A Case Study of Two Rural Secondary Schools in New Mexico:

Perspectives on Leadership

by

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ABSTRACT

The present study was designed to examine factors that led to the academic success of two rural secondary schools in New Mexico. The primary focus was on the characteristics and behaviors of leaders in two high-achieving rural schools and how these factors might have contributed to achievement of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in school year 2009-10. The secondary focus of the study concentrated on the characteristics of the rural environment of the schools and what role, if any, school location might have contributed to AYP.

Of the approximately 820 public schools in New Mexico, 42 (30%) of secondary schools designated as “rural” achieved AYP in 2009-10. 2 of the 42 secondary schools, were selected for the study. Tara High School and Twelve Oaks Middle School, located in separate New Mexico villages, were identified as achieving the AYP in the 2009-10 school year through demographic and statistical data collected primarily from the New Mexico Public Education Department. The location of the two rural secondary schools along with the willingness of their principals to participate met the research criteria for being a descriptive case study to define any causal relationships between leadership practices and rural settings that resulted in achieving the AYP for student achievement.

The researcher conducted interviews regarding leadership with two rural school principals, twelve secondary teachers, and seven parents. There was no direct contact with students in the study. Additionally, the researcher conducted
on-site observations of both schools and conducted an on-line leadership survey for principals of the two rural schools and an additional 8 principals for data purposes only. Among the 3 data sets, the researcher found that there was complete unanimity as to the common characteristics of high-achieving schools located in rural communities influencing student achievement: culture, motivation, instructional leadership, empowerment, school leadership, trust, and community involvement. The twelve teachers and seven parents were unanimous that the two principals maintained a positive demeanor, visibly demonstrated care, supported and openly dialogued with the teachers to make their own classroom decisions, maintained an open-door policy, and modeled professional behavior.
T’áá altsohní bíníghago naanitséskees, Shiyázhí.

A phrase spoken by the greatest man on earth—my father.

This book is dedicated to my parents, James and Irene;

My husband Brian and our babies: Nicolle, Courtney, Darius, and Rainey.
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Ahéhee’ Shitaa’ Diyin dóó Shimá Nohasdzáán. Making an offering of ground white corn and prayer to the Holy Ones at dawn is what makes everything possible.

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Thank you to my husband Brian and our children Nicolle, Courtney, Darius, and Rainey. I am extremely proud of all you. Nikki, you are almost there; stay committed and persist to accomplish your goals. Courtney, keep up the excellent work with school and your hard work will reward you as you move into higher education. Son, you are becoming a fine, handsome young man with such intelligence. Baby Rainey, you are such a beautiful and smart child. Always keep your focus on nurturing and expanding your knowledge as you are all so full of potential and talents that will take you places. Always set the bar high and aim to transcend all obstacles no matter what. You have my support and prayers—always. I thank you for the wonderful children that you are.

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CHAPTER 1

PROPOSAL OF STUDY

Leadership that provides a response to accountability is paramount. In the past, school leadership was perceived as authority that functioned apart from the context and environment in which administrators worked. Due to changes in society and schools, leadership is now widely “considered to be vital to the successful functioning of many aspects of a school” (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005, p. 5). Today’s school leaders, including principals, must have qualities that foster an academic environment. “It is the principal’s leadership that sets the tone of the school, the climate for teaching, the level of professionalism and morale of teachers, and the degree of concern for what students may or may not become” (p. 5).

In the approximately 132,656 K-12 schools in the United States (Center for Education Reform, 2009), leadership systems and many individual leaders tend to rely heavily on mandates, compliance, and bureaucracy. Consequently, many leaders have become fragmented in their approach to their jobs and “have lost their intrinsic sense of connection to a larger whole” (Senge, 1990, p. 3). Leadership has become a disconnected “blob” (Marzano & Waters, 2009, p. 1) that negatively affects the functioning of a learning organization. Because the emphasis traditionally has been on the authoritarian role of the principal, the principal’s function was left in obscurity.

In education today, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act has forced a consideration of different perspectives on the role and function of the principal.
According to findings by Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005), “Principal leadership has a correlation of .25 with average student achievement in a school.” Although principals do not work directly with students as teachers do, “the actions of the principal are an important part of the mix of activities that in the aggregate have a powerful causal effect on student achievement” (Marzano & Waters, 2009, p. 2).

The present study was designed to examine factors that led to success, specifically defined, in two schools, with a focus on the leadership qualities of the respective principals and selected characteristics of the respective rural communities. Tara High School and Twelve Oaks Middle School, secondary schools located in separate villages in New Mexico, served as the two cases in the present study. In undertaking this study, the researcher sought not only to contribute to the literature on effective leadership, but also to attain knowledge that would contribute to her aspirations to become an effective leader of a high-achieving school or schools.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this research was to develop a descriptive case study of two secondary school principals who appeared, based on the success of their schools, to have demonstrated effective leadership. The study also focused on factors related to the rural environment surrounding the schools, possibly in combination with the characteristics and practices of the principals themselves. The research sought to identify the best practices and to define the characteristics of principals in high-achieving schools. An attempt was made to determine
leadership philosophies and traits that were associated with a pattern of success and increases in achievement as reflected in scores on the New Mexico Standards-Based Assessment (NMSBA).

**Research Questions**

Three questions that guided this study were as follows:

1. Are there common characteristics of school climate in high-achieving rural schools?
   
   Sub-question 1: Does rural location positively affect school climate and achievement?

2. What are the characteristics of principals in high-achieving rural schools?

3. Are there common leadership practices of principals in high-achieving rural schools?
   
   Sub-question 1: What are teachers’ opinions about principal leadership?
   
   Sub-question 2: What are parents’ opinions about principal leadership?

**Significance of the Study**

Effective leadership is an important but elusive topic that has been and continues to be studied extensively. According to Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005), “The concept of leadership dates back to antiquity.” They continue, citing Bass (1981), that “the study of leadership is an ancient art. Discussions of leadership appear in the works of Plato, Daesar, and Plutarch” (p. 4). Today there are many theories about leadership. However, we lack clear understanding about all aspects of leadership that result in, or at least are associated with, student
achievement. This lack of clarity about effective leadership on the part of educational researchers and practitioners renders it an essential topic for continuing study.

It is important to define the word *leadership* for the purposes of the present study: “Leadership is the process of persuasion or example by which an individual (or leadership team) induces a large group to pursue objectives held by the leader or shared by the leader and his or her followers” (Gardner, 1990b, p. 17). A mere definition does not provide a precise embodiment of what effective leadership means; however, one can define specific leadership behaviors that are consistent in high-achieving schools. These behaviors must be steeped in a “floor of beliefs, opinions, values, and attitudes that provides a foundation for practice” (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007, p. 82). A principal who possesses strong leadership behaviors and continually monitors progress will most likely have a successful school.

In addition to defining leadership behaviors, type and style of leadership are equally important elements. Successful leaders have the capacity to manage their type and style of leadership. “Typically, the best, most effective leaders act according to distinct approaches to leadership and skillfully switch between the various styles depending on the situation” (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2004, p. 53). Sergiovanni (1992) referred to successful leadership styles as “a form of stewardship” (p. 76) and Evans (1996) called it “Savvy” (p. 141). Essentially, type and style involve possessing a variety of behaviors and methods of leadership. Savvy becomes evident when a leader can skillfully and consistently
maneuver between types and styles of leadership when responding to a variety of circumstances. “Integrity is a fundamental consistency between one’s values, goals, and actions. At the simplest level it means standing for something, having a significant commitment and exemplifying this commitment in your behavior” (Evans, 1996, p. 137). A principal who is effective through style and leadership type adeptly guides a learning organization to continually improve achievement among all learners.

**Definition of Terms**

*Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)*: “NCLB requires each state to develop its own accountability system consisting of test scores, graduation rates, attendance rates, and other indicators. Individual schools must meet the state’s AYP goals by raising levels of achievement for specific subgroups of students such as minorities, special education, and those from low-income families, to a state-determined level. Every student must reach proficiency levels, as determined by the state in which they live, by the 2013-14 school year” (Education Portal, 2007, paragraph 4).

*High achieving schools*: schools that achieved adequate yearly progress (AYP) during the 2009-10 school year.

*Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC)*: leadership standards used to train novice school leaders and assess practicing leaders.

*New Mexico Administrative Code (NMAC)*: the official compilation of current rules as defined by state agencies in New Mexico (New Mexico Administrative Code [NMAC], 2010).
New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED): the state agency in Santa Fe, New Mexico that oversees public schools in the state.

New Mexico Standards Base Assessment (NMSBA): used to assess all state-funded public elementary and secondary school students in writing, reading, math, and science standards.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB): the educational reform bill for all elementary and secondary public schools in the United States enacted in 2001 by President George W. Bush. One of the main initiatives of NCLB is to narrow the achievement gap of economically disadvantaged and minority students.

Personal mastery: “the discipline of continually clarifying and deepening personal vision, of focused energies, of developing patience, and of seeing reality objectively” (Fullan, 2007, p. 7).

Rural school: New Mexico schools are designated as rural schools based on the New Mexico Administrative Code (NMAC; see definition above). NMAC Title 6 addresses “primary and secondary education and defines general provisions and definitions applicable to rural education” (NMAC 6.34. 2. 6). NMAC 6.34.2.7 defines rural schools in New Mexico (see definition in Chapter 3).

Systems thinking: a conceptual framework, body of knowledge, and tools developed over the past 50 years to help understand how things influence one another within a whole.

Delimitations

This study was delimited in the following ways:
1. Only two schools were examined, both high-achieving rural secondary schools in the state of New Mexico.

2. Only the two principals of the respective schools examined were studied. The individuals were selected from a pool limited to principals whose schools had achieved AYP in the 2009-10 school year and who had been employed within that same school district for at least one year. The principals were selected without regard for age, years of experience, teaching experience, or other demographic factors, although these factors were considered in the findings.

3. Only the leadership styles and behaviors of the two principals were studied and taken into account in relation to the effects, if any, on their respective schools’ achievement of AYP.

4. Only two of the original four high-achieving rural schools that agreed to participate were selected based on specific criteria.

5. Only teachers and parents who provided consent to participate were included as participants in the study.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The study of leadership rivals in age the emergence of civilization, which shaped its leaders as much as it was shaped by them. From its infancy, the study of history has been the study of leaders—what they did and why they did it. —Bass, 1990, p. 3

Leadership is not a new topic of scholarly inquiry. “Leadership, and the study of this phenomenon, has roots in the beginning of civilization. Our work, work environment, worker motivations, leaders, managers, leadership style, and a myriad of other work-related variables have been studied for almost two centuries” (Stone & Patterson, 2005, p. 1). Nevertheless, leadership is coming under increasing scrutiny, stimulated in part by federal legislation approved in 2001 that continues to have major effects on public education in the United States.

After the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001, a new set of accountability and achievement demands were established in the areas of math and reading. NCLB affected many areas of education: student attendance, proficiency of all groups, graduation rates, teacher quality, school and district budgets, parent/student choice in selecting schools, and supplemental education services. “The 1,200 page law was complicated, but the goal was simple: reform public elementary and secondary schools to make sure no child is left behind or stuck in a failing school system. By 2014, every child in a U.S. public school is expected to be proficient in both reading and math” (Education Portal, 2007, paragraph 5). As a result, job descriptions for school principals everywhere, inner
city to rural areas, changed radically to include a multi-faceted list of responsibilities coupled with stipulations for efficacy.

In New Mexico rural schools, the list of today’s leadership responsibilities are further complicated by matters of “economics, . . . school size, and community identity” (Bard, Gardener, & Wieland, 2007, paragraph 1). The reality of rural schools is one of possible reorganization due to decreasing student enrollments and finances. “Faced with declining enrollments and financial cutbacks, many rural schools and communities continue to deal with challenges associated with possible school reorganizations and consolidations” (Bard et al., 2007, paragraph 1).

For the present study the researcher examined literature related to the many aspects of leadership, specifically focusing on the following main ideas: foundations of leadership, theories of leadership, ethical leadership, culture and leadership, stakeholder diversity, leadership today, and tomorrow’s leaders.

**Foundations of Leadership**

Defining leadership is a daunting task. There is an intricate and diverse field of knowledge dating as far back as the Egyptian monarchs, Greek heroes, and biblical patriarchs. Authoritarian leadership style was prevalent then, but several prototype shifts have occurred since. Antonakis, Ciampiolo, and Sternberg (2004) in *The Nature of Leadership* put leadership research into perspective with the following statement: “Take bits and pieces of several sets of jigsaw puzzles, mix them, and then ask a friend to put the pieces together into one cohesive
picture” (p. 4). This analogy points to the struggle researchers experience in their attempts to develop a conceptually unified analysis of leadership.

Due to the lack of a precise definition for the concept of leadership, many findings from the numerous studies on this topic are inconsistent. However, “most leadership scholars would agree, in principle, that leadership can be defined as the nature of influencing process—and its resultant outcomes—that occurs between a leader and a follower” (Antonakis, Cianciolo, & Sternburg, 2004, p. 5). More specifically, Gardner (1990b) defined leadership as “the process of persuasion or example by which an individual induces a group to pursue objectives held by the leader or shared by the leader and his or her followers” (p. 17). Another common definition of leadership is the following: “a process of social influence by which an individual enlists the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a task or mission (Chemers [no date], paragraph 2). The common theme among these definitions is that leadership occurs in the context of multiple people, and is not something provided by an individual acting alone.

**Theories of Leadership**

Although difficult to define, leadership research can be divided into the various influences generated in the past 150 years. In the time of Queen Victoria and Abraham Lincoln, there was a belief that leaders were born. Some “born” leaders included Napoleon, Alexander the Great, and Julius Caesar, all of whom were believed to be different from ordinary people because of their “innate” ability to lead. This 19th-century hypothesis is better known as “The Great Man Theory” of leadership. Thomas Carlyle, a historian linked to this theory, believed
that “a leader is the one gifted with unique qualities that capture the imagination of the masses” (Management Study Guide, 2011, paragraph 3). Principally, certain males were believed to rise to power as a consequence of their extraordinary qualities. Furthermore, the theory asserts that the traits “great men” possessed were constant over time regardless of the time or place in which they ruled or the role they played in history. Because they were born with certain characteristics, they were meant to rise to greatness despite the time, place, or conditions. In terms of pragmatic research, this theory provided an arbitrary foundation because “great persons” appeared only once or twice per century.

Although the Great Man Theory was eventually refuted, it deserved merit for its focus on traits. In the 1920s and 1930s, the “Leadership Traits Theory” emerged. It emphasized a closer inspection of differences in character. Personality and even physical traits became central to the study of leadership. “In two influential reviews (Mann, 1959; Stogdill, 1948), certain traits associated with leadership were identified” (Antonakis, Ciancio, & Sternberg, 2004, p. 6): intelligence, dominance, and motivation, among others. The assumption that fueled Trait Theory was that leaders shared certain psychological, sociological, and physical characteristics. Psychological indicators of effective leadership included intelligence and charisma, while certain social, economic, and education variables were treated as sociological indicators. Height and appearance were the physical characteristics studied.

Doyle and Smith (2001, quoting Bennis, 1998) wrote:
Leaders are people, who are able to express themselves fully... They also know what they want, ... why they want it, and how to communicate what they want to others, in order to gain their co-operation and support. Lastly, they know how to achieve their goals. (paragraph 6)

Trait Theory contends that to achieve what Bennis described certain psychological, sociological, and physical characteristics must be present. However, Gardner (1990a) maintained that “there are no traits that guarantee successful leadership in all situations. The leader of a university faculty may have quite different attributes from the commander of a military attack team” (p. 38). In essence, the fundamental concern with this theory was that it assumed there was an identifiable set of traits needed by leaders regardless of context.

