is important because effective leadership practices and student outcomes are in direct correlation with principal influence (Crane & Green, 2012). Ultimately, effective leadership directly influences the quality of the strategies and lessons presented by teachers and support staff (Lunenburg, 2010). The influence of school leaders starts with the quality of feedback provided in general conversations, classroom walkthroughs, and formal observations (Tuytens & Devos, 2017).

Background of the Study

According to Yusuf et al. (2017), feedback is best defined as specific ideas about the progress of a learner with a laser focus to guiding the individual to areas of improvement. The authors noted that feedback can be verbal or written and it can be delivered in a direct or indirect manner to the recipient. Direct feedback is simple and to the point, whereas indirect feedback is not delivered in a straightforward manner but merely insinuated to the receiver. Yusuf et al. (2017) further argued that the most reliable feedback works best when it is candid and specific.

Leiva et al. (2016) argued that leaders must be realistic in their expectations when doing teacher observations and in the validity of the data. According to Templeton et al. (2016), classroom observation is the preferred and the most straightforward method for assessing teacher practices. Yet, Van der Lans et al. (2016) suggested that most observations have been flawed and failed to yield valid outcomes. However, through collaboration with classroom teachers, school leaders can focus on the "why" and "how" facets of learning (Templeton et al., 2016). Leiva et al. suggested that observational feedback is perhaps one of the most challenging tasks for both novice and seasoned school leaders especially when determining how to facilitate a systematic

feedback process. They asserted that teacher practices will not improve without a genuine system for providing the needed constructive feedback and coaching required for mastery of school, classroom, student, and teacher goals.

Constructive feedback must support improving the learning process and not include only positive comments; therefore, teachers need helpful, honest feedback to achieve better learning outcomes (Thurlings et al., 2013). Generally, most teachers welcome the opportunity to reflect and refine their teaching practices (Tanner et al., 2017). School leaders must hone their knowledge and skill to encourage teacher growth with adequate feedback (Kelley & Dikkers, 2016).

Lia (2016) argued that teacher feedback has many challenges. Teachers realize the benefits of credible feedback, yet are concerned with the details of who gives it, how it is given, when it is given, and how the information will be used. Regardless of how feedback is perceived, it remains the most powerful way to improve teacher learning (Desimone, & Pak, 2017; Lia, 2016; Tanner et al., 2017).

As powerful as feedback has been, it has not been without its share of controversy (Donahue & Vogel, 2018; Van Soelen, 2013). Donahue and Vogel (2018) argued that while feedback is considered by teachers and school leaders to directly inspire adjustments to teaching practices, it is not seen as being positive in all situations. In their study, they noted that "some teachers expressed disappointment that there was often little to no follow-up" by school leaders, while some other teachers perceived that feedback was used in personal vendettas against them (p. 45). The study further showed that more positive perceptions were noted for constructive feedback and coaching with feedback. Overall, teachers want to be engaged in collegial

conversations about the value that constructive feedback will bring to the entire school community (Tanner et al., 2017).

School transformation is facilitated by the opinions and the activities of the school leader, and administrator support of an endeavor practically guarantees its success (Tanner et al., 2017). School leaders are making positive changes toward becoming more visible as instructional leaders; however, it takes time to make the adjustments needed to provide authentic formative feedback (Van Soelen, 2013). Therefore, school leaders must be deliberate in their efforts to support the initiative and to provide meaningful, productive feedback (Hudson, 2016; Lia, 2016). Since this is a huge undertaking, further reflection leads to the question: "What are some specific actions that school leaders should engage in to be a better support to teachers?" Stein (2016) made the assertion that successful schools should be staffed with strong leaders that can make quality decisions to benefit the well-being of the whole school.

Theoretical Framework

Northouse (2016) argued that while there is no one specific definition for leadership, leadership is best characterized as the skill of an individual or a group of individuals to inspire and guide followers or other members of an organization to achieve a shared goal. Thus, an effective leader achieves that objective by handling present circumstances and creating a plan for successful future outcomes.

Northouse (2016) defined transformational leadership as "the process whereby a person engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower" (p. 162). Transformational leadership supports the idea that principals engage the faculty and staff to produce a high-quality output that benefits the students and is characterized by four components: idealized influence, inspirational motivation,

intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Burns, 1978; Marks & Printy, 2003; Northouse, 2016).

I framed this study around the effectiveness of principals utilizing transformational leadership and the instructional leadership model, first introduced in the 1980s. The instructional leadership model defines the principal as the instructional leader that concentrates on teacher learning, just as the teacher assists with student learning (Hallinger, 2003). Principals who combine transformational and instructional leadership have shown improved student academic achievement and school improvement (Robinson et al., 2008; Ross & Cozzens, 2016).

Statement of the Problem

Within the last few years, educators in U.S. school districts have acknowledged the need for teacher support mechanisms (Carr et al., 2017; Desimone & Pak, 2017; Ellington et al., 2017; Nieminen, et al., 2013). For example, teachers need to have a coach/mentor who guides and supports their efforts to improve their progress (Carr et al., 2017; Lia, 2016; Reddy et al., 2019). Some school districts with high-poverty schools have increased the availability of instructional coaches to teachers (Carr et al., 2017; Desimone & Pak, 2017; Ellington et al., 2017). This is especially important since the teachers "working in communities of intense poverty experience higher rates of stress and turnover that are three times higher than national averages" (Reddy et al., 2019, p. 15). If districts cannot afford to provide instructional coaches, then principals are often the ones tasked with the challenge to ensure that teachers receive feedback that continually improves their capacity, encourages them to stay in the classroom, and empowers them to improve their instructional practices while working under challenging conditions (Donahue & Vogel, 2018; Reddy et al., 2019).

Consequently, teachers must be given feedback that is accurate, clear, and unbiased (Thurlings et al., 2013; Yusuf et al., 2017). This feedback must support improving the learning process and provide authentic comments (Hudson, 2016; Yusuf et al., 2017). Teachers need helpful, candid feedback to achieve better learning outcomes (Hudson, 2016; Thurlings et al., 2013). Inevitably, most teachers understand the need for quality feedback to reflect and refine their teaching practices (Leiva et al., 2016; Tanner et al., 2017).

As teachers put effort into improving their teaching skills, they need specific direction and guidance revealed from constructive feedback (Leiva et al., 2016; Lia, 2016). Hence, researchers recognize the need for principals to be instructional coaches for their teachers (Carr et al., 2017; Donaldson & Mavrogordato, 2018; Ellington et al., 2017; Reddy et al., 2019; Sowell, 2017). Assuredly, principals must wisely plan the approaches needed to facilitate the coaching that delivers feedback to engage teachers and demonstrate a need to change teaching practices to improve student achievement (Carr et al., 2017; Reddy et al., 2019; Tanner et al., 2017).

Purpose of the Study

Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative instrumental case study was to describe best-practice instructional coaching feedback strategies as perceived by effective principals of high at-risk schools in Louisiana. According to Shernoff et al. (2019), coaching is an opportunity for a school leader or another educator to share strategies from their instructional toolbox. Stake (2010) argued the major reason to use a case study is to acquire the descriptions and interpretations of others.

Research Questions

      RQ1. Intellectual Stimulation: Describe the instructional coaching feedback strategies that are implemented to focus on learning.

      RQ2. Inspirational Motivation: Describe the instructional coaching feedback strategies that are implemented to encourage collaboration.

      RQ3. Individualized Consideration: Describe the coaching strategies that are implemented to communicate with teachers to encourage change when feedback is negative.

      RQ4. Idealized Influence: Describe the coaching strategies implemented to provide honest, specific feedback despite challenges.

      Data were collected through a case-study approach with individual principal interviews. I conducted semistructured interviews, which allowed me a degree of latitude to adjust the course of the conversation as needed (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). The interview-guided protocol along with documents, artifacts, and field notes provided answers to research questions. The various data sources were used for triangulation to ensure more breadth to participant dialogues (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018).

Rationale for the Study

      A tremendous challenge facing school leaders is the ability to maintain continuous school improvement (Preston et al., 2017). Federal mandates, including NCLB, RT3, CCSS, and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) has continued to pressure school principals to perform at optimum levels. A plethora of information has been written on school leadership and principal action that leads to those required changes (Donaldson & Mavrogordato, 2018; Preston et al., 2017; Sowell, 2017). However, little information has been found to demonstrate the distinctive actions, behaviors, and practices that can be utilized by principals leading high at-risk schools as

compared to those schools which are not high at-risk schools. I anticipate that lessons learned from this study can inform the conduct of future instructional leaders to improve student achievement and teacher practices when facing similar circumstances in high at-risk schools.

Definition of Key Terms

At-risk schools. Schools where 50% or more of students meet low-income qualifications, which includes being eligible for free or reduced lunch (Louisiana Department of Education, n.d.).

At–risk students. At-risk students are the students identified as belonging to low socioeconomic classes. These students typically include African Americans, Hispanics, and other impoverished students (Matsko & Hammerness, 2014).

Coaching. Coaching is a strategy for executing a support system for teachers that can include demonstration, professional development, and feedback (McKenna &Walpole, 2008). The principal's role as the coach is to encourage and promote teacher reflections on the best instructional practices and the implementation of those practices through professional development opportunities (Blase & Blase, 1999; Gimbert, 2009).

Constructive feedback. Helpful honest feedback that provides teachers the opportunity to reflect and refine their teaching practices to achieve better learning outcomes (Thurlings et al., 2013).

Effective instructional leadership. The skill of inspiring teachers and staff to give maximum instructional effort to influence maximum learning achievement in students (Lunenburg, 2010).

Effective principals. Individuals in a school who create a learning environment where academic success is the primary goal, while ensuring that policies, procedures, and resources support that goal (Lunenburg, 2010).

Effective schools. Educational institutions where the majority of the classes are at grade level and teachers, staff, students, and administrators have varying levels of accountability for academic success (Louisiana Department of Education, n.d.).

Feedback. Specific ideas about the progress of a learner with a laser focus to guiding the individual to areas of improvement (Kelley & Dikkers, 2016). Feedback can be formal or informal, brief notes or conversations, written notes in an observation, or more extensive discussions where precise data are given with provisions for guidance of the next steps for improving instructional practices (Marzano et al., 2013).

High-performing, high at-risk schools. Schools where 50% or more of students who meet low-income qualifications (eligible for free or reduced lunch) and are meeting and/or exceeding state standards in English language arts and mathematics (Louisiana Department of Education, n.d.).

Instructional coaching. The conversation and activities that occur after monitoring or observation. The series of conversation between the principal and the teacher focuses on the two working together to developing the teacher's skills to increase student achievement through stronger instructional practices (Gimbert, 2009).

Instructional leader. The individual who is the focal point within the school that affects the quality of teacher instruction, the progress of student achievement, and the level of effectiveness in school functioning (Lunenburg, 2010).

Public schools. Preschool through Grade 12 institutions that receive funding in whole or part from the state or federal governments (Louisiana Department of Education, n.d.).

School improvement. Planned educational change that enhances student learning outcomes as well as the school's capacity for managing the action steps to produce that change (Louisiana Department of Education, n.d.).

Student achievement. The perspective of whether the appropriate percentage of students mastered or attained the learning standard proficiency (Louisiana Department of Education, n.d.).

Student growth. A change in a student's knowledge or skills, as evidenced by a gain in student standardized testing scores (Louisiana Department of Education, n.d.).

Summary and Organization of Study

Chapter 1 contains an introduction to the study. The ensuing research is divided into four additional chapters. Chapter 2 is a literature review that lays the foundation for the theoretical framework of transformational leadership with a lead-in to the instructional leadership model. In addition, the roles of the principal will be explored along with the principal as the instructional leader and coach. The literature review will also include feedback strategies and look at high at-risk schools and the federal Title I program. Chapter 3 contains a description of the methodology. In Chapter 4, I report on the findings. Chapter 5 is a summary of the study, a discussion and conclusion of findings, and implications for practice and future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this qualitative instrumental case study was to describe best-practice instructional coaching feedback strategies as perceived by effective principals of high at-risk schools. This qualitative instrumental case study focused on effective principals defined as being those whose schools have shown consistent academic improvement over a course of at least two academic school years, according to the Louisiana Department of Education (LDoE).

This literature review is attentive to key concepts that are significant to how instructional coaching feedback strategies are used to increase student achievement and teacher practices in high at-risk schools. These concepts include a theoretical framework discussion of the transformational leadership theory and the instructional leadership model. The next section traces a brief history of school reform within the last 20 years, followed by the history and roles of the principal, professional development opportunities, and teacher collaboration to enhance best practices and student academic achievement through coaching and feedback strategies. The final section presents characteristics of high at-risk schools, Title I, and poverty.

Literature Search Methods

In order to locate previous research that provided critical insight into the topics of this study, I reviewed several articles from a variety of resources. One of the chief resources was the online database of Brown Library at Abilene Christian University (ACU), which allowed the search to be narrowed to peer-reviewed articles. Employing the ACU online database helped ensure that the research selected for this review was relevant to the topic and was up to date on current trends and concepts associated with the topic. Key terms researched*: coaching*, *feedback*, *high at-risk populations*, *history and roles of principals*, *leadership*, *instructional leadership*,

principals, *professional development*, *teacher evaluations*, *Title I*, *transformational leadership*, and *urban schools.*

Theoretical Framework Discussion

Despite years of educational restructuring, almost all high at-risk schools in the United States are performing below proficiency on standardized tests (Wieczorek & Manard, 2018). As a result of these findings, principals are expected to demonstrate and use their skills as instructional leaders to promote higher student achievement (Shaked, 2018). Despite the generational data, there are some schools that defied the odds and destroyed the myth that the lower socioeconomic background of students results in automatic academic failure (Finn & Rock, 1997). Northouse (2016) argued that while there is no one specific definition for leadership, leadership is best characterized as the skill of an individual or a group of individuals to inspire and guide followers or other members of an organization to achieve a shared goal. Thus, an effective leader achieves that objective by handling present circumstances and creating a plan for successful future outcomes (Northouse, 2016). Since all leaders are not created the same, there are various philosophies, styles, and theories to which leaders subscribe of which two—transformational leadership and instructional leadership—are included in this review of the literature.

Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational leadership is a style of leadership that concentrates mainly on shared leadership (Hallinger, 2003). Bass and Riggio (2006) further articulated the need for transformational leaders to motivate their followers to accomplish extraordinary feats while building their own capacity to become leaders. The authors also suggested that transformational leadership is a widespread style of leadership, because it emphasizes intrinsic motivation and

follower development, which fits the needs of many individuals in varying fields of service.

Northouse (2016) defined transformational leadership as "the process whereby a person engages

with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the

leader and the follower" (p. 162). Great leaders take on the greatest challenges and tackle the

biggest problems (Goleman, 2014). The transformational leader is the one who connects with

others and builds a relationship that raises the level of enthusiasm and honesty in both the leader

and the follower (Northouse, 2016). These leaders must initiate, develop, and carry out

significant changes in organizations. Over 16 years ago, Stanley (2003) argued that to meet the

challenges of schools, leaders must be change agents that have competence, courage, clarity, and

character. Of these characteristics, clarity is the most important for an organization. Thus,

Stanley noted, "A next generation leader must learn to be clear even when he is uncertain" (p.

12).

