STUDENT GROWTH GOALS:

THE IMPACT OF EVALUATIVE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GOALS

ON PRINCIPAL PRACTICE

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

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with a

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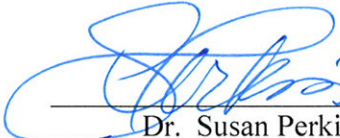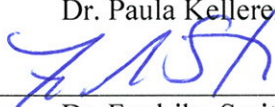Department of Graduate Education
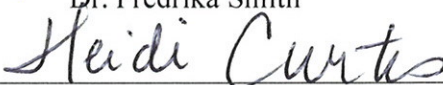
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AUTHORIZATION TO SUBMIT DISSERTATION

This dissertation of Brian Lowney, submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education with a major in Educational Leadership and titled "Student Growth Goals: The Impact of Evaluative Student Achievement Goals on Principal Practice," has been reviewed in final form. Permission, as indicated by the signatures and dates given below, is now granted to submit final copies.

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation, in large part because of the time and support they invested in me, to my family. My wife, son, and daughter have provided the "stick-to-it-iveness" that is required to complete a research project like this one. I hope my passion for this research topic shines through as an example of the support I have received at home. Thank you Christel, Colin, and Callie Mae.

ABSTRACT

Changes in recent federal, state, and local legislation have added increased scrutiny of and pressure on the evaluation systems of educators across the nation. This scrutiny and pressure have prompted significant changes to both the systems and processes for determining and reporting the effectiveness of teachers and principals. One of the most substantial changes is the use of student growth goals in determining evaluation outcomes for educators. This qualitative study examined the practice and impact of student growth goals created by principals. How do principals describe the impact of evaluative student growth goals on their leadership practice? In what ways are teacher-created student growth goals reflected in the student growth goals that principals set?

To examine these questions, the researcher interviewed ten principals and analyzed the data using an open coding and thematic organization of the results. Several themes that emerged from the participant interviews included: (a) principals view improved evaluation as a crucial leadership practice; (b) principal level (i.e. elementary or secondary), rather than experience, is a critical factor in goal-setting effectiveness; and (c) principals must have expertise in collaborative leadership to effectively develop meaningful student growth goals.

The implications of these themes suggested that policymakers and practitioners increase professional development designed to improve the level of learning-focused conversations of teachers and principals, target increased professional development to secondary principals, develop student growth measures that are useful at the secondary level, and find ways to create time in the system for teachers, principals, and their evaluators to engage in these evaluation conversations.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Public education stakeholders across the country are increasingly asking for accountability…accountability for resource management, for student achievement, and for teacher evaluation (Elmore & Fuhrman, 2001; Lyon, 2009; Scherrer, 2011). Fetters, Sharrett, and Zhu (2013) stated this explicitly: "The new evaluation system must hold educators accountable and serve to leverage authentic professional growth" (p. 3). The adoption of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (2001) and associated national, state, and local policies put increasing pressure on state legislatures and local districts to look at teacher accountability and evaluations in new ways (Earl & Fullan, 2003; Taylor & Tyler, 2012). For the purpose of increased accountability, it is becoming commonplace for teacher evaluations to be built on a foundation of student growth goals and achievement towards these goals, which results in testing that has high stakes for both students and teachers (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2010; Protheroe, 2011). Recent research surrounding teacher's accountability for student test scores reported mixed results. For instance, Levine and Levine (2013) reported very little positive change in student achievement results on state and national exams as a result of the high stakes testing. A second significant finding focused on the inability of the high stakes testing program to close the achievement gap. "Over the NCLB years, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores show that minority–majority achievement test gaps barely changed nationally for fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics" (Levine & Levine, 2013, p. 23).

Regardless, the national move to teacher and principal accountability for student achievement remains a significant component of the educational reform movement. In the

Pacific Northwest, researchers have described support for the adoption of a new evaluation system in Washington that replaced the traditional satisfactory/unsatisfactory ratings and moved to a four-tier "growth" scale for both teachers and principals (Coulter, 2013). The new system relies heavily on the use of student growth data in the evaluation and allows districts to choose from one of three teaching frameworks for teacher evaluation (Coulter). Much of the local literature emphasizes the philosophical and practical use of the Danielson Framework for Teaching and Learning, the Marzano's Framework for Teaching, or the CEL 5D+ Instructional Framework. While the system and reliance on a choice of high-quality teaching frameworks are strong tools for professional development and growth of teachers, the qualitative data has not supported the system's ability to fairly rate teacher effectiveness (Coulter). In fact, study results indicated that the implementation of the new teacher evaluation system was conducted without the adequate time and resources to be fully effective (Coulter).

While a lack of time and resources may have presented a barrier in implementation of the teaching frameworks, another significant component of this change in evaluation practice has been the use of student growth data in the evaluation of our school leaders. The use of student growth data for evaluating school leaders needs to be more fully understood as it is likely to impact much of the educational climate. To fill that gap, the intent of this study was to describe the impact of an increased focus during principal evaluation on student growth goals and principal practice. Additionally, this study sought to describe the level of influence teacher and principal student growth goals have on one another. As educators seek to discover a connection between teacher evaluations and student achievement, this researcher believes there is a clear

need to describe the perceptions and connection between student growth goals and resulting changes in principal practice.

The work of Marzano (2003, 2006, 2009), Elmore (2001), and Reeves (2006, 2008, 2009) drives much of the theoretical frame for the analysis in this research study. Marzano's (2003) work around Schools That Work, Elmore's (2001) focus on educator evaluation and accountability, and Reeves' (2006) research on the Learning Leader all help to create a lens with which we can explain the relationships between recent research and policy review in the following areas:

- The evolution of teacher and principal evaluation practices.

- Teaching practices that impact student achievement.

- Principal practices that impact student achievement.

- District leadership practices that impact student achievement.

- Leadership practices that impact the achievement gap.

- An explanation of value-added student growth analysis.

- The role of student growth goals on student achievement.

This theoretical framework is examined in depth near the conclusion of the literature review in Chapter 2.

Statement of the Problem

There is a need to connect the teacher and principal evaluation process and evidence of growth and increased student achievement (Booker, Bruch, & Gill, 2013; Earl & Fullan, 2003). Throughout the United States, states have moved to a new evaluation process for both teachers and principals that focuses on student growth and requires teachers and principals to set and

achieve student growth goals and examine student growth data (Chatterji, 2002). Many approach this system with some angst regarding the implementation. This research project will explore how this focus on growth and student test results actually influences principal leadership practices. It will also explore the relationship between teacher and principal student growth goals.

Researchers have examined teacher classroom practices and the impact on the classroom, often using qualitative methodology (Aaronson, Barrow & Sander, 2007; Chatterji, 2002; Walker, 2014). That is, researchers have tied teacher behaviors and practices to principal/teacher/student perception data and evaluation results (Lloyd & Rowe, 2009). Research and peer-reviewed studies can also be found that examine the connection between a multitude of leadership styles, teacher practices, and school climate factors. (Marzano & Waters, 2006). This body of research can be found in various databases, dissertations, professional journals, and even in mainstream educational media on occasion.

While this research is valuable, much of it does not address whether a focus on student achievement goals and data has the desired impact – improvements in educator practice. As a high school administrator with experience evaluating the performance of over 100 educators through a decade of supervision duties, this researcher's experience working with teachers pushes the issue of evaluation that focuses on results to the forefront of the evaluation discussion. Classroom climate and order, knowledge of content and pedagogy, and commitment to culturally relevant teaching practices are clearly important in the evaluation process and in effective teaching (Zimmerman & Deckert-Pelton, 2003). However, as education in the United States moves towards a system of increased accountability for results in the form of improved student

test scores, the question remains whether a focus on the data as a central part of principals' evaluation of teachers really does lead to improved leadership practice (Taylor & Tyler, 2012).

Furthermore, just as teachers are being "pressed" into goal-setting around student growth measures, school administrators are also beginning to set student growth goals that are connected to their principal evaluation in significant ways (Sinnema & Robinson, 2012). For instance, Marzano (2003) reported significant impacts on student achievement when certain principal leadership is evidenced. The research is not as evident with respect to how (or whether) principal goal-setting and measurement of growth in student achievement goals substantially impacts the leadership practice of school administrators (Scherrer, 2011).

Recent research into the question of how goal-setting impacts professional practice in educators is underwhelming. In a quantitative research study that examined the impact of principal practices on teachers, Levey (2014) looked more deeply into how principal goal-setting affected school improvement results. The author defined this seemingly complex and multi-faceted process of goal-setting as "principals using goals that teachers understand and are willing to follow" (Levey, 2014, p. 10). Teachers did report that principals generally engaged in goal setting processes that were positive (Levey, 2014). While there were significant findings in the study regarding positive teacher perceptions of the principal goal setting process, Levey (2014) concluded that evidence did not exist to support recent claims of this process as a primary influence on student achievement.

Additionally, there is a significant need to study the connection between the student growth created by teachers and principals, including the process for collaboratively setting goals, frequency of progress monitoring, and summative assessment of goals. Will simply setting solid

goals and "focusing" on goals for increased student achievement lead to changes in practice? The notion that principals and teachers must work interdependently on goals for which they are held mutually accountable in order to maximize the positive correlation between goals setting/measurement and the evaluation process is an area that deserves attention.

Research Questions

This research project is focused on providing answers to the following questions:

1. How do principals describe the impact of evaluative student growth goals on their leadership practice?

2. In what ways are teacher student growth goals reflected in the student growth goals that principals set?

Description of Terms

The following brief definitions will be useful during the course of this research proposal:

Formative Assessment Practices: a variety of formal and informal assessment practices used during the learning process in order to modify teaching and learning activities to improve student learning (Reeves, 2008).

Multiple Measures: the implementation of multiple scores/indicators and sources of evidence of student learning that vary in type, are collected at multiple points in time, and that gauge progress within and across subject areas (Shakman, Riordan, Sanchez, Cook, Fournier, & Brett, 2012).

No Child Left Behind: a federal law passed that attempts to hold primary and secondary schools measurably accountable to higher standards, particularly in math and reading

achievement, and provide more opportunities to parents for school choice (Hershberg &

Robertson-Kraft, 2010).

Race to the Top (RTTT): an incentive-based system that drives over $4 billion to state

education funding and requires states to use data to both reward and recognize great teaching and

to replace teachers whose students are not meeting benchmark student growth scores (Hershberg

& Robertson-Craft, 2010).

Student Growth Goals: goals created by principals and/or teachers that describe specific

and measurable student achievement increases (Hinz, 2009).

Summative Assessment Practices: a formal assessment practice used to evaluate student

learning at the end of a unit of instruction by comparing it against a standard (Reeves, 2008).

Transformational Leadership: a leadership style that focuses on team-building,

motivation, and collaboration with staff members within the school to help reach individual goals

and accomplish positive change (Chin, 2007).

Value-added Measures: a data-based growth measure that is used to calculate how

much positive (or negative) impact individual teachers have on student learning during the

course of a given school year (Shakman et al., 2012).

Significance of the Study

Much has been written in recent decades regarding leadership and teacher practice that

effectively improve student learning results (Marzano, 2006; Reeves, 2009; Rice, 2010).

However, many of these studies reveal a significant gap in the research. One research gap is in

drawing the connection between teaching strategies and student achievement. For instance,

Marzano (2009) pointed out that over-reliance and over-generalization of teaching strategies

labeled "high-yield" strategies have not necessarily led to corresponding gains in student achievement. Rather, there was a significant argument to be made that many districts have employed a checklist mentality to their approach for adopting a teaching framework and that districts simply created a menu of effective practices that barely skim the surface of impacting substantial changes in teacher practice and/or student results (Marzano, 2009). Although Marzano (2009) noted that specific teaching strategies are not the end goal of the teaching profession and that the ultimate indicator of successful teaching ought to be increases in student knowledge, the effective use of teaching strategies as a routine course of action in the classroom could produce a positive effect on student achievement. When educators utilized excellent teaching strategies on a regular basis and as a part of a comprehensive view of quality teaching, there was a high probability of improved student learning (Marzano, 2009).