Typically, the term caretaker, when applied to an individual, connotes or implies a person who plays an insignificant, menial role. However, when the term is used in connection with such high officials as president, chief executive officer, or general commander, it can convey a perception of a powerful, prestigious leader. Nonetheless, when a powerful person is described as a caretaker, the word takes on a venerating and humbling meaning. For example, Franklin D. Roosevelt, U.S. president from 1933–45, was aptly described as the “caretaker” of the American people. During the 1940s and 1950s, researchers began examining factors of leadership success, focusing specifically on leaders’ behavior and their treatment of their followers. What specifically did President Roosevelt and other successful leaders do that led to their success? In other words, attention on leaders shifted from psychological, sociological, and physical traits to their leadership behaviors.
Two well-known studies—one by Katz, Maccoby, Gurin, and Floor (1951) of the University of Michigan and the other by Stogdill and Coons (1957) of Ohio State University—categorized “two dimensions of leadership generally referred to as consideration (i.e., employee-oriented leadership) and initiating structure (i.e., production-oriented leadership)” (Antonakis, Cianciolo, & Sternberg, 2004, p. 7). Along the same lines, Blake and Mouton (1964) “described two extremes of leadership concern or dimensions: concern for production and concern for people” (paragraph 1). The basis of this new “Behavioral Theory” was centered on identifiable and learnable conduct executed by successful leaders. It was believed that if typical actions were identified among successful leaders, then other leaders should be able to readily learn to act in the same manner to achieve effective leadership. These actions were identified by Lewin, Llippit, and White (1939) as leadership styles that they labeled as autocratic, democratic, and laissaz-faire. Alternatively, Blake and Mouton (1964) identified typical discrete leadership style categories as impoverished, country club, middle of the road, authoritarian, and team (see Appendix A).

Subsequently, Behavioral Theory dispelled the conviction that leaders are born, holding instead that leaders can be readily fashioned by schooling them in a set of identifiable common behaviors. Nevertheless, before long it became clear that although common strands of behavior could be identified, a given style might be more or less effective depending on the particular circumstances in each case. “The styles that leaders can adopt are far more affected by those they are working with, and the environment they are operating within, than had been originally
thought” (Doyle & Smith, 2001, paragraph 13). Before long, inconsistencies in research findings on leader actions confirmed that behavior alone did not assure leadership success.

Upon the realization that the setting and situation may play roles in leader effectiveness, researchers once again changed directions. The “Situational/Contingency Theory” of leadership departed from the search for specific leadership behaviors to examinations of which behaviors or styles work best in different contexts. Fred E. Fielder(1997) said, “Effectiveness depends on two interacting factors: leadership style and the degree to which the situation gives the leader control and influence” (quoted in Doyle & Smith, 2001, paragraph 15). Three factors of importance validate Fielder’s claim. First, a positive, supportive relationship between leader and followers must exist. Second, a distinct outline of goals, plans, and expectations must be clearly evident. Finally, the followers should see their leader as possessing the power to get the job done. For the first time in leadership research, Situational/Contingency Theory put leadership into a cyclical perspective where other factors and people became part of the leadership matrix, whereas previously the leader was examined independently and in a linear fashion. The dynamics of leadership became increasingly complex and perplexing: “Researchers defining the Situational/Contingency Theory of leadership acknowledged that leaders did more than simply ‘Act’–they often had to ‘react’ to specific situations, and thus, the Situational/Contingency Theory evolved” (Stone & Patterson, 2005, p. 5).
The timeframe for the emergence of the Situational/Contingency Theory was 1960 to 1980. Not only was the workforce growing and its demographics shifting rapidly, the means and methods of work were being transformed by developments in technology. “McCollum (1995) implied that companies in the information age were unsuccessfully trying to conduct their business using obsolete industrial age leadership theories” (Stone & Patterson, 2005, p. 5). It became apparent that leadership style was just as important as the situation because more than one style of leadership may be required for a given situation. Furthermore, an entirely different leader might be needed if a leader could not or would not adapt to a given situation. Finally, workers were also scrutinized along with the leader and situation. However, instead of discovering answers to questions about what makes leadership work, an entirely new assortment of questions arose.

The focus of research shifted again during the 1980s and 1990s to the methods and approaches leaders utilized to manage organizational performance. The studies from this period can be categorized into two types of leadership theories: Transactional (task oriented) and Transformational (interpersonal-relationship oriented). “Transactional leaders lead through specific incentives and motivate through an exchange of one thing for another” (Bass, 1990, quoted in Stone & Patterson, 2005, p. 6). In other words, compliance is rewarded. Various authors (i.e., Avolio, Walderman, & Yanimarina, 1991; Seltzer & Bass, 1990) have reported, as cited in Stone and Patterson (2005) that “research has shown that many leaders turned to a transactional leadership theory, the most prevalent
method of leadership still observed in today’s organizations” (p. 6). Although it continues to prevail in many organizations, transactional leadership is not appropriate for school leadership because of its management focus on short-term outcomes.

Conversely, transformational leadership provides a more complete approach to working within a school organization. Stone and Patterson (2005), citing various authors, wrote,

In contrast to focusing on where the organization is today and only on maintaining the status quo (the end result of transactional leadership), transformational leaders look at where the organization should be heading and determine how to handle internal and external change and employee needs to reach that goal. (p. 7)

Through interaction with others on a personal level with authentic interest in their progression and development, transformation leadership is believed to be “closer to the ne plus ultra that people have in mind when they describe their ideal leader and is more likely to provide a role model with whom subordinates want to identify” (citing Bass & Avolio, 1994, quoted in Stone & Patterson, 2005, p. 7). Transformational leadership emphasizes empowerment of workers, encouraging them to seek new levels of purpose and commitment to the organization.

“Transformational leaders transform the personal values of followers to support the vision and goals of the organization by fostering an environment where relationships are formed and by establishing a climate of trust where visions are shared” (citing Bass, 1985, quoted in Stone & Patterson, 2005, p. 9). Although transformational leadership may appear to provide a definitive description of effective leadership, the interest in this topic remains intense.
Research over the past 150 years has not produced a coherent, comprehensive definition of leadership. Moreover, it has not generated a list of specific leadership behaviors germane to all situations in various capacities. None of the theories that have emerged over the generations are mutually exclusive, and unanswered questions about leadership remain today; nevertheless, “over 100 years of empirical research on leadership has made clear some of the basic building blocks of effective leadership” (Chemers, [no date], paragraph 12). For example, it was once believed that leaders were born, not made, and current research continues to expand on established theories. However, a conclusion can be made from the numerous theories that leadership is neither a single individual nor a single process; school leadership likewise includes multiple facets and individuals, a kaleidoscope of people and processes, depending on the environment and mission of the particular organization.

**Ethical Leadership**

Numerous verses, quotations, and sayings delineate between behaviors deemed right and those deemed wrong by individuals and by society. Ethics are internal or private beliefs about personal decisions or actions that help form an individual’s character and values. Acquired primarily during childhood at home, church, and in other environments, including society at large, a person eventually learns norms for conduct that are appropriate in various settings. For most individuals, moral development matures with age. In time, comprehension and internalization of ethical norms become part of a person’s character and values, which individuals in turn act on in their personal and professional lives.
With recent scandals involving companies such as Enron and AIG, the concept of ethical leadership may present some challenges. Fullan (2007) stated that “morals, ethics, trust, values, integrity, respect, and commitment are words with lofty connotations” (p. 73). It is evident that “ethics involves many things but it is primarily concerned with understanding and achieving human well-being. The ultimate aim of ethical action may be seen as what Aristotle called ‘the common good of all’” (Knapp, 2007, p. xii). “Many different disciplines, institutions, and professions have norms for behavior that suit their particular aims and goals” (Resnik, 2010, paragraph 6). With ethics in school leadership, Aristotle might call it “the common good of all learners.” Generally, the norms for conduct in school leadership are aligned to the common purpose, “the good,” a large part of which is being defined as student achievement. Ideally, the school leader should set the tone by outlining the core values of the school. This includes the expectation that principals play a significant role in modeling appropriate behavior for faculty, staff, and students. “Authentic leaders translate their beliefs and values into concrete actions at a fundamental level” (Evans, 1996, p. 141). From the school leader’s model of behavior, both adults and students should fashion their actions accordingly.

In the research literature, numerous authors have discussed and demonstrated the importance of moral leadership. Due to the demands of NCLB, current literature says that moral leadership should direct significant attention to accountability, trust, and politics while maintaining a level of authenticity. “Leaders must be forceful. Leaders must have vision. Leaders must
successfully manipulate events and people, so that vision becomes reality. Leaders, in other words, must lead” (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 76). Society views leadership traditionally as “characters that single-handedly pull and push organizational members forward by the force of personality, bureaucratic clout, and political know-how” (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 75). In essence, such beliefs are deeply rooted in the Great Man Theory and the resulting practices do not work well in today’s environment, if they ever did. Instead, Senge (1990) contributed, “The most successful corporation of the 1990s will be something called a learning organization” (p. 3). Senge goes on to say that a “learningful” environment has to be created: “It is no longer sufficient to have one person learning for the organization” (p. 4). In essence, all involved within the school organization is a learner—student, teacher, administrator, and support personnel.

To create a learning organization, leaders depend on hidden leaders within an organization; that is, leaders help their followers, but in turn they encourage those followers to help them—reciprocal help, if you will. Thus, transformational leaders appeal to the better nature of all involved—by seeking help for the good of all—Aristotle’s “common good.” Doyle and Smith (2001) described it as “a transcendence of self-interest for the sake of the team, organization or larger polity” (paragraph 21). Furthermore, Sergiovanni (1992) discussed “leadership that counts, in the end, the kind that touches people differently. It taps their emotions, appeals to their values, and responds to their connections with other people” (p. 76). This type of leadership fosters moral peer pressure throughout the organization so that significant operational relationships are engendered. “The
level of awareness or consciousness about the significance and value of designated outcomes, and ways of reaching them is raised” (Doyle & Smith, 2001, paragraph 21). Such relationships oblige all members to work together on common goals.

With the sweeping changes that have taken place in the United States in recent years, many people seem to be trying to keep up by limiting their ideas about “what is good” to themselves and their families in an attempt to maintain their “place” in a rapidly changing environment. Knapp (2007) stated that concern for self is so powerful that “the idea of the common good is in trouble today—serious trouble” (p. xiii). Selfish conceptions of the “good” can lessen a learning organization’s ability to focus on the “common good of all” and affect the potential “learningful” nature of the organization (Senge, 1990, p. 4).

On the other hand,

Most of us at one time or another have been part of a great team, a group of people who functioned together in an extraordinary way—who trusted one another, who complemented each others’ strengths and compensated for each other’s limitations, who had common goals that were larger than individual goals, and who produced extraordinary results. (Senge, 1990, p. 4)

In a successful learning organization, coworkers develop a kind of credo, a belief system that drives the school. They discover how to learn together through shared visions and voice. As educators it is our professional moral duty to create learning organizations that strive for improved student achievement at all times.

In a learning organization, such educators become part of a common credo so as not to be left behind. “Leaders are measured by their sense of purpose,
ability to get others engaged with them as they translate purposes, manage the enterprise, and intervene when required to keep the system on target” (Milstein, 1992, in Brown-Ferrigno, 2003, p. 470). Moral purpose consistently guided by one’s credo usually results in the development of deep trust. Honesty and integrity are paramount in leadership practices because without them leaders become ineffective. “Integrity is the correspondence between word and deed and honesty refers to being truthful or non-deceitful” (Kirpatrick & Locke, 1991, p. 53). Trust creates “leadership as stewardship” (Senge, 1990, p. 75) based on moral authority. Without moral authority as a foundation, leadership becomes mired in mandates and directives that shape the overall moral orientation of a school setting.

A “Who’s serving who” (p. 75) concept as defined by Sergiovanni (1992) is a model of the reciprocal help mentioned earlier. It allows an organization to build bridges for the benefit of all. Knapp (2007) maintained that it is “the obligations of leaders to promote justice, fairness, trust, and the conditions necessary for people to live well in communities that flourish. Education is in a state of rapid change and alteration due to accountability demands of NCLB” (p. xii). At a time when leadership should be focusing on creating a “learningful” (Senge, 1990, p.4) community through a “who’s serving who” (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 75) model, mandates and directives directly affect moral commitment to students. When a form of leadership exists with authenticity and sincerity, collective identity of a learning organization is reinforced. In other words, trust and collegiality, or “heart,” provide people with the drive, desire, will, and
passion to carry on toward a common goal. These qualities are fragile and can make or break an organization.

To get to the “heart” of an organization, moral leadership has to be authentic and not led by a checklist. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Evans (1996) calls this “savvy”—a practical, problem-solving wisdom that enables leaders to make things happen. “Savvy subsumes an array of qualities, ranging from knowledge of one’s field to having a good ‘nose’ for institutional problems” (p. 141). Some leaders have the “craft knowledge” (Evans, 1996, p. 142) to instinctively switch between styles and select appropriate problem-solving strategies depending on the type of people and work involved. Hence, giving credence to the Great Man Theory, some individuals in society are innately “craft knowledge[able]” (Evans, 1996, p. 142). Although craft knowledge can be learned through experience, some people naturally possess high levels of common sense and compassion as well as valor and bravery, together with character, intelligence, and disposition. When these traits are present, trust ensues, and ultimately committed followers.

In reality, however, the facets of ethical leadership discussed by each author and presented above are scattered throughout an organization. Within large school districts, tidbits of moral leadership may be found in various departments, committees, buildings, and so forth. Pockets of moral leadership that exist in a large school district may have little to no effect depending on a variety of conditions. The research studies examined for this review on moral leadership were typically based on pockets of success in various locations in the United
States. Research studies on how this works within a single organization, such as from top to bottom or vice-versa, are lacking.

Organizational Culture and Change

Similar to leadership, culture can connotate various meanings, but it is often used to refer to groups of people. In *Leadership: Why Gender and Culture Matter*, Kluckhohn (1951, quoted in Ayman & Korabik, 2010) defined it as follows:

“Culture is an acquired and transmitted pattern of shared meaning, feeling, and behavior that constitutes a distinctive human group” (p. 158). More specifically, culture can be one of two things: (a) the specific country or nation one belongs to, along with the physical characteristics most common to one’s origin; or (b) the cumulative assembly of beliefs, traditions, knowledge, wisdom, roles, dress, attitudes, faiths, language, behavior, preferences, taboos, superstitions, values, and even motives related to one’s origin. As defined in the context of schools, culture is inclusive of specific features exclusive to a school.

Sergiovanni (1992) defined school culture as “a set of understandings or meanings shared by a group of people. Typically these meanings are tacitly held and serve to define the group as being distinct from other groups” (p. 342). However, school cultures are far more complex than this ostensibly simple definition. In fact, school culture “is a living thing that needs to be actively recognized, valued, and nurtured” (Fullan, 2007, p. 157). The norms, attitudes, beliefs, values, customs, and behaviors of a school give life to its culture, which can be good, bad, or harmless. No matter where on a scale a given school’s culture may fall, all types are resistant to change. However, over time, all cultures
slowly evolve as they adapt to changing conditions and adopt new ideas from other cultures and sources. Like other cultures, school cultures have the capacity to change. For change to occur, however, the school culture’s multi-dimensions, levels, and layers must be acknowledged and addressed.

School culture is extremely important because it directly and indirectly affects the outcomes of the school’s mission. Without attention to the role of culture, innovations meant to improve current conditions of a school are futile. For change to occur, Barth (2004) recommended defining the unhealthy rudiments of school culture and transferring models of desired elements in their place. Barth (2004) described the work of earlier researchers who identified some healthy norms that may exist within a school such as confidence, traditions, high expectations, pockets of collegiality, and recognition. “Culture building requires the skill to transform elements of the school’s culture into forces that support rather than subvert the purposes of the school” (Barth, 2004, p. 162).

People naturally seize elements within reach that are familiar and comfortable. Acts of culture-building may infringe on or even attempt to remove some elements that placate staff and faculty. Hence, changing the culture is an immensely difficult task for leadership. However, “school cultures cannot be changed from without; they must be changed from within” (Barth, 2004, p. 162). Too often leaders enter a school culture that is foreign to them and immediately seek to implement a design foreign to the school. These well-intentioned endeavors fail from the beginning because such change is seen as coming from without.
A significant example of this type of change occurred during the 1950s and 1960s in the form of national curriculum reform initiatives. For all intents and purposes, finances were augmented and innovations were abundant. This was an era when schools were built with open plans and team teaching came to the forefront. However, “by the early 1970s, there was mounting evidence that the yield was minuscule, confined to isolated examples” (Fullan, 2007, p. 5). Currently, a more direct approach through accountability is being applied in an attempt to change the system of education. Similar to England’s Every Child Matters, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) is a reform model based on progress made on a yearly basis that is deemed adequate by the state. Specifically, all students must attain proficiency in math and reading by the school year 2013-14 (NMPED, 2002). However, Fullan (2007) quoted James Popham (2004): “The law is practically and politically impossible and . . . the majority of schools will be labeled as failing under the criteria provided, with little opportunity and time to address the issues” (p. 241). The implications for leadership and school culture and their attempts to build capacity within all while working for improvement, is damaged as demands from without are mandated (Barth, 2004, p. 162).