Transformational leadership is composed of four components: idealized influence,

inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass &

Riggio, 2006; Lowder, 2009; Northouse, 2016). These factors act as rubrics for determining the

quality of the leader's attributes.

Idealized Influence. Balyer (2012) emphasized that idealized influence is defined as the

ability of a leader to put the needs of others first, and not using his/her influence for personal

gain. Instead, this leader displays exemplary moral principles that inspire followers. Idealized

influence describes leaders who act as solid role models for followers (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

The followers identify with these leaders and want to imitate them because of the leaders' high

standards of honesty and fair practices (Northouse, 2016). In the eyes of the followers, these

leaders are highly trusted to do the right thing (Balyer, 2012; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse,

2016). Transformational leaders are visionary leaders who see the needs of their organization and strive to change the environment conducive to those needs (Lowder, 2009). According to Bass and Riggio (2006) and Lowder (2009), the transformational leader can implement and preserve conditions that are beneficial to the needs of the faculty, staff, and students while addressing any challenges that may arise. These leaders are highly esteemed, trusted, and appreciated (Bass & Riggio, 2006). This type of leader seeks to make a positive influence by exhibiting high standards, keeping a focus on followers' needs, and keeping a positive demeanor (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Lowder, 2009).

Inspirational Motivation. Inspirational motivation is defined as having a passion to inspire and encourage followers by setting high expectations and involving everyone in the process of creating the vision for the organization and for future goals (Balyer, 2012; Bass & Riggio, 2006). Inspirational motivation is indicative of leaders who convey high expectations to followers, encouraging them through inspiration and dedication to the shared vision in the organization, according to Bass and Riggio (2006). Bass and Riggio (2006) and Northouse (2016) agreed that team spirit is heightened through this aspect of transformational leadership. According to the characteristics of inspirational motivation, this leader is continuously displaying hopefulness about future goals while providing confident meaning to the current set of tasks. The leader reflects on the skills and abilities of their employees, empowering them to believe in their abilities. This component of transformational leadership allows all stakeholders to be a part of the vision-making team. Bass and Riggio (2006) further discovered that school leaders who exhibit characteristics of inspirational motivation create an atmosphere that raises staff enthusiasm about their work.

Lowder (2009) suggested that transformational leaders lead their team by illustrating the behavior they expect to see in their staff. This attention to behavior motivates staff members to model and emulate the leader's actions and words (Northouse, 2016). This creates a strong culture that maintains a positive attitude and demonstrates the actions they expect of those around them (Lowder, 2009; Stewart, 2006). Furthermore, Leithwood et al. (2010) noted that transformational leaders involve staff members in helping to build a shared vision, which is critical to strengthening staff enthusiasm and commitment. As a result, the staff stay focused and invigorated to advance the goals and mission of the school. Transformational leaders use inspirational motivation to keep enthusiasm high while encouraging the members around them (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Intellectual Stimulation. Intellectual stimulation is defined as the frequency with which a leader encourages their employees to solve problems and find creative solutions (Seltzer & Bass, 1990). Intellectual stimulation refers to the amount of academic knowledge that the leader shares with the staff. The leader encourages them to think and explore new ideas based on best practices (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2016; Seltzer & Bass, 1990). Intellectual stimulation includes leadership that encourages followers to be imaginative and inventive while challenging their own beliefs and values as opposed to those of the leader and the organization (Northouse, 2016). This encourages individuals to be creative in their thinking to find workable solutions to problems. Therefore, these leaders include the staff in finding solutions to any problems that may arise (Seltzer & Bass, 1990).

According to Bass and Riggio (2006), the intellectual stimulation component of transformational leadership encourages transformational leaders to allow their staff to create and implement the ideas that guide them toward a shared vision. These leaders encourage staff to

greater exploits and imagination. They support and embrace ideas that are produced by all stakeholders in the organization.

Individualized Consideration. Seltzer and Bass (1990) defined individualized consideration as the degree to which a leader encourages, supports, and pays personal attention to their staff. Individualized consideration provides a supportive climate where leaders are aware of individual follower's desires for the development and success of their goals by acting as a trusted advisor (Bass & Riggio, 2006). When demonstrating individual consideration, leaders create an atmosphere that supports the professional growth of the staff (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Individualized consideration encourages individuals to achieve their full potential (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Therefore, the individuals feel valued and respected. Furthermore, Loon et al. (2012) also asserted that individualized consideration nurtures an environment that inspires trust and supports learning within the organization.

Instructional Leadership Model

Instructional leadership became popular as an answer to the nation's yearning for schools to improve student academic achievement (Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood, 1994; Leithwood et al., 2010). The principal became the school's instructional leader and the key source of what educational proficiency should look like in the school building (Marks & Printy, 2003). Thus, principals are responsible for management and academic learning (Leithwood, 1994).

The importance of instructional leadership is being debated as the challenges of being a successful school leader become more difficult (Hallinger, 2003; Jenkins, 2009; Liontos, 1992). The National Association of Elementary School Principals (2001) defined instructional leadership as the ability to direct learning communities, where staff members meet regularly to

collaborate on and resolve school issues, evaluate job performance, and take responsibility for what students learn.

Liontos (1992) argued that a weakness in the instructional leadership theory was the idea that great leaders would not necessarily be great as classroom teachers. The principal who is an instructional leader must be solidly grounded in all aspects of instructional procedures. But a few leaders do not have those skills; however, Liontos suggested they are still able to help the school progress and improve its ratings (1992). The importance of instructional leadership was propelled in large part by the effective schools' movement from nearly a half century ago and has since been renewed because of increased pressure on school leaders to be held responsible for student achievement (Hallinger, 2003).

Hallinger (2003) argued instructional leadership asserts the principal's role in the school is to manage, regulate, supervise, and develop curriculum and instruction in the school. The primary focus is on how the instruction is being delivered to students and how the principal can serve in a role to improve this instruction. According to Hallinger (2003), instructional leaders have several qualities that make them effective: strong, methodical leaders, hands-on in their work with teachers and the curriculum, goal-oriented and focused on improving academic outcomes, and change agents.

Jenkins (2009) interjected the thought that successful instructional leaders need to know the curriculum, have a toolbox filled with effective instructional practices and strategies, and be able to model a variety of assessment strategies. Instructional leaders recognize that a positive school-learning climate is critical to improving the culture of a school and success of the students. A positive climate helps to guard instructional time, encourage professional development, and provide incentives for teacher and student learning (Hallinger, 2003). The

instructional leader's role is connected to the curriculum; therefore, they must have a strong knowledge of instructional practices to lead the staff, to improve the school environment, and increase the learning outcomes for the students (Jenkins, 2009). In conclusion, defining the school mission, managing the instructional program, and developing the school environment are significant aspects of being an instructional leader (Hallinger, 2003; Jenkins, 2009).

Federal Mandates for School Improvement

For nearly 20 years, the burden to increase student achievement has risen dramatically, driven by federal policies, such as NCLB, RT3, CCSS, and ESSA, which placed extreme pressures on school leadership to improve student performance. In addition to managing the physical plant of the school building and ensuring adequate human and financial resources (Grissom & Loeb, 2011), school administrators are expected to be instructional leaders responsible for supporting and developing demanding, rigorous instructional practices for teachers (Grissom et al., 2013; Leithwood & Louis, 2012). Also, principals are tasked with guaranteeing high levels of academic success for students, developing a school culture that values high academic standards, and directing a professional learning community (Acker-Hocevar et al., 2012; Drago-Severson et al., 2013; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

As a result of the bolder demands on the school principal, the role that they play has undergone major changes, becoming more intricate (Bossi, 2007; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007), thereby changing from the role of manager to that of an instructional and transformational leader. School leaders must acclimate to this new pattern of school leadership to meet the unavoidable challenges that they eventually face (Weathers & White, 2015; Wise & Jacobo, 2010).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

The NCLB legislation was enacted in 2001 with the intention of enhancing the educational opportunities for students. One of the central focuses of NCLB was to hold schools accountable for ensuring that all their students achieve mastery in reading and math, especially the groups that had been historically left behind (Cronin et al., 2009). The legislation required states to ensure that schools are held accountable for all students by incorporating adequate testing measures. These testing measures consisted of specific grade levels and subjects that must be assessed. NCLB required that students enrolled in grades 3–8 be tested annually (Casey, 2014). Once the testing results were received, schools and districts analyzed the data to evaluate the strongest scores, top schools, and students who were not able to acquire the required scores to pass the standards (Casey, 2014). The legislation aimed to ensure that all students are proficient in reading and math, and that all schools make the appropriate adequate yearly progress.

NCLB was severely criticized for its weighty focus on English language arts and mathematics at the expense of other academic disciplines (Jones & Workman, 2016). The increased assessment in the two subject areas of English and mathematics led to a focus on those subjects over others and a perception of teaching to the state assessment so that the school scores would remain high (Jones & Workman, 2016). School leaders faced challenges with meeting the requirements of the NCLB legislation (Schraw, 2010). Schraw noted that the ultimate goal of 100% proficiency is statistically impossible. Especially since schools that serve students who historically have low achievement are at a disadvantage when they try to achieve 100% efficiency. Not only did high at-risk schools find this goal difficult to meet, but it also created a huge challenge for the higher performing schools with very few of them able to achieve mastery.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

ESSA was signed and enacted in 2015 with the intent to improve upon the NCLB legislation of 2002. Chenoweth (2016) noted that the ESSA legislation was intended to safeguard the rights of all students to achieve at high academic levels in a variety of disciplines. Chenoweth further proposed that ESSA gives more authority to states to determine how nonacademic achievement is measured while expanding to more well-rounded academic assessments. The added measure of measuring student growth increases the need for school leaders to ensure that the various student groups, from underachieving to high-achieving students, continue to grow and learn each year. The added assessment components of the ESSA legislation may create a challenge for school leaders since each school, according to the U.S. Department of Education website, is measured not only on academic scores but also on additional factors, including student growth, graduation rates, college and career readiness, and the performance of consistently underperforming students.

History and Roles of the Principalship

The principal's roles require knowledge at the instructional level, but also the management of all faculty and staff (Neumerski, 2012). Research and data clearly show that nearly all principals teach before becoming principals (M. Anderson, 2017; Liontos, 1992; Marks & Printy, 2003). Some of the principal's responsibilities include having conversations with problematic students, serving as an instructional leader to teachers, and maintaining proper order in the school (Wieczorek & Manard, 2018). The job of the school principal is ongoing and never-ending and typically does not end when the school day does (Leithwood, 1994; Liontos, 1992). The principal is the person in charge of the school, and of everyone in the school (Hoy & Smith, 2007).

An effective principal should have all the abilities and talents of a highly qualified classroom teacher with the leadership skills for students and teachers, according to Neumerski (2012). Neumerski further stated that principals must have the ability to fully comprehend the best teaching strategies and techniques; therefore, the principal's job requires expertise at the classroom level and beyond. The principal's job also requires the skills to organize the responsibilities of a staff that includes teachers, other administrative personnel, and professional and nonprofessional staff (Neumerski, 2012; Wieczorek & Manard, 2018). Good instruction is the center of all successful schools. In addition to good instruction, best practices and principal beliefs are essential components as they relate to the principal's role as an instructional leader (Nash, 2010; J. P. Preston et al., 2017).

One of the most vital responsibilities of a school principal is to ensure that all students are provided with excellent academic opportunities (Marks & Printy, 2003). A critical part of that task is improving instructional knowledge by providing the appropriate feedback to the classroom teachers (Feeney, 2007).

While an effective school principal is an essential element of a school's success, research indicates that classroom teachers have more of a significant and direct impact on student achievement, with principals playing an indirect role in impacting student achievement (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; Leithwood & Louis, 2012; Leithwood & Wahlstrom, 2008; Louis et al., 2010; Marzano et al., 2005), with some researchers stating that the effect of school principals contributes 25% to the total influence on a student's academic performance (Gale & Bishop, 2014).

The expectations of the principal's role have changed over the years. Principals were fully responsible for managing the school, its building, staff, students, and facilities (Ediger,

2014). As regulations and requirements of schools and school leaders have changed through the implementation of NCLB and other federal mandates, the principal's role has progressed to include instructional leadership (Neumerski, 2012; Tirozzi, 2001). In addition to instructional leadership, the principal is also the aspiring leader, the team builder, the coach, and the change agent of the school (Alvoid & Black, 2014). The principal's role has shifted from administration and management to leadership and vision (Tirozzi, 2001). Though the role has grown in scope, the principal is still responsible for the management of the school building and overseeing the requirements of schedules, safety, and daily operations (Ediger, 2014).

An effective leader must display positive characteristics of leadership drawn from a variety of leadership styles and know and understand the needs of the school campus and the mechanisms that work in schools to create an effective environment (Allen et al., 2015; Alvoid & Black, 2014). Typically, high-performing schools have historically had strong leadership from the building principal (Wieczorek & Manard, 2018).

The role of the school principal has progressed beyond that of a facility manager (Neumerski, 2012). The school principal delivers instructional leadership that is essential to establishing connections between the teachers and for allowing for unity and better-quality relationships in student academic achievement (Allen et al., 2015; Hoy & Smith, 2007). School leaders inspire, foster, and support teacher growth (Bayler, 2012).

Anderson and Sun (2017) acknowledged the notion that the school leaders' obligation is to empower teachers to collaborate in self-managing teams to develop their instruction with a growth mindset. Anderson and Sun indicated that leadership styles have five main characteristics: encouraging mutual trust, developing leadership abilities in others, planning organizational goals, visualizing outcomes, and supporting the professional development of

teachers (2017). An effective instructional leader establishes the role of an instructional coach by producing a shared vision, providing opportunities for teachers to learn from one another, and including teachers in instructional decision-making (Blase & Blase, 1999; DuFour & Eaker, 2008; DuFour & Marzano, 2009; Marzano et al., 2005).

Professional Development and Collaboration

One of the roles of the principal as an instructional coach is to involve teachers in a genuine reflection process to critically think about their instructional practices and assist in identifying ways to improve practices through professional development practices (Blase & Blase, 1999; Gimbert, 2009; Marks & Printy, 2003). When teachers can collaborate with each other, it enables them to improve instructional practices in the classroom and improve student learning (Coggshall et al., 2012). Several researchers confirm that the best teacher knowledge and implementation happens by professional development collaborations with other teachers, reviewing student data, practicing self-reflection, and team teaching in genuine classroom settings (Coggshall et al., 2012; Darling-Hammond, 2012; DuFour & Eaker, 2008; DuFour & Marzano, 2009; Gilles et al., 2010). Professional development is more effective and comprehensible when principals establish a learning culture that increases partnership among teachers to build and improve their instructional practices (Darling-Hammond, 2012; DuFour & Eaker, 2008; DuFour & Marzano, 2009). This type of collaboration establishes strong lines of communication between teachers and principals, teachers and teachers, and teachers and students (Darling-Hammond, 2012; DuFour & Eaker, 2008; DuFour & Marzano, 2009).

Importance of Student Achievement

Gale and Bishop (2014) acknowledged the importance of school leadership but noted that the leadership impacts only 25% of the total results of student success. Effective instructional

skills are critical in promoting students' achievement and school improvement (Leithwood & Louis, 2012; Pourrajab & Ghani, 2016). The longer the tenure of a principal at a single school, the more the principal impacts student achievement (Babo & Postma, 2017). This indicates and emphasizes the importance of a principal's consistent relationship with members of the learning community (Kouzes & Posner, 2017).