Recent policy analysis also pointed to the need for an increased focus on principal leadership and student growth goals (New Leaders for New Schools, 2012). In this policy report, the results of research and policy from several prominent authors were examined in order to guide policy-makers in establishing the most important design and implementation considerations for effective principal evaluation systems (New Leaders for New Schools, 2012). The results of the analysis indicate that while 70% of a principal's evaluation should be based upon the student and teacher outcomes, the remaining 30% should focus on the following principal practices: vision for results and equity, planning and operations, culture, teaching and learning, staff management and development, and principal leadership and growth (New Leaders for New Schools, 2012).

Recent legislation and the corresponding policy changes mandate that teacher and principal evaluations include value-added analysis of student achievement gains (Scherrer, 2011). Nearly every state in the union has now adopted policy changes that make this connection between student test scores and teacher/principal evaluation results (Piro, Wiemers, & Shutt, 2012). Piro et al. (2012) made the case that states were influenced in making this shift by two primary factors:

  – Ongoing concerns that teacher and principal evaluations were largely unsuccessful in removing ineffective educators.

  – Compelling data that teacher and principal effectiveness were the single largest factors leading to increases in student achievement.

With these policy considerations in mind, and in response to the apparent lack of recent published studies of comprehensive evidence-based "claims" of what constitutes effective principal leadership, Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008) conducted a meta-analysis of the research of effective principal-leadership practices. Perhaps the recommendation that had the largest bearing on the evaluation process was the following: Leaders ought to make greater direct contributions to staff capacity (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008). This recommendation has implications for further study of effective evaluation practices that focus on principal growth.

The examination of the research questions will serve the purposes of two main audiences: policy makers and practitioners. First, the focus on the correlation between student growth data in principal evaluations and actual principal practice should be of interest to policy makers around the country, specifically in the Northwest United States. As the process for teacher and principal evaluations evolves, research that addresses the results of this data focus in educator

evaluations could help to establish clear policy and guidelines for districts. Educators and administrators will benefit from research questions that center on effective collaborative practices, when these practices create significant increases to student learning (Marzano, 2003).

Overview of Research Methods

Building a conceptual framework around the educator evaluation policies, practices, and results was central to determining the research questions, methods, and analysis in this study. Ravitch and Riggan (2012) presented the need for and design of conceptual frameworks as an integral part of the research process. The conceptual framework is a process that helps bring coherence to the research process, methods, and theories. A conceptual framework helped the researcher determine (and explain) why the topic is worth researching and it guided the researcher in determining how to approach the research process (Ravitch & Riggan). Ravitch and Riggan further explained the conceptual framework in this way; the conceptual framework is the overarching lens that includes personal interests (the researchers thoughts, ideas, and assumptions), the literature review (which help guide and put context to the research), and a theoretical framework (a structure that helps the researcher explain relationships between the research and theories).

These distinctions are important to research in that personal interests often have significant impact in choosing a research topic, the literature review guides the researcher in both understanding the current reality around educator evaluation and the research questions/methods, and the researcher is able to use the aforementioned tools to help construct a visual representation of the relationships between educational policy climate, teacher/principal

evaluation models, student growth goals, effective teacher and principal practice, and student achievement results.

The formation of a visual representation of the relationships among the existing research, a theoretical framework, helped to bring coherence to the research questions and methods (Ravitch & Riggan, 2012). There are many moving parts related to the research questions around teacher and principal evaluation and practice. The theoretical framework helped to explain the connections between these parts. Much like the effective teacher who seeks to activate prior knowledge of students at the start of class in order to move forward with the day's learning, a researcher needs to understand and synthesize the previous body of research and theory in order to determine the merit and methods of his/her own research process.

The creation of the theoretical framework was also important in defining the research process. Ravitch and Riggan (2012) argued that the process of developing a conceptual framework may be even more valuable than "finding" a ready-to-use framework. While personal interests led this researcher to the research topics and the literature review shaped the research questions and context of the problem, it is the theoretical framework that explained the relationships among the moving parts of theory and research (Ravitch & Riggan). Further, in this research study, the theoretical framework was instrumental in defining which aspects of the research warrant deeper examination, both through literature review and research methods.

After considerable effort in building both a conceptual framework and a theoretical framework, a qualitative methods approach has been selected for this study. Because qualitative research methods help researchers gain a deep understanding of people and behavior, this research method has become increasingly popular during the last twenty years (Hazzan & Nutov,

2014). Qualitative methods are typically utilized to research social processes that involve human interaction and shine a light on these processes from a variety of perspectives (Hazzan & Nutov). Additionally, qualitative methods are appropriate for this study as this type of exploratory design is useful for a topic that has not been examined in great depth (Cresswell, 2013).

Hazzan and Nutov describe the difficulty in choosing to use qualitative methods in research. After taking courses in statistics and quantitative methods, many potential researchers struggle in viewing qualitative research as a viable research alternative. In this study, qualitative inquiry skills such as intuition based on experiences, observation without passing judgment, and the ability to recognize patterns have contributed greatly to an understanding of how goal-setting processes impact practice (Hazzan & Nutov, 2014).

Qualitative interviews of school principals were used to obtain in-depth information about principal goal-setting and perceptions of principal practice. After gaining consent from the university and two suburban school districts to conduct interviews with principals, interview questions were created and validated using a content validity index system/score, and questions were pilot tested with district and school administrators not participating in the actual interviews. Ten participants were then recruited to participate in semi-structured interviews. The researcher used an interview protocol that consisted of six open-ended questions with a scripted opening and closing for each interview and results were audio taped, transcribed, and coded using qualitative analysis techniques.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

Introduction

Researchers have explored best practices in the teaching and educational leadership profession (Bradshaw, 2002; Chin, 2007; Earl & Fullan, 2003; Galvan, 2013; Lange, Range, & Welsh, 2012). This research of impactful leadership behaviors identifies both teacher and administrator practices that promote learning. While these identified leadership practices should impact what happens in schools and classrooms, there are two important lapses in the literature that support the need for a fresh approach to this research:

- The exploration of the evolution of teacher/principal evaluation and its relationship to leadership practice.

- The need to investigate the impact of teaching and educational leadership practices on student test scores.

The necessity of addressing these aspects of teacher and principal practices is evident in the literature around the evolution of teacher/principal evaluation practices and the correlation data between teacher/principal student growth goals and student test scores (Levine, 2013; Loeb & Grissom, 2013; Murphy, Hallinger & Heck, 2013; Papay, 2012).

Theoretical Framework

The creation of a theoretical framework was a critical and evolving process for this researcher. While the research questions drove the process at the start of the literature review, it was only after beginning to create a visual representation of the relationships among this research that a real focus began to come into shape. This explanation of the relationships between

educational policy climate, teacher/principal evaluation models, effective teacher and principal practice, and student achievement results helped tremendously, creating coherence and significance for the research questions of this study. Although each piece of literature reviewed for this study contributed to the development of the theoretical framework, the research of three primary authors were central to the explanation of the connections between components of educator evaluation, and thus the theoretical framework of this study: Marzano, Elmore, and Reeves.

Marzano's extensive research into teacher, principal, and leadership practices that positively impact student achievement have been instrumental in the development of the theoretical framework. For instance, Marzano, McNulty, and Waters (2003) demonstrated through their meta-analysis that there is a significant impact on student achievement when principal leadership is in evidence. The analysis examined over twenty leadership responsibilities, including culture and discipline, and correlated the practices into average impact size. Finally, the analysis demonstrated the negative correlation that also exists in relation to a lack of leadership and student achievement measures (Marzano et al.).

Elmore's related research on principal student growth goals was also critical in the evolution of the framework. For instance, a comprehensive meta-analysis examined qualitative and quantitative research studies from across all 50 states in this effort to determine how performance accountability measures in schools impacted results (Elmore & Fuhrman, 2001). While the research questions in this study focused on the impact of principal student growth goals on performance, a comprehensive look at school accountability measures adds considerable depth to the research. Specifically, one of Elmore and Fuhrman's most relevant

findings described the immediate impact of setting student achievement goals. The authors found that the goal-setting and accountability measures associated with student achievement were significant in pushing teachers and principals toward a much more intentional focus and energy for their work (Elmore & Fuhrman). As for the incentives and negative consequences that often accompany accountability to student growth goals, the authors found that while these measures could contribute to motivation, recognition for increased performance was actually a more significant motivator (Elmore & Fuhrman).

In developing a theoretical framework, Reeves' (2006) analysis of research involving more than 300,000 students in more than 290 schools across all 50 states, Canada, and internationally has been particularly powerful. Defining the leadership actions of principals that contributed to improved practice at the classroom level, Reeves' development of seven dimensions of leadership were critical: (a) visionary leadership, (b) relational leadership, (c) systems leadership, (d) reflective leadership, (e) collaborative leadership, (f) analytical leadership, and (g) communicative leadership. Each of these principal leadership styles has created research-based results among a variety of school settings (Reeves). Each of the leadership styles contributed to improved school results, and specifically to leading an effective goal-setting process with teachers. This lens (and synthesis in the theoretical framework) for analyzing the qualitative interview responses from principals in this study has been invaluable and will be discussed thoroughly in Chapters 4 and 5.

Another piece of research from Reeves (2008) with respect to teacher leadership practices and in developing a teacher leadership framework has been instrumental in developing the theoretical framework for this research (Reeves). A fundamental finding of the research

(conducted primarily in the United States' fourth largest school district) was that professional development for teachers must include direct observation of teachers by teachers (Reeves). While this leadership and professional development practice is important, two other leadership practices from Reeves' research have had substantial influence on the identification of effective principal practice in the collaborative goal-setting process and in development of this study's theoretical framework; recognition of effective practices throughout the school year and emphasizing the effectiveness of these practices. This action research has also proven to be a powerful influence in the qualitative design of this study.

In another meta-analysis of over 100 research and analysis reports, Reeves (2009) examined another important aspect of principal leadership; how can school leaders plan for change, implement change, and sustain change? The author examined each of these aspects of the change process in relation to the different types of support and leadership a principal can impact (Reeves). Of considerable interest to this research study and the development of the theoretical framework are Reeves' findings on how a principal can lead and influence the strategic planning process among teachers and within a school. In a quantitative analysis of strategies that led to increased student achievement, the authors cited high levels of planning, implementation, and monitoring of the goal-setting process (Reeves).

The research of Reeves, taken in conjunction with the implications of the work of both Marzano and Elmore, form the foundation for a theoretical framework that assists in the analysis of the interdependent roles of educational policy climate, teacher and principal evaluation practices, goal-setting practices around student growth measures, the effectiveness of educator practices, and student achievement results.