In a learning community where the concept of “Who’s serving who” (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 75) is central to the work toward continual improvement, everyone involved is a learner. “Such a school is a community whose defining, underlying culture is one of learning. The condition for membership in the community is that one learn, continue to learn, and support the learning of others” (Barth, 2004, pp. 163-164). NCLB is an outside reform effort that some believe
hinders the development of learning communities from within (Barth, 2004, p. 162).

School leaders today must play numerous roles and fulfill many responsibilities. Deal and Peterson (1999) stated that “a leader must inquire below the surface of what is happening to formulate a deeper explanation of what is really going on. To be effective, school leaders must read and understand their school and community culture” (p. 198). Improvements within a school must come from the school leader functioning as the representative who dictates the pulse of the school. Deal and Peterson (1999) defined the roles of a school leader from the perspective of anthropology: “historian, anthropologist, visionary, symbol, potter, poet, actor, and healer” (p. 199). Basically, these roles are the foundation of transformational, savvy leadership. It is a combination of the Great Man, Traits, Behavior, and Contingency Theories in practice. “Charisma, attention to individualized development, and the ability and willingness to provide intellectual stimulation are critical in leaders whose [business] firms are faced with demands for renewal and change” (Bass, 1990, p. 31). Although transformational leadership may not be the end-all, it may provide some balance between the demands of NCLB and a reasonable capacity of education that will facilitate progress toward a series of ever-moving targets.

**Stakeholder Diversity**

“We all should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry, and we must understand that all the threads of the tapestry are equal in value no matter what their color” (Maya Angelou, 2010, quotation 57). Diversity in education is yet
another word that is not easily defined. A classroom can have diverse ethnic groups who speak a diversity of languages. A class can be diverse in gender and religious backgrounds. A class can be diverse in socio-economic status and backgrounds. A class can be diverse in learning styles and needs. Diversity can exist within intellectual capacities and personalities. The same is true of teachers and administrators. It is not the leader’s responsibility to manage diversity in the workplace in separate compartments as outlined above. Alternatively, “diversity should be understood as the varied perspectives and approaches to work that members of different identity groups bring” (Thomas & Ely, 1996, p. 270, emphasis in original).

The central theme in the literature on diversity was summarized by Thomas and Ely (1996): “They [diverse people/groups] bring different, important, and competitively relevant knowledge and perspectives about how to actually do work—how to design processes, reach goals, frame tasks, create effective teams, communicate ideas, and lead” (p. 270, emphasis in original). In the classroom, “relevant knowledge and perspectives about how to actually do work” can be found in diversity in learning styles, learning capacities, and learning differences. Such diversity in a classroom creates a “learningful” environment by providing a range of opportunities for students to learn from one another (Senge, 1990, p. 4, emphasis in original). Levine (2003) stated, “Within every student contending with learning differences, an area invariably exists in which her or his mind has been amply equipped to thrive” (p. 290). Despite the obstacles student diversity may present, teacher accountability demands that the opportunity to succeed be
provided to all children. Even the success level of each child can be diverse because different learners progress differently depending on their learning capacity. Such diversity is the existing demography in education today.

Complicating the matter of diversity in education, the manner in which teaching is supported, supervised, and adjusted affects the success of learners. McGee Banks (2003) broadened the discussion on diversity with perspectives on gender and race. Although she gave further details about leadership definitions and theories, the essence of her piece focused on diversity in leadership—specifically addressing “the nature of leadership needed to fully embrace diversity at all its levels” (Fullan, 2007, p. 266). McGee Banks provided one clear definition of leadership; however, Stogdill (1974) defined leadership as “the initiation and maintenance of structure in expectation and interaction” (p. 15). This definition outlines specific behaviors and actions initiated, monitored, and retooled by an individual irrespective of the person’s gender or race. As basic as this may sound, the diversity of this seemingly single behavior or action of leadership is as diverse as the learning capabilities of a student.

Leadership Today

The roles of today’s leaders involve a multifaceted set of challenges. Indeed, No Child Left Behind imposes on leadership a whole host of responsibilities, expectations, and demands. Today’s leaders are expected to know how to manage not only the responsibilities, expectations, and demands of his/her office, but also those of the building, district, community, state, and federal government. Furthermore, they are working in conditions with inadequate
compensation, job-related stress, and time fragmentation (Ferrandino, 2001, p. 441).

Changes in administrator preparation programs surfaced in the late 1980s after reports emerged from the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration and the National Policy Board for Educational Administration. “Many program faculty members and districts are developing varied and innovative instructional strategies and organizational structures to prepare school administrators to lead schools in these complex times (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003, p. 469; see also Jackson & Kelly, 2002; Milstein & Krueger, 1997; Peterson, 2002). During the past 20 years professional standards have been implemented in leadership preparation programs. Experienced leaders who were trained before the onset of professional standards reached retirement age and younger candidates with the skills to manage today’s social and educational changes were needed. Various authors were quoted as saying that administrator preparation required programs with strong emphasis on the “development of standards-based curricula and modified program delivery formats” to accommodate state standards, testing, and accountability expectations of today (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003, p. 469).

Changes in leader preparation programs obviously led to changes in how school leaders conducted business at their work sites. Today’s leader must know how to efficiently and effectively handle internal and external challenges while maintaining focus on student achievement. “Preparing effective educational leaders for rural communities is critically important. Almost 8,000 or more than
half (56 percent) of all operating public school districts in the U.S. are located in rural areas” (Harmon & Schafft, 2009, p. 6). Rural schools face multiple challenges that are not limited to leadership and teacher recruitment, pay, funding, and increased responsibilities. “Typically, school systems in rural America do not have assistant superintendents or a lot of other centrally focused staff” (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2005, p. 2). Therefore, school leaders and teachers have to assume additional educational and non-educational duties that traditionally are not part of their job descriptions. Although NCLB creates challenges common to both urban and rural schools, rural schools are further affected in the areas of school accountability and teacher qualifications due to their small size. Rural school leaders are faced with multiple challenges on top of the ones outlined above. “Because each rural situation is unique, there can be no one-size-fits-all approach to either rural education or to the preparation of leaders for rural schools” (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2005, p. 1).

Ethical leadership demands that efficacy and liability, particularly in the area of state standards and high-stakes testing, are maintained while student achievement is kept at the forefront at all times. Mandates and directives, heavy in emphasis and pressure on high stakes accountability, and delivered from the top down, demand that schools become innovative. As a result, many schools have become reform-focused while lacking the systems-thinking aspect of reform. “There was actually great pressure and incentives to become innovative, and this resulted in many schools adopting reforms that they did not have the capacity (individually or organizationally) to put into practice” (Fullan, 2007, p. 6). Even
so, schools randomly and haphazardly attempt to reform current systems that result in temporary or no change. Instead, the lack of strategy and commitment generates a “teaching to the test” climate in schools as opposed to actual systemic reform.

There is tremendous need for school principals today to implement comprehensive, sustainable reforms. They must create a school environment conducive to such transformations:

It requires intensive action sustained over several years to make it possible both physically and attitudinally for teachers to work naturally together in joint planning; observation of one another’s practice; and seeking, testing, and revising teaching strategies on a continuous basis. Reform is not just putting into place the latest policy. It means changing the cultures of classrooms, schools, districts, universities and so on. (Fullan, 2007, p. 7)

In essence, NCLB has to become NTLB, or No Teacher Left Behind, if school principals expect to instill authentic change. Furthermore, it is not “[a] character that single-handedly pull[s] and push[es] organizational members forward” (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 75). Rather, it must be an organizational effort. One way a principal can begin to achieve such a climate is to concentrate on power standards. Power standards are state standards that meet three criteria: “endurance, leverage, and readiness for the next level of instruction” (Reeves, 2002, p. 239).

With the demands of today, it is essential that schools concentrate on standards that are “balanced and comprehensive” (Reeves, 2002, p. 239) and ensure that they cover what students must know and be able to do. Often teachers teach what is called “nice to know” as opposed to “need to know” information.
The development of power standards relies on comprehensive skills that prepare students with the “endurance, leverage, and readiness” to apply what is learned to most questions on the standards-based assessment (Reeves, 2002, p. 239). In other words, power standards can help a school avoid teaching to the test. “Leaders recognize that the question to be asked at the end of every year is not merely what teachers covered, but rather what students learned” (Reeves, 2002, p. 240). Power standards for today’s leader means that students achieve proficiency on standards addressed; however, all power standards may not tackle all content on the high stakes test. Power standards may not provide students with the durable knowledge to do well on all questions posed on a high stakes test; however, they do supply students with “skills or knowledge that remains with them long after the test is completed” (Reeves, 2002, p. 241).

“If public schools are to meet the needs of American society in the twenty-first century, they will need to transform themselves from organizations in which the core business is producing compliance and attendance to organizations in which the core business is nurturing commitment and attention” (Schlechtly, 2005, p. 221). Schlechtly (2005) is talking about the role of the teacher as the individual who is the “leader and designer of engaging work for students” (p. 221). An essential piece required of a learning community is collaboration. “The first and most important practical implication is that the leader must make time for teachers to collaborate within and among grade levels to identify power standards” (Reeves, 2002, p. 245). To develop and implement innovations that
will result in change for positive effects on student achievement, today’s leadership needs to support new roles for both the teacher and administrator.

**Future Leaders**

Hargreaves and Fink (2006) summarized a plausible path for tomorrow’s course of leadership by quoting Albert Einstein: “We cannot solve the problems that we have created with the same thinking that created them” (p. 445). The stark applicability of this quotation is alarming, yet it seems that the only change in American education is change itself. It may be a mere perception based on experience, but it was not long ago that principals were seen only when trouble was brewing or when a hand was extended for congratulations after an award. Otherwise, they sat behind closed doors.

Principal training programs are under scrutiny so they can produce leaders who can handle the pressures and problems of today. Leaders can no longer suit up to sit at a desk. An orchestra might perform without a conductor but the quality of the performance may be inadequate in terms of how each individual contributes to the whole without a conductor. The conductor is charged with providing that completeness, much like a principal is entrusted with managing a system of “instruments” available within a school building to achieve success in student learning and other aspects that contribute to school success. Kelley and Peterson (2002) discussed the importance of improving principal performance. Programs in the past obviously did not encompass what Kelley and Peterson call “work realities” (p. 356). Work realities include demands by students, teachers, parents, and central office as well as policy and politics. In dealing with so many
constituents, it is not startling that work realities include the fact that “more than 80 percent of the day is spent in verbal interaction, much of it face to face” (Kelley & Peterson, 2002, p. 357). Talk appears insignificant; however, if done effectively, verbal interaction can tremendously aid the work toward building an innovative school culture.

The cumulative work demands in a given day that require various leadership styles and strategies are among the work realities of principals. Kelley and Peterson (2002) noted that the types of interactions principals engage in from minute to minute can vary in “social variability, . . . problem complexity, . . . cognitive and affective diversity, . . . and expansive nature of expertise” (p. 357). Essentially, programs that train principals have to prepare them to gain a wide knowledge and skill base to enable them to adeptly manage all facets of leading a school.

Many authors address different facets of leadership from various perspectives; however, they invariably espouse a belief that leadership is not the job of a single individual, but of a group. What is not addressed by these authors is the idea of how to effectively communicate the nature and depth of the kinds of problems and issues that school leadership is entrusted to negotiate in a school. It is true that “one cannot choose one’s family,” and some of the dysfunctions that exist within families may also be present within organizations. None of the authors cited how a leader can coax a 20-year veteran teacher to try a new method, or coax resistors to seek a new perspective for the sake of students. Perhaps this was addressed by each author indirectly or it was inherent within the
ideas discussed, assuming comprehension on the part of the organization. Nevertheless, more research should be directed toward how leadership can effectively achieve “buy-in” so that innovative attempts become systemic innovations that can improve student achievement.

Many educators are wedded to the traditional idea of leadership being one person operating in isolation. It is necessary for today’s leaders to dispel this notion so they can lead effectively. “The classical theorists debated whether leadership was a function of the individual and his or her characteristics or whether the historical context served to shape the individual in response to societal needs or events” (McEwan, 2000, paragraph 2). Today there is an understanding that an educational leader must lead with a combination of functions, characteristics, and styles to accommodate various contexts to effectively respond to the particular needs of a given situation despite time and place.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

The design and method used in the present study are described in this chapter. The purpose of the study was to examine the effects of selected characteristics and behaviors of the leaders in two high-achieving schools that achieved adequate yearly progress (AYP) in the 2009-10 school year, as defined by the New Mexico Public Education Department. Factors related to the rural settings of the two schools were also examined. The chapter begins with a restatement of the research questions, followed by a description of the criteria used to select the two schools and the rationales underlying those criteria. The explanations of the specific nature of the research design and procedures are provided. Next, details about the two schools are included. Finally, the data collection procedures are outlined, followed by a detailed description of the data analysis procedures.

Restatement of Research Questions

Three questions that guided this study were as follows:

1. Are there common characteristics of school climate in high-achieving rural schools?
   
   Sub-question 1: Does rural location positively affect school climate and achievement?

2. What are the characteristics of principals in high-achieving rural schools?

3. Are there common leadership practices of principals in high-achieving rural schools?
Sub-question 1: What are teachers’ opinions about principal leadership?

Sub-question 2: What are parents’ opinions about principal leadership?

Selection Criteria and Rationales

Information was obtained from the New Mexico Professional Education Department website to identify schools eligible for this study (NMPED, 2010). Some 820 public schools administered the New Mexico Standards Base Assessment (NMSBA) in the spring of 2010. Of those, 141 schools (17%) attained AYP status. Forty-two of the 141 AYP schools were secondary schools (30%), the focus of the present study. Although many of the 820 New Mexico public schools are within city or town limits, 19 of the 42 (45%) secondary schools that achieved AYP in 2009-10 were located in rural areas of the state.

Designation as rural schools came from the New Mexico Administrative Code (NMAC). NMAC Title 6 addresses “primary and secondary education and defines general provisions and definitions applicable to rural education” (New Mexico Administrative Code 6.34. 2. 6). NMAC 6.34.2.7 states:

Rural local educational agency (“rural LEA”) means a local school district meeting the following criteria:

(1) the total number of students in average daily attendance at all schools served by the school district is fewer than 600, or all schools in the district are located in counties with a population density of fewer than 10 persons per square mile; and

(2) all schools served by the school district have a school locale code of 7 or 8 as determined by the Secretary of the United States department of education in its small, rural school achievement eligibility spreadsheet for a given year. (NMAC, 2010)

The selection criteria were:
1. The secondary schools must have achieved AYP for the 2009-10 school year.

2. The principals must have been employed by and practicing at the same school for the entire 2009-10 school year.

3. The principals had to give their consent to allow the researcher to conduct the present study.

The rationale for the first criterion was to concentrate only on high-achieving secondary schools. The purpose of this study did not include analyzing differences between high- and low-achieving schools—thus the concentration on AYP schools. The second criterion was established to ensure that the participating schools employed the same principal for the entire 2009-10 school year. This criterion was used because one of the main purposes of the study was to examine possible effects of the principal on student achievement. The reason for including the third criterion is that written and verbal data in the form of interviews were required by the researcher from the consenting schools, which required consent from the principals on behalf of their schools.

The design of the study required direct input in the form of information and opinions from the principals themselves regarding their leadership behaviors, practices, and attitudes. This was one of the most important sources of information, although the information obtained was triangulated with that from other sources. Furthermore, research protocol required the consent of the school to participate in the study. Thus, it was necessary to obtain the consent of the leader of each school, the principals, not only for personal interviews with those
individuals, but for permission to conduct other interviews and on-site observations.