A recent study recognized principals as having an average-level positive affect on student achievement (Karadag, 2019). However, the variety of ways school principals influence student achievement is diverse, and their influence on student achievement can be extremely active or facilitating, depending on the situation and/or administrator approach (Babo &Postma, 2017; Karadag, 2019; Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Some researchers determined that the principal only has an indirect effect on student achievement, while other researchers concluded a school leader can have a direct influence on student achievement (Leithwood & Louis., 2012; Pourrajab & Ghani, 2016; Urick & Bowers, 2014). Moreover, the leadership practices of school principals can positively inspire different elements of the school environment, including student learning, academic achievement, and teacher attitudes (Marfan & Pascual, 2018; Preston et al., 2017; Woods & Martin, 2016).

Coaching and Mentoring

Instructional leaders are expected to provide examples of effective classroom practices and make accurate decisions to provide useful feedback to teachers for effective school improvement (Brookhart & Moss, 2015; McKenna & Walpole, 2008; Moss & Brookhart, 2015). Principals are expected to be able to recognize whether lessons are aligned with the standards-based curriculum, develop assessments that are consistent with standards, and be able to determine if students' work is meeting the academic standards (Lashway, 2003). The role of an

instructional coach is to work collaboratively with individual teachers, such as meeting frequently to review data, model or share best-practice instructional methods (McKenna & Walpole, 2008). Effective instructional leaders either hire or provide their services as an instructional coach to enhance and improve teaching practices (DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Marzano et al., 2005). The coaching role has expanded and is more important than the evaluator role (Moss & Brookhart, 2015). While the perception of being an evaluator is connected to teacher and school accountability, the role of the principal as a coach serves to engage teachers in a process of reflecting on instructional practices and identifying ways to improve practices by providing professional development (Blase & Blase, 1999; Gimbert, 2009).

Communicating Feedback

Feedback must be a consistent component of any effective evaluation plan (Brookhart & Moss, 2015; Carr et al., 2017; Desimone & Pak, 2017). Without unbiased feedback and regular details on progress and performance, teachers are unlikely to achieve professional goals (Ellington et al., 2017). According to Feeney (2007), the primary goal of feedback is to increase the efficiency of teaching and stimulate professional growth: "Feedback should be based on descriptive observable data, provide characteristics of effective teaching, and promote reflective inquiry and self-directedness to foster improvements in teaching supported by evidence of student learning" (p. 191).

The absence of quality feedback from the instructional leader or coach will prove to be problematic (Lia, 2016). Feedback that is composed of superficial and inconsequential comments that lacks any connection to student learning reduces the teacher's capacity to be effective in the classroom (Neumerski, 2012). Teacher capability is heightened when they are given the opportunity to participate in evaluating data and making inferences that connect instruction with

student learning (Anderson & Sun, 2017). Eventually, this capacity for using student data to improve teaching will establish an increase in teacher development (Feeney, 2007; Kraft & Gilmour, 2016).

Constructive and meaningful feedback is needed to promote reflection and allow teachers to plan and achieve new goals, which ultimately leads to an increased sense of effectiveness in their teaching (Wiggins, 2012). This improvement comes only when the teacher is self-directed by managing, monitoring, and adapting their actions based on the instructional coaching provided them (Neumerski, 2012).

Feeney (2007) argued that principals can promote peer-learning opportunities by developing teacher teams with clear goals, common planning time, and occasions for peer observations and feedback. Wiggins (2012) reinforced the perception that feedback is most helpful when it is purposeful, clear, measurable, and individualized to the teacher, as well as being on time, frequent, and consistent.

Improving teaching and learning requires that principals engage teachers in conversations about the quality of instruction observed in the classroom (Moss & Brookhart, 2015). Feedback is an important element of improving teaching and learning (Marzano et al., 2005; Stout et al., 2014; Tucker & Stronge, 2005). Feedback is important for all teachers, but it is particularly essential for beginning or noncertified teachers who are often faced with a barrage of new practices and learning the culture of a new school and district (Blase & Blase, 2002; Coggshall et al., 2012; Gimbert, 2009; Hindman, et al., 2015).

For feedback to be meaningful and increase effectiveness, researchers have supported the use of certain strategies in the execution of feedback (Brookhart & Moss, 2015; Hattie & Yates, 2014; Marzano et al., 2005; Moss & Brookhart, 2015; Stout et al., 2014; Wiggins, 2012). For

example, feedback should be provided as soon as possible after an observation, because immediate feedback is more effective than delayed feedback (Brookhart & Moss, 2015; Moss & Brookhart, 2015). Research supports the idea that feedback should be given within 24 hours (Moss & Brookhart, 2015; Stout et al., 2014; Wiggins, 2012). Next, the research endorses the idea that principals should concentrate on one or two key elements of performance to ensure the feedback provided is meaningful to the teacher (Wiggins, 2012). The key in quality feedback and coaching is for teachers to have a clear understanding of the feedback given and suggestions made. This is critical as meaningful feedback challenges, supports, and motivates teachers (Donaldson, 2016).

High At-Risk Schools

At-risk schools have consistently underperformed at lower levels than other schools with some research suggesting that they can be turned around or moved out of an at-risk designation by the leadership practices of school leaders (Chenoweth & Theokas, 2013; Fuller et al., 2017; Kalman & Arslan, 2016; Litz & Scott, 2017). School leaders have been identified as being a critical contributing factor in turning around schools designated as at-risk schools (Cruickshank, 2017; Day et al., 2016; Loewenberg, 2016; Tan, 2018; Woods & Martin, 2016).

Research supports the assumption that low-achieving schools can be transformed into high-achieving schools through effective leadership practices (Brown & Green, 2014). While I previously stated that principals account for 25% of the impact on student achievement (Gale & Bishop, 2014), additional research has concluded that effective school principals have had noteworthy effects on student achievement in reading and mathematics (Dhuey & Smith, 2014; Lunenburg & Irby, 2014; McKinney et al., 2015). Effective principal leadership practices have a

considerable positive outcome on reducing achievement gaps in schools (Chibani & Chibani, 2013; Günal & Demirtaşlı, 2016; Ni et al., 2018).

Title I Schools

The Title I block grant program was established by the U.S. Department of Education in 1965 as part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to provide federal revenue to schools that serve a high percentage of low-income students (Cascio & Reber, 2013). Sousa and Armor (2016) noted that the primary purpose of the 1965 Title I program was to fund additional programs intended to increase the educational achievement of children in poverty and who are at risk of failing. According to Sousa and Armor, the Title I reauthorization of 2000, the NCLB Act, established a more concrete goal of closing the academic achievement gap between economically disadvantaged students and their noneconomically disadvantaged peers. Students who are failing or at risk of failing are provided supplemental instruction and resources in addition to their regular classroom instructional program. The U.S. Department of Education (USDE) report acknowledged that principals of Title I schools are faced with the challenge of improving instructional delivery, developing rigorous assessments, and raising the academic achievement of the most deprived of students at habitually low-performing schools.

Poverty

According to the Center for Law and Social Policy (2013), poverty has been a predictor of present and future student success. The Title I program allocates federal funding to school districts to assist with the instructional needs of the socioeconomically and underprivileged student population. The U.S. government acknowledged an increasing achievement gap between high- and low-poverty schools, with students at high-poverty schools showing drops in achievement, as compared with students at low-poverty schools showing growth in achievement

(USDE, 2015).

It is vital that the instructional leader focus on the achievement data of the student subgroups and recognize the need for programs and policies that help children living in poverty (Reed & Swanminathan, 2016). It is crucial that all educators be mindful of the many factors that play a vibrant role in student classroom interactions and the impact it has on student achievement (Reed & Swanminathan, 2016; Tan, 2018). High-poverty schools can succeed with high expectations and the support of the whole school in which the principal is responsible for building cordial relationships among the staff (Brown & Green, 2014).

With the assistance of Title I program funding, schools can level the playing field in at-risk schools by enacting the following actions: research and secure high-quality curriculum and instructional materials with accompanying academic assessments, purchase resources to target deficient skills, provide enrichment programs, and close the achievement gap (Brown & Green, 2014; Reed & Swanminathan, 2016; Tan, 2018). Along with assisting with the instructional needs of the students, principals use the additional funding to prepare and train teachers to work with at-risk youths, provide ongoing professional development, and increase parental involvement (Brown & Green, 2014; Reed & Swanminathan, 2016; Tan, 2018).

Summary

In this chapter, I reviewed studies that investigated successful principal leadership, school reform, the history and role of the principal, the leadership effect on student achievement, and professional development and coaching in high at-risk schools. Additionally, I reviewed literature related to Title I and its potential for helping students to be successful in educational settings. Chapter 3 describes the methodology of the study. Chapter 4 reports on the findings.

Chapter 5 is a summary of the study, a discussion of the findings, a conclusion, and implications

for practice and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative instrumental case study was to describe best-practice instructional coaching feedback strategies as perceived by effective principals of high at-risk schools. Coaching is an opportunity for school leaders to share strategies from their instructional toolboxes (Shernoff et al., 2019). In this chapter, I review the purpose statement and the research questions. Then I describe and explain the research method and design, the population and study sample, materials and instrument, data collection, data analysis, methods of trustworthiness, the researcher's role, ethical considerations, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

Buck et al. (2016) suggested that an instrumental case study provides insight into a topic. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative instrumental case study was to describe best-practice instructional coaching feedback strategies as perceived by effective principals of high at-risk schools. This qualitative instrumental case study focused on effective principals, defined as being those whose schools have shown consistent academic improvement over a course of at least two academic school years, according to the LDoE. I found eight effective principals of high at-risk schools in Louisiana to interview to describe the instructional coaching feedback strategies they have implemented in their schools. My interview questions addressed the following research questions:

RQ1. Intellectual Stimulation: Describe the instructional coaching feedback strategies that are implemented to focus on learning.

RQ2. Inspirational Motivation: Describe the instructional coaching feedback strategies that are implemented to encourage collaboration.

RQ3. Individualized Consideration: Describe the coaching strategies that are implemented to communicate with teachers to encourage change when feedback is negative.

RQ4. Idealized Influence: Describe the coaching strategies implemented to provide honest, specific feedback despite challenges.

Research Design and Method

This study is categorized as qualitative because "qualitative inquiry is particularly oriented toward exploration, discovery, and inductive logic. Inductive analysis begins with specific observations and builds toward general patterns" (Patton, 2002, p. 56). A qualitative study also, as Patton (2002) suggested, attempts to understand the entirety of a program and its reasons for doing things.

Yin (2013) described the case study as an explorative way that in-depth data can be collected and used to discover responses to actual events that happened to either a single person or to a group of people at a specific place in time. Creswell (2013) and Yazan (2015) also described the case study as an approach for discovering and identifying the meaning individuals and groups attribute to a human or social problem. This process is based on methodological styles of investigation. According to Creswell (2013), the qualitative approach is the method to use when desiring detailed views of a study. Stake (1995) argued the major reason to use a case study is to acquire the descriptions and interpretations of others.

Another explanation of the case study by Creswell and Guetterman (2019) defined a case study as a form of ethnography that provides an in-depth exploration of an activity, an event, an individual, or a process. Creswell and Guetterman further noted that there are specific types of case studies, including collective, instrumental, and intrinsic. The study that I conducted was an instrumental case study that focused on a specific topic using several different cases to illustrate

that single topic. Stake (2005) hypothesized that when the purpose of a case study goes beyond the case, it is then referred to as an instrumental study. An instrumental case stems from open-ended interview questions that reveal personal values (Yin & Davis, 2007). In this study, I used a semistructured interview (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003) to ask questions of principals who have been successful at using coaching feedback strategies in at-risk schools. Yin (2015) indicated that semistructured interview questions permit new revelations to be brought forth because of participant responses.

Population and Sample

Effective principals are principals who create a learning environment where academic achievement is the primary goal (Badenhorst & Koalepe, 2014). Therefore, for purposes of my study, effective principals are those whose schools have shown consistent academic improvement over a course of at least two academic school years, according to the LDoE. Furthermore, Dunsworth and Billings (2009) emphasized that effective principals ensure that policies, procedures, and resources support their primary goal of having an effective school. Effective schools are schools having most of the classes on grade-level where the students, teachers, and administrators have various levels of accountability for academic success (Shin et al., 2013). High poverty schools are defined as having between 76% and 100% of students receiving free and reduced-priced meals (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010). For the purposes of my study, successful at-risk schools are determined to be those schools having at least a 50% minority population and 50% of the student body qualifying for free and reduced-price meals and which have shown consistent academic improvement over at least two academic years, according to the LDoE.

The population for this study was high at-risk public secondary school (middle school, junior high school, or high school) principals in Louisiana whose schools have been recognized by the LDoE for exemplary academic performance on the Louisiana state standards assessment tests dating back to the last two school sessions when data were generated. The anticipated maximum number of participants in the sample was 10 principals who worked at their respective schools a minimum of two years. However, due to Covid-19, several hurricanes taking place during the school year, and changes in school administration, eight principals participated who met the required criteria.

The sample group were principals from high at-risk secondary (6-12) Louisiana schools whose schools have been deemed effective, according to the LDoE school performance scores (SPS) and school letter grades. There were 101 potential principals who met the requirements of the sample group. The research sample consisted of eight principals in a multicase sampling (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018) to allow me as the principal investigator to describe instructional coaching feedback strategies implemented in these schools. Patton (2015) advised that the sampling of an instrumental case study must be purposely identified. The participants in my study were identified by the snowball or chain sampling strategy from the suggestions of other contributors (Leavy, 2017). The recruitment email is in Appendix D.

Participant Demographics

The eight principals interviewed came from at-risk high schools representing seven school districts spanning the state of Louisiana. Participant experience as a principal ranged from 6–24 years (Table 1). The average timespan that these principals had been working on their campuses was almost 8.5 years. Two principals interviewed were on their campuses for 10 years, with the shortest tenure being three years and the longest being on his campus for 21 years. Table

2 indicates the school performance under the leadership of the current principal/research participant.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Research participant	Age (range)	Gender	Race	Total years in education	Total years as a school principal
Principal 1	51-60	Male	Black	26	13
Principal 2	51-60	Male	Black	24	10
Principal 3	61-75	Male	White	42	24
Principal 4	51-60	Male	Black	25	14
Principal 5	61-75	Male	Black	40	20
Principal 6	41-50	Male	Black	17.5	6
Principal 7	41-50	Male	Black	21	8
Principal 8	61-75	Male	Black	30	15

Table 2

School Performance

Research participant	Years as principal of current school	School letter grade 2018	School performance score (SPS) 2018	School letter grade 2019	School performance score (SPS) 2019
Principal 1	7.5	B	77+	B	77+
Principal 2	5	B	80+	B	85+
Principal 3	21	B	77+	B	77+
Principal 4	10	B	80+	B	80+
Principal 5	10	A	95+	A	99+
Principal 6	6	B	77+	B	77+
Principal 7	3	B	88+	B	88+
Principal 8	5	B	77+	B	77+

Materials/Instruments

 Data collection instruments primarily included interviews based on a guided protocol (Appendix B), but I also utilized document reviews, artifacts, and field notes (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017). All instruments assisted in answering the research questions. One-on-one semistructured open-ended interview questions were my primary data collection instrument (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). Qualitative interviewing assumes that the beliefs of the participants are pertinent and will provide insight into their beliefs (Patton, 2015). Semistructured interviews are most often used in qualitative research and are guided by specific questions (Yin, 2015). However, the order in which I asked the interview questions was not set but was guided by the responses of the participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Interviews are a valuable source of data for case studies and are formatted along the lines of facilitated conversations instead of formal questions (Yin, 2018). Patton (2002) described a respectable interview as "an opportunity to investigate feelings, thoughts, and intentions" (p. 341). I used semistructured interviewing because highly formalized structured interviews would have denied me the engaging conversations needed for a true understanding of the common themes and findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2015). I collected demographic information during my initial contact with participants when recruiting them and explaining the research study and process.