Figure 1. The impact of evolving evaluation practices on educator practice and student outcomes
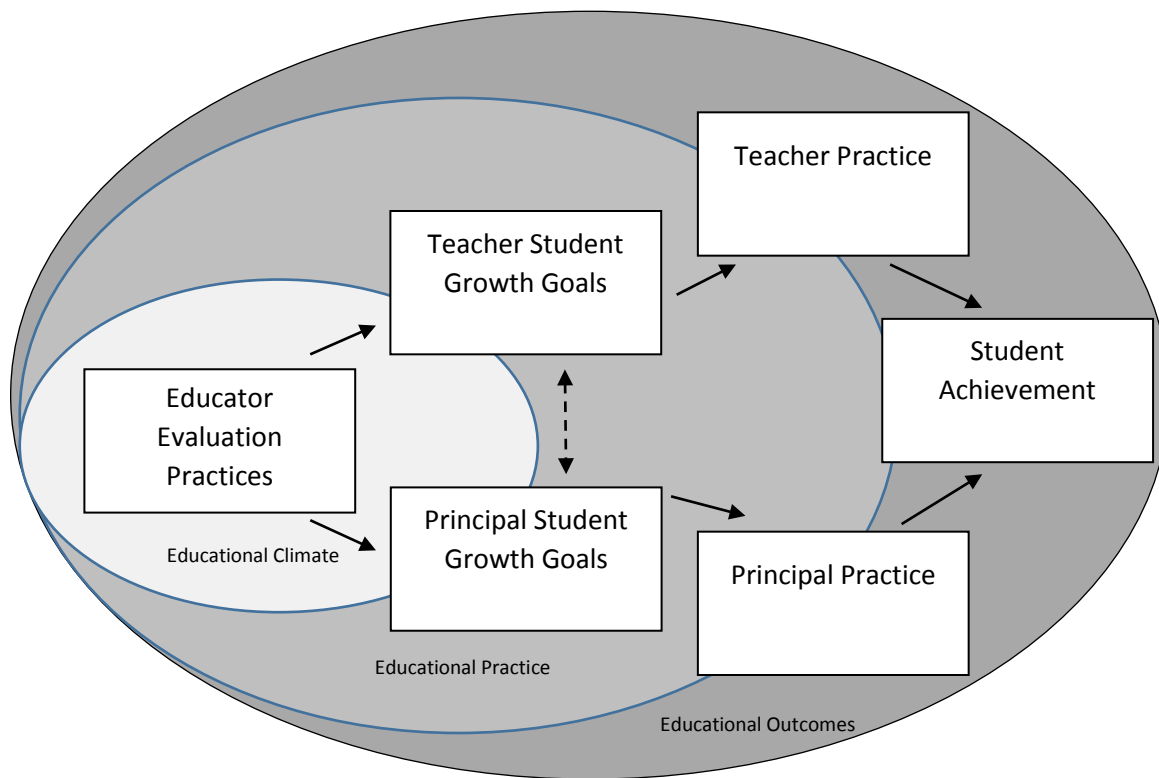
Theoretical Framework built upon the research of Marzano, Elmore, and Reeves

The literature review supports the changing role of student achievement goals and data in the evaluation of teachers and principals (Austin, Berends, Gerdeman, & Stuit, 2014; Elmore & Fullan, 2001; Marzano & Waters, 2006; Milanowski, 2004; Reeves, 2008). In examining the context of this change in evaluative focus, several themes emerged from the review of literature, including: (a) the evolution of teacher and principal evaluation practices, (b) teaching practices that impact student achievement, (c) leadership (principal) practices that impact student

achievement, (d) district leadership practices and the achievement gap, (e) leadership practices that impact the achievement gap, (f) an explanation of value-added student growth analysis, and (g) the role of student growth goals on student achievement.

The Evolution of Teacher and Principal Evaluation Practices

Policymakers across the nation are examining teacher and principal evaluation practices and making significant changes that go beyond evaluating the teacher and principal practices found in the schools classrooms and schools (Data Quality Campaign, 2012; Edwards, 2011; Hershberg & Robertson-Craft, 2010; Murphy, Hallinger, & Heck, 2013; Papay, 2012; Sartain, Stoelinga, & Brown, 2011). Specifically, policymakers are now beginning to gauge the effectiveness of educators by the results they produce. For example, a recent State of California report examined the trends of new ways to measure teacher effectiveness (Edwards, 2011). One of the most common changes in principal and teacher evaluation is the desire to connect educator evaluation and effectiveness to student test scores (Edwards).

This policy and research review begins with analysis of recent studies that correlate principal practices with student achievement and school excellence (Clifford, Hansen, & Wraight, 2012). Clifford et al. (2012) found the following common practices by principals resulted in gains in student achievement throughout the research: shaping school goals, providing direction for school improvement, emphasizing school practices and structures, and creating school social and organizational networks. Clifford et al. (2012) synthesized this research into eight design indicators that policy makers should consider in developing principal evaluation systems:

1. Specifying evaluation goals

2. Securing/sustaining stakeholder investment

3. Selecting measures

4. Determining the structure of the evaluation system

5. Training evaluators

6. Ensuring data integrity

7. Using the results of evaluation

8. Evaluating the system

In an effort to connect principal evaluation to best practices, Catano and Stronge (2007) used a mixed-methods approach to analyze the content of current principal evaluation tools and compared this content to instructional leadership best practices and professional standards. The authors also attempted to find correlations between the various demands of the state and professional standards and the instructional leadership practices that are demanded of today's principals (Catano & Stronge). The research demonstrated that evaluation practices that focused on instructional leadership components in the principal evaluation tool were aligned to professional and state standards (Catano & Stronge). Catano and Stronge noted that exceptions to this focus on instruction were found in the areas of maintaining student records, keeping drop-out statistics, and providing teacher professional development. Although there are a few significant findings in the report, the most compelling for this study is the fact that the researchers concluded that principals do not give student results enough weight (Edwards, 2011). In their own thinking about evaluations, the researchers believed that evaluations too often focused on easy-to-observe practices, such as classroom management and whether students are

on task. Instead, the researchers believed principals needed to look for evidence that students are actually mastering learning goals set for them (Edwards).

Policymakers are continuing to search for a teacher and principal evaluation system that will improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools (Hershberg & Robertson-Craft, 2010; Master, 2012). In fact, Hershberg and Robertson-Craft asserted that these efforts, along with the availability of the additional funds, have heralded many state efforts that include reforms that are largely based on student growth, student-learning outcomes, and student test scores.

Another recent analysis conducted by the Data Quality Campaign (DQC) (2012) examined recent data regarding teacher evaluation reforms that emphasize student test scores in the evaluation. The researchers prioritized five actions deemed important to policymakers and to the needs discovered in this literature review (DQC):

- Establish link between student data and teachers.

- Implement the practices that support this link.

- Provide ready access to this data.

- Provide educator training on how to use this data.

- Improve teacher preparation programs to include this data analysis.

The DQC report concluded that without these accompanying actions, policy changes will be ineffective and result in unintended consequences.

Recent increased attention to student outcome data in the teacher evaluation system was also the topic of research in a large meta-analysis (Murphy, Hallinger, & Heck, 2013). Murphy et al. introduced their narrative with an introduction that made the case for the recent attention paid

to teacher evaluation, citing the importance of quality teaching in the school improvement process. Additionally, the researchers in this study discussed the decline in the power of teacher unions and increase in public and legislative demands for accountability and responsibility as primary drivers in the recent shift in teacher evaluation towards more value-added approaches to gauge teacher effectiveness. The authors cautioned that data were scarce with regard to the real impact of teacher evaluation on school improvement (Murphy et al.). The direct and indirect evidence from multiple data sources did not demonstrate a significant relationship between teacher evaluation practices and student achievement results. The researchers in this study used data from over 40 research studies which demonstrated that teacher effectiveness and school improvement gains could improve more from efforts such as establishing a vision and using data effectively than from teacher evaluation processes (Murphy et al.). The implication of this study for the research questions in this study seem clear; the inclusion of data-driven student growth goals could add substantial value to the evaluation process.

Additionally, research exists that shines a light on the impact of evaluation practices that student equity and the achievement gap. Borman and Kimball (2005) pointed to a strong correlation between schools with high poverty, low achievement, and high minority student populations and the likelihood that these students were taught by teachers who scored lower on evaluation results. However, of more significance was the authors' finding that, when these differences in overall student populations were accounted for, the quality of teacher in the classroom played a significant role in closing the achievement gap (Borman & Kimball). Borman and Kimball also found that this impact on equality was more pronounced if teachers with high

evaluation scores also possessed experience and training in effective teaching practices for urban and diverse student populations.

Pressure exists to change the evaluation processes of educators in specific ways (Sartain, Stoelinga, & Brown, 2011). Sartain et al. reported that districts and schools across the country increasingly feel pressure to implement teacher and principal standards that are significantly different from current/past practice in two ways. First, teacher and principal evaluations should give meaningful feedback and provide guidance to educators in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Further, evaluations should provide a way to differentiate between high-performing and low-performing educators.

These same districts and states are responding to this pressure, and to $4.25 billion in competitive Race to the Top funding, by linking student achievement results and teacher and principal evaluations (Sartain, Stoelinga, & Brown, 2011). Using both quantitative and qualitative research methods, the authors concluded that an updated teacher evaluation system that focused on specific language and student outcomes was effective in improving the quality of teaching, although there were limitations based on the lack of skill and investment on the part of the principals in the study (Sartain et al.).

Evaluation Practices that Impact Teacher Practice

Researchers have examined, and even rated, teaching beliefs and practices that positively impact student learning (Bruegman & Jackson, 2009; Lambert, 2003; Milanowski, 2004; Shakman, Riordan, Sanchez, Cook, Fournier, & Brett, 2012; Valli & Buese, 2007). With regards to whether teacher beliefs can impact practice, Goddard et al. (2004) found a strong correlation between teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and their collective efficacy beliefs. A critical finding

indicated that teachers who were empowered to influence significant and relevant decisions within a school were more likely to believe that their school team could achieve increases in student growth (Goddard et al.). Another recent study by Bruegmann and Jackson found significant gains in student achievement data in schools and among teachers that reported observable positive teaching characteristics in their peer teacher colleagues. Teachers with more effective colleagues, reportedly and/or confirmed with student achievement data, produced students with substantial increases in math and reading student achievement scores. Finally, these gains were most significant for teachers new to the profession (Bruegman & Jackson).

In another study, Milanowski (2004) analyzed data collected from student achievement tests in math, science, and reading, then compared these results to expected outcomes and teacher evaluation ratings. The results showed some correlation between the ratings in teacher evaluation and the student test scores, and suggested that a quality teacher evaluation system could be significantly correlated to improved student achievement scores (Milanowski). Shakman et al. (2012) continued this research into effective teacher practice as a result of recent educational reform resulting in the implementation of teacher evaluation systems that included both multiple measures and collaboration around professional growth plans. While none of the states that were included in the study used value-added models in teacher evaluations, all of the states used self-assessments and common descriptors of effective teaching standards (Shakman et al.).

With the increasingly changing policy development in education surrounding teacher accountability for student achievement, other research questions have sought to determine the impact of these changes on teacher practice (Earl & Fullan, 2003; Lange, Range & Welsh, 2012;

Valli & Buese, 2007). Through an extensive literature review, Valli and Buese noted a link in prior research between an increasing number and intensity of change initiatives and changes in teacher practices. Specifically, the researchers drew a correlation between the high-stakes nature of many of these policy directives and an increase in teacher workload and stress. Additionally, the authors found that the potential negative impacts of fast-paced policy demands fell disproportionally on schools with high poverty, at-risk, and English Language Learner (ELL) student populations (Valli & Buese). This research points to the need to choose very intentionally both the pace and high-stakes nature of change.

Leadership Practices of Principals that Impact Student Achievement

In addition to the focus on teacher practices that promote learning, researchers have studied the impact that effective principal practice can have on student achievement (Chin, 2007; Copland, 2003; Gray & Streshly, 2008 Honig & Coburn, 2007; Lloyd, Robinson, & Rowe, 2008; Marzano & Waters, 2006; Protheroe, 2011; Ryan and Soehner, 2011). Ryan and Soehner examined several variables (and components) of principal leadership to examine whether principal leadership directly or indirectly impacted student achievement and test scores. While there is a notion that principal leadership is critical to the success of schools, the question remained as to the impact on teacher practice and student results. The analysis indicated that an overwhelming amount of evidence existed to support the claim that effective principal leadership practices can have a significant indirect impact on student achievement (Ryan & Soehner). Although the study could not show direct cause/effect, Ryan and Soehner were able to draw correlations from several principal leadership actions and describe the impact of these practices on student achievement results.

An analysis by Chin (2007) measured the effect of transformational leadership as defined by the ability of a school leader to motivate and inspire; in essence, to create an environment that encourages members of the school to engage in meaningful ways and to grow themselves and the organization. Chin defined this effect of transformational leadership in three ways:

1. Teacher job satisfaction,

2. School effectiveness measures,

3. Student achievement data

The results indicated a significant impact of transformational leadership on all three measures, but the impact was most significant for teacher job satisfaction and least impactful for student achievement data (Chin).

A key to understanding how goal-setting impacts teacher practice is in analyzing the relationship between principal leadership behaviors and teacher instructional practices. What general impact do principal practices have on teacher behaviors? Quinn (2002) utilized two quantitative survey instruments to gather data in order to explore the correlation between principal leadership and teacher performance. While Quinn's findings established the research foundation for making the assertion that the principal has a central role in changing the instructional practice of teachers, the quantitative research done in this study added a useful piece of information: principals who model a commitment to school goals, articulate a clear vision for instructional goal-setting, and foster an adherence to clear performance goals are able to positively impact teacher instructional practices (Quinn).