**Research Design**

This case study utilized quantitative and qualitative research methods. Yin (2009) explained that “the distinctive need for case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena. In brief, the case study allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-to-life events” (p. 4). It was important that the researcher acquire firsthand knowledge regarding shared characteristics about each school: AYP status, rural setting, and principal consent.

Survey Monkey, an on-line survey service, was used to construct and administer a survey instrument with a quantitative response mode that addressed the standards outlined in the Interstate School Leadership License Consortium (ISLLC). In addition, one-on-one personal interviews—a qualitative data source—were used to gather firsthand information from principals, teachers, and parents. Field notes were also gathered by the researcher during on-site visits.

Leadership in the two secondary schools that had achieved AYP may share common characteristics, beliefs, and practices that contributed to each respective school’s successes. For that reason, it was vital to obtain information concerning leadership directly from each participating principal through direct interviews. It was essential to categorize leadership characteristics and behaviors that may have played a role in each school’s designation as having achieved AYP;
therefore, the design type was specifically selected to reflect the goals of this study.

**Description of Sample and Schools**

Upon approval from the Arizona State University Institutional Review Board (IRB; see Appendix B), a letter of consent to participate was sent to 19 principals of the 19 rural secondary schools in New Mexico that achieved AYP in 2009-10. Four principals consented to participate in the study. Two of the four principals and their schools were selected based on the selection criteria and the school’s student population size. The researcher sought schools that had approximately 500 students. Tara Schools and Twelve Oaks Schools were the schools that fit the selection criteria and whose principals elected to participate in the present study. Each school system had three schools: elementary, middle, and high.

**Description of Schools**

**Tara Schools Setting**

Field notes were taken to provide descriptions of each of the two school systems, with emphasis on the two secondary schools. Tara schools were situated in a small mountain village in Abraham County, New Mexico. According to the United States Census Bureau (2009) statistics, the village had a population of 1,545: 65.7% Caucasians, 30.1% Hispanics, 2.8% Native Americans, 1.0% African-Americans, and 0.4% Asians. There were 21,016 people in Abraham County. Tara Schools included a Pre–K through grade 5 elementary school, a grade 6–8 middle school, and a grade 9–12 high school. Of these, only Tara High
School was a participant in the study. All buildings were situated in close proximity on a single campus. The district administrative offices were located within walking distance of all three schools near the maintenance building.

The school climate provided visitors with a sense that this was a learning community. The high school encompassed one lengthy building with classrooms on both sides of the hall. Down the single hall, support beams were inscribed with character words such as integrity, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship. Student-created school spirit and inspiration posters decorated the halls. Although positive behavior posters in all the buildings were numerous, there was no formal evidence of school or classroom rules. In the elementary school, visually appealing goal-setting displays decorated the hallways. The overall student population in the Tara schools was 539 students: 70% Caucasians, 27% Hispanics, 2% African-Americans, and 1% Native American. Tara High School had an enrollment of 176 students.

**Twelve Oaks Schools Setting**

The Twelve Oaks schools were located at an elevation of 8,600 feet in the Washington National Forest in Platero County, New Mexico. In 2009, according to the United States Census Bureau, there were 63,201 people in Platero County and 750 people in the community of Twelve Oaks. Ethnicities represented in Platero County were 51.4% Caucasian, 35.4% Hispanic, 6.8% Native American, 5.1% African American, and 1.4% Asian. Twelve Oaks Schools enrolled 462 students Pre-K through grade 12. Grade 6–8 grade students were housed in one building along with Pre–K through grade 5. Twelve Oaks High School, situated
approximately a quarter of a mile from Twelve Oaks Middle School, was not part of the study. Twelve Oaks Middle School had an enrollment of 99 students.

Upon entry into the combined Twelve Oaks middle and elementary schools, the researcher was greeted with stairs straight ahead and white corridors to the right and left. There was not a clear marker indicating directions to the office. There were many stairs inside because the building was constructed into the side of a hill. Pre–K through grade 2 classrooms were on the ground level along with the gym and cafeteria. Grade 3 through 5 classrooms were located on east side of the third level. Grade 6 through 8 classrooms were also on the third level but on the west end of the building. The middle school section of the building was clearly sectioned off from the lower grades. Located outside each classroom were bulletin boards adorned with student work. The principal’s office, front office, library, staff lounge, and work room were located on the second level.

Table 1 displays demographic information for the two schools in this study. As noted, both schools have predominately Caucasian student populations.
Table 1

School Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Tara schools</th>
<th>Twelve Oaks schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>School staff</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers 6–12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Population</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total enrollment</td>
<td>539</td>
<td>462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade levels</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Elementary K-5</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle 6-8</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school 9-12</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black American</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Information in this table was taken from Greatschools (2010).

Teachers at Tara High School and Twelve Oaks Middle School became part of the study based on their individual consent. Unlike principals, teachers participating in the study were randomly selected from among those who gave their consent, and a specific set of criteria was not used. Similarly, parents arbitrarily became part of the study based on their consent and the fact that they had children attending one of the participating schools.
Data Collection

Data sources used in the present study were in the form of qualitative and quantitative modes of collection. The qualitative forms of data included interview responses and the researcher’s field notes. The quantitative form of data collection came from the on-line survey.

Interviews

The principal, teacher, and parent interview questions were designed to help the researcher develop a firsthand understanding of behaviors and practices that both principals valued and displayed on a regular basis. Although all interview questions addressed leadership behaviors and practices, they were worded slightly different for each group (principals, teachers, parents). Another goal in the design of the questions was to establish information regarding community and school demographics in an attempt to determine whether and to what extent these demographic factors contributed to student success. The length of the interviews ranged from one to two-and-one-half hours. All information gathered was reported in an anonymous manner to maintain the confidentiality of all individuals involved.

Interviews with principals. The principals of the two schools in this study were Mr. Butler of Tara High School and Mr. Ashley of Twelve Oaks Middle School. The interviews with the principals were built around 11 open-ended questions about their personal backgrounds, education, positions held, other experiences, views about leadership practices and behaviors, and their actual practices and behaviors (see Appendix C).
**Interviews with teachers.** Twelve secondary teachers were interviewed for the study. At Tara High School six female teachers were interviewed: Ms. Melanie, Ms. India, Ms. Suellen, Ms. Scarlett, and Ms. Wilkes. At Twelve Oaks Middle School five female teachers and one male teacher were interviewed: Ms. Hamilton, Ms. Meade, Ms. Merriweather, Ms. Wilkerson, Ms. Slattery, and Mr. Stuart. The teacher interviews consisted of responses to and discussions of ten open-ended questions about the teachers’ personal backgrounds, education, positions held, and other experiences. They were also asked questions about their views regarding leadership practices and behaviors as well as actual leadership practices and behaviors exhibited by their respective principals (see Appendix D).

**Interviews with parents.** Similar to teachers, the parents who were interviewed were selected on the basis of consent and availability. Because of the rural location of the participating schools, many parents were inaccessible. The researcher located parents who were employed near the schools. Three parents from Tara were interviewed: Ms. O’Hara, Ms. Pitty, and Ms. Kennedy. At Twelve Oaks four parents were interviewed: Ms. Tarleton, Ms. Carreen, Ms. Ellen, and Ms. Charles. All seven parents interviewed were mothers of then current students in one of the two schools. Parent interviews consisted of responses to and discussions of ten open-ended questions about their personal backgrounds, education, positions held, and other experiences. They were also asked questions about their views regarding school leadership practices and behaviors. Each parent also answered questions about the leadership practices and behaviors of their child’s principal (see Appendix E).
Survey

A survey addressing the leadership standards outlined in the Interstate School Leadership License Consortium (ISLLC; see Appendix F) was designed using Survey Monkey, software for surveys available to the public on the internet (http://www.surveymonkey.com/; see Appendix G). The survey instrument was comprised of 31 questions, with a response mode consisting of five-point Likert-type scales: “Almost Always,” “To a Considerable Degree,” “Occasionally,” “Seldom,” and “Never.” The surveys were intended to provide information about the attitudes and practices related to leadership of the two principals in the study. The 19 rural secondary school principals whose schools achieved AYP in the 2009-10 school year were also re-invited to complete the survey. Eight of the 19 (42%) principals took the survey on line in addition to the two principals participating in the study, who also took the survey on line, for a total of 10 respondents, a response rate of 52.6% (see Appendix E).

Pilot Testing

The interview questions for the principals, teachers, and parents were pilot tested on a group of five individuals to determine the clarity and accuracy of questions appearing on all three types of interviews lists. The pilot testing of interview questions was completed prior to the on-site visits during which the actual interviews were conducted. Likewise, the survey was sent to five individuals to determine the clarity and accuracy of the instrument as well as to verify that the survey was received and functioned as intended prior to being sent to the secondary principals of the rural AYP schools. Individuals who participated
in the pilot testing were colleagues and friends of the researcher who were selected on a convenience basis. None of the pilot study participants was a participant in the present study or associated with the Tara or Twelve Oaks schools.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed for major premises and ideas. Once common themes and concepts were identified from the interviews, observations, and the survey, coding categories were developed. Words and phrases were defined to identify common ideas. The ideas were then grouped and categorized into subject areas. The major themes and other results are discussed in Chapter 4.

Summary

This chapter focuses on the design, population, procedures, and data analysis of the present research study that was conducted using qualitative and quantitative methods. An on-line survey, interview questions, and on-site field notes that were used as data are described in this chapter. Data accessed from the NMPED website are also presented. Additionally, data collection procedures and the actual data analysis are described in this chapter. The findings of the study are presented in Chapter 4.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this pair of case studies was to examine the effects of selected characteristics and behaviors of school principals in two high-achieving rural New Mexico schools that had achieved adequate yearly progress (AYP) in the 2009-10 school year. Data were collected from three sources: written (online) surveys, personal interviews, and observations. This chapter consists of a presentation of the findings attained through these qualitative and quantitative methods.

In addition to the two principals whose schools participated in the present study, 10 of the 19 principals (52.6%) whose rural New Mexico secondary schools achieved AYP for the year in question completed the on-line survey. Findings from their responses on the survey were arranged according to leadership standards provided by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC; see “Definition of Terms” in Chapter 1).

Findings

In this section, data from three sources—the interviews, survey, and field notes—were integrated and a comparative analysis was performed to define emerging themes along with other findings. The researcher’s initial impressions of the schools were of a warm, inviting atmosphere as indicated by the physical appearance of the facilities and encounters with students and school personnel. People were extraordinarily nice and welcoming. From the interviews, survey, and field notes seven themes emerged that were defining characteristics evident in
both schools. The major themes and concepts identified were (a) culture, (b) motivation, (c) instructional leadership, (d) empowerment, (e) school leadership, (f) trust, and (e) community involvement. The seven themes were consistent across all three data sets.

**Culture**

**Principals.** A significant characteristic of both principals was their level of activity throughout the day. At the time of the onsite visit, Tara High School had experienced frozen pipes due to freezing weather and Twelve Oaks Middle School had reopened after being closed for three days, also due to winter weather. Such problems may have been a factor in the workloads of both principals. However, the interviews with teachers and parents suggested that the extraordinarily busy behavior exhibited by both principals was typical for them. Both principals claimed they worked from 70 to 80 hours each week.

An important behavior practiced by both principals was their attempts to visit each classroom every day. Mr. Ashley at Twelve Oaks Middle School taught one class every morning during which his principal duties were on hold for 55 minutes. He still managed to visit the majority of classrooms every day. Mr. Butler at Tara High School had classrooms in three buildings but still managed to visit most classes every day. During the researcher’s on-site visit, both principals were observed paying close attention to the people in their respective schools, especially the students.

Both principals were in near constant contact and dialogue with their students, and the students reciprocated by paying attention to the principals. The
relationships between students and principals appeared very well established. An analogy the researcher jotted down was that students’ behavior toward their principal was one of a devoted pet wanting to please the master. A nod, greeting, or question from the principal to student was akin to the master giving his or her pet a scratch behind the ear. Both principals said that it was very important not only to show but also to tell students that they cared about them no matter what kind of day was at hand. Another area of importance was that both principals made it a point to speak with all 500-plus students personally—to get to know them individually as well as to learn about their families, goals, problems, and lives in general.

**Teachers.** Teachers at Tara High School and Twelve Oaks Middle School were very inviting and friendly while maintaining their professionalism. Morale appeared to be very positive as all teaching staff members interviewed and observed displayed exceptional attitudes about their respective principals, students, and schools. In both schools there was a strong sense of teacher sovereignty, which created an unusual sense of equality between teacher and principal.

A culture built on trust resonated among all teachers interviewed at the Tara and Twelve Oaks schools. Teachers said that they felt privileged to be allowed to control some of the schools’ processes and decision-making. For example, it was not a directive in either school that teachers submit the week’s lesson plans each Friday. Teachers were grateful that their principal was
cognizant of the fact that lesson plans changed based on student progress on daily objectives.

Teachers also expressed their views on the importance of the open-door policy in their schools. Positive problem-solving feedback was always provided by the respective principals in both schools according to the teachers. Teachers also talked about the advice they sought from their principals regarding difficult situations that arose at work or even personally. All the teachers interviewed commented on how their principal always had a positive attitude and that they knew their principal “had their backs.”

Many of the teachers at Tara High School and Twelve Oaks Middle School also talked about how their principal was very supportive in making certain that all teachers had sufficient resources available to do their jobs. This was especially evident at Tara High School, where instructional technology was available in all classes. All classrooms were equipped with SMART boards (interactive white-boards), write pads, document readers, computers, and internet access. Students also had access to iPods pre-loaded with books. There was an ongoing discussion about the upcoming purchase of iPads. At Twelve Oaks Middle School, there were SMART boards in some, but not all, classes. However, teachers there also expressed that the principal was very supportive in providing resources to teachers, despite less-than-ideal financial support for the schools.

Parents. The importance of religious faith in both the Tara and Twelve Oaks communities was apparent from the on-site observations, something that was affirmed through the parent interviews. Youth organizations established by
the area churches were mentioned by all parents as common activities their 
children shared. Tara parents talked about how their children traveled directly 
from school to the sites of youth activities via busses provided by the churches. 
The church denomination that provided youth activities was not a factor 
according to the parents. It was more important that children were in attendance at 
a youth activity on a regular basis than which church denomination provided the 
services.

Parents talked about the school, churches, and all aspects of each 
community as being built on trust. The parents talked about the easy accessibility 
of teachers and that contact with the school was always positive. Parents 
expressed that school personnel treated their children as their own. The parents 
said that the school was the identifying factor in their community, and for that 
reason they put a great deal of trust in the schools.

A common aspect of the parent interviews was that they reflected on their 
previous experiences in larger schools where students are often “lost in the 
system” or misguided due to sheer numbers of students. They were very happy 
with the size of their community’s school and all mentioned how it felt “like 
family” or created an “intimate feeling” of belonging. This was confirmed by both 
principals and most teachers with the phrase, “You have to show them you love 
them like they are your own.” At Tara Schools, there were 539 students in Pre-K 
through grade 12 while at Twelve Oaks Schools there were 462 students in Pre-K 
through grade 8. It was obvious that a family-like climate was present in both 
school systems.
Motivation

**Principals.** The principals at Tara High and Twelve Oaks Middle schools both expressed their belief that allowing teacher input whenever possible played a large role in the motivation of teachers to perform their jobs well. Both principals believed that extending decision-making responsibilities to teachers helped create a sense of ownership and buy-in. Mr. Ashley at Twelve Oaks Middle School said, “A way to get buy-in is by planting an idea into a teacher’s head. This strategy allows teachers to believe in it themselves and then begin to push it.” The concept behind this was that the teacher would then advocate for a particular idea among colleagues; this strategy proved powerful as teachers saw merit in an idea that one of their own was advocating. At Tara High School, Mr. Butler’s strategy for buy-in was to target teachers who were already motivated to assume additional duties to draw others in. Both principals appeared to know their staff well enough to build on their strengths and use them for the benefit of their school organizations.