 Due to Covid-19 protocols, I interviewed participants via Zoom conference or by phone conversation at their convenience. In addition to gathering demographic information, I asked a series of open-ended questions based on the research questions and the literature review with interviews lasting approximately 30 minutes but no longer than one hour. The questions were designed to elicit rich descriptions from the principals regarding their use of coaching feedback strategies to improve teacher instruction and improve student learning. I taped and later

transcribed each semistructured interview verbatim. Each written transcription was provided to the appropriate participant to check for accuracy (Chenail, 2011; DeVault,2017).

Data Collection

Prior to collecting any data, I obtained Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from ACU (Appendix C). Each participant was given a consent form outlining the purpose of the study, how the data would be collected, analyzed, and reported, and how confidentiality would be protected. Data was collected through a case-study approach with individual principal interviews. I conducted semistructured interviews, which allowed me a degree of latitude to adjust the course of the conversation as needed (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). The interview guided protocol along with documents, artifacts, and field notes provided answers to the research questions. These various data sources provided the triangulation required to ensure more breadth to participant dialogue (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Saldaña & Omasta, 2018).

The data were collected confidentially to provide the participants with anonymity. I asked the principals a series of questions via Zoom or phone conversation in a confidential manner to establish rapport and trustworthiness. Names of participants, as well as names of locations, were de-identified to maintain confidentiality. The interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes to one hour each. I obtained permission to record the interviews. All transcriptions and interview recordings are being kept in a secure location and will be destroyed after three years.

I also collected relevant documents and artifacts—lesson plans, standards and objectives, classroom management plan, web site information, and meeting agendas—and took field notes to get a snapshot of feedback strategies these principals implemented. According to Patton (2002), artifacts provide a rich source of information about organizational and program effectiveness.

Data Analysis

Data retrieved from the interviews and written documents were transcribed for further investigation and study. Qualitative data analysis draws conclusions logically from the data collected and compares the findings against other situations (DeCuir-Gumby et al., 2011; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Stake (1995) considered data analysis as an opportunity for researchers to reflect on their impressions and make meaning from them. Merriam and Tisdell recommended data analysis should begin while collecting data and adjustments made to subsequent interviews if information surfaces during an early interview requiring more depth or revision.

The text from these numerous data sources needs to be communicated with a minimum number of words. According to Saldaña and Omasta (2018), reducing text to smaller chunks is a process known as coding. Coding helps the researcher analyze and understand data patterns that help to explain the human response that can be used to construct other types of knowledge. The interpretation of patterns refers to attributing importance to what was found, understanding those discoveries, proposing clarifications, and drawing conclusions from the patterns (Patton, 2002).

As I reviewed the interview data, I coded them (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011). Coding is a data analysis management strategy in which the researcher assigns a short description or identification to the data to more readily allow the researchers to access data and find patterns (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015; Saldana, 2016). While coding the interview data, I constructed, sorted, and named categories while also identifying and forming patterns and themes (DeCuir-Gumby et al., 2011; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Saldana, 2016; Yin, 2018).

I recorded the interviews and made notes that I used to transcribe the data (V. Anderson, 2017). Saldana (2016) identified three coding practices: in vivo, pattern, and process coding. I

began the coding process by carefully reading each transcription of participant responses (Stuckley, 2014). I then used the in vivo coding strategy to identify common words and phrases that indicated the actual language and aim of each participant during the initial coding (Saldana, 2016). Next, I used pattern coding to determine the similarities identified by the participants. I used two types of coding, as Patton (2002) suggested that qualitative research should use more than one type of coding.

Methods of Establishing Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, the credibility and trustworthiness of the researcher is crucial to the research study (Chenail, 2011; DeVault, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015). The four elements of trustworthiness for qualitative research are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. I accurately represented the data collected to reduce researcher bias.

Credibility means that the researcher has created the legitimacy and accurateness of the findings and interpretations of the research study through the eyes of the participants (Merriam, 1998; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015). A strategy for establishing credibility is member checking (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam, 1998). During the member-checking process, I asked each participant to review the notes and observations collected during the interview process. Merriam (1998) and another writer (DeVault, 2017) suggested that this should happen continuously throughout the interview process. As a result, participants reviewed and verified the accuracy of all data collected. To further ensure credibility and trustworthiness, I used triangulation throughout the interview process by recording the interview with Zoom or my phone, taking field notes, and reviewing documents (Krefting, 1991). Also, I convened an expert panel to review the guided protocol questions prior to the actual interviews.

Transferability attests to the relevancy of the study's findings (Merriam,1998). Transferability is established by providing readers with evidence that the research study's findings could be applicable to other contexts, situations, times, and populations. I used thick descriptions to explain the findings within the study that could be applied to other situations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Dependability is important to trustworthiness because it presents the research findings as consistent and repeatable (Merriam,1998). My aim as the researcher was to verify that my findings were consistent with the raw data that I collected. Patton (2002) further claimed that the dependability of a study is established when other researchers could repeat the findings of the study, as this process yields consistency in the research.

Confirmability is the last condition of trustworthiness that a qualitative researcher should establish (Merriam, 1998). Leavy (2017) further defined confirmability as whether or not the researcher interfered with the outcome of the study's findings. Confirmability validates the findings as being shaped by the participants more than they are shaped by the researcher. As a veteran educator and former master teacher and instructional coach, I have many ideas about feedback strategies and how these strategies should be implemented. However, I wanted the participants' words to dominate the conversation rather than my thoughts and ideas.

Researcher's Role

In qualitative case study research, the researcher is the primary data collection instrument (Chenail, 2011; Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015). Qualitative researchers conduct the interviews, review all information, and compile data themselves (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). As the principal investigator, I collected, analyzed, and reported on all information discovered.

In this study, I interviewed effective principals of high at-risk schools. For my entire 27 years as an educator, I have worked in schools that were defined as high at-risk. Often, these schools did not have sufficient materials, resources, or the staff to adequately meet the needs of the students. My students and the reputation of the school had often been stigmatized by labels, such as underachieving, poor performing, or inadequate, which resulted in much discouragement and high turnovers of staff. Now, in my role as an assistant principal in a high at-risk school and aspiring to become a school principal, I recognize the challenges that all school leaders face to be effective in their schools. I especially desire to gain a deeper understanding of the strategies that principals in high at-risk schools use to promote student and teacher achievement. I wanted to be transparent in my role as a researcher; therefore, I carefully explained the process and kept notes in a reflective journal for authenticity and clarification purposes (Chenail, 2011).

Prior to interviewing participants, I explained my purpose in this research study to each participant (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I thoroughly reviewed and explained the consent forms to each participant prior to the participants signing the forms. I also shared with each participant the interview and analysis process. I verified participant responses for accuracy during the interview and gave all participants an opportunity to review the transcripts of the interview to confirm accuracy (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The rights of participants were protected by informed consent, confidentiality, and the absence of any data that could reveal the identity of participants or their school or school district (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I collected and stored information without identifying the names, schools, or school division of any of the participants. I also assigned pseudonyms to each participant interviewed to avoid using names.

Ethical Considerations

The rights of participants were protected by informed consent, confidentiality, and the absence of any identifying data that could reveal the participants, their school, or their school district (Creswell & Poth, 2018). All identifying information was kept and will be kept confidential. Data collected was stored in a secure location. Principals interviewed were identified only by pen names. During the recruitment process, I shared the purpose of the study with the participants prior to the interview to ensure all understood the purpose and procedure involved in the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The completed transcript of each interview was shared with each participant for feedback, comment, and further clarification prior to completing this study.

No data collection was initiated until approval of this study was provided by the ACU IRB. All participation was strictly voluntary. I selected the secondary school principals by whether they met the requirements of the study and by their agreement to participate in the study. All participants were guaranteed anonymity as much as possible, and all data was used only to fulfill the requirements of the study.

Assumptions

Simon (2011) defined assumptions as those things that are out of the researcher's control, yet if these assumptions were not present, the study would be invalidated. I assumed all participants answered all questions to the best of their abilities with honest and open minds. To ensure the utmost honesty, participant confidentiality was established to collect data. Also, participation in this study was based on voluntary consent, and participants were able to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty. Therefore, I assumed that all responses

to the questions were reliable and valid while being aligned with the participant's real experiences.

Limitations

Simon (2011) emphasized that limitations are circumstances outside of the researcher's control. I worked to achieve data saturation by inviting effective principals of high at-risk schools to participate; however, I did not have any control over who accepted the invitation. Another limitation over which I had no control was the experiences the principals had fulfilling their roles as principals. According to Marshall and Rossman (2011), no research project is perfectly designed, and all studies have limitations. Therefore, I recognize and acknowledge the limitations of this study regarding how it can and cannot contribute to the existing research.

The results of the study pertained to school administrators based in a few Louisiana school districts. Due to the location and population of the study, the results cannot be generalized to the experiences of school administrators in other school districts and states.

Delimitations

Delimitations are choices the researcher deems appropriate for the study (Patton, 2002). Delimitations are under the control of the researcher (Simon, 2011). Simon (2011) clarified delimiting factors as the choice of objectives, the research questions, interest, theoretical frameworks chosen, and the population the researcher chooses to investigate. A delimitation of my study is that the results pertained to school administrators based in a few Louisiana school districts. Data collected in this study were limited to the expertise of only secondary school principals of high at-risk schools, who self-identified as instructional leaders and transformational leaders. The participants were principals of active Title I public high schools in

Louisiana. The schools must have earned A's and/or B's over the last two years of generated

data under the leadership of the current principal.

Summary

Chapter 3 provided a detailed description of the methodological procedures suggested for

my study. These procedures included the research design and methodology, strategies for data

collection, the population and setting, research materials, and data collection and analysis. This

chapter also included the role of the researcher, ethical considerations, assumptions, limitations,

and delimitations. Chapter 4 provides the results and analysis of my study followed by the

discussion of findings and conclusions in Chapter 5.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative instrumental case study was to describe best practice instructional coaching feedback strategies as perceived by effective principals of high at-risk schools in Louisiana. According to Shernoff et al. (2019), coaching is an opportunity for a school leader or another educator to share strategies from their instructional toolbox. Stein (2016) argued that successful schools should be staffed with strong leaders who can make quality decisions. Stake (2010) argued the major reason to use a case study is to acquire the descriptions and interpretations of others.

In this chapter, I report findings from interviews with eight high school principals in Louisiana based on the components of transformational leadership—intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, and idealized influence. Transformational leaders are visionary leaders who see the needs of their organization and strive to change the environment conducive to those needs (Lowder, 2009). Findings are reported by research questions.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 explored intellectual stimulation and described the instructional coaching feedback strategies that are implemented to focus on learning. Intellectual stimulation refers to the amount of academic knowledge that the leader shares with the staff and encourages them to think and explore new ideas based on best practices (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2016; Seltzer & Bass, 1990). Several interview questions were asked of the principals to generate the rich responses needed to adequately explore the instructional coaching feedback strategies implemented to focus on student learning (Appendix B). An analysis of the principals' responses yielded a plethora of information with the following emerging themes: educational programs

consistent with shared goals, differentiated instruction, coaching cycles for teachers, and peer mentoring for teachers.

Educational Programs Consistent With Shared Goals

Educational programs consistent with shared goals were strategies to focus on learning. Five of the principals began the interview by sharing the goals, mission, or vision of their schools as a foundation for building intellectual stimulation with strong educational programs. One principal said, "Along with stakeholders, we'll provide a learning environment where students' academic, social, and emotional needs are met." Another principal indicated that his vision is to "turn learners into leaders." Another indicated that his "goals, mission, and vision all are geared to committing to the success of all students." Each of the principals expressed their passion for seeing their students succeed and they have implemented educational programs to ensure that teachers are able to meet student needs. One principal beamed as he spoke about his "state of the art educational programs" designed to meet the needs of his teachers, which then trickled down to the students.

Five of the principals indicated that young and inexperienced teachers presented their biggest challenge to meeting the academic needs of the school. Another principal also added that students lacking the necessary skills also presented a challenge. Consequently, two prevalent educational programs were being implemented in the schools of the principals with whom I spoke. To offset the issues with coaching young teachers that are often noncertified, Principal #1 spoke extensively about the educational program—the Teacher and Student Advancement Program (TAP). This educational program is an all-inclusive school improvement model that establishes sustained structures for building educator excellence and increasing student

achievement growth. Three other principals also mentioned TAP; however, only one had not heard of it or utilized the program.

As the interviews developed, all the principals revealed that students' social and emotional learning impacts academic learning. To help the students increase their knowledge and skills, the Leader in Me program was mentioned twice during the interview process. Principal #4 shared his reason for using this program:

> The Leader in Me program helps students learn how to become self-reliant, take
>
> initiative, plan ahead, set and track goals, do their homework, prioritize their time,
>
> manage their emotions, be considerate of others, express their viewpoint persuasively,
>
> resolve conflicts, find creative solutions, value differences, and live a balanced life. The
>
> process helps students develop the skills and self-confidence they need to lead their lives
>
> and succeed in school and beyond.

Figure 1 provides a general overview of the seven habits of highly effective teens, which is the foundation of the Leader in Me program.

Figure 1

Leader in Me Program - 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens
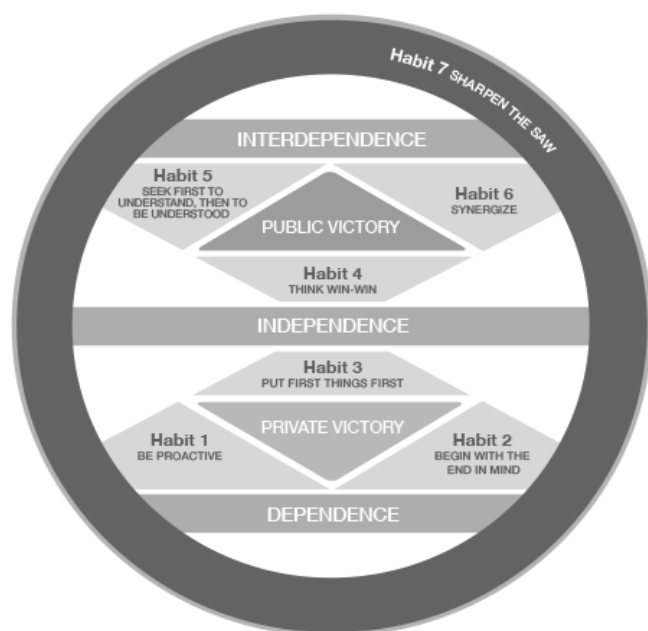
Note. This figure demonstrates the 7 habits of high effective teens as modeled when using the Leader in Me program. Adapted from https://www.seancovey.com/books/7habits. Adapted with permission from Franklin Covey Co.