However, transformational leadership is not the only style of leadership that contributes to positive student outcomes. A recent study used meta-analysis to examine the difference

between transformational and instructional leadership on student growth measures and concluded that instructional leadership had a significant impact on student outcomes and a substantially higher impact on student outcomes than transformational leadership (Lloyd, Robinson, & Rowe, 2008). The analysis also derived five categories of impactful practice in these instructional leaders:

1. Establishing goals and expectations.
2. Resourcing strategically.
3. Planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum.
4. Promoting and participating in teacher learning and development.
5. Ensuring an orderly and supportive environment.

A primary source study by Copland (2003) focused on a recent effort (supported by $50 million in federal grant funding) to understand school leadership. Copland purported several practices gaining traction in the world of educational leadership including (a) leadership as a function of building capacity and changing culture, (b) leadership as a focus on an ongoing inquiry cycle for student learning, and (c) leadership as the ability to make collective decisions. These leadership conditions were examined in 86 schools through interviews, surveys, and observation (Copland). Copland concluded that while building leadership capacity across a school and the ability of a school staff to make collective decisions are important, it is the cycle of inquiry that can be leveraged to create the largest positive changes in school improvement efforts. Copland described this cycle of inquiry as the process of examining a problem of practice in great detail, engaging in intentional teaching and modeling to address this problem, and reflecting and planning to improve the desired outcomes.

Further research conducted by Rice (2010) and Lazaridou and Iordanides (2011) made the case for the substantial impact effective principal leadership can have on student outcomes based upon an analysis of the research of eight primary sources. Rice asserts that this belief has been held for decades, yet there has been little data to validate the belief in any empirical way. However, Rice provided limited analysis on the impact of effective principal leadership. While there have been many ways to measure principal effectiveness, Rice used an analysis of the literature to highlight the following findings:

- Effective principals hire and retain effective teachers more often.

- Principal experience levels have a significant impact on effectiveness data.

- Effective principals have high skill in several high-leverage tasks and allocate their time to these tasks proportionately.

- Value-added ratings of teachers are particularly valuable in teacher evaluation, if they use data over time and multiple measures.

- Principal quality has most significant impact in high-need and low-performing schools.

Interestingly, other related research also reported that teachers rated all of the principal activities as important and rated management skills above a participative approach to decision making (Lazaridou & Iordanides). Finally, Lazaridou and Iordanides found that teachers value transformational leadership practices such as having a strong vision and promoting vision as highly important.

Grisson and Loeb (2011) examined a 42-task principal analysis in order to determine which of the tasks, performed at a high level by the principal, can predict an increase in student achievement results (Grissom & Loeb). Grissom and Loeb were also able to validate their

findings by examining and comparing these results with analysis from assistant principals, teachers, and parents. Significant findings included the following two consistent items:

- − The most common principal management/leadership practices can be themed into five primary categories that included classroom walkthroughs, teacher coaching, teacher evaluation, professional development, and the development of school curriculum (Grissom & Loeb).

- − Only one of the 42-tasks analyzed in the research consistently predicted growth in student achievement results: the principals' organizational management skills (Grissom & Loeb).

The amount of time principals spend engaged in leadership practices measured against positive school results is an important variable (Horng, Klasik, & Loeb, 2009). Horng et al. measured these positive school outcomes as: student achievement results, teacher and parent assessments of the school, and teacher satisfaction ratings. Although the findings may appear to be intuitive, Horng et al. found that increased time spent by principals on more systemic organization management functions (managing budgets, maintaining school safety, and hiring personnel, for example) were significantly correlated with increased student test scores and teacher/parent assessments of the school climate. Furthermore, time spent on the more ongoing, daily activities of the principals' duties did not result in significant gains in student achievement and often have a negative impact on teacher and parent rankings of the school climate (Horng, et. al.).

Additionally, Bowers and White (2014) set out to determine which principal practices were most likely to increase student achievement. Of significance was Bowers' and White's use

of complete statewide data in Illinois to complete this quantitative analysis. Among the significant findings of Bowers and White, was that there were several principal practices that, over time, proved to be most influential in determining increased student outcomes. These practices included:

- Principals with two to five years of experience had the most substantial impact on student achievement.

- Principals who previously taught in the same building as their principalship had significant gains in student achievement (Bowers & White).

Branch, Rivkin, and Hanushek (2009) opened their quantitative research study with the assertion that despite the fact that "much has been written about the importance of school leadership, there is surprisingly little systemic evidence on this topic" (Branch et al., 2009, p. 1). Much like the research of Bowers and White, Branch et al. aimed to use empirical evidence that could be utilized to estimate the effectiveness levels of key elements of principal practice. Among the findings of Branch et al. were the ideas that increases in the length of time that a principal served in any one particular school had significant positive effects on student achievement and principals working in high-poverty schools demonstrated the greatest variability in effectiveness ratings. Although it may challenge current practices and/or beliefs, principals who were rated as most effective were most likely to remain in their current schools.

District Leadership Practices that Impact Student Achievement

Accountability for students, teachers, and principals has been extended to district administrators, as well (Honig & Coburn, 2007; Marzano & Waters, 2006). Honig and Coburn examined over 30 years of literature that described the ways that district-level accountability and

evidence has changed and increased over time. The degree to which district leaders are now being held accountable to using data in their decision making, particularly around teacher and principal evaluation, has increased significantly (Honig & Coburn). Two primary trends emerged in this review. First, district administrators were apt to cite use of "practitioner knowledge" or "local knowledge" as evidence of effective leadership, rather than merely a description of practice. Second, it was also noted that political considerations played a major role in the type and use of the data (Honig & Coburn). Local control regarding the politics of education translated into important differences in how teachers, principals, and schools responded to requirements for accountability regarding student achievement.

Marzano and Waters (2006) also used meta-analysis to explore possible connections between district-level leadership and the levels of student achievement within the district. Their findings were supportive of the belief that "sound leadership at the district level adds value to an education system" (Marzano & Waters, 2006, p. 8). Marzano and Waters further found that the average student achievement increases that could be expected in districts that demonstrated high levels of superintendent leadership (as measured by surveys and perception data) was nearly 10 percentile points. They also identified the district-level leadership practices that correlated to this increased achievement, including goal-setting, school board alignment, and resource management (Marzano & Waters).

Leadership Practices that Impact the Achievement Gap

The impact of leadership practices on the achievement gap were also examined in the literature. Could principals be agents of inclusive education for diverse students? Riehl (2000) examined the connection between effective principal practices as both a means and measure of

shrinking the achievement gap. The examination of principal practices that promoted inclusion and achievement among diverse student populations was a necessary first step in determining how this gap could be addressed (Riehl). Several categories of principal practice were identified in Riehl's analysis. Among the most impactful of these leadership tasks was the promotion of inclusive teaching and learning within the classroom and school (Riehl). The notion that principals have much to gain in setting professional goals that center around promoting culturally responsive teaching practices is supported by the literature and research (Riehl, 2000).

Value-Added Student Growth Analysis in Evaluations

As previously noted in this literature review, researchers such as Booker (2013), May (2007), and Walsh (2012) believed research was needed in order to take a closer look at effective teacher evaluations. In fact, Austin, Berends, Gerdeman, and Stuit (2014) asserted, "designers of new performance evaluation systems need to understand the factors that can affect the validity and reliability of value- added results or other measures based on student assessment data used to evaluate teacher performance" (p. 1). In the process of their research, Austin et al. demonstrated a modest correlation between a state-mandated, criterion-referenced test and a norm-referenced test commonly used in school districts. In addition to this modest correlation, Austin et al. found that improved design and statistical analysis used in the value-added model could substantially improve the validity of these value-added estimates and measures. Additionally, Rothstein (2010) pointed out that the current research showed only weak correlations between value-added measures and teaching performance, using a variety of measures. Therefore, the lack of findings may have been due to poor research design and analysis rather than an actual lack of connection.

A report by Booker, Bruch, and Gill (2013) evidenced the increasing use, across the nation, of student achievement measures and growth data in evaluating teachers. The researchers' report also noted the limitations of state assessments for these purposes as they typically did not apply to early grades and/or high school teachers who teach subjects other than reading and math (Booker et al.). Thus, many states were opting to use alternative value-added measures to gauge the effectiveness of teachers. Two significant findings of the report's literature review that pointed to improved practice via a value-added approach. There was a strong correlation of value–added analysis using commercially available tests to other measures of teacher performance and there was stability of these positive results over time. Both commercially available tests and stable use of the results were consistently found to improve teacher practices over time (Booker et al.).

Callister-Everson, Feinauer, and Sudweeks (2013) analyzed current peer-reviewed literature and looked for information regarding whether or not a value-added approach to teacher evaluation is effective in measuring and/or improving teacher practice. The authors made the inference that if one is to assume that student test scores are to be used in teacher evaluation, then the system ought to use these scores in the most beneficial way possible (Callister-Evans et al.). Callister-Everson et al. proposed that rather than using traditional value-added approaches to teacher evaluation practices, evaluators could reliably evaluate and positively impact teacher practice through a propensity score matching measure. This type of measure allowed teacher performance to be judged in comparison to a set of students most like that of the teacher's students (Callister-Evans et al.).

May and Robinson (2007) attempted to answer the following related research question: Have teachers used personalized assessment information (PARS) reports and websites to make instructional decisions or implement new practices? The study examined the effectiveness of districts utilizing new assessment reporting for score reports in an effort to increase student test scores (May & Robinson). Both teachers and students/families were encouraged to use the test scores and website reporting mechanisms to change teaching and learning practices in the classroom. The results suggested that there were positive impacts on student motivation and achievement data. Specifically, the individual data had a significant positive impact on students retaking the state exam (May & Robinson). Similarly, several subgroups of students demonstrated even more significant gains in achievement through the use of PARS (May & Robinson).

Another "value-added" study examined trends in student achievement data and followed this data through the progression of elementary, middle, and high school (Heilig & Darling-Hammond, 2008). Heilig and Darling-Hammond attempted to analyze the effects of gaming strategies for avoiding negative data results like grade retention, student exclusion during testing, and misreporting data. Results indicated that while these gaming strategies had significant impacts in increasing the reported student achievement scores, this strategy, and other shortcomings of the testing accountability for the district, for administrators, and for teachers, was a result of the focus on a one-point-in-time shot of student achievement as the measure of success rather than long-term measures of student growth and achievement (Vasquez Heilig & Darling-Hammond).

Other pertinent research has been aimed at drawing the connection between value-added student achievement measures and the principal evaluation process (Loeb & Grissom, 2013). This analysis highlighted the current shift towards using value-added student achievement measures in principal evaluations. The authors asserted that principal evaluations tied to student test scores was the next logical step in education reform centered on evaluations and had limited empirical evidence to this point. Two significant findings of the brief's analysis (Loeb & Grissom) included the choice of value-added analysis method as critical in determining the effectiveness of correlating principal practice and student test scores; further, the authors found little empirical evidence to support or refute claims of value-added measures in principal evaluations. They concluded that more evidence needs to be collected over time.

Others have attempted to examine the impact of principal practice on student achievement results in international reforms (Earl & Fullan, 2003). Specifically, Earl and Fullan examined the connections between the increased use of data and the reform efforts they were engaged in over three separate international school systems. Leaders in all three districts expressed both their hopes and concerns for the use of student achievement data in school planning and change (Earl & Fullan). A significant outcome of the analysis was the notion that school leaders must shift their thinking from using data for accountability to using data for improvement (Earl & Fullan). This could only happen when educators became adept at transforming the data into information that can be understood and used.

Study of student outcomes associated with other value-added evaluation models in education was conducted by Chetty, Friedman, and Rockoff (2012) as they examined the validity of value-added teacher measures in evaluation in measuring the long term "success" of students.

Measures of long-term success included: (a) attending college, (b) attending higher-ranked colleges, (c) earning higher salaries, (d) living in higher SES neighborhoods, and (e) saving more for retirement. The researchers concluded that this value-added approach provided strong correlations to the above indicators. In essence, high quality teachers (as measured by value-added analysis) helped to create significant economic value for students later in their lives (Chetty, Friedman, & Rockoff).