Both principals also mentioned that involving students in the decision-making process provided them with a sense of motivation as well. Mr. Butler at Tara High School commented that “I ask students, ‘What do you need from the school, the teacher, what do you need from me?’ He said that asking students such questions helps them realize that they are a part of the process that contributes to their motivation to do better. Likewise, Mr. Ashley at Twelve Oaks Middle School said that students have to be part of the processes to help them develop a “team” mindset that enhances overall school motivation.
**Teachers.** The common response from teachers regarding motivation was that they wanted to return or support their principal’s motivation. “Because he is so good to us, we challenge ourselves to be better” was the response given by Ms. Hamilton of Twelve Oaks Middle School. Ms. India, a teacher at Tara High School commented, “He [principal] targets our strengths and uses them to benefit the school, not us. He is a true coach.” Teachers, similar to students, appeared to have a desire to please the principal as well because he consistently treated them well. They spoke of the support the principal provided them as professionals. Teachers expressed that the climate of support encouraged all staff and students to support one another to work as a team.

**Parents.** Parents eagerly talked about the positive demeanor of their child’s principal. Parents from both communities commented on how the principal’s attitude affected the students. Parents said that students are motivated to do well in school if they see that the school cares about them. All parents interviewed said that the principal and teachers, at both locations, express their appreciation and care for all students. Students know that their principals and teachers really care about them, which helps create or adds to their motivation. Based on the interviews with parents, the researcher concluded that the principal’s attitude toward students and visitors at the school, including parents, creates an overall positive climate ideal for motivation to do well in school.

**Instructional Leadership**

**Principals.** The principals at both schools discussed, at length, setting high standards. Both commented that creating a culture that continually and
consistently expects high standards from students and teachers was very important. Furthermore, showing students and teachers that expecting high standards was a non-negotiable aspect of school life by first modeling it themselves was essential. It was important that the principals themselves were modeling high professional standards focused on student achievement. Another common element of importance expressed by both principals was visibility with a positive attitude at all times. Mr. Ashley at Twelve Oaks Middle School said, “I have to set the tone. If I’m always in a grumpy mood or on someone’s case, it affects climate.” If it affects climate, then students, classes, teachers, and even support staff are negatively impacted. Mr. Butler of Tara High School had similar beliefs: that setting the initial example positively affects students and staff, all of which affects student achievement.

Teachers. Teachers who were interviewed primarily addressed the attitudes and support of their respective principals. A consistent response was that they knew the principal cared about what they were doing because of his presence in the classroom during daily instruction. They expressed that they felt no intimidation but rather a sense of being part of a team whose goal was student achievement. Teachers said that they welcomed the principal’s presence anytime, without a schedule or prior notice, because it demonstrated what was actually happening in the classrooms on a daily basis. One commented that teachers do not “put on dog and pony shows” that can result from scheduled observations.

Teachers also talked extensively about the support they received from their principals regarding their innovative ideas that would target student
achievement. If they believed that a workshop or program would benefit student learning, the principal was very likely to support their idea. One teacher commented on how the principal is always willing to listen to new ideas and then supports ideas that demonstrate commitment to the vision of the school. Another commented that if the idea did not help students, teachers tended not to bring it to the principal’s attention. An important message echoed by individual teachers was that they did not attempt to bring ideas to their principal that may have worked for other schools with specific populations. Only ideas that were specific to their particular population were presented to the principal and colleagues for consideration. There was a sense of a collaborative assembly of input directly tied to student achievement for all ideas presented, as opposed to an individual or group forcing a new approach or method upon others without notice.

Parents. The parents acknowledged that they were aware that the principal and teachers in their respective schools were stretched thin. Parents spoke of how incredibly busy the principal was at their child’s school, but commented that if they needed to speak with him he would ensure that he made time to allow them to do so. Parents said that the principals of their schools were accessible, which showed them that the principals genuinely cared about their children. The same was true for the teachers; Ms. Pitty explained, “They are here for the kids. They take pride in that and we can see that as parents.” The conclusion the researcher was able to draw was that instructional leadership was very strong in both schools and was equally recognized by the principal, teachers, and parents.
Empowerment

Principals. The primary source of empowerment the principals identified was ensuring that a shared vision of continuous improvement with a focus on the mission of the school was in the forefront at all times. Mr. Butler at Tara High School said, “Our mission defines who we are and where we want to go. It defines our curriculum, behavior, essentially all our needs.” The principals expressed that having a shared vision is critical in order for the school organization to work cohesively toward common goals that are focused on student achievement. The essence of both principals’ emphasis was that a shared vision creates positive elements within their schools. For example, it helps decision-making processes. With a consistent focus on student achievement, decisions are constantly based on what is in the best interests of students. Another example was that it creates trusting relationships among staff and principal because all involved feel part of a team. It also helps with daily classroom visits in that teachers do not feel intimidated because they know the principal’s visibility is in response to his duties as a person who shares the same vision.

Teachers. The most common response from the teachers interviewed was that they were able to make decisions with or without their principal. Ms. Hamilton at Twelve Oaks Middle School said, “Mr. Ashley is extremely supportive. If we make a decision he doesn’t agree with, he is ready to listen with an open mind. He is one of the best ones [principals] I’ve ever worked with.” Ms. Merriweather agreed with Ms. Hamilton: “He makes me a better teacher because he lets me be who I am and do what I’m trained to do.” Others commented that
they were treated as professionals compared to other situations in which they had taught. They were expected to operate their classes as they saw fit so long as it was in alignment with the vision of the team. Overall, teachers detailed an ideal atmosphere in which they had freedom to teach. They were comforted by the fact that their principal’s support was constant and consistent. One teacher commented that the autonomous environment created a self-sufficient teaching staff.

Confidence in themselves as well as colleagues as opposed to seeking the help of the principal at all times assisted in the efficient operation of the school. Teacher empowerment had a positive effect on teacher motivation at both Tara High School and Twelve Oaks Middle School.

**Parents.** The emerging theme of empowerment in parent responses was that they felt completely at ease visiting their children’s school at any time. The interviewed parents were all active volunteers, some as members of the Parent Advisory Committee. Ms. Ellen commented that the comfortable environment of the school motivated her to join the Parent Advisory Committee: “If you can be involved in their [child’s] education, it becomes even more vital to you and you feel you can make a difference not just in your own kid’s life, but other people’s kids, too.” Ms. O’Hara at Tara said, “This school makes you feel you want to be part of a team.” The general conclusion drawn from the parent interviews was that because of the inviting, non-threatening climate of the school, parents felt empowered to reach out and extend their help in the work toward student achievement.
**School Leadership**

**Principals.** The underlying theme that defined school leadership for both principals was keeping a focus on students at all times. Mr. Butler concisely put it this way: “You have to be about kids and not politics.” Mr. Ashley said, “The goal is about student achievement.” He added that teachers have to be supported for them to perform their jobs: “It’s important to let my teachers run, grow, and pull themselves up. . . . These teachers were hired as professionals and I’m here to guide them to do what is best for students.” Both principals believed that school leadership is about what is beneficial for students. Everything else is directly tied to and dependent on the success of learners. Some key elements of their school leadership that the principals identified were structural organization, team decision-making, relationships based on shared vision and trust, effective communication, and visibility and accessibility. Most of all, they both suggested the need for a level of authenticity within each element displayed by the principal. Mr. Ashley at Twelve Oaks Middle School said, “People are like sharks—they can smell the blood from miles away. Students and teachers know when you are not for real.”

**Teachers.** The primary elements of school leadership identified by teachers were the level of autonomy teachers had and their part in the shared decision-making processes at each school. Ms. Scarlett of Tara High School said what all other teachers seemed to echo: “We get to experience an enormous amount of freedom to teach the way we want that best fits our population.” Other teachers emphasized the level of independence they had at their respective
schools by offering comparisons to previous places of employment. The interviewed teachers expressed appreciation and stated that they did not take advantage of the amount of trust their principals had in them. Regarding decision-making processes, Ms. Wilkerson at Twelve Oaks Middle School commented, “Mr. Ashley draws out the best in everyone, encourages all to do their thing and share their talent.” She elaborated: “He doesn’t have to delegate responsibilities because we all volunteer to take on additional duties. He is good at making sure the load is spread.” The desire to volunteer rather than be appointed to assume decision-making responsibilities was common at both schools. The researcher concluded that the decision-making processes were shared among all staff even when a teacher or teachers volunteered to assume the responsibility. In general, the culture of the building provided all teachers the privilege of contributing to the overall decision-making process.

**Parents.** The common response that tied parent responses to school leadership was that they all perceived that the principals truly cared about all students. Ms. Kennedy, who had three children at Tara High School, said it best: “Administrators here do their job from the heart and always for the kids.” One parent, Ms. Pitty, said that the principals “take their job very seriously.” Another parent, Ms. O’Hara, added that principals “were very down to earth.” Other elements essential to school leadership that parents commented on included principals knowing all students by name as well as their families, timely communication about school matters with parents, an open-door policy, and accessibility.
Trust

Trust. The element of trust was evident in the way both principals worked with teachers and students. Among the most indirect but prevalent evidence of trust was the absence of school rules in classrooms and throughout the buildings. The researcher came upon only one rule, posted near the K-3 hall restrooms at Tara High, that prevented middle and high school students from entering the restrooms designated for Pre-K through grade 3 students. There appeared to be no other rules posted in either school. The researcher concluded that the level of trust had to be extremely high for students not to be reminded of school rules. During on-site visits, the researcher did not witness any acts of unacceptable behavior at any time. Kindergarteners through high school students were especially well mannered while in the classroom, in the lunch room, and between classes. There was a strange sense of order throughout the schools, especially at Tara High School.

Trust was also evident in the way teachers worked. An indirect but poignant indication of the trust the principals placed in their teachers was the manner in which classrooms were decorated. Many of the classrooms the researcher visited were embellished with simple yet significant decorations that resulted in a feeling of home. The most common pieces of furniture found in most classrooms at both schools were rocking chairs, couches, lamps, and framed photographs. Most classes also had one or two walls painted in different colors such as purple, green, mauve, or brown. These simple elements in classrooms generated a feeling of being at home. One of the major elements of positive
leadership behaviors identified by teachers was the independence they enjoyed. The classrooms, including the atmosphere they created through decorations, confirmed the autonomy discussed by teachers. The principals may not have expressed how they built trust in their schools, but it was directly manifested in the general climate of each school.

**Teachers.** Based on conversations at both schools, the researcher sensed that there was a shared feeling of equality between teachers and their respective principals. In the researcher’s experience, principals are generally viewed as “the boss.” However, at the Tara and Twelve Oaks schools teacher responses conveyed the impression that the relationship between teacher and principal was one of a team working toward the same goals. The typical “boss” dominating the “supervised” was not apparent. Teachers were not intimidated by administration because the sense of trust created a shared and equal working environment. Ms. Hamilton at Twelve Oaks Middle School expressed, “I can go to him [Mr. Ashley] with any problem and work out a solution without any repercussions.” Another spoke of lesson plan submission a week ahead of time as required of most teachers in the researcher’s experience. Neither principal collected lesson plans because the trust had been established between teacher and principal. Teachers said that the trust was reciprocal in that although their principal may not demand lesson plans weekly, when the principal spot-checked for lesson plans, lesson plans were generally produced without incident.

**Parents.** Parents expressed a general sense of trust that the community as a whole had the best interest of youth as a foremost concern. Trust was extended
to the students as evidenced by the fact that many of them drove themselves to school. Both schools are in rural locations and busses are not provided for after-school activities; thus, many students drive themselves to school and the parents interviewed said that the community “watches out” for all students at all times. Ms. Hamilton described it this way: “Kids here are under eye at all times; they are fish in a fish bowl.” Parents commented on how it was natural for them to perceive the Tara community’s children as their collective children. There was a basketball game the first night the researcher was at Tara High School. One parent commented that people who no longer had children at the school still attended games because of the general perception that all students were their children. The defining comment about trust came from Ms. Tarleton of the Twelve Oaks community: “You hear the phrase, ‘It takes a village to raise a child’; it is true here. The whole village supports the school.”

**Community Involvement**

**Principals.** Because the Tara and Twelve Oaks communities are situated in rural areas, parent involvement was somewhat limited to parents within close proximity of the schools. Some students lived with their working parents as far away as 60 miles. Mr. Ashley said, “Community involvement is hard up here because it is so rural. When we try to involve parents—some live 60 miles out—it is hard. . . . It’s not that they don’t care, it is how far out they live.” Mr. Butler of Tara High School mentioned the work ethic of parents: “The work ethic is tremendous.” He then spoke of the strong faith base of the community, noting that much of the community involvement happens within the work that is done in
youth groups. Essentially, the community’s strong Christian background, along with the work ethic, created an unconventional inlet for community involvement. Ms. Tarleton of Twelve Oaks Middle School was quoted previously as stating that the support for the schools comes from the village. This statement was confirmed by what the principals conveyed regarding community involvement.

**Teachers.** According to the interviewed teachers, the best way to involve the community was to maintain an open-door policy and accessibility. They said that the open-door policy provided parents and visitors with a welcoming atmosphere. At Twelve Oaks Middle School, the researcher noticed that in some classrooms there were additional adults working at the teachers’ desks. A teacher pointed out that these individuals were parent volunteers. Ms. Merriweather explained that there was a pool of parents and some grandparents who volunteered regularly. These parents volunteered consistently enough to become familiar with the teacher’s “way of doing things and knowing what needs to be done and got right to work.”

At Tara, community involvement primarily revolved around the youth groups organized by the area churches as well as school sports activities. Youth groups met on Wednesdays and Fridays each week and students were transported directly from the campus after school to the site of the event. Regarding sports, Ms. Melanie said, “A large number of students here [Tara High School], their parents were former students and graduated from here.” She went on to say, “Our main source of community involvement at the high school comes from athletics,
but at the elementary level PTA is huge.” The idea that the school defined the community was common to both schools.

Parents. The concept of the “village supporting the schools” was clearly evident in the parent interviews. Because of the small size of the Tara and Twelve Oaks communities, knowledge about other members of the community was prevalent in the way parents spoke about the children in reference to the entire student population of their respective communities. Both communities were deeply rooted in their Christian faith; therefore, much interaction between the youth and adults of both communities took place in area churches, which resulted in a common feeling of family throughout both communities. The schools and the involved parents may not have completely perceived the scope of community involvement present because of their rural setting; however, in the researcher’s experience, both communities expressed sentiments related to elements of excellent community involvement.

Survey

The self-assessment portion of the Educational Leadership Policy Standards was revised and rewritten as questions (see Appendix F). A set of 31 questions with a five-point Likert-type response mode was developed. The survey was designed to help the researcher develop an understanding of the two secondary principals’ leadership characteristics and practices (see Appendix G).

An invitation to complete the survey was initially sent to all 19 principals of rural New Mexico secondary schools that had met AYP standards for the target year. Designation of schools as rural was based on the New Mexico
Administrative Code. NMAC Title 6 defines the general requirements and definitions related to rural education (see “Definition of Terms” in Chapter 1). The first invitation included a disclaimer that completion of the survey would serve as consent to participate in the study. Of the 19 invitations, four principals completed the survey and confirmed participation via telephone. The researcher then selected two of the four school systems with nearly equal populations of 500 students, as the participants for the present case study. Three additional rounds of invitations were sent to the remaining 15 principals who had not responded to the survey, seeking their input exclusively for data collection purposes. Six more secondary principals responded, which brought the number of respondents to eight secondary principals in addition to Mr. Butler and Mr. Ashley, for a total of ten principals who completed the survey. The researcher analyzed the survey to provide additional in-depth data that demonstrated consistency across all three data sets: interviews, field notes, and survey.

The six ISLLC standards are displayed in Tables 2 through 7, one standard per table. Below each standard, the functions or specific processes that directly support the standard are given. The survey asked principals to indicate the degree to which they exercised each of the six functions. The five options were “almost always,” “to a considerable degree,” “occasionally,” “seldom,” or “never.”

Table 2 defines the first standard for leadership behaviors, a standard that addresses and supports the vision for the school. It outlines how the mission was created and how data were used to identify goals that would align with the mission so that the school could develop a shared vision as a focal point of the
work. Furthermore, the standard outlines how leadership initiates and implements plans that would contribute to the school’s vision. Finally, the standard addresses leadership behaviors that promote and monitor continuous improvement so that work toward the common vision can be continually adjusted to achieve goals.