Differentiated Instruction

To further assist with the challenges and struggles of meeting academic needs to strengthen intellectual stimulation, all principals indicated that differentiated instruction was vital to student and teacher success. Principal #5 was most proud of the strategies that he has implemented because his school's letter grade was "F" when he arrived. He has since taken "many academic risks" to get teachers to teach differently and meet the students where they are. Principal #3 noted that doing the same kind of teaching and expecting a different result epitomized the definition of insanity. Principal #2 echoed almost the exact sentiment adding that "these are at-risk kids who deserve a chance to be successful." He mentioned that "teachers need

to engage every student through effective instruction." Principal #1 mentioned cluster meetings as a mandatory professional development for teachers that will tackle various topics as they relate to the strategies that are being implemented during specific cycles. Figure 2 is a sample of a blank cluster meeting record that is used to plan various topics that are implemented during professional development. Figure 3 is an example of a cluster meeting record which addressed differentiated instructional methods.

Figure 2

Sample Cluster Meeting Record

Cluster Group Meeting Record
(for each cluster meeting)

Date: _____   LRP Week _____

Attendees Sign In:_____

_____

School Goal: By _____, _____% of _____ grade students will increase/decrease scores on _____:

Yearly Cluster Goal: By _____, teachers will demonstrate proficiency in teaching _____, resulting in increased student performance in _____ as measured by _____.

Cycle Cluster Goal: By _____, teachers will demonstrate proficiency in teaching _____, resulting in increased student performance in _____ as measured by _____.

▲ Identify Need   ◯ Learn   ⬠ Develop   ◼ Apply   ◆ Evaluate

Cluster Meeting Outcome: *What will I learn?*
By the end of the cluster meeting, teachers will be able to _____ in the classroom, resulting in students' _____ in the classroom, as measured by _____.

RUBRIC Reinforcing	STEPS	Activity What will I do?	Materials What will I need to bring with me?
	▲ Identify Need		
	◯ Learn		
	⬠ Develop		
	◼ Apply		

Figure 3

Actual Cluster Meeting Record

Date: October 22, 2020	Cluster Cycle: 1	CLRP Week: 7
Yearly School-Wide Goal: By May 2021, xxx will increase our school score from xxxx to xxxx as teachers focus on utilizing differentiated instructional methods in order to engage students in higher order thinking and problem solving with a focus on writing.		
Compass/ VAL-ED Leadership Goal: Monitor the participation of **EVERY student** in social and academic activities. Assess the **CULTURE** of the school from students' perspectives.		
Cluster Cycle Goal: By October, teachers will model their thinking and provide differentiated instructional methods as evidenced by: • An increase in PIC from xxxxxxx_ to _xxxxxx__ • Students will demonstrate mastery of essential *thinking* standards via bi-weekly snapshots • Strengthened next steps in IGP to address differentiation		

Teacher-Focused Learning Target: By the next cluster, the teacher will develop and follow an an academic intervention plan for bubble students
    Student-Focused Learning Outcome:
    By the next cluster, students will show mastery tasks and activities listed on the teacher created academic intervention plan.		

Coaching Cycles

Coaching cycles were a strategy to focus on learning implemented by the participants. For example, Principal #5 used the term "coaching cycle" when identifying strategies that he uses to implement his focus on learning. According to the principal, "a coaching cycle puts an agenda in place to ensure teachers are getting help to improve their teaching skills in the classroom so that students can improve in their learning." Principal #3 stated that coaching cycles highlight data in areas where teachers are excelling as well as the areas that need improvement. Principal #1 did not specifically use the term *coaching cycle*; however, he referenced coaching as a series of steps an instructional coach follows when working with teachers to improve their proficiency in the classroom. He also follows a prescribed formula for coaching teachers according to the TAP model that he uses at his school. Four of the eight principals interviewed either used the term *coaching* or implied it as a strategy to focus on

learning. Figure 4 is an example of a circular coaching cycle that allows for repetition of specific steps so that the teacher gains the skills necessary to be successful.

Figure 4

Coaching Cycle
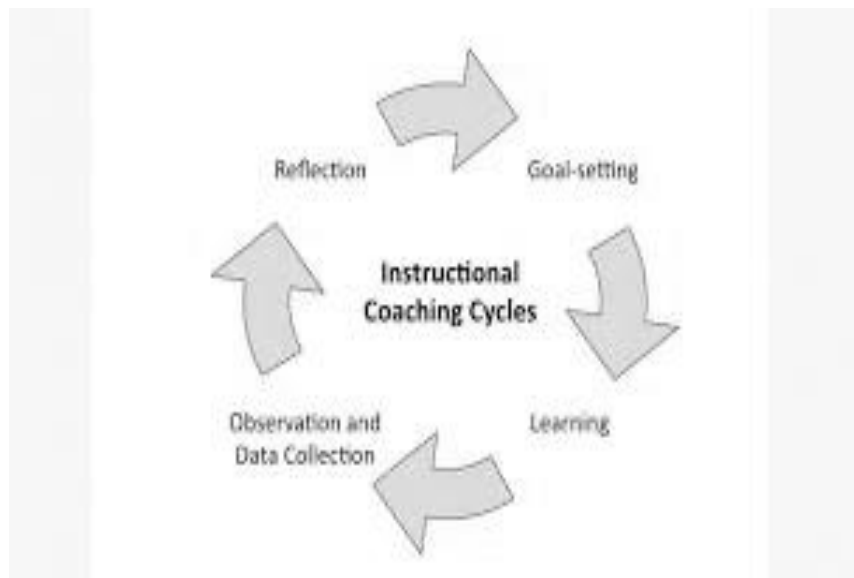
Note. This figure demonstrates the components of the Instructional Coaching Cycle. Figure adapted from https://eleducation.org. In the public domain.

Peer Mentoring

Another theme that emerged as a strategy to focus on learning during the principal interviews was peer mentoring for teachers. Peer mentoring as described by Principal #4 is the opportunity for all educators to learn from those that have experienced some amounts of success with perfecting their craft as educators. Principal #1 spoke about peer mentoring and coaching as key components of the TAP model. Principal #5 paired teachers with mentors to have the teachers first observe the mentor before the mentor observed the teacher. Principal #8 communicated one of his experiences when he filled a teaching position after the school year had started. He said, "After school starts it is virtually impossible to hire anyone with teaching experience." He needed a teacher; therefore, he had to hire someone who had never taught

before. The principal admitted to being challenged by the needs of this new teacher and decided

to pair that new teacher with a veteran teacher for advice and some guidance. The principal was

excited to share the success story of how that peer mentoring relationship helped the teacher to

grow and develop. Overall, many of the principals agreed that peer mentoring is an important

strategy that is implemented to focus on learning for teachers and students.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 explored inspirational motivation and described the instructional

coaching feedback strategies that are implemented to encourage collaboration. Several interview

questions were asked of the principals to generate the rich responses needed to adequately

explore the instructional coaching feedback strategies implemented to encourage teachers to

collaborate (Appendix B). The principal responses supported what several researchers have

already confirmed. The best teacher knowledge and implementation happens by professional

development collaborations with other teachers, reviewing student data, practicing self-

reflection, and team teaching in genuine classroom settings (Coggshall et al., 2012; Darling-

Hammond, 2012; DuFour & Eaker, 2008; DuFour & Marzano, 2009; Gilles et al., 2010). An

analysis of the principals' responses yielded an abundance of information with the following

emerging themes: professional learning communities (PLCs), common planning time, and

teacher grouping.

Professional Learning Communities

PLCs occur when educators meet regularly to share their knowledge, analyze student

work, plan instruction, and collaborate to improve teaching skills. After analyzing principal

responses, I realized that every principal interviewed utilized PLCs in some way even if they

referenced them by another name. Principal #4 said he uses PLCs for teachers to share and

collaborate with each other. He encourages peer collaborations during those weekly meetings to discuss instruction at the school and ways to improve it. Principal #3 said he uses PLCs for teachers to collaborate on "other job-related tasks and responsibilities" that allow them to rotate duties. When I asked for clarification, he responded by saying teachers can take turns leading the PLC meetings and showcasing their successful class activities. Principal #1 also uses PLCs to keep the faculty updated on scholarly articles, books, and other related academic readings. Figure 5 is the agenda of a PLC book study plan.

Figure 5

PLC Book Study Plan

PLC Book Study Plan
You Are The Team
6 Simple Ways Teammates Can Go From Good To Great

Spring Semester 2018

Objective: Identify the critical attributes of TEAMWORK and develop structures to foster collaboration that will lead to positive student outcomes.

2/1 Thurs. PLC members receive books and homework assignment. HW: Read Introduction/Chapter 1, pgs. 1-22 by Tuesday 2/6/18.

2/6 Tues. 1:00-1:50 Book Study (2:00-2:40 PBIS mtg.)

  a. Bellringer-Read the article, Strong Teams, Strong Schools (10 min.) *highlight & pair/share

  b. Review norms set in August 2017 and discuss team's progress in relation to norms (5 min.)

  c. Complete Workbook Introduction/Self-assessment, pgs. 3-7 (15 min.)

  d. Chapter 1 Be Selfless
  -Group analysis, 3-4 members per team   Workbook Application w/chapter 1 (15 min.)

  e. Reflection/Share-out (5-10 min.)

Future Dates (*District Early Dismissals):

3/13 Chapters 2 and 3

4/17 Chapters 4 and 5

5/8 Chapter 6 & Team EOY/Appreciation Luncheon

Common Planning Time

An analysis of principal responses indicated that having a common planning time permits teachers to meet and collaborate on important work and decision making about students and instruction. It was further revealed through interview conversations that the common planning time needed may need to be scheduled apart from the typical PLC. Six principals professed to giving their teachers common planning times to collaborate on their lessons. Principal #2 said that "teachers of the same subject area have the opportunity to collaborate with each other about strategies that are working or not working." Principal #5 has teachers meeting in collaborative groups every Friday. Principal #5 said, "Most of the teachers are stand-alone, so they enjoy the weekly opportunity to work and plan together without the need to compete with each other." Principal #1 expressed that "the district provides enough staff for teachers to have a common planning period for 45 minutes once a week, which comes before the 90-minute weekly cluster meeting where teachers are basically learning how to be teachers."

Teacher Grouping

Professional development is a mandatory practice on both the school and district level that encourages collaboration and focuses on teachers participating in groups. Several principals expressed the need to vary events to keep the teachers fully engaged and actively participating in the learning activities. Only Principal #1 indicated that he had no problems with teachers and their willingness to readily participate in groups without promptings. However, Principal #3, Principal #4, and Principal #8 used a grouping component to assist teachers in completing professional development activities to enhance their collaboration skills. Principal #3 said he frequently allows teachers the opportunity to choose their own partners for certain activities to inspire and motivate them to work together. Principal #4 has grouped teachers according to the

"skill that they excel in or are deficient in." Principal #8 said he changes his groups on a regular basis to give faculty members a chance to collaborate with everyone rather than with those of the same department and discipline. Figure 6 shows teacher groupings for collaboration during a professional development day.

Figure 6

Teacher Collaborative Groupings

GROUP ROTATIONS FOR BREAK-OUT SESSIONS					
	SESSION I COMPASS REVIEW	SESSION II CODE OF CONDUCT	SESSION III POWER OBJECTIVES	SESSION IV SCAFFOLDING	SESSION V QUESTIONING TO DEEPEN
8:45 – 9:15	GROUP A	GROUP B	GROUP C	GROUP D	GROUP E
9:15 – 9:45	GROUP E	GROUP A	GROUP B	GROUP C	GROUP D
9:45 – 10:00 RESTROOM & COFFEE BREAK					
10:00 – 10:30	GROUP D	GROUP E	GROUP A	GROUP B	GROUP C
10:30 – 11:00	GROUP C	GROUP D	GROUP E	GROUP A	GROUP B
11:00 – 11:30	GROUP B	GROUP C	GROUP D	GROUP E	GROUP A

Research Question 3

Research Question 3 explored individualized consideration and described the coaching strategies that are implemented to communicate with teachers to encourage change after receiving negative feedback. Seltzer and Bass (1990) defined individualized consideration as the degree to which a leader encourages, supports, and pays personal attention to their staff. When demonstrating individual consideration, leaders create an atmosphere that supports the professional growth of the staff (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Therefore, several interview questions were asked of the principals to generate the rich responses needed to adequately explore the coaching strategies implemented to communicate with teachers when the feedback is negative (Appendix B). An analysis of the principals' responses yielded a plethora of information with the following emerging themes to encourage change after receiving negative feedback: school and district wide professional development, walkthroughs, and peer mentoring for teachers.

Professional Development

Principal #6 said, "We provide professional development at the beginning of the year to discuss classroom procedures and policies. Then during the year, the district provides content related PD for all the district. Our district mandates that everyone attend the PD trainings." Figure 7 is an example of a PD agenda. Principal #4 stated that teachers are responsible for redelivering the PD information when appropriate. Principal #5 mentioned that professional development is provided monthly for two consecutive hours. The PD is mandatory, so attendance has not been a problem because the information presented is beneficial to their needs. Principal #2 has professional development once monthly but has it more frequently when teacher needs demand more. Principal #3 meets with his teachers for mandatory professional development during teaching planning. The teachers are expected to redeliver the content information during monthly faculty meetings.

Figure 7

Professional Development Agenda

AGENDA	
7:30 – 8:00	Sign-In
10:00 – 11:30 ENGLISH	Learn Zillion / Strategies for Responding to Student Writing Needs District Sponsored for Grades 6-12 ELA Teachers (map) Teachers will need to log-in and register prior to 10:00
11:00 – 12:00	Lunch On Your Own
THROUGHOUT DAY	♦ **TASKS OF THE DAY THAT MUST BE COMPLETED** 1. Departmental Meetings and Collaborations 2. School-wide needs assessment 3. Student Learning Targets Formulated and Input into CIS. 4. Prepare for P-T Conference (Schedule Meetings, Etc) (Must correspond with homeroom and all failing students) 5. Finish Mid-Term Exam Grading 6. Post Grades for 3rd Six Weeks in JCampus 7. Email Principal ▮▮▮ with all student failures for the 1st semester. 8. Mentor Teachers and New Teachers Meet
PT CONF FORM	▮▮▮▮ (develop / forward to teachers) P/P Version /Google Doc
3:00	Dismissal

Walkthroughs

Principal #1 expressed that walkthroughs are a major piece of feedback for his teachers because each walkthrough is a different focus area. Principal #2 prefers the term *snapshot*. He said, "A walkthrough is a snapshot of what is going on in the class when the administrator walks in." Since they are random and generally short, teachers cannot "fake a lesson." Principal #3 uses his walkthrough observation notes as professional development for his teachers. Principal #4 said that walkthroughs help him work with those teachers who need help and help him see a strategy that can benefit another teacher. Principal #5 mentioned that walkthroughs "capture a true picture" of what goes on in the classroom on a day-to-day basis. Along with Principal #5, Principals # 7 and #8 all use a Compass walkthrough rubric to provide specific feedback to teachers. Principal #6 said, "Walkthroughs are our gauging instruments." He uses them to provide insight to teachers as well as monitor the strategies that teachers are using. Teachers must be receptive to the feedback. Figure 8 is a copy of a Compass walkthrough form. Figure 9 is another example of a walkthrough form with "look-fors." Figure 10 is an example of an informal walkthrough conducted by one of the principals.