Recognition and consequences for teachers and principals are often part of the value-added "push" into educator evaluation systems. Amrein-Beardsley and Collins (2002) conducted analysis of the teacher evaluation results in Houston Public Schools, focusing on those evaluations that resulted in teacher merit pay and teacher contract terminations. Houston Public Schools is one of the first and largest districts in the country to implement a value-added teacher measure in order to recognize and incentivize great teaching and contribute to non-renewal of teacher contracts (Amrein-Beardsley & Collins). Qualitative results indicated that while teachers generally reported that they favored the measure and the incentive program, they often equated the reward with "winning the lottery, given the random year-to-year instabilities they see" (Amrein-Beardsley & Collins, p. 4). Quantitative analysis revealed statistical evidence that independent measures of teacher effectiveness lacked accuracy and consistency when compared to the value-added measures (Amrein-Beardsley & Collins).

Hanushek and Rivkin (2010) also provided quantitative analysis of data on student achievement as a measure of teacher effectiveness in order to draw conclusions about whether or not value-added models have a significant impact on student achievement results. The researchers concluded that while there were limitations to using value-added results as the sole

gauge of teacher effectiveness, there was strong correlation data to support the use of these measures in teacher evaluation (Hanushek & Rivkin). Of particular interest, especially as one examined the use of evaluations to make teacher renewal decisions, was Hanushek and Rivkin's finding that "eliminating 6-10 percent of the worst teachers could have dramatic impact on student achievement even if these were replaced (permanently) with just average teachers" (p. 269).

The consistency of application of value-added data into evaluation practices was examined in depth through a thorough meta-analysis conducted by the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL), Southeast (2012). The Southeastern REL examined the results of research in each of the six states that comprise the region, determined the degree to which each of the states incorporated student test scores in teacher evaluations, and compared the methods of implementation in each state. The results of the analysis indicated that while several states have incorporated student achievement data significantly in the teacher evaluation system in order to address recent local and national policy changes, several have made only superficial attempts (such as using the data to guide professional development rather than as a substantial component in teacher evaluation ratings) at incorporating this data into teacher evaluations (Regional Educational Laboratory).

The Role of Student Growth Goals on Student Achievement

The literature is just beginning to grow in the area of specifically drawing correlations between student growth goals/data and teacher/principal evaluations (Bradshaw, 2002; Cho, Jimerson, Spikes, & Wayman, 2012; Hinz, 2009; Levine & Levine, 2013; Lyon, 2009). Research was performed by Bradshaw to answer the question of whether or not a 14-year-old state-

mandated evaluation system was valid. That is, did an increased alignment of evaluations focused on effective teacher practices actually lead to improved practice in the classroom? Bradshaw intended to discover if the evaluation process was effective in identifying exemplary teacher practice rather than simply validating competent practice. The results showed very little correlation between the new evaluation system and the alignment of evaluation practices across the state education system. Only 54% of the surveyed teachers reported that the evaluation had an impact on their practice and less than half reported a significant connection between the evaluation system and student results (Bradshaw).

Cho, Jimerson, Spikes, and Wayman (2012) presented a case for an examination of the connection between the use of data in schools and classrooms and the effectiveness of this data use. The study defined the effectiveness of data use both quantitatively (through the use of a widely administered survey and student achievement measures) and qualitatively (through in-depth personal interviews). Cho et al. attempted to designate these results into categories such as educators' use of data, educators' attitude towards data, and principal leadership. The study resulted in a fairly straightforward conclusion: the majority of teachers and principals in the study desired to use data to improve their instruction, but they noted that there were substantial barriers, including computer data systems, that prevented them from using the data in this way (Cho et al.).

Teachers in another study were asked a series of open-ended questions to describe teachers' perceptions (positive and negative) of being held accountable for the test scores of their students (Hinz, 2009). The researcher grouped the teacher responses into categories that could then be analyzed. The results demonstrate that teachers generally felt a strong responsibility for

their student's test scores. While teachers understood the idea of using student achievement results in the evaluation process, they also pointed out the need to include multiple measures of student achievement in these evaluations rather than simply using one high-stakes exam score (Hinz). This theme of accountability combined with the need to use more than one assessment and/or a portfolio in order to measure student achievement of students is the prevailing result (Hinz).

New York served as the research ground for another study that attempted to perform a cost-benefit analysis for state testing and measure it against the achievement data results. This cost-benefit analysis was intended to determine whether or not the taxpayers of New York were getting the educational improvement that they were purportedly funding (Levine & Levine, 2013). The study reported very little positive change in student achievement results on state and national exams as a result of the high stakes testing. A second, and significant finding, revolved around the ability of the high stakes testing program to close the achievement gap. During the time of the No Child Left Behind emphasis on accountability, the results showed very little change in the minority–majority achievement gap data (Levine & Levine).

A longitudinal approach to the data also supported the continued examination of the relationship between performance-based teacher evaluation practices and increased student achievement (Lyon, 2009; Lange, Range, & Welsh, 2012). Lyon presented a study that sought to establish whether there was a relationship between teacher evaluation systems that relied on student achievement measures and increases in student test scores on state assessments. This study examined data over time from Missouri's top performing schools (as measured by student test scores) and compared the results to survey responses from principals in those schools. The

surveys identified specific evaluation processes in order to attempt to find high leverage evaluation practices as they relate to student achievement results (Lyon). The results indicated that there was a relationship between the use of specific evaluation criteria around student achievement and the results of the schools in regards to student achievement (Lyon).

Further evidence supporting the use of data in evaluative practices was conducted by Lange et al. (2012). The researchers established the need for the study of the conditions that exist in effective data-driven schools in the context of NCLB and the increasing pressure for schools to "prove" their effectiveness through student achievement data. Additionally, the research identified that schools are under increased scrutiny to address student achievement for under-performing student groups and that this pressure led to increased reliance on data-driven decisions (Lange et al.). Among the most significant findings of Lange et al. was the list of the variety of data educators need in order to form effective conclusions: student learning data, demographic data, school process data, and perception data.

Conclusion

The literature supports the use of student achievement data in the teacher and principal evaluation process (Bradshaw, 2002; Chin, 2007; Copland, 2003; Earl & Fullan, 2003; Hinz, 2009; Honig & Coburn, 2007; Lange et al. 2012; Levine & Levine, 2013; Lloyd et al., 2008; Marzano & Waters, 2006; Lyon, 2009; Marzano, McNulty, & Waters, 2003; Ryan & Soehner, 2011; Valli & Buese, 2007). The research indicate that further study is needed to draw significant correlations between teacher and principal goal-setting with student achievement data as part of the evaluation practice and the actual improvement of practice and increase in student achievement (Cho et al., 2012; Data Quality Campaign, 2012; Lange et al., 2012; Levine &

Levine, 2013). This research study attempts to continue the examination of evaluation practices

in education and to explore the connection between evaluation practices for educators that focus

on student data and improved professional practice and test scores.

Chapter III

Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

It is clear, through policy implementation in recent years and throughout extensive

literature review, that the focus on educational reform and teacher and principal evaluation is

strongly associated with the demonstrated improvement in student achievement (Austin,

Berends, Gerdeman, & Stuit, 2014; Edwards, 2011; Hershberg & Robertson-Craft, 2010; Valli &

Buese, 2007). This established focus on value-added educator evaluation measures, though,

should be further examined with regard to actual teacher and principal practice and the

associated student test score results (Booker, Bruch, & Gill, 2013; May & Robinson, 2007).

The impacts of principal goal setting associated with student achievement growth

measures on the resulting principal practice merit more in-depth analysis (Loeb & Grissom,

2013). This study was intended to describe the relationship between evaluation practices for

teachers and principals that rely significantly on student growth achievement and the

improvement of practice and results, with a clear focus on the following research questions:

1. How do principals describe the impact of evaluative student growth goals on their

   leadership practice?

2. In what ways are teacher student growth goals reflected in the student growth goals that

   principals set?

Research Design

The study employed a phenomenological qualitative research design. The decision of

whether to use quantitative or qualitative research methods is a common and important question

among researchers (Creswell, 2013; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009; Sogunro, 2002) and was guided through application of the theoretical framework previously examined in detail in Chapters 1 and 2. Among the most important considerations within the context of theoretical framework was the *purpose* of the research. While it is critical to note that no single approach is best for all research purposes and that often both methods can be employed to complement one another, the use of these approaches is central to the successful process and product of a research study (Olusegun, 2002). For the purposes of this study, Olusegun highlights two relevant points: first, one must abandon the tendency to argue that one method is inherently better than the other, and second, a thorough understanding of both measures is required in order to make an informed decision about the appropriateness of using either measure.

For the purposes of this research study, the qualitative approach of gathering more in-depth responses that explored and defined the views of a select number of participants held several advantages in examining the relationship and questions around how a focus on student achievement results in teacher and principal evaluation actually impacted practice. A qualitative approach in this study allowed for the purposeful selection of schools and principals that explored the depth this topic deserved (Hinz, 2009). Additionally, a qualitative approach allowed the researcher to ask open-ended and in-depth questions. During the interview process, the researcher could choose "information rich" subjects and leverage these samples to gain an in-depth understanding of the issue and/or research questions (Creswell, 2012; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009). For these reasons, it was apparent that qualitative methods provided the most appropriate design in finding answers to the research questions.

Participants

The participants of this study were principals in one large, suburban K-12 public education school district and in one large, urban K-12 public education school district. The districts combine to serve over 50,000 students in the Northwestern United States and were chosen using purposive sampling techniques due to accessibility and representativeness. Specifically, these districts represented the practice of both suburban and urban school districts (Merriam, 2009). Additionally, both school districts were among the ten largest districts in the state and, based on both size and student demographics, were representative of districts that serve nearly 80% of the student population in the state.

Interviews were conducted with ten principals (utilizing both random and purposeful sampling methods), representing both elementary and secondary school leadership positions (See Table I). Additionally, the selection of representative numbers of male and female participants from both urban and suburban settings was purposeful. The researcher was prepared to interview any number of participants in order to collect adequate data, and ten participants resulted in maximizing the information to be gained from the participant group, adequately answering the research questions, reaching a data "saturation" point (Merriam, 2009). Participants engaged in a semi-structured interview which was conducted face-to-face in a school or public setting, such as a coffee shop. Interviews were conducted to accommodate the schedules of participants.

Table I

Principal and School Setting Demographics

Demographics	School Information
Research Participant (*n*)	*10*
Size of Districts	*22,000-31,000 students*
Campus Size	*300 to 1600 students*
Gender Ratio	*6 male: 4 female*
K-12 Level	*5 elementary: 5 secondary*
Experience Level	*4-15 years administrative experience* *m=11, SD=2.8*

Solicitation of Participants

Principals from two suburban school districts with varying degrees of experience (variances in years of experience and levels of experience) were selected. The participants in this portion of the study were current public school principals with previous experience in "traditional" evaluation systems and current "reform" evaluation systems that include student growth goals and measures. After submitting for and receiving both university and school district approval (Appendices A-G), the researcher sent out an electronic notice (email) to twelve principals explaining the study and soliciting volunteers. Using positive responses from the notice, the researcher conducted an interview using a predetermined interview protocol/script. Although no incentives were offered for participation in the study, ten principals responded with interest in participating in the research. The researcher was intentional about the solicitation and

selection of principals at the elementary and secondary levels from both genders in order to take into account potential differences.

Data Collection Procedures

The following paragraphs provide a description of the data collection process.

Instrument:

Prior to piloting the interview protocol and questions, each potential interview question was scaled with regards to relevance (Polit & Beck, 2006). In order to determine that the interview questions were relevant to the research questions of the study, 10 content experts (principals and district administrators NOT taking part in the actual interview protocol) used the attached CVI rating form (Appendix I) to assign a value of relevance on a 4-point ordinal scale to ten proposed interview questions. For each question, the number of content experts assigning a rating of 3 or 4 (relevant) was divided by the total number of experts (Polit & Beck). It was predetermined that a CVI score of .70 or higher would validate the interview question and scores below .70 would be discarded and/or edited and re-scored. Of the initial 11 interview questions that were included in the draft instrument, eight questions received a CVI score of .70 or above (Appendix J).

The researcher developed a script for the start and conclusion of the interviews conducted in this research (Appendix K). The purposeful sharing with interviewees of both the "what and why" of the study, as well as assuring the participant of confidentiality of their responses, provided appropriate background for the interviews (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). Next, the advice that Jacob and Furgerson offered regarding writing open-ended questions combined with the notion of writing prompts to elicit more probing responses was used in developing the interview

pilot. Finally, the guidance of Jacob and Fergurson contributed in establishing the interview protocol, questions, and instrument length and time constraints. The interview instrument was edited and revised multiple times based on this advice and the practical application of this principle. The interview protocol is included as Appendix I.