Results of the responses from the ten responding secondary principals of rural schools were that for three of the five functions, half of the participating principals \((n=5)\) responded “To a considerable degree.” An equal number responded that they “Almost always” performed the functions pertinent to Standard 1. The function that had the strongest response was for creating and implementing goals, with 70% \((n=7)\) of the principals indicating that they “Almost always” performed this function. Within the functions under Standard 1, it appears that the principals perceived the essential elements most likely required to effectively lead are motivation and trust. Data in Table 2 show that eight of ten responding principals claimed to practice leadership behaviors that build motivation and trust. Furthermore, the principals of Tara High School and Twelve Oaks Middle School both expressed that building on their teachers’ strengths was a source for motivation while simultaneously building trust.

Chi-square analysis for Standard 1 (see Table 2) indicates that results for four of the five functions were statistically significant in favor of the number of responding principals who selected “Almost always” or “To a considerable degree,” collapsed into a single category for the purpose of analysis, as opposed to “Occasionally,” “Seldom,” or “Never,” similarly collapsed into a single category (see Table 2). The only function for which the results failed to reach
statistical significance \((p < .05)\) was Function 4: “Promote continuous and sustainable improvement.” Even for this function, 80% of the responding principals reported strong support in the form of their actions, but the remaining 20% reported only occasional support for this set of responsibilities.

Table 2

*Results of ISLLC Standards Survey Standard 1*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Almost always</th>
<th>To a considerable degree</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Collaboratively develop and implement a shared vision and mission</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(X^2 = 6.4, df = 1, p &lt; .05)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Collect and use data to identify goals, assess organizational effectiveness and promote organizational learning</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(X^2 = 10.0, df = 1, p &lt; .01)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Create and implement plans to achieve goals</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(X^2 = 6.4, df = 1, p &lt; .05)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Almost always</th>
<th>To a considerable degree</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. Promote continuous and sustainable improvement</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$X^2 = 3.6, df = 1, p &gt; .05$ (n. s.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Monitor and evaluate progress and revise plans</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$X^2 = 6.4, df = 1, p &lt; .05$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Chi-square analysis based on the two highest responses versus the three lowest responses.

The results for Standard 2 are displayed in Table 3. Standard 2 outlines leadership behaviors that support student success through school culture and instructional programs. A major purpose of Standard 2 is the establishment of a trusting school culture where high standards are an expectation. The entire matrix of Standard 2 consists of multiple layers of a school organization to ensure student success, such as ensuring rigor of curriculum to support high expectations, motivating learning environment, promoting staff leadership, providing technological support, supervising quality instruction, assessing and demanding accountability, and evaluating instructional impact to help facilitate success for all students.

The results shown in Table 3 indicate that most principals in rural schools, including the principals of Tara High and Twelve Oaks Middle schools, claimed to have incorporated culture-building into their daily practice so that all activities are centered on student learning. The interviews with the principals, teachers, and
parents confirmed the importance principals placed on Standard 2. That school culture played an important role in student success was a belief in evidence in both schools in this study.

Chi-square analysis for Standard 2 indicates that results for four of the nine functions (1, 3, 4, and 6) were unanimous in favor (i.e., “Almost always” or “To a considerable degree”) (see Table 3). These four functions dealt with, respectively, “a culture of collaboration, trust, learning, and high expectations,” “a personalized and motivating learning environment,” supervising instruction, and developing “assessment and accountability systems” for students. Results for another three functions (2, 7, and 8) were not unanimous but were still statistically significant in favor ($p < .05$). These functions concerned, respectively, “a comprehensive, rigorous, and coherent curricular program,” maximizing “time spent on quality instruction,” and promoting “the use of the most effective and appropriate technologies to support teaching and learning.” The remaining two functions (5 and 9), both of which dealt with monitoring student progress, received strong support (i.e., “Almost always” or “To a considerable degree”) from a majority of the responding principals, but the results did not reach statistical significance ($p < .05$). One respondent selected “Never” for Function 5, for developing “assessment and accountability systems to monitor student progress.”
Table 3

Results of ISLLC Standards Survey Standard 2

*Standard 2:* An education leader promotes the success of every student by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Almost always</th>
<th>To a considerable degree</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Nurture and sustain a culture of collaboration, trust, learning, and high expectations</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>70.0%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\chi^2 = 10.0), (df = 1), (p &lt; .01)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Create a comprehensive, rigorous, and coherent curricular program</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\chi^2 = 6.4), (df = 1), (p &lt; .05)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Create a personalized and motivating learning environment for students</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\chi^2 = 10.0), (df = 1), (p &lt; .01)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Supervise instruction</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\chi^2 = 10.0), (df = 1), (p &lt; .01)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Develop assessment and accountability systems to monitor student progress</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\chi^2 = 3.6), (df = 1), (p &gt; .05) (n.s.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Develop assessment and accountability systems to monitor student progress</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\chi^2 = 10.0), (df = 1), (p &lt; .01)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Almost always</th>
<th>To a considerable degree</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7. Maximize time spent on quality instruction</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(X^2 = 6.4, df = 1, p &lt; .05)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Promote the use of the most effective and appropriate technologies to support teaching and learning</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(X^2 = 6.4, df = 1, p &lt; .05)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Monitor and evaluate the impact of the instructional program</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(X^2 = 3.6, df = 1, p &gt; .05) (n. s.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Chi-square analysis based on the two highest responses versus the three lowest responses.

Standard 3 focuses on the safety, efficiency, and effectiveness of the school environment through the supervision of the organization, operation, and resources available. Leadership must provide for stakeholder safety and welfare by supporting management and operational systems in a school building. A leader can seek help in maintaining a safe, efficient, effective environment by extending leadership capacities to others such as teachers. Making certain that the overall school system is safe, efficient, and effective typically results in highly focused concentration on quality instruction and student learning.

Results in Table 4 show that many of the responding principals indicated that they “Almost always” addressed the functions outlined. The majority of the
respondents (80%) claimed to “Almost always” promote the welfare and safety of stakeholders within the school, that is, students and teachers. Trust becomes part of the organization’s culture when people know they are safe. Additionally, teachers become more likely to assume leadership roles when the environment is safe. Empowerment becomes part of the school personality so that quality instruction geared toward student learning becomes central to the organization. Half of the principals responded that they “Almost always” supported teacher leadership and six of ten principals indicated that the focus on quality instruction and student learning were critical to the work of the organization.

Chi-square analysis for Standard 3 (see Table 4) indicates that results for three of the five functions were statistically significant in favor of the responding principals who selected “Almost always” or “To a considerable degree,” as opposed to “Occasionally,” “Seldom,” or “Never.” The strongly supported functions were Functions 2, 3, and 4: “Obtain, allocate, align, and efficiently utilize human, fiscal, and technological resources,” “Promote and protect the welfare and safety of students and staff,” and “Develop the capacity for distributed leadership,” respectively. Functions 1 and 5 failed to reach statistical significance ($p<.05$): “Monitor and evaluate the management and operational systems” and “Ensure teacher and organizational time is focused to support quality instruction and student learning,” respectively.
Table 4

Results of ISLLC Standards Survey Standard 3

**Standard 3:** An education leader promotes the success of every student by ensuring management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Almost always</th>
<th>To a considerable degree</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Monitor and evaluate the management and operational systems</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$X^2 = 3.6, df = 1, p &gt; .05 (n.s.)$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Obtain, allocate, align, and efficiently utilize human, fiscal, and</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>technological resources</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$X^2 = 6.4, df = 1, p &lt; .05$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Promote and protect the welfare and safety of students and staff</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$X^2 = 10.0, df = 1, p &lt; .01$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Develop the capacity for distributed leadership</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$X^2 = 6.4, df = 1, p &lt; .05$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Ensure teacher and organizational time is focused to support</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quality instruction and student learning</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$X^2 = 3.6, df = 1, p &gt; .05 (n.s.)$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** Chi-square analysis based on the two highest responses versus the three lowest responses.

Standard 4 relates to working in partnership, not only with the school, but also with the community in the interest of student success. Standard 4 implies that
to secure support from community resources school leadership must focus on building relationships with families and local partners so that understanding and appreciation of diverse and social contexts within a community are utilized in the efforts aimed toward student success. Results in Table 5 illustrate that half or more of the principals say they utilized data to help make educational decisions as well as to build partnerships with students’ families and community partners to improve student success. However, support was weaker for Standard 4 than for some other standards as evidenced by the fact that “To a considerable degree” was a more common response than “Almost always.”. Function 1, “Collect and analyze data and information,” was supported unanimously by respondents, albeit with 80% of respondents selected “To a considerable degree” and only 20% “Almost always.” The other three functions under Standard 4 received considerably weaker support from respondents.

Chi-square analysis for Standard 4 (see Table 5) indicates that results for only Function 1 were statistically significant in favor of the responding principals who selected “Almost always” or “To a considerable degree,” as opposed to “Occasionally,” “Seldom,” or “Never” (see Table 4). Results for Functions 2, 3, and 4 failed to reach statistical significance ($p < .05$): “Promote understanding, appreciation, and use of the community’s diverse, cultural, social, and intellectual resources,” “Build and sustain positive relationships with families and caregivers,” and “Build and sustain productive relationships with community partners,” respectively. Responses were especially mixed for Function 2, with 10% of the respondents indicating “Seldom,” 40% “Occasionally,” 30% “To a considerable
degree,” and only 20% “Almost always.” Another function that garnered a range of responses was Function 4, for which 10% of responding principals indicated “Seldom,” 30% “Occasionally,” 50% “To a considerable degree,” and only 10% “Almost always.”

Table 5

Results of ISLLC Standards Survey Standard 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Almost always</th>
<th>To a considerable degree</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Collect and analyze data and information</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X² = 10.0, df = 1, p &lt; .01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Promote understanding, appreciation, and use of the community’s</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diverse cultural, social, and intellectual resources</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X² = 0.0, df = 1, p &gt; .05 (n. s.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Build and sustain positive relationships with families and caregivers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X² = 3.6, df = 1, p &gt; .05 (n. s.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Build and sustain productive relationships with community partners</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X² = .4 , df = 1, p &gt; .05 (n. s.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Chi-square analysis based on the two highest responses versus the three lowest responses.
For Standard 5, all five functions received strong support (see Table 6).

According to the survey responses, 50% \((n = 5)\) of the principals claimed that they consistently ensured accountability, practiced behaviors in an ethical manner, safeguarded school and community values, made decisions with regard for moral and legal consequences, and ensured that student needs drove school decisions (Function 1). Functions 2 and 3 received the strongest support, with 80% of the responding principals indicating for both functions that they “Almost always” practice such behaviors.

Chi-square tests showed statistically significant support for all five functions associated with Standard 5 (see Table 6). All responses for all five functions were “Almost always” or “To a considerable degree” except for a lone “Occasionally” for Function 4: “Consider and evaluate the potential moral and legal consequences of decision-making.”
Table 6

Results of ISLLC Standards Survey Standard 5

**Standard 5:** An education leader promotes the success of every student by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Almost always</th>
<th>To a considerable degree</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Ensure a system of accountability for every student’s academic and social success</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$X^2 = 10.0, df = 1, p &lt; .01$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Model principles of self-awareness, reflective practice, transparency, and ethical behavior</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>80.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$X^2 = 10.0, df = 1, p &lt; .01$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Safeguard the values of democracy, equity, and diversity</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>80.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$X^2 = 10.0, df = 1, p &lt; .01$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Consider and evaluate the potential moral and legal consequences of decision-making</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>70.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$X^2 = 6.4, df = 1, p &lt; .05$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Promote social justice and ensure that individual student needs inform all aspects of schooling</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$X^2 = 10.0, df = 1, p &lt; .01$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Chi-square analysis based on the two highest responses versus the three lowest responses.

Standard 6 provides school leadership with a focus on forces outside the school that must be considered if student success is to be promoted using every
available resource. The three functions outlined by Standard 6 are directed toward the culture, politics, social, and economic contexts of the community. The manner in which a school leader must actively advocate in the above contexts should be in the best interest of student success.

Of the six standards, Standard 6 received the most varied responses as shown in Table 7. The strongest response was 60% \( (n = 6) \) of the principals who claimed they “Almost always” performed Function 1: “Advocating for children, families, and caregivers.” The weakest support among these three standards was for Function 2: “Act to influence local, district, state, and national decisions affecting student learning.” Only two responding principals (20%) indicated that they “Almost always” acted on this function, and in total 50% of respondents indicated that they “Occasionally,” “Seldom,” or “Never” did so. Support for Function 3, “Assess, analyze, and anticipate emerging trends and initiatives in order to adapt leadership strategies,” was not much stronger, with only 60% of respondents selecting the top two categories.

Standard 6 addresses community involvement and trust, two of the major themes identified from the three data sets. While the responses for Standards 1 through 5 were overwhelmingly positive, with half or more of the principals claiming that they supported the respective standards “Almost always” or “To a considerable degree,” for Standard 6 the responses were different. An observation can be made that “local and district” were combined with “state and national.” The principals who responded to the survey may have perceived that the
latter dominated the former. The belief that influences at the state and national levels can be more complex may have shaped the responses.

Chi-square analysis revealed non-significant results for all three functions in Standard 6. Indeed, 50% of respondents indicated that they “Occasionally,” “Seldom,” or “Never” acted “to influence local, district, state, and national decisions affecting student outcomes,” including 20% who claimed they “Never” did so. Clearly there was less support among the responding principals of New Mexico AYP high schools for dealing with power structures and trends beyond their own schools and communities.
### Table 7

**Results of ISLLC Standards Survey Standard 6**

**Standard 6:** An education leader promotes the success of every student by understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Almost always</th>
<th>To a considerable degree</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Advocate for children, families, and caregivers</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(X^2 = 3.6 ), (df = 1), (p &gt; .05) (n. s.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Act to influence local, district, state, and national decisions affecting student learning</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(X^2 = 0.0 ), (df = 1), (p &gt; .05) (n.s.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Assess, analyze, and anticipate emerging trends and initiatives in order to adapt leadership strategies</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(X^2 = .4 ), (df = 1), (p &gt; .05) (n. s.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Chi-square analysis based on the two highest responses versus the three lowest responses.

### Summary

Seven themes were found to be common among the New Mexico schools that made Annual Yearly Progress in the 2009- year. The major themes and concepts identified through the interviews with the principals, teachers, and parents were: (a) culture, (b) motivation, (c) instructional leadership, (d) empowerment, (e) school leadership, (f) trust, and (e) community involvement.

The responses of the ten principals to the ISLLC Standards Survey Standards
1 through 6 are depicted in Tables 2 through 7. Elaborated on in the next chapter are the answers to the research questions, along with conclusions in light of the literature review, as a result of the findings set out in this chapter.
CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of selected characteristics and behaviors of the leaders in two high-achieving New Mexico secondary schools that attained adequate yearly progress (AYP) in the 2009-10 school year. Additionally, factors related to the rural settings of the two schools were examined. Three research questions guided the present study. Research Question 1 asked whether there were common characteristics of school climate in high-achieving rural schools. A sub-question of Question 1 asked whether the rural location of the schools positively affected climate and achievement. Question 2 sought to identify characteristics of principals in high-achieving schools. Question 3 asked whether there were common leadership practices among principals in high-achieving rural schools. The first sub-question of Question 3 sought teachers’ opinions about principal leadership, and the second sub-question asked parents’ opinions about principal leadership.

The participants involved in the study were from two rural communities in New Mexico who were employed by or parents of students at Tara High School and Twelve Oaks Middle School, in respective communities of the same names. Two secondary principals, 12 secondary teachers, and seven parents voluntarily participated in this study. All 21 individuals were interviewed using questions that sought their opinions on leadership. The questions for the principals, teachers, and parents were worded slightly differently but the content was similar. Both principals also completed an on-line leadership survey and the researcher
conducted on-site observations at both participating schools to collect field notes. Additionally, eight principals of other rural schools in New Mexico that achieved AYP in 2009-10 volunteered to take the leadership survey for anonymous data collection purposes only.