Figure 8

Compass Walkthrough Form

TEACHER:_____ DATE:_____ SUBJECT:_____ PERIOD:____ TIME IN:_____ OUT:_____

WALK THROUGH OBSERVATION FORM

1C: PLANNING AND PREPARATION COMPETENCY: SETTING INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

INEFFECTIVE

_____Outcomes lack rigor.
_____Outcomes do not represent important learning.
_____Outcomes are not suitable for many students in the class.

EMERGING

_____Outcomes represent a mixture of low expectations and rigor.
_____Some outcomes reflect important learning.
_____Outcomes are suitable for most of the class.

PROFICIENT

_____High expectations and rigor.
_____Outcomes are written in terms of what students will learn rather than do.
_____Outcomes represent a range of outcomes: social, reasoning, management, etc.

HIGHLY EFFECTIVE ~ IN ADDITION TO THE CHARACTERISTICS OF PROFICIENT

_____Plans reference curricular frameworks to ensure accurate sequencing (HE).
_____Teacher connects outcomes to previous and future learning.
_____Outcomes are differentiated.

2C: CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT COMPETENCY : MANAGING CLASSROOM PROCEDURES

INEFFECTIVE

_____Students not working and are disruptive
_____No established procedures for distributing / collecting materials.
_____Procedures for other activities are confused or chaotic.

EMERGING

_____Small groups are only partially engaged.
_____Procedures for transitions/distribution/collection established, but rough.
_____Classroom routines function unevenly.

PROFICIENT

_____The students are productively engaged during small group work.
_____Transitions between large / small group activities are smooth.
_____Classroom routines function smoothly.

HIGHLY EFFECTIVE ~ IN ADDITION TO THE CHARACTERISTICS OF PROFICIENT

_____Students take the initiative to ensure that their time is used productively.
_____Students ensure transitions and routines are smooth.
_____Students take initiative in distributing / collecting materials.

3B: INSTRUCTION COMPETENCY: USING QUESTIONING AND DISCUSSION TECHNIQUES

INEFFECTIVE

_____Questions are rapid-fire, and convergent, with a single correct answer.
_____Questions do not invite student thinking.
_____All discussion is between teacher and students. Students are not invited to speak directly to one another.
_____A few students dominate the discussion.

EMERGING

_____Teacher frames some questions designed to promote student thinking. Few students are involved.
_____The teacher invites students to respond to one another, but few respond.
_____Teacher calls on many students, but only a few participate.

PROFICIENT

_____Open-ended questions, students invited to think and have multiple answers.
_____The teacher makes effective use of wait time.
_____Ongoing discussion between students without mediation by the teacher.
_____Teacher calls on most students, even those who don't volunteer.

HIGHLY EFFECTIVE ~ IN ADDITION TO THE CHARACTERISTICS OF PROFICIENT

_____Students initiate higher-order questions. (HE) In addition to the characteristics of proficient
_____Students extend the discussion, enriching it.
_____Students invite comments from classmates.

PAGE 1

CLASSROOM TYPE:
☐CORE ☐CTE ☐SPED
☐ELECTIVE ☐OTHER_____

COVID: ☐ SHIELDS ☐ DISTANCING

☐ POD / WOD DISPLAYED ON BOARD.

☐ OBJECTIVES POSTED ON BOARD.

OBJECTIVE:
_____
_____
_____

EVALUATOR:

QUESTIONING:

STUDENT _____

TEACHER _____

HOTS _____

WALK THRU NOTES:

1 _____
2 _____
3 _____
4 _____
5 _____
6 _____
7 _____
8 _____
9 _____
10 _____
11 _____
12 _____
13 _____
14 _____

3C: INSTRUCTION COMPETENCY: ENGAGING STUDENTS IN LEARNING

INEFFECTIVE

_____Few students intellectually engaged.
_____Learning tasks only require or have a single correct response or method.
_____Materials used ask students to perform rote tasks.
_____Only one type of instructional group is used when variety would better serve the situation.
_____Unsuitable materials
_____Lesson drags or is rushed.

EMERGING

_____Some students are intellectually engaged.
_____Learning tasks require a mix of thinking and recall.
_____Student engagement with the content is largely passive, learning primarily facts or procedures.
_____Students have no choice in how they complete tasks.
_____Partially successful grouping.
_____Materials and resources are partially aligned to the lesson objectives, only some demand thinking.
_____Uneven pacing.

PROFICIENT

_____Most students are intellectually engaged.
_____Learning tasks have multiple correct responses and demand higher-order thinking.
_____Students have some choice as to how they complete learning tasks.
_____Mix of different types of groupings.
_____Materials and resources support the learning goals and require intellectual engagement.
_____Pacing provides time students need to be intellectually engaged

HIGHLY EFFECTIVE ~ IN ADDITION TO THE CHARACTERISTICS OF "PROFICIENT

_____All students are highly engaged.
_____Students take initiative to modify task to make it more meaningful to their needs.
_____Students suggest modifications to grouping patterns.
_____Students have extensive choice in how they complete tasks.
_____Students suggest modification or additions to the materials.
_____Students have an opportunity for reflection and closure on the lesson.

3D INSTRUCTION COMPETENCY: USING ASSESSMENT IN INSTRUCTION

INEFFECTIVE

_____Teacher gives no indication of what high quality work looks like.
_____Teacher makes no effort to determine whether students understand the lesson
_____Teacher doesn't ask students to evaluate own or classmates' work.

EMERGING

_____Little evidence that the students understand how their work will be evaluated.
_____Teacher monitors understanding through a single method; elicits no understanding from students.
_____Teacher requests global indications of understanding.
_____Feedback not uniformly specific not oriented towards future improvement.
_____Lesson adjustments partially successful.

PROFICIENT

_____Students indicate that they clearly understand characteristics of high quality work.
_____Teacher elicits evidence of understanding and students are invited to assess work and improve.
_____Feedback includes specific and timely guidance for at least groups of students.
_____Teacher makes lesson adjustments when necessary to enhance understanding.

HIGHLY EFFECTIVE~IN ADDITION TO THE CHARACTERISTICS OF PROFICIENT

_____Evidence that students have helped establish the evaluation criteria.
_____Sophisticated and continuous monitoring.
_____Teacher makes frequent use of strategies to elicit information about individual student understanding.
_____Feedback is specific and timely, provided from many sources, including other students.
_____Students monitor own understanding, either on their own initiative or as a result of set tasks.
_____Teacher adjustments designed to assist individual students.

GLOW _____
_____

GROW _____
_____

15 _____
16 _____
17 _____
18 _____
19 _____
20 _____
21 _____
22 _____
23 _____
24 _____
25 _____
26 _____
27 _____
28 _____
29 _____
30 _____
31 _____
32 _____

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT:

____ 100%   ____ 75%
____ 50%   ____ 25%
____ GROUP WORK   ____ IND. WORK
____ DISCUSSION   ____ Q&A SESSION
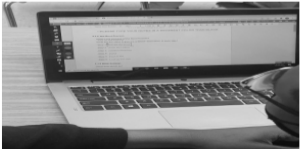____ NOTE TAKING

ACTIVITIES WITNESSED IN CLASSROOM:

☐ KAGAN
☐ HOTS
☐ COLLEGE VOCABULARY
☐ PROJECT BASED LEARNING
☐ EOC ALIGNMENT
☐ ACT ALIGNMENT
☐ USE OF GUIDEBOOKS
☐ USE OF ASSESSMENT GUIDES
☐ USE OF ADOPTED CURRICULUM
☐ USE OF GOOGLE CLASSROOM

Figure 9

Walkthrough "Look-Fors"

Teacher/Student Behaviors	Evidence

Communicating Expectations

Teacher Actions:
- ❏ LTs are posted and visible for in-person and virtual students
- ❏ Uses student friendly language to convey the goals of the lesson
- ❏ Uses questioning/dialogue to engage students in understanding the expectations
- ❏ Assessment/activities match the expectations from the LT

Student Actions:
- ❏ Can verbalize the expectations for the lesson
- ❏ Student work aligns with the overall goal of the lesson

"Today we are talking about the boot process. What are these red boxes? Six steps

Photo of the posted IBCA LT. **I can list the steps of the Boot Process in order and access the CBIOS settings in a computer.**

W.F. read the do's.

Modeling Thinking

Teacher Actions:
- ❏ Provides a strong model as a point of reference for students (whether pre-done or in-the moment)
- ❏ Narration/think-aloud of the process is present
- ❏ Steps out the process to allow students to ask questions
- ❏ Points out misconceptions

Student Actions:
- ❏ Students are actively engaged while the teacher is modeling
  - ❏ Capturing notes
  - ❏ Following along with a student copy
  - ❏ Asking questions

"What is the purpose of the Boot Process?"

"Need five minutes to wake up? Do the hokey pokey?"

Step 2, check the CMOS, too much, just know CMOS. [reading **"I'm telling you what to write."**

Everyone good with step 1, step 2?

Where are instructions found? [@9:40 a.m.]

-Internal summary @9:45 a.m.

-Student looked to the board for help to answer teacher question.
"I went through all of these steps and I feel like half of you are not paying attention." [@9:53 a.m.]

Differentiation Instructional Strategies

Teacher Actions:
- ❏ Incorporating differentiated instructional strategies that identifies and addresses student needs
- ❏ Learning is scaffolded to support S learning
- ❏ Group students by shared interest, topic, or ability for assignments.
- ❏ Providing students choices that supports their learning styles
- ❏ Secures each student is mastering the LT/objective (Assessing Students' Learning)

Student Actions:
- ❏ Working in groups/pairs utilizing thinking/content strategies
- ❏ Engaged in Verbal/Written Peer to Peer Feedback
- ❏ Students engaged in work different from peers
- ❏ Students moving towards mastery

-Not observed during my 40 minute observation.

Glow: Teacher identified/modeled for students what was essential (CMOS) content as it related to note-taking expectations.

Grow: Learning is scaffolded to support student learning

Overall/Additional Takeaways:
Reflection Questions:
1. How can you expand your PIC to assess student comprehension of the six steps of the Boot Process beyond teacher-led questioning of individual students? {Particularly in the beginning to the middle of your lesson. 45 minute observation}
2. How can you improve student analytical thinking during the teacher-led lecture/student note-taking process of your PIC?

Figure 10

Informal Walkthrough

Informal Walkthrough   School ▆▆▆▆▆   Teacher ▆▆▆▆▆

Date: 1-15-18   Grade/Subject: Biology   Observer: ▆▆▆▆▆

Time: 1:30pm   ✔ beginning of class ☐ Middle of class ☐ End of class   Total # of Students 19
(Beg Time/End Time)

Objective is evident (posted) and clearly communicated in student friendly language.
☐ No evidence   ✔ Yes — I will learn to choose and use appropriate models to understand a science concept

Rigor: ✔ High ☐ Low ☐ Mixture   **Lesson Type:** ✔ Whole Group ☐ Small Group ☐ Paired ☐ Individual ☐ Mixture

Students are engaged/not engaged in accomplishing the objective. (Number of students in each category)
Wandering _____ Watching _____ Working (compliance) most · Highly Engaged (challenged) almost

Teacher is engaged/not engaged with students upon entry into classroom by:
☐ Lecture ☐ Modeling ✔ Facilitating ☐ Assessing ☐ Circulating among students/groups ✔ At Desk/Work Station ☐ On Computer

	Scripting/Notes
1C: Setting Instructional Outcomes ✔ Outcomes represent high expectations and rigor. ☐ Outcomes are related to "big ideas" of the discipline. ☐ Outcomes are written in terms of what students will learn rather than do. ✔ Outcomes represent a range of outcomes: factual, conceptual understanding, reasoning, social, management, communication. ☐ Outcomes are suitable to groups of students in the class, differentiated where necessary. **2C: Managing Classroom Procedures** ✔ The students are productively engaged during small group work. ☐ Transitions between large and small group activities are smooth. ☐ Routines for distribution and collection of materials and supplies work efficiently. ☐ Classroom routines function smoothly. **3B: Questioning and Discussion Techniques** ✔ Teacher uses open-ended questions, inviting students to think and/or have multiple possible answers. ☐ The teacher makes effective use of wait time. ☐ The teacher builds on/uses student responses to questions effectively. ☐ Discussions enable students to talk to one another, without ongoing mediation by the teacher. ☐ The teacher calls on most students, even those who don't initially volunteer. ✔ Many students actively engage in the discussion. **3C: Engaging Students in Learning** ✔ Most students are intellectually engaged in the lesson. ✔ Learning tasks have multiple correct responses or approaches and/or demand higher order thinking. ☐ Students have some choice in how they complete learning tasks. ☐ There is a mix of different types of groupings, suitable to the lesson objectives. ☐ Materials and resources support the learning goals and require intellectual engagement, as appropriate. ✔ The pacing of the lesson provides students the time needed to be intellectually engaged. **3D: Using Assessment in Instruction** ☐ Students indicate that they clearly understand the characteristics of high quality work. ✔ The teacher elicits evidence of student understanding during the lesson. ✔ Students are invited to assess their own work and make improvements. ☐ Feedback includes specific and timely guidance for at least groups of students. ☐ The teacher attempts to engage students in self- or peer-assessment. ☐ When necessary, the teacher makes adjustments to the lesson to enhance understanding by groups of students.	The students will select and use correct information to explain scientific method What in a cell which makes protein asked the teacher Teacher presents activity in which the class acts out – abstract representation Narrator explains that students are watching in real time Teacher describes the process of the relationship of DNA, genes and protein Teacher describes DNA and RNA Teacher fills out worksheet on the board Teacher calls student to the board to work DNA code Teacher ask who will volunteer to do the last one

Comments:

Action Plan/Follow-up:

Teacher may consider less lecture and more hands on activities.

Peer Mentoring

Peer mentoring also emerged as a theme in Research Question 1. The principals echoed similar sentiments for implementing the focus on learning and as well as communicating with teachers to encourage change after receiving negative feedback. The following comments were also mentioned for Research Question 3: Principal #1 spoke about peer mentoring and coaching as key components of the TAP model. Principal #4 talked about the opportunity for all educators to learn from those that have experienced some amount of success with perfecting their craft as educators. Principal #5 paired teachers with mentors to have the teachers first observe the mentor before the mentor observes the teacher. Principal #8 mentioned pairing a new teacher with a veteran teacher for advice and guidance. As in Research Question 1, the principals approved of peer mentoring as an effective method for communicating with teachers to encourage change after receiving negative feedback.

Research Question 4

Research Question 4 explored idealized influence and described the coaching strategies implemented to provide honest, specific feedback despite challenges. Balyer (2012) defined idealized influence as the ability of a leader to put the needs of others first, and not using their influence for personal gain. Instead, the leader displays exemplary moral principles that inspire followers. To gain the understanding required to answer this research question, I asked several interview questions of the principals to generate the rich responses needed to adequately explore the coaching strategies implemented to provide honest feedback despite challenges (Appendix B). During the interview, the topic proved to be a difficult one, as it was revealed when several of the participants chose not to answer in detail. However, an analysis of the principals' responses yielded some genuinely candid information with the following emerging themes: a

commitment to establishing a culture of respect for teachers, and a commitment to honesty despite challenges.