The researcher conducted pilot interviews to refine the protocol and interview questions to be used in the study. Both the protocol and the questions were pilot tested with three principals in order to refine the interview process and adapt the questions (Creswell, 2013). This interview pilot served to test the research instrument and the feasibility of the study (Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001). Additionally, Teijlingen and Hundley listed several benefits of piloting the interview prior to actual research. These benefits include:

- A pilot interview helps establish a protocol and determine if sample and technique are effective
- A pilot interview process assists in solving logistical issues
- A pilot interview ensures that data will answers research questions
- A pilot interview process gives credibility to the study with stakeholders

The pilot subjects were selected based on both convenience and similarity to actual participant factors (school setting, experience, etc.). Based on pilot interviews, two questions were combined to form a total of six questions for the interview instrument.

Interview Procedures:

Interviews were conducted in order to describe the effectiveness of teacher and principal evaluations focused on student achievement. The interview process was strengthened through the researcher's level of preparation, facilitation of the interviews, and skill in asking carefully

crafted questions in ways that encouraged participants to provide thoughtful, thorough descriptions of their experiences. Data were solicited through the use of an open-ended interview protocol and the facilitator's experience in working with educators in asking useful questions and eliciting rich data and reflection from them was useful (Turner, 2010).

Table II

Synopsis of Data Collection

Data Collection	Methods
Researcher reflective notes	Qualitative Data
Interview #1 with participants	Qualitative Data
Interview follow-up (if necessary)	Qualitative Data

Analytical Methods

The following methods for organizing and analyzing the data were employed:

First, the interview data were transcribed by the researcher. Next, the researcher began analyzing the data. Hand analyzing the data was completed by doing a general read to get a sense of themes, then coding the data to explore those themes to examine specific segments and themes within the data (Creswell, 2012). This included using/finding many interconnecting themes during the analysis. The interview data were coded using an analytical coding process which first employed open coding (simply identifying potentially important or relevant sections of interview responses) and then deriving categories from these coded segments (Merriam, 2009). These categorized responses formed the basis of the analysis.

Trustworthiness and Credibility

The credibility of the research was critical to the applicability of the study. It is essential in qualitative research to demonstrate that a true description of principal practice is represented in the research in order for both dependability and transferability (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002). The qualitative research in this study employed the following strategies to ensure both credibility and trustworthiness in the methods and findings:

- Right of refusal prior to and during data collection. Participants were given multiple opportunities to refuse to participate in all or part of the process to ensure honesty when contributing data. In particular, each person who was approached was given opportunities to refuse. Ten of twelve principals solicited for this research study chose to participate.

- Analytic notes in order to reflect and document decisions during analysis. This allowed the researcher to reflect on his own biases and assumptions and helped ensure that the final results reflected the participants' perspective (Anfara, et. al., 2002). Specifically, notes were kept on the coding framework and are reflected in the multiple drafts of the coding framework, instrument drafts, and study itself.

- Peer-review of analysis. The researcher sought out scrutiny of the data collected by colleagues in order to put the data in perspective and challenge assumptions made by the researcher, as immersion in the study could have otherwise inhibited his ability to view it with real detachment (Shenton, 2004). In addition to review of data with colleagues informally, the researcher conducted several reflective conversations with his dissertation chair.

- – Bracketing. Both the notes collected during the research process and the reflective conversations along the way have mitigated the potential bias that exists in a phenomenological qualitative study (Creswell, 2013).
- – Member checking after coding and theming (Appendix L). The researcher sent a draft of themes to the participants after coding and asked for feedback and reactions (Anfara, et. al., 2002). Participants either verified the data or offered no follow-up feedback.

Limitations

A primary disadvantage was that the research problems focused on the use of data and results in measuring teacher and principal effectiveness. Further limitations of the interview data collection included, availability of sites, level of access, and number of participants.

Another limitation of the research was the researcher's familiarity with the study sites and setting. While study participants were selected outside of the sphere of the researcher's influence, the interview participants were selected from school districts in which the researcher had a real interest in improving the practice of principals. The researcher took great care in refraining from an advocacy position.

Chapter IV

Results

Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the research process and interviews that were

conducted during the process. Although the discussion in Chapter 5 is organized according to

research questions, the organization of the themes in this chapter reflect those that emerged from

the interviews rather than being strictly organized by the research questions. While the research

questions provided the scaffold for interviews, it is worthwhile to see how the results were

described by participants.

These results are organized into three main sections. The first section describes the goal-

setting process that participants have employed in the evolving evaluation system. The second

section presents the ways that participants described the relationship between their principal

growth goals and the goals that teachers set around student achievement. The third section

describes participant perceptions of the impact that the inclusion of student growth goals in the

evaluation process has had on their own practice.

The results are presented consistent with the themes that emerged during the analysis of

the transcript data and as part of the constantly edited and revised coding framework. This

coding framework was the central guidepost during the analysis phase and has been instrumental

in organizing over 100 pages of transcript data. In order to preserve anonymity, specific

participant responses are denoted with P (for principal) and a number that corresponds to the

coded transcripts (P3, for example). In addition, identifying pronouns (i.e. he, she, his, hers)

were randomly assigned to principal responses and descriptions. The results are presented

consistent with the following research questions:

1. How do principals describe the impact of evaluative student growth goals on their

    leadership practice?

2. In what ways are teacher student growth goals reflected in the student growth goals that

    principals set?

The following results address the research questions as participants described (a) the goals

setting process, (b) the relationship between teacher and principal goals, and (c) the impact on

principal practice.

Goal Setting Process

While the research around student achievement goals and their impact on student learning

as part of the educator evaluation cycle is in its infancy (Bradshaw, 2002; Cho, Jimerson, Spikes,

& Wayman, 2012; Hinz, 2009; Levine & Levine, 2013; Lyon, 2009), participants in this study

were able to succinctly describe the ways that they went about setting their student growth goals.

Their descriptions generally fell into one of two categories: first, they described the collaboration

that they engaged in towards the development of their student achievement goals, and second,

they were able to articulate how the goal setting process has changed over the course of years

and how the process has been influenced by the implementation of a new state model for

evaluation.

Participants described the ways that they collaborated in establishing student growth

goals in four distinct ways and with varying frequencies (see Table III).

Table III

Collaboration as a Part of Goal Setting

Theme	Frequency of topic/description
Collaboration with teachers	10 of 10 participants
Collaboration with evaluator	10 of 10 participants
Collaboration with assistant principal	6 of 10 participants
Collaboration with colleagues	2 of 10 participants

Questions in the interview ensured that all or nearly all of the participants would address the collaboration between principal/teacher and principal/evaluator (indeed, 10/10 participants did address these topics).

Participants were specifically asked to describe the process they used to collaborate with their teachers. First, several participants described the all-too-often phenomena of being new to a school as principal and the need for collaboration:

> Coming into this building brand new last year, I had conversations with staff
> members first to help me set a good growth goal as it impacted school
> culture and student achievement as a ripple effect of school culture. So
> initially I was getting some background information. (P4)

This effort to collaborate came from the necessity of learning about a new school, the data of its students, and the practices of the teachers. Other participants described collaboration as simple as pushing "our teachers everyday to articulate a learning target" (P8) and as complex as the following description of collaboration during this goal setting phase:

I really worked with the staff to identify that we wanted to focus on using

the Developmental Reading Assessments DRA 2 as an assessment tool. We

aligned our goals with that and primarily kind of being a school wide goal

and everyone nested their goals together in that way. (P10)

Participants were also prompted to discuss the level of collaboration with their own

evaluators around setting their goals. The "new-ness" of student achievement goals as part of the

principal process was evident in the descriptions of the participants here, too. "I would say the

process evolves year in and year out. I wouldn't say there is one set way that we come to do that"

(P1). Others described the collaboration with their evaluator as "an interesting process" (P2).

Beyond this lack of clarity around the new process, there is variety in participant descriptions of

how they actually set their goals with their supervisors. One participant described the

collaboration as business as usual, "I can't answer that, because it is always part of my

conversation" (P3). Another, stated, "I think I just did them. I just wrote them. Then I sent them

in. That was it" (P7). Most, though, were able to describe the real ways they worked with their

evaluators to set meaningful goals. These descriptions are represented in the following response:

My evaluator and I meet once a month and that question about our goals and

our progress comes up every single time that we sit down and meet. So, if

you are able to know what the performance data looks like I think we have

more meaningful conversations about the business that we are in. (P1)

Additionally, the interview questions also explored the collaboration between principal

and assistant principal. All participants who worked with an assistant principal (6/10) provided a

description of this collaboration. Most of these participants described a process that mirrored

that of their own collaboration with a district-level evaluator. While the descriptions varied a bit amongst the participants, one description seems to have captured the theme of the six participants who worked with assistant principals around goal-setting.

> I don't want her (assistant principal) spending time to figure out what should
> be my goal. I want her figuring out "how do I support my people through
> this school while meeting the needs that I have to have a reliable, valid
> system changing procedure?" (P3)

Participants who responded to this prompt all described a process of collaboration with their assistant principals that resulted in very similar (if not identical) student growth goals as the participant.

Interestingly, two of the participants described the importance of collaboration with colleagues (other principals and assistant principals) although this was not directly asked during the course of the interview. One secondary participant specifically referenced "the presentation we had heard from an elementary participant in the district about the success he had had about setting a common goal in the building" (P2) as being instrumental to her approach around goal setting at the secondary level. This concept of collaboration amongst colleagues bears further discussion later in this research study as we examine the implications of this research.

Several themes emerged within the participants' description of the goal setting process. Nearly all participants described an increase in focus on student learning during this goal setting process (this is the third year that principals have engaged in the process), an increase in a "growth mindset" of teachers and administrators during the goal setting process, and several

consistent obstacles that they encountered as they worked with staff to create growth goals that measured student achievement.

First, participants consistently described the change of focus during the goal setting process as resulting in conversations that were much more centered on student learning. Many of the participants described this as a substantial change, moving from personal or management goals in the past that often did not have a strong connection to student learning. As one participant stated, "So I think with teachers and with myself the former evaluation that was something talked about at the very beginning of the year and the very end of the year, and maybe occasionally here and there it would be brought up" (P1). This notion of collaborating with teachers around growth measures that truly impact student learning is evident in the description of most participants. P1 continued by contrasting current practices to past practices:

> Whereas now with the way we have adopted a new evaluation system and with our student growth goals, I feel like it is something we talk about routinely in all of our conversations and having those student growth goals in place gives us a starting point to have that conversation as far as having a really data based conversation. (P1)

This sentiment of the increase in evaluation conversations centered on real student data was repeated in several participant interviews, including the following:

> Now, you really have to show growth of student performance. It is not about how well you dress, how much money you were able to save in ASB (budget), how many discipline referrals were you able to kick back, or

whatever. Those things are really more about management than about

leadership. (P6)

The participants emphasized the change in the tone and content of goal-setting conferences from focusing on management practices to emphasizing learning goals.

Another consistent theme that was derived from the conversations around the goal setting process was an increase in a "growth mindset" of teachers and administrators as they discuss the evaluation and their practices. One participant noted that "this process is really more of a growth process, more authentic. It's more about the efforts that support the rating then about the opinion piece on who you are as a person/leader/manager" (P6). With the popularity of recent research and writings around "growth mindset" (see Angela Lee Duckworth or Carol Dweck's work), this theme emerged consistently among the participants in this study. Another participant stated that the new process of setting goals allowed him to "let people know that if you don't reach your goal that is ok and you are not a failure, but you have to be working toward something" (P8). This growth mindset helped participants to reflect that "the strength is that the process does allow everyone to grow" (P6) rather than focus on student achievement in isolation of growth.

A final set of themes in the goal setting process that emerged during the interviews with participants was several consistent obstacles that they encountered as they worked with staff to create growth goals that measured student achievement. In fact, nearly a third of the interview content from transcripts and every participant described (directly and indirectly) the challenges that have arisen as principals have changed to an evaluation system that focuses on student achievement results (see Table IV). These challenges range from lack of experience to overcoming the fear of change to a lack of skill, and many more.