A thematic analysis was conducted with the responses from the principal, teacher, and parent interviews. After transcription of interviews, common words and phrases were identified and matched to key ideas in the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards used in the survey. Seven themes emerged as consistently discussed by all participants: (a) culture, (b) motivation, (c) instructional leadership, (d) empowerment, (e) school leadership, (f) trust, and (e) community involvement. The seven themes were consistent across all three data sets. The findings related to the three research questions are discussed according to the seven emerging themes along with the survey responses.

**Research Question 1: Findings and Conclusions**

*Are there common characteristics of school climate in a high-achieving rural school?* Sub-question 1: Does rural location of schools positively affect school climate and achievement?* An important finding related to the first question was that all seven themes were consistently mentioned during interviews with the principals, teachers, and parents in both communities. It was almost as if, although randomly selected, participants rehearsed the answers to the interview questions to ensure consistency in responses. The seven themes of culture, motivation, instructional leadership, empowerment, school leadership, trust, and
community involvement were common characteristics consistently mentioned at both Tara High School and Twelve Oaks Middle School. “The key to a successful school is often found in the unique attributes of its organizational culture” or climate (Fullan, 2007, p. 157). The validity of Fullan’s statement was readily apparent in both schools.

All individuals interviewed appeared to have a complete grasp of the “reality” of their environment. Sergiovanni and Starratt (2007) stated that there are four dimensions of school culture: artifacts, perspectives, values, and assumptions. Artifacts of culture are those aspects easily observable in what is said and how people behave. Perspectives involve how people in an organization react to or handle situations. Values provide the foundation for how an organization evaluates situations that may arise. While the first three levels are tangible and observable, the fourth level is theoretically embedded in an organization and involves a deeper level of the first three. In other words, assumptions can be defined as an absolute awareness of the “reality” of the school’s environment as described by Sergiovanni and Starratt (2007):

Craig C. Lundberge describes assumptions as “The tacit beliefs that members hold about themselves and others, their relationships to other persons, and the nature of the organization in which they live. Assumptions are the nonconscious underpinnings of the first three levels—that is, the implicit, abstract axioms that determine the more explicit systems of meanings.” (p. 343)

Interviews, observations, and survey responses from both Tara High School and Twelve Oaks Middle School demonstrated that all four levels of culture were well established, which provided an ideal climate for the remaining
six themes to flourish: motivation, instructional leadership, empowerment, school leadership, trust, and community involvement. “When leaders [teachers and parents] stay attuned to the everyday realities of school culture, they are better equipped to ensure alignment with, and progress towards, the collective vision of the school’s future” (Fullan, 2007, p. 157). As for the sub-question about physical setting, it appears that the rural location of both schools positively affected school climate, which had a positive influence on student achievement.

Research Question 2: Findings and Conclusions

What are the characteristics of a principal in a high-achieving rural school? A fundamental characteristic of both principals was how they effortlessly managed their 70 to 80 hours of work per week. The level of activity exhibited by both principals was initially perceived by the researcher as perhaps a result of circumstances at the time of the on-site visits. However, interviews with teachers and parents indicated that each of the 14 to 16 hours in a typical day was filled with non-stop activity for both principals.

Both principals had a commitment to visiting all classrooms on a daily basis. It was imperative to both principals that they be visible, with a positive demeanor, at all times to create a non-threatening atmosphere. More importantly, the principals noted that visibility demonstrated that they cared about students and teachers. Visibility also allowed for constant dialogue among the principals, teachers, and students. Another reason why visibility was critical to the principals was that it showed support in that they were able to see for themselves the kind of support teachers and students needed in terms of tangible supplies and any
innovative ideas. Visibility reinforced another important feature of the principals: their open door policies that encouraged constant dialogue with teachers and students.

A further characteristic of both Mr. Butler at Tara High School and Mr. Ashley at Twelve Oaks Middle School was their modeling of professional behavior in a number of ways. For example, they treated all teachers as professionals at all times. One way this was manifested was that they allowed teachers to provide input into the school’s processes and decision-making. This practice provided an important foundation for professional relationships between leader and teachers based on shared vision, trust, effective communication, and accessibility. Another way was to establish an autonomous environment for teachers so that they were able to make classroom decisions based on the shared vision of the school organization. An essential trait that provided purpose for all the other characteristics was the both principals set high standards focused on achievement for students as well as teachers.

**Research Question 3: Findings and Conclusions**

*Are there common leadership practices of the principals in high-achieving rural schools?* *Sub-question 1: What are teachers’ opinions about principal leadership?* *Sub-question 2: What are parents’ opinions about principal leadership?* The leadership survey served as a strong indication of common leadership practices among principals of high-achieving rural schools. The on-site visits to Tara High School and Twelve Oaks Middle School reinforced the leadership survey as the researcher witnessed the six standards outlined in ISLLC.
enforced and in practice. The responding principals indicated “Almost always” 69% of the time to the 26 functions outlined under the six standards, while 50% of the time they indicated “To a considerable degree,” a strong indication that principals perform the functions outlined by ISLLC as practices employed by effective leaders. Only one function of the 26 resulted in 40% of respondents indicating “Occasionally.” This was a function in Standard 4: “Promote understanding, appreciation, and use of the community’s diverse cultural, social, and intellectual resources.” This may be because both principals participating in the present study stated that community involvement was a challenge because many parents lived long distances from the schools. Interestingly, the standards that received the statistically non-significant results were 4 and 6, which dealt with community involvement (Standard 4) and influence in the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural realms (Standard 6). The standards that received the most support (and the smallest frequencies of lower levels of support) were 1 and 3. Both Standards 1 and 3 involve promoting the success of every student: Standard 1 through a shared vision supported by all stakeholders, and Standard 3 through management of the organization, operation, and resources.

Although interviewed teachers and parents were not shown the ISLLC standards for leadership, they corroborated the results of the survey by describing their principals’ leadership practices as those outlined in ISLLC. Interviewed teachers and parents spoke of a shared vision focused on student success. They discussed a school culture that was positive and oriented toward doing what was best for all learners with a constant emphasis on safety, efficiency, and
effectiveness. Moreover, teachers spoke about the shared leadership responsibilities between leader and teachers that created empowerment. All concepts discussed by interviewed teachers and parents were elements present in the six standards provided by ISLLC as practices effective leaders should employ.

Conclusions

The data in Chapter 4 represent perspectives on effective school leadership provided by a group of educators who work in schools in rural New Mexico. Among the three data sets utilized in the present study, consistency was demonstrated. The interview responses provided by the teachers and parents supported responses from the principals on both the interviews and survey. Furthermore, the researcher’s on-site observations aligned with responses indicated on the survey as well as with responses from the personal interviews. Guided by three questions in this study, the researcher discovered findings that were consistently supported by the three data sets.

There were common characteristics of school climate in the two high-achieving rural secondary schools. Although Mr. Butler of Tara High School and Mr. Ashley of Twelve Oaks Middle School did not have a copy of the ISLLC standards readily available, their typical leadership behaviors were confirmed through their interview responses, those of the teachers and parents, and observations made by the researcher. The researcher found that all but one of the 32 functions outlined by ISLLC were continuously and consistently performed as claimed by the principals participating in the survey, including the two principals involved in this study.
In identifying the degree to which Mr. Butler at the Tara schools performed the 32 functions, he responded “Almost always” 65% of the time and “To a considerable degree” 28% of the time. He responded “Seldom” only once (3%). Mr. Ashley of the Twelve Oaks schools responded “Almost always” 53% of the time and “To a considerable degree” 41% of the time. Like Mr. Butler, he responded “Occasionally” to only one function.

Among all principals who took the survey, 24 (75%) of the 32 functions received a response above 50% of “Almost always” performed. It is clear that common characteristics existed among principals of rural schools in New Mexico that achieved AYP.

Fullan (2007) wrote, “Teacher stress and alienation are at an all-time high, judging from the increase in work-related illness, and from the numbers of teachers leaving or wanting to leave the profession” (p. 129). Evidence of these phenomena was lacking at Tara High School and Twelve Oaks Middle School. Although both schools had factors that can cause low morale—physical isolation, increased accountability, decreasing enrollments—teachers at both schools appeared to foster and enjoy a strong support system of collegiality that created a culture of trust steeped in collaboration and willingness to learn together. All four of Bryk and Schneider’s (2002) components of trust were discussed by interviewed teachers at both schools as essential elements of each school’s climate: respect, competence, personal regard for others, and integrity. The school climate at both schools demonstrated a culture that nurtured continual growth and learning.
James, Connolly, Dunning, and Elliot (2006) completed a study of effective schools in which they identified six characteristics:

Leadership depth and intensity; the mindset of being empowered, proactive, and optimistic; a teaching team modus operandi; the engagement of pupils and their parents; a very efficient and effective organization and management; and mutual support, validation, and valuing between the school and the community. The overall effect was a highly motivating and energized collaborative culture in which people were passionate about their work together and deeply focused on making and continuing to make changes that would get results. (p. 79)

The school cultures at Tara High School and Twelve Oaks Middle School exemplified all six characteristics. In Chapter 1, Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) are quoted: “[School leaders] are considered to be vital to the successful functioning of many aspects of school” (p. 5). The researcher observed a validation of this assertion through the data sets gathered in the study. Additionally, Fullan (2007) stated, “The principal is in the middle of the relationship between teachers and external ideas and people. As in most human triangles, there are constant conflicts and dilemmas” (p. 155). Mr. Butler and Mr. Ashley both appeared to work effortlessly within the triangle described by Fullan. Based on the principal, teacher, and parent interviews, the success of the “triangle” was dependent on how effectively the principals worked with the students, teachers, and community.

A definition of “leadership” by Antonakis, Cianciolo, and Sternberg (2004) quoted and discussed in Chapter 2 was clarified and authenticated by the researcher through the three data sets gathered: “Leadership is the process or example by which an individual induces a group to pursue objectives held by the
leader or shared by the leader and his or her followers” (p. 17). Defining and driving the shared objectives that teachers, principals, and parents seemed to equally support was the students.

Another significant finding was that the rural locations appeared to have played a positive role in the success of the two schools in this study. “Numerous authors have reported on the importance of involving parents and/or the community in rural school improvement efforts, particularly in support of student academic achievement” (Harmon & Schafft, 2009, p. 4). According to the principals, teachers, and parents, the rural environment provided a “family-like” setting in the schools as well as communities. The concept of “a village raising a child” was evident in that the community considered all youth as their own children. This atmosphere created a strong support system grounded in religious faith and family values that had a positive effect on academics. Furthermore, both the Tara and Twelve Oaks communities strongly supported extracurricular activities, which provided a support system for the youth. In essence, the researcher concluded that rather than the schools seeking parents, the parents sought ways to be helpful at the schools.

Mr. Ashley of Twelve Oaks Middle School discussed a triangle of support that all students required to achieve success. The triangle consisted of parental, school, and community support. He said that if one of the support systems were lacking, students who operated on a triangle with a missing piece were the ones who experienced problems in school. The researcher concluded that students in the Tara and Twelve Oaks communities had a strong support system from
parents/guardians, school personnel, and community members who believed that they had a shared responsibility to help youth succeed. Furthermore, the researcher found that each piece of the triangle also had its own support system in that students became part of the triangle. Harmon and Schafft (2009) wrote, “Despite their portrayal of life in the rural area as a privilege, educational leaders viewed place (rurality) as presenting more problems than possibilities in the lives of most students” (p. 4). The triangle of support evident at both schools in this study refutes this claim.

It is a conclusion that each principal, teacher, and student in the communities of Tara and Twelve Oaks had a heightened sense of purpose because of the support systems that were in place. The type of community was best described by Chance (1999) as a “greater community.” “This greater community epitomizes people who share a common core of values regarding the young people of that community and their potential future” (p. 231). The principals, Mr. Butler and Mr. Ashley, fostered an environment for a high level of academic environment through their daily leadership practices and behaviors. Teachers and parents equally conveyed similar positive opinions about the leadership their respective principal provided. They discussed a leader who effectively manages with a type and style of leadership embedded with Evan’s (1996) “savvy” or Sergiovanni’s (1992) “form of stewardship”—a type that results in a high performance from all involved with the school.
Recommendations

The findings and conclusions from this study yielded the following recommendations:

Implications for Leadership

- Principals must facilitate the development of a meaningful, shared vision that fits the reality of the school organization.
- Principals need to fully understand the processes involved in the development of a shared vision so as not to leave it to chance in the hope that teachers, support staff, students, and other stakeholders adopt the general vision with fidelity.
- Principals must identify their building’s culture and acknowledge the positive aspects of culture in order to utilize the strengths and diminish the negative aspects.
- Principals need to define elements of their school building that have an effect on motivation for students, teachers, and support staff.
- Principals must provide leadership that fosters autonomy in the classroom while maintaining compliance. Instructional leadership that emphasizes compliance creates a school culture with a fragmented shared vision which results in lack of motivation.
- Principals must provide empowerment for teachers so that they become focused on a shared vision by modeling and delegating school leadership whenever possible. Teachers who are treated as leaders provide enhancement of school culture and motivation as trust is created.
Recommendations for Future Research

1. Two rural secondary schools that achieved AYP in 2009-10 in New Mexico were used in the present study. It is recommended that additional rural schools be studied in further studies.

2. Some schools in metropolitan areas schools in New Mexico achieved AYP in the 2009-10 school year. It is recommended that the same study be applied to metropolitan schools to see if leadership practices are consistent with rural school leadership.

3. The two schools in this study were both very small in terms of enrollments, as were the respective school systems. It is recommended that school size be studied in addition to the factors of success identified in this study.
REFERENCES


Milstein, M. M. (1992). *The Danforth program for the preparation of school principals six years later: What we have learned*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the University Council for Educational Administration, Minneapolis, MN.


New Mexico Administrative Code. (2010). *Primary and secondary education, rural education, flexibility for rural school districts, Title 6, Chapter 34,*


APPENDIX A

BLAKE AND MOUTON FIVE LEADERSHIP STYLES

(FROM MANAGERIAL GRID)
Country Club Leadership—High People/Low Production

This style of leader is most concerned about the needs and feelings of members of his/her team. These people operate under the assumption that as long as team members are happy and secure then they will work hard. What tends to result is a work environment that is very relaxed and fun but where production suffers due to lack of direction and control.

Produce or Perish Leadership—High Production/Low People

Also known as Authoritarian or Compliance Leaders, people in this category believe that employees are simply a means to an end. Employee needs are always secondary to the need for efficient and productive workplaces. This type of leader is very autocratic, has strict work rules, policies, and procedures, and views punishment as the most effective means to motivate employees. (See also our article on Theory X/Theory Y.)

Impoverished Leadership—Low Production/Low People

This leader is mostly ineffective. He/she has neither a high regard for creating systems for getting the job done, nor for creating a work environment that is satisfying and motivating. The result is a place of disorganization, dissatisfaction, and disharmony.

Middle-of-the-Road Leadership—Medium Production/Medium People

This style seems to be a balance of the two competing concerns. It may at first appear to be an ideal compromise. Therein lies the problem, though: When you compromise, you necessarily give away a bit of each concern
so that neither production nor people needs are fully met. Leaders who use this style settle for average performance and often believe that this is the most anyone can expect.

Team Leadership—High Production/High People

According to the Blake Mouton model, this is the pinnacle of managerial style. These leaders stress production needs and the needs of the people equally highly. The premise here is that employees are involved in understanding organizational purpose and determining production needs. When employees are committed to, and have a stake in the organization’s success, their needs and production needs coincide. This creates a team environment based on trust and respect, which leads to high satisfaction and motivation and, as a result, high production. (See also our article on Theory Y) (1964).
To: Jana Humphreys  
FROM: Mark Roosa, Chair  
Sec. Beh IRB  
Date: 12/03/2010  
Committee Action: Exemption Granted  
IRB Action Date: 12/02/2010  
IRB Protocol #: 011005/44  
Study Title: A Case Study of Two Rural New Mexico Secondary Schools and Principals:  
School Location and Effective Leadership that Contribute to AYP Results  

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(2).  

This part of the federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.  