Commitment to Establishing a Culture of Respect for Teachers

All eight principals are committed to respecting the staff of individuals working on their campuses. As self-identified transformational leaders, the principals agreed that the basic construct of idealized influence is putting the needs of the school first, which includes being intentional about teacher needs. Each of them in a way that is unique to their school circumstances built a culture of respect and trust. Principal #7 believes that an administrator should be "fair, just, and truthful" in every aspect, as that establishes a sense of trust, fairness, and unity among the faculty and staff. Consequently, Principal #1 mentioned that the challenge leaders face when providing honest, specific feedback comes primarily from his veteran teachers, whose mindsets are not accustomed to teaching with the high expectations and requirements that are placed on teachers at a TAP school. He described their "set in their ways" attitude as a "major learning curve." However, he is committed to using various strategies that show respect for all his teachers. For example, he helps all teachers meet and exceed the expectations of quality teaching by ensuring that they are given four different levels of support. He emphasized that if a teacher leaves his school, it is not for the lack of support given. Furthermore, Principal #7 noted his commitment to respect teachers, because he provides his teachers an opportunity to have rant sessions at the beginning of every PLC meeting that he facilitates. He allows teachers to give voice to their concerns and find viable solutions. He said, "When teachers feel that they are being heard and listened to, they are open to suggestions that spark change and productivity."

Commitment to Honesty

In implementing idealized influenced and putting the needs of others first, each of the

principals were committed to establishing an environment for honest feedback. For example,

Principal #3 shared the strategies and the challenges that he faces when providing honest,

specific feedback. Principal #3 coaches his struggling teachers and provides them with targeted

feedback. While implementing his commitment to honesty, he noted, "It is extremely frustrating

and counterproductive when teachers are mentored and coached but still fail to acknowledge the

problems that they consistently encounter." He further stated, "When the teacher deflects the

evidence and makes it personally about them, then they are no longer looking to improve their

instruction." Nevertheless, he continued his commitment to being honest to provide positive

feedback when it was warranted and held face-to-face meetings when feedback was less positive.

Principal #6 focused on his commitment to being honest when he noted that teachers

must also be open to honest feedback and not be "stuck in their beliefs." For instance, the

administration reviews lesson plans weekly and provides honest feedback on the rigor of the

standards in the lesson. Still, he stated, "We have had some teachers that were not receptive to

the feedback and it was apparent."

Principal #5 indicated the importance of conducting honest evaluations of the staff. In

addition, most of the principals revealed that the data should drive the decisions that are made

without fear of making mistakes in the process. Focusing feedback on data supports their

commitment to honesty.

Principal #2 was transparent when he implied that he was sometimes challenged within

himself to always provide honest, specific feedback following an observation or walkthrough.

Principal #2 spoke of several instances when teachers did not accept truthful feedback and took it

personally; consequently, they felt that they were treated unfairly. The principal revealed the toll these incidents took on his professional relationship with the teachers. Despite those challenges, he still contended that the process does not work if immediate, truthful feedback is withheld and not provided with intentionality.

Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the findings from eight secondary principals who self-identify as instructional leaders and transformational leaders. These principals serve in high at-risk schools in the state of Louisiana and have consistently shown academic improvement over a course of at least two academic school years, according to the LDoE. There were four research questions derived from the theory of transformational leadership that helped me discover the themes and strategies in the principals' responses. The themes and findings derived from Research Question 1 included educational programs consistent with shared goals, differentiated instruction, coaching cycles for teachers, and peer mentoring for teachers. The themes and findings derived from Research Question 2 yielded information about PLCs, common planning time, and grouping teachers during professional development activities. The themes and findings derived from Research Question 3 were school and district-wide professional development, walkthroughs, and peer mentoring for teachers. These were all helpful to describe the coaching strategies that are implemented to communicate with teachers to encourage change after receiving negative feedback. The themes and findings derived from Research Question 4 were a commitment to establishing a culture of respect for teachers and a commitment to honesty. Chapter 5 contains a summary of the study, an interpretation and discussion of the findings, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative instrumental case study was to describe best-practice instructional coaching feedback strategies as perceived by effective principals of high at-risk schools in Louisiana. Eight principals of several high at-risk secondary schools were interviewed to discuss the strategies that they implement in their respective schools. These principals have been successful instructional leaders as they transform the learning environment for their at-risk students. According to Shernoff et al. (2019), coaching is an opportunity for a school leader to share strategies from their instructional toolbox. Stein (2016) argued that successful schools should be staffed with strong leaders who can make quality decisions.

This chapter contains a summary of the study and includes an overview of the problem, the purpose statement and research questions, the study design, a summary of the findings, and an interpretation and discussion of the findings. The final section encompasses the implications for practice, and recommendations for future research followed by the conclusion.

Summary of the Study

A tremendous challenge facing school leaders is the ability to maintain continuous school improvement (C. Preston et al., 2017). Federal mandates, including RT3, CCSS, and the ESSA, have continued to pressure school principals to perform at optimum levels. Much information has been written on school leadership and principal action that leads to those required changes (Donaldson & Mavrogordato, 2018; C. Preston et al., 2017; Sowell, 2017). However, little information had been found to demonstrate the distinctive actions, behaviors, and practices that can be utilized by principals who lead high at-risk schools as compared to those schools that are not high at-risk schools.

This study was framed around the transformational leadership theory by principals who utilize instructional leadership methods in their prospective schools. The instructional leadership model, first introduced in the 1980s, defined the principal as the instructional leader who concentrates on teacher learning as the teacher assists with student learning (Hallinger, 2003). Transformational leadership supports the idea that principals engage the faculty and staff to produce a high-quality output that benefits the students, and it is characterized by four components: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Burns, 1978; Marks & Printy, 2003; Northouse, 2016). Principals who combine transformational and instructional leadership have shown improved student academic achievement and school improvement (Robinson, et al., 2008; Ross & Cozzens, 2016).

Overview of the Problem

Teachers must be given feedback that is accurate, clear, and unbiased (Thurlings et al., 2013; Yusuf et al., 2017). This feedback must support improving the learning process and provide authentic comments (Hudson, 2016; Yusuf et al., 2017). Teachers need helpful, candid feedback to achieve better learning outcomes (Hudson, 2016; Thurlings et al., 2013). Inevitably, most teachers understand the need for quality feedback to reflect and refine their teaching practices (Leiva et al., 2016; Tanner et al., 2017).

As teachers put effort into improving their teaching skills, they need specific direction and guidance revealed from constructive feedback (Leiva et al., 2016; Lia, 2016). Hence, researchers recognize the need for principals to be instructional coaches for their teachers (Carr et al., 2017; Donaldson & Mavrogordato, 2018; Ellington et al., 2017; Reddy et al., 2019; Sowell, 2017). Assuredly, principals must carefully plan the methods and tools needed to

facilitate the coaching process that delivers feedback to engage teachers and demonstrate a need to change teaching practices to improve student achievement (Carr et al., 2017; Reddy et al., 2019; Tanner et al., 2017).

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative instrumental case study was to describe best-practice instructional coaching feedback strategies as perceived by effective principals of high at-risk schools in Louisiana. The following research questions framed this qualitative study:

RQ1. Intellectual Stimulation: Describe the instructional coaching feedback strategies that are implemented to focus on learning.

RQ2. Inspirational Motivation: Describe the instructional coaching feedback strategies that are implemented to encourage collaboration.

RQ3. Individualized Consideration: Describe the coaching strategies that are implemented to communicate with teachers to encourage change when feedback is negative.

RQ4. Idealized Influence: Describe the coaching strategies implemented to provide honest, specific feedback despite challenges.

Review of the Study Design

I conducted an instrumental case study which focused on a specific topic using several different cases to illustrate that single topic. Stake (1995) hypothesized that when the purpose of a case study goes beyond the case, it is then referred to as an instrumental study. An instrumental case stems from open-ended interview questions that reveal personal values (Yin & Davis, 2007). In this study, I used a semistructured interview to ask questions of principals who have been successful at using coaching feedback strategies in at-risk schools. Yin (2015) indicated that semistructured interview questions permit new revelations to be brought forth because of

participant responses. Patton (2015) advised that the sampling of an instrumental case study must be purposely identified. The participants in my study were identified by the snowball or chain sampling strategy from the suggestions of other contributors (Leavy, 2017).

In this study, eight principals of high at-risk high schools in Louisiana met the requirements to participate because they were the following:

- A principal of a public high school in Louisiana;

- A principal of an active Title I school;

- A principal of a school that earned A's and/or B's over the last two years of generated data from the Louisiana Education Department;

- Currently a principal of that school; and

- A principal who identifies as an instructional leader and a transformational leader.

The anticipated maximum number of participants in the sample was 10 principals who worked at their respective schools a minimum of two years. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, several hurricanes taking place during the school year, and changes to school administration, I was only able to recruit eight principals to participate based on the required criteria and their extremely busy schedules.

Summary of Findings

The following is a summary of the findings in relation to each of the four research questions. Research Question 1 explored intellectual stimulation and described the instructional coaching feedback strategies that are implemented to focus on learning. The findings yielded the following themes:

- Educational programs consistent with shared goals

- Differentiated instruction

- ▪ Coaching cycles for teachers

- ▪ Peer mentoring for teachers

Research Question 2 explored inspirational motivation and described the instructional coaching feedback strategies that are implemented to encourage collaboration. The findings yielded the following themes:

- ▪ professional learning communities (PLCs)

- ▪ Common planning time

- ▪ Grouping teachers for professional development (PD) activities

Research Question 3 explored individualized consideration and described the coaching strategies that are implemented to communicate with teachers to encourage change after receiving negative feedback. The findings yielded the following themes:

- ▪ Mandatory school and district-wide PD

- ▪ Walkthroughs

- ▪ Peer mentoring for teachers

Research Question 4 explored idealized influence and described the coaching strategies implemented to provide honest, specific feedback despite challenges. The findings yielded the following themes:

- ▪ Commitment to establishing a culture of respect for teachers

- ▪ Commitment to honesty

Conclusions, Interpretation, and Discussion of the Findings

This qualitative instrumental case study described best practice instructional coaching feedback strategies as perceived by effective principals of high at-risk schools in Louisiana. This study was framed around the transformational leadership theory by principals who utilize

instructional leadership methods in their respective schools. The transformational leader uses

various methods to connect with others and produce a high level of inspiration to perform their

duties more efficiently (Northouse, 2016). The National Association of Elementary School

Principals (2001) defined instructional leadership as the ability to direct learning communities,

where staff members meet regularly to collaborate on and resolve school issues, evaluate their

job performance, and take responsibility for what students learn. Transformational leaders are

visionary leaders who see the needs of their organization and strive to change the environment

conducive to those needs (Lowder, 2009). The overall conclusion of this study suggests that the

principals are committed to the principles of transformational leadership and have made a

commitment to lifelong learning to benefit teacher practices, instructional leader practices, and

ultimately student practices. Furthermore, as transformational leaders, the principals have

established a teacher-oriented culture and a risk-free environment where trust and relationships

are evident in the programs and activities that occur daily on the campuses of each of the

principals.

Intentionality is an important component of being a transformational leader and the

principals participating in this study lead by example. Every principal in this study self-identified

as a transformational leader and had been effective in helping their schools to consistently

improve the academic environment. Discussion and interpretation are discussed by research

questions.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 explored intellectual stimulation and described the instructional

coaching feedback strategies that are implemented to focus on learning. Intellectual stimulation

refers to the amount of academic knowledge that the leader shares with the staff and encourages

them to think and explore new ideas based on best practices (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2016; Seltzer & Bass, 1990). The research findings from this question suggest the conclusion that effective principals are consistently focused on the goals, vision, and mission of the school as they plan strategies to focus on learning. The faculty and staff were familiar with the objectives of the school and worked along with the principal to facilitate consistent success. Leithwood et al. (2010) noted that transformational leaders involve staff members in helping to build a shared vision, which is critical to strengthening staff enthusiasm and commitment. As evidenced by the consistently high school performance scores, the instructional staff stayed focused and invigorated to advance the goals and mission of their schools.

When teachers struggled with the mission, vision, and goals, the self-identified transformational leaders in this study provided the support that was needed to ensure teacher success. It became evident to me by their responses that the principals had built a climate of understanding and mutual respect with the teachers and staff members regarding the mission of the school and the focus on learning. According to Bass and Riggio (2006), the intellectual stimulation principle of transformational leadership encourages transformational leaders to allow their staff to implement the ideas that guide them toward the vision. Effective school administrators stimulate, nurture, and support teacher growth (Bayler, 2012). Therefore, a conclusion based on the findings suggests that principals implement intellectual stimulation by being intentional in providing appropriate strategies and giving the necessary feedback to focus on lifelong learning by the faculty and staff.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 explored inspirational motivation and described the instructional coaching feedback strategies that are implemented to encourage collaboration. The research

findings from this question suggest that effective principals are focused on promoting opportunities for collaboration. As revealed in the findings, the principals established PLCs to give teachers an opportunity to engage in academic conversations to supplement instructional ideas and practices. Professional development and common planning times also aided in encouraging and supporting teacher collaboration. Feeney (2007) argued that principals can promote peer-learning opportunities by developing teacher teams with clear goals, common planning time, and occasions for peer observations and feedback. In conjunction with the findings of inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation, Wiggins (2012) reinforced the perception that feedback is most helpful when it is purposeful, clear, measurable, and individualized to the teacher, as well as being on time, frequent, and consistent.

Anderson and Sun (2017) acknowledged the notion that the school leaders' responsibility is to empower teachers to collaborate in self-managing teams to develop their instruction with a growth mindset. Anderson and Sun also indicated that leadership styles have five main characteristics: having mutual trust, fostering the leadership abilities of others, goal setting, visualizing, and the capability of supporting the professional development of teachers. When teachers can collaborate with each other, it enables them to improve instructional practices in the classroom and improve student learning (Coggshall et al., 2012). Several researchers confirmed that the best teacher knowledge and implementation happens by professional development collaborations with other teachers, reviewing student data, practicing self-reflection, and team teaching in genuine classroom settings (Coggshall et al., 2012; Darling-Hammond, 2012; DuFour & Eaker, 2008; DuFour & Marzano, 2009; Gilles et al., 2010). Consistent with transformational leadership, a suggested conclusion to implement inspirational motivation

indicates that principals have the responsibility to provide opportunity for strategies that encourage collaboration.

Research Question 3

Research Question 3 explored individualized consideration and described the coaching strategies that are implemented to communicate with teachers to encourage change after receiving negative feedback. The research findings from this question suggest that principals use several strategies to communicate with teachers to change their practices after receiving negative feedback. Mandatory school and district professional development offers opportunity for the implementation of different practices that have proven successful. According to Donaldson (2016), the key in quality feedback and coaching is for teachers to have a clear understanding of the feedback given and suggestions made. This is a critical component, because meaningful feedback challenges, supports, and motivates teachers.

The research findings also endorse the idea that principals should concentrate on one or two key elements of performance to ensure the feedback provided is meaningful to the teacher (Wiggins, 2012). The study responses revealed that focusing on too many standards would be counterproductive to teacher focus and success. As some principals indicated, they looked for certain components during the walkthroughs rather than focusing intently on all components of the lesson. One of the principals revealed that his teachers were left with a reflection question to answer after receiving his feedback. The teacher had the opportunity to focus on one issue and respond without being overwhelmed by having to process too much information. In conclusion, the findings of this research question indicated that principals are committed to communicating with teachers about their professional growth to implement individualized consideration.