Table IV

Challenges in the Goal Setting Process

Challenge	Frequency of topic
Lack of clarity around the process	5 of 10 participants
Difficulty in setting meaningful growth goals	4 of 10 participants
Difficulty in leading learning conversations	3 of 10 participants
Principal lack of knowledge/experience in goal setting	3 of 10 participants
Differences between elementary and secondary	2 of 10 participants
Lack of trust	2 of 10 participants
Time/process is overwhelming	1 of 10 participants
Teacher lack of knowledge of standards/assessment	1 of 10 participants
Staff turnover	1 of 10 participants

Interestingly, none of the interview questions were designed to elicit direct feedback from participants of the challenges that they faced as they engaged in working with teachers, assistant principals, and evaluators on establishing goals. While each of the participants in the study noted at least one of the potential obstacles listed in Table IV, several of the concerns were found thematically from multiple participants. These challenges include the lack of clarity around a new evaluation process, the difficulty in setting meaningful student achievement goals, and the fear of evaluation consequences and lack of trust that hindered the process.

The concerns of lack of clarity around a new evaluation process and student growth goals were summed up by a participant who stated, "Nobody knew what they were doing. I had this folder, this big, filled with junk. It was crazy" (P6). This confusion and lack of experience in

setting goals was the most consistent challenge in the initial implementation of goal setting as part of the evaluation system. Without guidance, participants reported the following challenge:

> I have been trying to find a system that works so that I feel like the
>
> goal has meaning rather than just a box to check that we've gone through a
>
> process" (P1).

Several participants echoed that the angst "has come from where we are trying to figure out what the growth goals are, what those look like, and what qualifies as a growth goal" (P2). This participant, and several others, also discussed the notion that this lack of clarity was improving as they gained experience with the new system. As an example, "I think it is becoming more clear as we do the work" (P3).

This concern about the lack of clarity was related in many participants' descriptions to the difficulty in setting meaningful goals that actually led to improved instruction and increased student achievement. That is, after principals made the transition to a new evaluation system, the difficulty in setting impactful goals presented a real challenge.

> I can make some technical goals really pretty easily, but will they have a lot
>
> of meaning and will they really inform my practice? And so I am trying to
>
> be really comfortable in kind of allowing that process to happen and then
>
> evaluate what are the goals of my staff that they are setting and setting my
>
> goals appropriate to that. (P1)

Another participant put it even more succinctly. "The teachers write their goals and, yes, they are in their evaluation but they did not necessarily see it as a tool to get better" (P7). While this challenge was consistent, it was neither universal nor seen as an insurmountable obstacle for all

of the participants. "I do believe in setting goals. I have always set goals. Whether it be formal or informal. To realize wait a minute. This could be a good thing" (P4).

A final notable challenge that participants reported during the course of interviews was the notion that teachers, and principals for that matter, often fought an uphill battle with regards to trust and the high stakes of the goals as part of the final evaluation. In fact, one participant described her physical reaction as she prepared for her own goal setting conference with her district-level evaluator, "I think I get a cold sweat and I get flushed and red" (P10). This feeling of nervousness was reported more often, though, as participants described the challenge of overcoming trust issues among teachers as they set goals that directly impact their evaluation results.

> So the challenge with that (authentic goals) is having those conversations
> with staff that are always supportive and always back to the learning rather
> than having them feel like we are targeting them specifically and targeting
> their practice. I think the danger is people can be made to feel like, well, if
> you don't do well then your evaluation suffers from that. That is not the
> point of the student growth goals and that is not the point of the whole
> evaluation system. (P1)

This statement encapsulates the comments of several participants in the study who found that both the high stakes nature of the goals and the lack of trusting relationships amongst teachers and principals presented a formidable challenge. Another participant put it this way:

> The history (evaluation, building, etc.) impacts peoples' willingness to
> establish relationships and let bygones be bygones and be able to trust each

other. As a profession our teachers are not anywhere near yet being able to

confront the data and take it just personal enough to change their practice

but not personal enough to make them feel bad (P3).

This is not an exhaustive description of the themes that emerged during the course of the

interviews (see Table IV), but it does represent the prevailing themes.

Relationship Between Principal and Teacher Goals

Participants delineated the relationship between their principal growth goals and

the goals that teachers set around student achievement. Although there were few

instances of participant descriptions of this relationship that were wholly teacher-derived

or completely principal-derived, most themes that emerged from participants'

descriptions of the relationship that could be categorized in one or more ways (see Table

V). These relationships were described in response to the following interview questions:

How would you describe the relationship between your goals and teacher goals? How

have the student growth goals that you set influenced your teacher's student growth

goals? How have the teacher's student growth goals influenced the student growth goals

that are part of your evaluation?

Table V

Relationship Between Principal and Teacher Goals

Relationship	Frequency of Description
No relationship exists between teacher and principal goals	1 of 10 participants
Principal goals influenced the teacher goals	3 of 10 participants
Teacher goals influenced the principal goals	3 of 10 participants

The goals of teachers and principals are interdependent	6 of 10 participants
School improvement goals (and data) influenced principal and teacher goals	8 of 10 participants

Although participants did cite several examples of how their principal growth goals formed the basis of teacher goals in the building, these examples were often prefaced by comments like "that's been inconsistent" (P1) or "maybe not a direct correlation" (P2). Participants did, however, identify data as the primary driver of their own goals and those of their teachers. Several examples follow.

Ok, my whole school goal is it starts with the state assessment scores. Then we dig a little deeper. (P3)

I go to the data first. I look for trends in the building. The second piece I look at our teams or our groups of kids that were struggling the most. (P5)

We identify where the gaps are. (P6)

We sat down as a grade level and looked at our grade level data looked at my own class then class as a whole and identify the area that we want to focus on. We then develop that goal. (P6)

I start with looking at the data. Ideally what we want to do is align the building goals with the teacher goals. So if the teachers are achieving and succeeding their goals then that means the building is achieving and succeeding their goals. So we aim to align them the best as we can. (P8)

It was looking at our data and what stood out. (P9)

While the principal goals in these descriptions did impact the teacher goals, participants were clear that it was the data that defined the content of the goals.

Several participants also cited the influence of teacher student growth goals on the development of their own targets. For instance, one participant offered that she believed that her principal goals are "probably going to be more from the bottom up. The idea is that their goals will inform mine" (P1). This idea of goals that flowed from teacher to principal was shared by the participant who described the hesitancy of his teachers.

> At first, because they felt like it was me micromanaging them. But when I shared with the team that my goals came from theirs, this was for me, and I'm using their goals…it actually supported them. (P3)

This notion that teacher student growth goals were ultimately the basis for principal goals was repeated during the course of several interviews. While there were also responses that reflected the lack of relationship between teacher goals and principal goals related to student learning, nearly all participants (8 of 10) were able to articulate a connection between their goals and teacher goals and/or school goals.

Impact on Principal Practice

Researchers have examined the impact that effective principal practice can have on student achievement (Chin, 2007; Copland, 2003; Gray & Streshly, 2008 Honig & Coburn, 2007; Lloyd, Robinson, & Rowe, 2008; Marzano & Waters, 2006; Protheroe, 2011; Ryan and Soehner, 2011). The question, however, of how student growth goals influence the use of these practices is the focus of this study. How do principals describe the impact of evaluative student growth goals on their leadership practice?

Participants described varying practices and varying degrees of implementation of these leadership practices as a result of setting student growth goals for themselves and in working with their teachers to set goals for student achievement. Themes and descriptions around (a) improved supervision and evaluation practices, (b) improved professional development practices, and (c) improved instructional leadership practices emerged during the analysis of participant interviews.

Improved supervision and evaluation practices.

Several participants described an increased emphasis on writing, revising, editing, and collaborating around goals with teachers as part of the evaluation process. While much of this collaboration was described as participants described their goal setting practice, participants also identified this increased collaboration as a leadership skill that they had increased the use of in their schools. For example, one participant stated "I am more invested in making sure they have the support that they need to meet their goals" (P5). Additionally, participants were able to describe the increased use of short-term goals to improve the practice of their teachers.

> We just coached the teachers on writing good goals…This year I think that
> was a big shift for us in having them so short…I thought because the
> teacher's goals were focused around helping students (P7).

Again, it is the participant's description of this coaching that placed this goal coaching in the improved leadership practice through supervision and evaluation category. Finally, participants cited improvements in their classroom observation practices several times throughout the interviews. "It has forced me out of my office. I am now on their

turf. I am going to go to them" (P4). In addition to citing increased use of a teaching framework for classroom observations, participants were able to point to more frequent and focused observations.

Improved professional development practices.

Another category of improved leadership practice that participants described involved the professional development that they developed for teachers, especially professional development focused on goal setting, collaboration, and student achievement results. Participants reported seeing a true need for continued professional development around the setting of goals. "It's a new process, how do we get to that point?" (P1). The answer for many participants was increased professional development time dedicated to collaboration in goal setting. "Almost all of it (PD) on the principal directed days was giving that time back to the teachers for collaboration around goals" (P2).

This dedication of time was reinforced with an increased focus on standards and the types of assessment data that could be used in writing and evaluating student growth goals. For instance, one participant discussed professional development needs as "really needing a diagnostic tool that tells us what gap kids have. I think that is really where we need to spend our time on" (P3). Participants were consistent in these descriptions of the importance of professional development in increasing the effectiveness of student growth goals.

Improved instructional leadership practices.

Finally, participants were able to articulate several specific instructional leadership practices that were impacted through their practice of establishing student growth goals (see Table VI).

Table VI

Impacted Instructional Leadership Practices

Practice	Frequency of Description
Learning v. management	5 of 10 participants
Achievement gap	5 of 10 participants
Reflective practice	6 of 10 participants
Differences in elementary and secondary practice	10 of 10 participants

Learning v. management.

Participants were able to point to instructional leadership practice as the focus of the work in today's schools.

> I have changed my practice because the principalship is changing. We are
> no longer managers of buildings. We have not been managers of buildings
> for a long time, but we behave like managers of buildings. For me a that
> practice has changed is that I have something instructional to talk to a
> teacher about now. Where we are on the same page. I can go in to (teacher
> name) class and say "Hey, remember our goal is computational fluency and
> when I did my walk thru yesterday I reflected and I wanted you to know that

> while you were teaching that math lesson and it was problem solving, you really addressed basic skills." (P3)

This increased focus on teaching and learning rather than school management was reflected in several participant's description of their leadership practice.

Achievement gap.

Participants described the focus that goal setting placed on examining the data from subgroups.

> We (staff) are looking at our Hispanic culture and what that looks like. Then kind of diving into some of those things that are keeping our Hispanic students from being at school. (P2)

This increased focus on shining the light on the data of underperforming students was a consistent theme among the participants.

> We have got kids who are missing their addition facts. What are you doing during your math intervention time to support these kids? (P3)

This theme of using goals to drive instructional leadership to increase student learning for our lowest achieving students was evident in the data analysis.

Reflective practice.

Finally, participants described reflective practice that is found in the literature as indicative of high levels of instructional leadership. For instance, one participant discussed "sticking with that goal another year because you have got to have longevity to decide if that goal is a good one or not" (P3). This type of reflection was part of many participant descriptions of the change in their practice.

I need to sit down and really reflect on what I am going to do next time. I

am really working on being more gentle than direct. I am in a different place

in the sense of mentality. This district is different than (name), and it has

taken me awhile to figure that out. (P9)

Participants described this leadership reflection as critical to the process of growth as

they continued to improve their principal practice.

Differences in elementary and secondary practices.

Elementary participants in the study described the goal-setting process and the work they

engaged in with teachers as a normal and ongoing part of their leadership practice.

For me it is the work we should be doing. I don't really feel that it is new

and novel. I don't feel like it is that big of a deal. But I understand for some

of my colleagues it is. (P3)

This principal describes the "normalcy" of goals in the evaluation process in the

following way:

I always make it a part of our conversation. I am assuming if my evaluator

is coming in to talk about what I am doing, he wants to know what I am

doing related to my goal. So I make it a part of the conversation…it has to

be in the forefront of what we are doing. (P3)

This description of the inclusion of goal setting for improved student achievement

results as part of the evaluation process was consistent, in one form or another, amongst

elementary participants.