You should retain a copy of this letter for your records.
APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PRINCIPAL
Would you please introduce yourself?

a. Age
b. Marital status
c. Number of children
d. Places lived
e. Schooling
   i. Undergraduate
   ii. Graduate
f. Years of professional experience
   i. Certified positions
   ii. Administrative positions

2. Current what position do you hold and how long have you been acting in this capacity?

3. What beliefs do you have about student learning?

4. What do you believe drives your student population’s willingness to achieve?

5. A philosophy or platform can be described as a framework of beliefs, values, and opinions that tailors one’s decision making, organization, and planning of instruction. Can you describe the positions you deem important in the daily function of your school in the following areas:
   a. In student learning?
   b. Student outcomes?
   c. Instructional climate?
d. Instructional organization  
e. Community involvement or external support?  
f. Leadership behaviors?

6. What belief do you have that your demographic area plays a part in your school’s AYP success?  

7. What types of extracurricular school-related or non-school related activities do you feel play a positive role in student success?  

8. What was a turning point in your professional career that led you to seek a position as a school principal?  

9. How do you zero-in on to your staff’s capabilities and use them to the advantage of achievement?  

10. How do you feel the overall contributions you’ve made to your school have helped to yield success at making AYP?  

11. Do you have any advice for potential principals?
APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS
1. Would you please introduce yourself?
   a. Age
   b. Marital status
   c. Number of children
   d. Places lived
   e. Schooling
      i. Undergraduate
      ii. Graduate
   f. Years of professional experience
      i. Certified positions
      ii. Administrative positions
2. Current what position do you hold and how long have you been acting in this capacity?
3. What do you believe drives your student population’s willingness to achieve?
4. What is your philosophy of education?
5. Can you describe your beliefs in the following areas:
   g. Student learning?
   h. Student outcomes?
      i. Instructional climate?
   j. Instructional organization?
   k. Community involvement or external support?
   l. Leadership behaviors?
6. Do you believe the demographic area/region of your school plays a part to your school’s success in AYP?

7. What types of extracurricular school-related or non-school related activities do you feel play a positive role in student success?

8. What are some of the principal’s strengths and weaknesses?

9. How does your principal target your leadership capabilities and other strengths and utilize them to benefit student achievement and the overall working of the school?

10. What contributions do you feel you’ve made that you believe attributed to AYP?
1. Would you please introduce yourself (no names)?
   
a. Age
b. Marital status
c. Number of children
d. Highest level of education
e. Residential status (own or rent)

2. Explain how being a part of the school’s parent organization is good for you, your child, and the school?

3. How does your involvement in the school help improve student learning so that the school achieves AYP?

4. What beliefs do you have about student learning?
   
f. How do you apply those beliefs in your own household?

5. Do you believe being in a rural environment has anything to do with the motivation of your child and other students performing so well in school?

6. What types of extracurricular school-related or non-school related activities do you feel play a positive role in student success?

7. Explain the community service supports (such as volunteering programs, Big Brother/Big Sister, Boys & Girls Club, etc.) that contribute to the success of your school?

8. What are the strong teacher behaviors displayed by the teacher(s)?

9. What are the weak teacher behaviors displayed by the teacher(s)?

10. What are the strong leadership behaviors displayed by the principal?

11. What are the weak leadership behaviors displayed by the principal?
12. Describe the activities that go on in your household on an average school day, week.
APPENDIX F

INTERSTATE SCHOOL LEADERS LICENSURE

CONSORTIUM (ISLLC) STANDARDS
Standard 1

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.

Knowledge

The administrator has knowledge and understanding of:

1. Learning goals in a pluralistic society
2. The principles of developing and implementing strategic plans
3. Systems theory
4. Information sources, data collection, and data analysis strategies
5. Effective communication
6. Effective consensus-building and negotiation skills

Dispositions

The administrator believes in, values, and is committed to:

1. The educability of all
2. A school vision of high standards of learning
3. Continuous school improvement
4. The inclusion of all members of the school community
5. Ensuring that students have the knowledge, skills, and values needed to become successful adults
6. A willingness to continuously examine one's own assumptions, beliefs, and practices
7. Doing the work required for high levels of personal and organization performance

**Performances**

The administrator facilitates processes and engages in activities ensuring that:

1. The vision and mission of the school are effectively communicated to staff, parents, students, and community members

2. The vision and mission are communicated through the use of symbols, ceremonies, stories, and similar activities

3. The core beliefs of the school vision are modeled for all stakeholders

4. The vision is developed with and among stakeholders

5. The contributions of school community members to the realization of the vision are recognized and celebrated

6. Progress toward the vision and mission is communicated to all stakeholders

7. The school community is involved in school improvement efforts

8. The vision shapes the educational programs, plans, and activities

9. The vision shapes the educational programs, plans, and actions

10. An implementation plan is developed in which objectives and strategies to achieve the vision and goals are clearly articulated

11. Assessment data related to student learning are used to develop the school vision and goals

12. Relevant demographic data pertaining to students and their families are used in developing the school mission and goals
13. Barriers to achieving the vision are identified, clarified, and addressed

14. Needed resources are sought and obtained to support the implementation of the school mission and goals

15. Existing resources are used in support of the school vision and goals

16. The vision, mission, and implementation plans are regularly monitored, evaluated, and revised

**Standard 2**

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

**Knowledge**

The administrator has knowledge and understanding of:

1. Student growth and development
2. Applied learning theories
3. Applied motivational theories
4. Curriculum design, implementation, evaluation, and refinement
5. Principles of effective instruction
6. Measurement, evaluation, and assessment strategies
7. Diversity and its meaning for educational programs
8. Adult learning and professional development models
9. The change process for systems, organizations, and individuals
10. The role of technology in promoting student learning and professional growth
11. School cultures

Dispositions

The administrator believes in, values, and is committed to:

1. Student learning as the fundamental purpose of schooling
2. The proposition that all students can learn
3. The variety of ways in which students can learn
4. Life-long learning for self and others
5. Professional development as an integral part of school improvement
6. The benefits that diversity brings to the school community
7. A safe and supportive learning environment
8. Preparing students to be contributing members of society

Performances

The administrator facilitates processes and engages in activities ensuring that:

1. The school is organized and aligned for success
2. Curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular programs are designed, implemented, evaluated, and refined
3. Curriculum decisions are based on research, expertise of teachers, and the recommendations of learned societies
4. The school culture and climate are assessed on a regular basis
5. A variety of sources of information is used to make decisions
6. Student learning is assessed using a variety of techniques
7. Multiple sources of information regarding performance are used by staff and students
8. A variety of supervisory and evaluation models is employed

9. Pupil personnel programs are developed to meet the needs of students and their families

10. All individuals are treated with fairness, dignity, and respect

11. Professional development promotes a focus on student learning consistent with the school vision and goals

12. Students and staff feel valued and important

13. The responsibilities and contributions of each individual are acknowledged

14. Barriers to student learning are identified, clarified, and addressed

15. Diversity is considered in developing learning experiences

16. Life-long learning is encouraged and modeled

17. There is a culture of high expectations for self, student, and staff performance

18. Technologies are used in teaching and learning

19. Student and staff accomplishments are recognized and celebrated

20. Multiple opportunities to learn are available to all students

**Standard 3**

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.

**Knowledge**

The administrator has knowledge and understanding of:
1. Theories and models of organizations and the principles of organizational development

2. Operational procedures at the school and district level

3. Principles and issues relating to school safety and security

4. Human resources management and development

5. Principles and issues relating to fiscal operations of school management

6. Principles and issues relating to school facilities and use of space

7. Legal issues impacting school operations

8. Current technologies that support management functions

**Dispositions**

The administrator believes in, values, and is committed to:

1. Making management decisions to enhance learning and teaching

2. Taking risks that improve schools

3. Trusting people and their judgments

4. Accepting responsibility

5. High-quality standards, expectations, and performances

6. Involving stakeholders in management processes

7. A safe environment

**Performances**

The administrator facilitates processes and engages in activities ensuring that:

1. Knowledge of learning, teaching, and student development is used to inform management decisions
2. Operational procedures are designed and managed to maximize opportunities for successful learning

3. Emerging trends are recognized, studied, and applied as appropriate

4. Operational plans and procedures to achieve the vision and goals of the school are in place

5. Collective bargaining and other contractual agreements related to the school are effectively manage

6. The school plant, equipment, and support systems operate safely, efficiently, and effectively

7. Time is managed to maximize attainment of organizational goals

8. Potential problems and opportunities are identified

9. Problems are confronted and resolved in a timely manner

10. Financial, human, and material resources are aligned to the goals of schools

11. The school acts entrepreneurially to support continuous improvement

12. Organizational systems are regularly monitored and modified as needed

13. Stakeholders are involved in decisions affecting schools

14. Responsibility is shared to maximize ownership and accountability

15. Effective problem-framing and problem-solving skills are used

16. Effective conflict resolution skills are used

17. Effective group-process and consensus-building skills are used

18. Effective communication skills are used
19. There is effective use of technology to manage school operations

20. Fiscal resources of the school are managed responsibly, efficiently, and effectively

21. A safe, clean, and aesthetically pleasing school environment is created and maintained

22. Human resource functions support the attainment of school goals

23. Confidentiality and privacy of school records are maintained

**Standard 4**

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.

**Knowledge**

The administrator has knowledge and understanding of:

1. Emerging issues and trends that potentially impact the school community

2. The conditions and dynamics of the diverse school community

3. Community resources

4. Community relations and marketing strategies and processes

5. Successful models of school, family, business, community, government and higher education partnerships

**Dispositions**

The administrator believes in, values, and is committed to:

1. Schools operating as an integral part of the larger community
2. Collaboration and communication with families

3. Involvement of families and other stakeholders in school decision-making processes

4. The proposition that diversity enriches the school

5. Families as partners in the education of their children

6. The proposition that families have the best interests of their children in mind

7. Resources of the family and community needing to be brought to bear on the education of students

8. An informed public

**Performances**

The administrator facilitates processes and engages in activities ensuring that:

1. Community youth family services are integrated with school programs

2. Community stakeholders are treated equitably

3. Diversity is recognized and valued

4. Effective media relations are developed and maintained

5. A comprehensive program of community relations is established

6. Public resources and funds are used appropriately and wisely

7. Community collaboration is modeled for staff

8. Opportunities for staff to develop collaborative skills are provided

9. High visibility, active involvement, and communication with the larger community is a priority

10. Relationships with community leaders are identified and nurtured
11. Information about family and community concerns, expectations, and needs is used regularly

12. There is outreach to different business, religious, political, and service agencies and organization

13. Credence is given to individuals and groups whose values and opinions may conflict

14. The school and community serve one another as resources

15. Available community resources are secured to help the school solve problems and achieve goals

16. Partnerships are established with area businesses, institutions of higher education, and community groups to strengthen programs and support school goals

**Standard 5**

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.

**Knowledge**

The administrator has knowledge and understanding of:

1. The purpose of education and the role of leadership in modern society

2. Various ethical frameworks and perspectives on ethics

3. The values of the diverse school community

4. Professional codes of ethics

5. The philosophy and history of education

**Dispositions**
The administrator believes in, values, and is committed to:

1. The ideal of the common good
2. The principles in the Bill of Rights
3. The right of every student to a free, quality education
4. Bringing ethical principles to the decision-making process
5. Subordinating one's own interest to the good of the school community
6. Accepting the consequences for upholding one's principles and actions
7. Using the influence of one's office constructively and productively in the service of all students and their families
8. Development of a caring school community

Performances

The administrator:

1. Examines personal and professional values
2. Demonstrates a personal and professional code of ethics
3. Demonstrates values, beliefs, and attitudes that inspire others to higher levels of performance
4. Serves as a role model
5. Accepts responsibility for school operations
6. Considers the impact of one's administrative practices on others
7. Uses the influence of the office to enhance the educational program rather than for personal gain
8. Treats people fairly, equitably, and with dignity and respect
9. Protects the rights and confidentiality of students and staff
10. Demonstrates appreciation for and sensitivity to the diversity in the school community

11. Recognizes and respects the legitimate authority of others

12. Examines and considers the prevailing values of the diverse school community

13. Expects that others in the school community will demonstrate integrity and exercise ethical behavior

14. Opens the school to public scrutiny

15. Fulfills legal and contractual obligations

16. Applies laws and procedures fairly, wisely, and considerately

**Standard 6**

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

**Knowledge**

The administrator has knowledge and understanding of:

1. Principles of representative governance that undergird the system of American schools

2. The role of public education in developing and renewing a democratic society and an economically productive nation

3. The law as related to education and schooling

4. The political, social, cultural and economic systems and processes that impact schools
5. Models and strategies of change and conflict resolution as applied to the larger political, social, cultural and economic contexts of schooling

6. Global issues and forces affecting teaching and learning

7. The dynamics of policy development and advocacy under our democratic political system

8. The importance of diversity and equity in a democratic society

**Dispositions**

The administrator believes in, values, and is committed to:

1. Education as a key to opportunity and social mobility

2. Recognizing a variety of ideas, values, and cultures

3. Importance of a continuing dialogue with other decision makers affecting education

4. Actively participating in the political and policymaking context in the service of education

5. Using legal systems to protect student rights and improve student opportunities

**Performances**

The administrator facilitates processes and engages in activities ensuring that:

1. The environment in which schools operate is influenced on behalf of students and their families

2. Communication occurs among the school community concerning trends, issues, and potential changes in the environment which schools operate
3. There is ongoing dialogue with representatives of diverse community groups

4. The school community works within the framework of policies, laws, and regulations enacted by local, state, and federal authorities

5. Public policy is shaped to provide quality education for students

6. Lines of communication are developed with decision-makers outside the school community
1. STANDARD I. An education leader promotes the success of every student by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by all stakeholders.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
<th>To a Considerable Degree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Collaboratively develop and implement a shared vision and mission</td>
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<td>B. Collect and use data to identify goals, assess organizational effectiveness, and promote organizational learning</td>
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<td>C. Create and implement plans to achieve goals</td>
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<td>D. Promote continuous and sustainable improvement</td>
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<td>E. Monitor and evaluate progress and revise plans</td>
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2. An education leader promotes the success of every student by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

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<tr>
<td>A. Nurture and sustain a culture of collaboration, trust, learning, and high expectations</td>
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<td>B. Create a comprehensive, rigorous, and coherent curricular program</td>
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<td>C. Create a personalized and motivating learning environment for students</td>
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<td>D. Supervise instruction</td>
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<td>E. Develop assessment and accountability systems to monitor student progress</td>
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<td>F. Develop the instructional and leadership capacity of staff</td>
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<td>G. Maximize time spent on quality instruction</td>
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<td>H. Promote the use of the most effective &amp; appropriate technologies to support teaching &amp; learning</td>
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<td>I. Monitor and evaluate the impact of the instructional program</td>
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3. An education leader promotes the success of every student by ensuring management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.

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<tr>
<td>A. Monitor and evaluate the management and operational systems</td>
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<td>B. Obtain, allocate, align, and efficiently utilize human, fiscal, and technological resources</td>
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<td>C. Promote and protect the welfare and safety of students and staff</td>
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<td>D. Develop the capacity for distributed leadership</td>
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<td>E. Ensure teacher and organizational time is focused to support quality instruction and student learning</td>
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4. An education leader promotes the success of every student by collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.

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<td>A. Collect and analyze data and information pertinent to the educational environment</td>
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<td>B. Promote understanding, appreciation, and use of the community’s diverse cultural, social, and intellectual resources</td>
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<td>C. Build and sustain positive relationships with families and caregivers</td>
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<td>D. Build and sustain productive relationships with community partners</td>
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</table>
5. An education leader promotes the success of every student by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. Ensure a system of accountability for every student’s academic and social success</th>
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<th>To a Considerable Degree</th>
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<tr>
<td>B. Model principles of self-awareness, reflective practice, transparency, and ethical behavior</td>
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<td>C. Safeguard the values of democracy, equity, and diversity</td>
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<td>D. Consider and evaluate the potential moral and legal consequences of decision-making</td>
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<td>E. Promote social justice and ensure that individual student needs inform all aspects of schooling</td>
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6. An education leader promotes the success of every student by understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. Advocate for children, families, and caregivers</th>
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<tr>
<td>B. Act to influence local, district, state, and national decisions affecting student learning</td>
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<td>C. Assess, analyze, and anticipate emerging trends and initiatives in order to adapt leadership strategies</td>
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