Research Question 4

Research Question 4 explored idealized influence and described the coaching strategies implemented to provide honest, specific feedback despite challenges. The research findings from this question suggest that principals used effective strategies to provide honest, specific feedback despite challenges. Goleman (2014) noted that great leaders take on the greatest challenges and tackle the biggest problems. During the interviews, I discovered the truth of that statement when the principals were challenged by this line of questioning. Honest feedback is not always well received. When this happens and the teacher becomes upset, the transformational leader must maintain a moral compass and continue to support the teacher despite the uncomfortable challenges. Bass and Riggio (2006) and Lowder (2009) maintain that this type of leader seeks to make a positive influence by exhibiting high standards, keeping a focus on followers' needs, and keeping a positive demeanor.

Based on the findings in this study, it is important for leaders to commit to honesty and establish a culture of respect for teachers. Leaders must be change agents who have competence, courage, clarity, and character (Stanley, 2003). According to Bass and Riggio (2006) and Lowder (2009), the transformational leader can implement and preserve conditions that are beneficial to the needs of the faculty, staff, and students while addressing any challenges that may arise. These leaders are highly esteemed, trusted, and appreciated (Bass & Riggio, 2006). The transformational leader is the one who connects with others and builds a relationship that raises the level of enthusiasm and honesty in both the leader and the follower (Northouse, 2016). In conclusion, the findings of this research question suggest that principals who are committed to building trusting relationships by maintaining honest communications can do so despite delivering challenging feedback.

Implications for Practice

The findings of this study can be used by high school principals of high at-risk schools to identify the coaching feedback strategies to facilitate changes in the learning environment. Also, the implications of this study could help administrators and instructional coaches develop effective strategies to address staff and student needs. Based on the findings of this study, I suggest the following practices to implement best practice instructional coaching feedback strategies as communicated by effective principals of high at-risk schools:

- The principal must have a vision for the school and communicate that vision. An effective instructional leader establishes the role of an instructional coach by creating a shared vision, providing opportunities for teachers to learn from one another, and involving teachers in instructional decision making (Blase & Blase, 1999; DuFour & Eaker, 2008; DuFour & Marzano, 2009; Marzano et al., 2005).

- The principal must be intentional about including faculty and staff in the vision. Transformational leaders involve staff members in helping to build a shared vision (Leithwood et al., 2010).

- The principal must be supportive of faculty and staff in their professional growth. Leaders create an atmosphere that supports the professional growth of the staff (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Also, a positive climate helps to protect instructional time, promotes professional development, and provides incentives for teacher and student learning (Hallinger, 2003).

- The principal must lead by example. Instructional leaders are expected to provide examples of effective classroom practices and make accurate judgments to provide

useful feedback to teachers for effective school improvement (McKenna & Walpole, 2008; Moss & Brookhart, 2015).

- The principal must review the data and let the data drive the decisions. Improving teaching and learning requires principals to engage teachers in conversations about the quality of instruction observed in the classroom (Moss & Brookhart, 2015).

- The principal must conduct honest evaluations of the faculty and staff to put the right people in the right place. School leader influences start with the quality of feedback provided in general conversations, classroom walkthroughs, and formal observations (Tuytens & Devos, 2017).

- The principal must always keep the lines of communication open with the faculty and staff. Teachers want to be engaged in collegial conversations about the value that constructive feedback will bring to the entire school community (Tanner et al., 2017).

- The principal must encourage parent and stakeholder participation. High-poverty schools can succeed with high expectations and the support of the whole school. The principal is responsible for building cordial relationships (Brown & Green, 2014).

- The principal must build a culture of honesty and respect. Transformational leaders are highly trusted to do the right thing (Balyer, 2012; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2016). Leaders should have high standards of honest and fair practices that others want to imitate (Northouse, 2016).

- The principal must provide opportunities for collaboration and common teacher planning times. Through collaboration with classroom teachers, school leaders can focus on the "why" and "how" facets of learning (Templeton et al., 2016). Also, when

teachers can collaborate with each other, it enables them to improve instructional practices in the classroom and improve student learning (Coggshall et al., 2012).

- The principal must establish peer-mentoring programs. The role of an instructional coach is to work collaboratively with individual teachers, such as meeting frequently to review data, model, or share best-practice instructional methods (McKenna & Walpole, 2008).

Recommendations for Future Research

The purpose of this qualitative instrumental case study was to describe best-practice instructional coaching feedback strategies as perceived by effective principals of high at-risk schools in Louisiana. The findings were limited to a few high school principals located in seven school districts. Future research recommendations include the following:

- Widen the study to include elementary and middle school principals in various states.

- Review data from multiple schools where principals emphasize their role as instructional coaches.

- Interview teachers for their suggestions for best practice instructional coaching strategies.

- Compare coaching strategies of principals who self-identify with various leadership styles.

- Compare coaching strategies of principals in a variety of demographic settings—suburban schools, urban schools, rural schools.

- Replicate the study with female principals.

Closing Remarks

School transformation is facilitated by the opinions and the activities of the school leader, and administrator support of an endeavor practically guarantees its success (Tanner et al., 2017). School leaders are making positive changes toward becoming more explicit instructional leaders; however, it takes time to make the adjustments needed to provide authentic formative feedback (Van Soelen, 2013). Research supports the assumption that low-achieving schools can be transformed into high-achieving schools through effective leadership practices (Brown & Green, 2014).

This study explored eight high school principals in Louisiana who self-identified as instructional leaders as well as transformational leaders. Each of these principals had worked on their school campuses as the administrator for at least two years, had active Title I campuses, and had earned A's and/or B's the last two years of generated data from the LDoE. This study was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic and a busy hurricane season in Louisiana, which prevented the participation of many principals who wanted to contribute. I was thrilled to have the opportunity to communicate with each principal. They gladly shared their lived experiences as principals of high at-risk schools. Most of these administrators work with students who are from the most poverty-stricken areas of their cities, while continuing to be consistently successful in raising academic achievement and standards. As a result of this study, I have a better understanding of some of the perceived coaching feedback strategies needed to bring about success in high at-risk schools. I propose to continue studying this topic and transformational leadership. I intend to share this knowledge at conferences with school leaders and other principals of high at-risk schools who have not been as successful.

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Appendix A: Informed Consent Form

> **Introduction:** **Best Practices for Instructional Coaching Feedback Strategies as Perceived by Effective Principals of High At-Risk Schools**

You may be able to take part in a research study. This form provides important information about that study, including the risks and benefits to you as a potential participant. Please read this form carefully and ask the researcher any questions that you may have about the study. You can ask about research activities and any risks or benefits you may experience. You may also wish to discuss your participation with other people, such as your family doctor or a family member.

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or stop your participation at any time and for any reason without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

PURPOSE AND DESCRIPTION: The purpose of this qualitative instrumental case study will be to describe best practice instructional coaching feedback strategies as perceived by effective principals of high at-risk schools in Louisiana. The investigator is seeking to interview secondary public-school principals of successful high at-risk schools who are willing to share their instructional strategies and their experiences in their role as the school's instructional leader.

If selected for participation, you will be asked to attend one visit with the study staff over the course of a month. Each visit is expected to take less than one hour. During the course of these visits, you will be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview. A follow-up conversation may take place if needed for clarification purposes.

In efforts to capture the most accurate information discussed in the interviews, the investigator will use an audio-recorder. Audio-recorded interviews protect the quality of the data, which allows the investigator the opportunity to analyze, compare, and explore themes that may have otherwise been missed in a semi-structured environment.

RISKS & BENEFITS: There are minimal risks to taking part in this research study. Though efforts have been taken to guard against it, a breach of confidentiality could occur. Another risk could involve difficulty in answering the interview questions. There are potential benefits to participating in this study. Such benefits may include the value of your perspective in helping high at-risk schools to be more successful by increasing student and teacher achievement. The researchers cannot guarantee that you will experience any personal benefits from participating in this study other than a chance to win a $20 gift card to Starbucks.

ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES: Due to COVID-19 restrictions, face-to-face interviews may not be an option. However, there may be other options available to complete the interview process, which include phone calls, Skype, Google Dual, or online conferencing via Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or another alternative.

PRIVACY & CONFIDENTIALITY: Any information you provide will be confidential to the extent allowable by law. Some identifiable data may have to be shared with individuals outside of the study team, such as members of the ACU Institutional Review Board. Otherwise, your confidentiality will be protected by the regulations and ethical guidelines for the protection of Human Research participants. Every effort will be made to preserve your confidentiality by assigning pseudonyms or numbers to all research notes, documents, and audio-recordings; and keeping notes, interview transcriptions, audio-recording, and any other identifying information on a password protected computer and/or in a locked filing cabinet in the office of the researcher.

CONTACTS: If you have questions about the research study, the lead researcher is Angela Steward. Contact information (phone or email): xxxxxxxxxxx, or xxxxxxxxxxx. If you are unable to reach the lead researcher or wish to speak to someone other than the lead researcher, you may contact Dr. Sandra Harris, ACU Faculty Advisor, xxxxxxxxxx. If you have concerns about this study, believe you may have been injured because of this study, or have general questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact ACU's Chair of the Institutional Review Board and Executive Director of Research, Megan Roth, Ph.D. Dr. Roth may be reached at: (xxxxxxxxxxxxxx xxxxxxxxxxxxx xxxx Hardin Administration Bldg., xxxxxxxxxxxxx
Abilene, TX 79699

Additional Information

Your participation may be ended early by the researchers for certain reasons. For example, we may end your participation if you no longer meet study requirements, the researchers believe it is no longer in your best interest to continue participating, you do not follow the instructions provided by the researchers, or the study is ended. You will be contacted by the researchers and given further instructions in the event that you are removed from the study. Your participation is greatly appreciated. If you complete the study, you will be eligible to enter a drawing for a $20 gift card from Starbucks. Gift card will be mailed to winner one week after the study closes.

Consent Signature Section

Please sign this form if you voluntarily agree to participate in this study. Sign only after you have read all of the information provided and your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. You should receive a copy of this signed consent form. You do not waive any legal rights by signing this form.

_____   _____   _____
Printed Name of Participant   Signature of Participant   Date

_____   _____   _____
Printed Name of Person Obtaining   Signature of Person Obtaining   Date
Consent   Consent

Appendix B: Guided Interview Protocol

Guided Interview Protocol

Date:

Time:

Place:

Interviewer: Angela Steward

Interviewee:

Greetings, thank you for volunteering to participate in this research study. Before we begin, I want to tell you the purpose of my study. Buck et al (2016) mentioned that an instrumental case study provides insight into a topic. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative instrumental case study will be to describe best practice instructional coaching feedback strategies as perceived by effective principals of high at-risk schools. This qualitative instrumental case study will focus on effective principals defined as being those whose schools have shown consistent academic improvement over a course of at least two academic school years according to the Louisiana Department of Education. The participants shall be effective principals of high at-risk schools in Louisiana to be interviewed to describe their instructional coaching feedback strategies implemented in their schools.

I ask that you please speak openly and honestly. Please feel free to ask me any questions you have as we go. If you forget something and want to go back and add to your answers, that is perfectly acceptable. You may skip a question or end this interview if you wish to do so at any time.

I will collect data from these interview questions from several participants and analyze them to identify emerging themes. You have been given and will be asked to sign the informed consent

that details the research process. As a research participant, I will assign you a unique identifier. No names or personal information will be identified. This interview will take up to one hour. For your complete participation, you will be entered into a drawing with other research participants to win a $20 Starbucks gift card. Once again, thank you for your participation. If you agree, the interview will be electronically recorded using an audio-recorder, and the researcher will also take handwritten notes as well. In the event this meeting is conducted online, the interview will be recorded using the record feature available through Zoom or Microsoft Teams, etc.

Interview Questions

RQ1. **Intellectual Stimulation: Describe the instructional coaching feedback strategies that are implemented to focus on learning.**

a. What are the goals, mission, and vision of your school? How are these implemented in your school's focus on learning?

b. What do you see as the biggest challenges to meeting the academic needs of your school? What strategies have you implemented to help meet those needs?

c. What do you as the principal do to bring the school's goals, mission, and vision to life for teachers who are struggling?

d. Were there any instructional coaching feedback strategies implemented to focus on learning that did not work? Why not? Please explain your response.

RQ2. Inspirational Motivation: Describe the instructional coaching feedback strategies that are implemented to encourage collaboration.

a. What initiatives do you have in place to motivate teachers to work together to for the common good as opposed to competing with each other?

b. What do you do to recognize teachers for quality classroom instruction? How do you provide assistance for struggling teachers?

c. Describe ways that you encourage peer collaborations at your school. Please elaborate on the process.

d. When thinking about the instructional feedback strategies that are implemented to encourage collaboration, what does not work? Please clarify your perceptions.

RQ3. Individualized Consideration: Describe the coaching strategies that are implemented to communicate with teachers to encourage change when feedback is negative.

a. What do you provide for professional development? When does professional development occur?

b. How is professional development attendance encouraged?

c. Describe the manner in which professional development concepts are redelivered and utilized at your school.

d. Were there any strategies that did not work when attempting to communicate with teachers? Why do you think the strategies did not work? Please explain.

RQ4. Idealized Influence: Describe the coaching strategies implemented to provide honest, specific feedback despite challenges.

a. What strategies are the most difficult for you to implement? Why?

b. In what way are teacher lesson plans and tests reviewed and critiqued to offer feedback?

c. In what way do walkthroughs encourage and provide honest, specific feedback?

d. Throughout this process, what did not work? Please elaborate.

Appendix C: IRB Approval

ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
Educating Students for Christian Service and Leadership Throughout the World

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
320 Hardin Administration Building, ACU Box 29103, Abilene, Texas 79699-9103
325-674-2885

August 28, 2020

Angie Steward
Department of Graduate and Professional Studies
Abilene Christian University

Dear Angie,

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I am pleased to inform you that your project titled "Best Practices for Instructional Coaching Feedback Strategies as Perceived by Effective Principals of High At-Risk Schools",

(IRB# 20-131   )is exempt from review under Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects.

If at any time the details of this project change, please resubmit to the IRB so the committee can determine whether or not the exempt status is still applicable.

I wish you well with your work.

Sincerely,

Megan Roth

Megan Roth, Ph.D.
Director of Research and Sponsored Programs

Appendix D: Recruitment Email

Hello! My name is Angela Steward, and I am conducting research for my doctoral degree at ACU. I am studying the instructional coaching feedback strategies of effective principals in high poverty public high schools in Louisiana. I would like to invite you to participate in my research. In order to be included in this study, you must meet the following criteria:

- Be a principal of a public high school in Louisiana
- Be a principal of an active Title I school
- Be principal of a school that earned A's and/or B's over the last 2 years of generated data from the Louisiana Education Department
- Must currently be principal of that school
- Be a principal who identifies as an instructional leader

You cannot participate if:

- You have been principal for less than 2 years
- You have been principal of your current school for less than 2 years

If you participate in this research, you will be asked to:

- Provide answers to a few questions, in which you will be asked about your age, gender, ethnicity, job history, number of years as a principal, and number of years at current school.
- Complete a one-hour interview with me, through a video conference. We will choose a time that is convenient for you.

If you have questions for me, would like to participate, or know someone else who you think qualifies and would like to participate, please email me at: xxxxxxxxxxxx. You can also call me at xxx-xxx-xxxx.