Unlike their elementary counterparts, the secondary participants provided descriptions of the purpose, process, and results of student growth goals in their own evaluations and those of their teachers that indicated a lack of expertise. Some of these descriptions indicated a lack of depth around the process of setting meaningful student growth goals.

> Yesterday, we did some work with our entire staff around some basics of the goal setting. Then we had 15 minutes, 10-15 minute meetings depending on who they are. Even good coaching knows this person is already running strong and they are going good and they are focused all I need are a few questions to know they got it. Boom, boom, boom , boom! Let them know that I am here. Look at their goals. That one may take 3-4 minutes even though we have set aside 15 minutes. I got around to 18 different teachers one on one yesterday. (P4)

This description of goals that were something to be accomplished in three minutes or less was not echoed in elementary participant descriptions of the process, but was reflected in both subtle and not-so-subtle ways amongst secondary administrators.

Conclusion

Researchers such as Booker (2013), May (2007), and Walsh (2012) believed research needed to further examine effective educator evaluation. The results of this qualitative study were intended to explore the idea that principal goals written to address increased student achievement actually impact principal practice. The results centered around the impact of these achievement goals around the goal setting practice, on the

collaboration of participants with teachers and colleagues about these goals, and on the

participants' perceptions about how these goals actually impacted their leadership.

Chapter V

Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations

Introduction

Researchers have examined both leadership and teacher practices that influence student learning results (Marzano, 2006; Reeves, 2009; Rice, 2010). As educators across America move to an evaluation process that calls for a significant increase in student achievement as a result of meaningful student growth goals (Chatterji, 2002), there is good cause to describe the connection (or lack thereof) between this "new" educator evaluation process and actual evidence of growth and increased student achievement (Booker, Bruch, & Gill, 2013; Earl & Fullan, 2003). This research project explored the connection between teacher and principal student growth goals and whether this focus on student achievement actually results in improvement in principal leadership practices.

This purpose of this study was to describe the relationship between evaluation practices for teachers and principals that rely significantly on student growth achievement and to examine principal practice in establishing and supporting these student growth goals. This chapter discusses the implications of the study in relation to these research questions:

1. How do principals describe the impact of evaluative student growth goals on their leadership practice?

2. In what ways are teacher student growth goals reflected in the student growth goals that principals set?

The following discussion of these research questions will serve to inform both policy makers and practitioners. First, the focus on the relationship between student growth data in

principal evaluations and principal practice should be of interest to policy makers around the country, specifically in the Northwest United States. As the process for teacher and principal evaluations is evolving, research that addresses the results of this data focus in educator evaluations could help to establish clear policy and guidelines for districts. Educators and administrators will benefit from research questions that center on effective collaborative practices, which create significant increases to student learning (Marzano, 2003).

Summary of Results

This study employed a qualitative research design in order to best meet the purpose of the research questions. More specifically, qualitative interviews allowed participants to provide thick descriptions of leadership practices and in-depth responses were able to "tell the story" of leadership practices, barriers to practice, and next steps in a way that served the purpose of providing robust descriptions in response to the research questions (Creswell 2012). This qualitative approach was further justified in the purposeful selection of participants that were able to both describe the phenomena of educator evaluation and highlight the differences in leadership beliefs and practices through the use of open-ended questions (Creswell, 2012; Hinz, 2009). The participants in the study were employed in both elementary and secondary school settings with varying degrees of experience (both teaching and administrative) and represented the experiences of participants in both urban and suburban school districts.

There were several themes that emerged from the participant interviews. After reading, re-reading and coding the transcripts, the results were organized into three main sections. The first section described the goal-setting process that participants have employed in the evolving evaluation system. The second section presented the ways that participants describe the

relationship between their principal growth goals and the goals that teachers have set around student achievement. The third section described participant perceptions of the impact that the inclusion of student growth goals in the evaluation process has had on their own practice.

Goal setting.

Participants in this study were able to succinctly describe the ways that they went about setting their student growth goals. Their descriptions generally fell into one of two categories: first, they described the collaboration that they engaged in towards the development of their student achievement goals, and second, they were able to articulate how the goal setting process has changed over the course of years and the implementation of a new state model for evaluation.

Relationship between principal and teacher goals.

Participants were also able to describe the relationship between their principal growth goals and the goals that teachers set around student achievement. Although there were few instances of participant descriptions of this relationship that were wholly teacher-derived or completely principal-derived, participants provided thick description of the relationship that could be categorized in one or more ways.

Impact on principal practice.

The participants of this study described varying practices and varying degrees of implementation of these leadership practices as a result of setting student growth goals for themselves and in working with their teachers to set goals for student achievement. Themes and descriptions around improved supervision and evaluation practices,

improved professional development practices, and improved instructional leadership

practices emerged during the analysis of participant interviews.

Research Question #1: Impact of evaluative student growth goals on principal practice

A primary purpose of this study was to provide illustrative description of the impact that

injecting student growth goals, for both teachers and principals, into the evaluation process has

had on the leadership practices of principals. In traditional educator evaluation systems, the

evaluations typically include easy-to-observe practices, such as student management and time-

on-task measures rather than student results (Edwards, 2011). In attempting to describe principal

perceptions of the impact of an updated evaluation system that does indeed place an emphasis on

the inclusion of student growth data for teachers and administrators, two themes have emerged

that are worthy of further discussion:

- Principals view the improved evaluation process as a crucial leadership practice.

- The school level that a principal serves, rather than years of experience, is a critical factor
    in goal-setting effectiveness.

Each of these themes are discussed in terms of their relationship to the impact of evaluative

student growth goals on principal practice.

Principals view the improved evaluation process as a crucial leadership practice.

Effective principal practice can have a positive impact on student achievement (Chin,

2007; Copland, 2003; Gray & Streshly, 2008 Honig & Coburn, 2007; Lloyd, Robinson, & Rowe,

2008; Marzano & Waters, 2006; Protheroe, 2011; Ryan and Soehner, 2011). While researchers

across the globe have designed studies and conducted research in order to delineate each of these

leadership practices, Marzano (2009) has categorized effective principal-leadership practice into five distinct categories:

1. A data-driven focus on student achievement.

2. Continuous improvement of instruction.

3. A guaranteed and viable curriculum.

4. Cooperation and collaboration.

5. School climate.

Further, evaluation practices can "fit" into each of these categories of principal-leadership. For instance, recent research supports the inclusion of effective evaluation practices for educators as a primary leadership action and a leverage point for increasing student learning in educational systems throughout the country This research has been instrumental in applying increasing pressure on policymakers to implement teacher and principal standards that are significantly different from current/past practice in a manner that gives meaningful feedback and provide guidance to educators in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning (Sartain, Stoelinga, & Brown, 2011). These efforts include reforms that are focused on student growth, student-learning outcomes, and student test scores (Hershberg & Robertson-Craft, 2010). These reforms in principal and teacher evaluation clearly demonstrate the desire to connect educator evaluation and effectiveness to student test scores (Edwards, 2011).

Participants in this study consistently reinforced the evaluation process as a crucial piece of the leadership practice of principals. Participants consistently reported that the single most important change in their leadership practice during the implementation of student growth goals for principals and teachers has been the increased focus on effective evaluation practices.

Participants reported that evaluation has become "a critical part of my conversation with teachers" and has "changed the way I have conversation with teachers" (P3). This changing view of evaluation as a primary leadership practice was expressed by this participant in the following way:

> Yeah, I think they (goals) have changed our practice because the
>
> principalship is changing. We are no longer managers of buildings. We have
>
> not been managers of buildings for a long time, but we continued to behave
>
> like managers of buildings. For me the practice that has changed is that I
>
> have something instructional to talk to a teacher about now. Where we are
>
> on the same page. I can go in to (teacher's) class and say, "Hey, remember
>
> our goal is computational fluency and when I did my walk-through
>
> yesterday, I reflected and I wanted you to know that while you were
>
> teaching that math lesson on problem solving, you really addressed basic
>
> skills. Did you know you did that and you embedded that instruction? (P3)

Participants reinforced the literature (Cho, Jimerson, Spikes, & Wayman, 2012; Hinz, 2009) in identifying goal setting as a priority and vital component of the evaluation process for both teachers and principals.

Participants also acknowledged the impact of improved evaluation practice that increases teacher efficacy as a result of setting student growth goals.

> I know goal setting is having an impact. I have heard them in their PLCs
>
> (professional learning communities) talk about the thinking, the activities
>
> that they need to do in the classroom to get growth. There is some impact

there. They would say I have a goal, but I don't look at it every day. You can

tell they are thinking about it more so than they have before. (P5)

Not only are teachers thinking about goals and student achievement as a result of evaluative

student growth goals, but so are the principals.

It has forced me to be intentional about instructional practices. It has forced

me to ask teachers to produce actual evidence. In the past I could always go

on a gut feeling of what I knew was right. I trust that gut, I still do. But now

I am forced to have evidence to prove what I know. I think that is good and

that is part of the intentionality piece. (P8)

Participants in the study verified recent research findings (Lyon, 2009) as they regularly cited

this intentional addition to the evaluation process that was created through purposeful goals

focused on student achievement.

This increased focus on making effective evaluation a primary leadership practice in a

principal's daily routine as a result of growth goals was captured by the following participant:

That is just talking about it more. Asking the questions more. Making it the

whole emphasis in the building about it. Getting more into their classrooms.

Talking to them about what they are doing in reading. (P9)

This same participant reported the increased need in the evaluation process to be knowledgeable

about teacher goals, the instructional practice taking place in the classroom, and the evaluative

instructional framework. One participant (P9) noted that "I have to spend time there (the

classrooms)" in order to provide effective evaluative guidance, specifically about student growth

progress. Another participant supported the literature review (Data Quality Campaign, 2012;

Edwards, 2011) that highlighted the need for competent leadership as a result of the framework

and goal-setting evidence.

> I think about the tool we have now for evaluation. It is so much more
>
> comprehensive. The rubric is providing so much feedback around what
>
> needs to be done in the classroom best practices. The ability to go and look
>
> at the evidence from an observation and compare it to a teacher's goals. P10

Clearly, principals are viewing recent reform efforts that place student growth goals at the center

of the educator evaluation process, from self-assessments and initial goal setting to classroom

observations and student achievement results.

The school level that a principal serves, rather than years of experience, is a critical

factor in goal-setting effectiveness.

Policymakers and educational leaders are now beginning to gauge the effectiveness of

educators by the results they produce (Data Quality Campaign, 2012; Edwards, 2011; Hershberg

& Robertson-Craft, 2010; Murphy, Hallinger, & Heck, 2013; Papay, 2012; Sartain, Stoelinga, &

Brown, 2011). In addition to the increased effectiveness and accountability of evaluation

practices, research exists to determine which principal practices and characteristics are most

likely to increase student achievement.

Of particular relevance to this study was the assertion in the literature review that

experience matters. Using a statewide analysis of data in Illinois to complete a quantitative

analysis, Bowers and White (2014) concluded that there were several principal practices that

proved to be most critical in determining increased student outcomes. Significantly, principals

with two to five years of experience had the most substantial impact on student achievement

(Bowers & White, 2014). And, although Branch, Rivkin, and Hanushek (2009) asserted in their quantitative research study that there is little systemic evidence supporting many claims of impactful leadership practices that lead to increases in student achievement, the authors also found that increases in the length of time that a principal served in any one particular school had significant positive effects on student achievement.

Participants in this study, while not necessarily contradicting the previous research, added to the body of research in demonstrating that elementary participants view the effectiveness of growth goals in a different way than their secondary colleagues. The participants interviewed for this study had administrative experience that ranged from 4 to 15 years, with no discernible differences in their descriptions of the impact of student growth goals as part of the evaluation process. In addition, male and female participants from both suburban and urban districts provided strikingly similar descriptions of practice. Participants from these varied settings, genders, and years of experience did describe differences in their practice, but no consistent theme was apparent.

The level of school leadership which the participant served, however, did provide insight. Ten principals were interviewed as part of the qualitative research process in this study; 5 elementary principals and 5 secondary principals (of these secondary principals, 2 were high school administrators and 3 were middle level administrators). Elementary participants described the goals setting process as much more instrumental to their practice, to the improvement of instruction, and to increased student achievement results than did the secondary participants in the study.

Elementary participants were adept in describing that the goals they were creating for themselves and with their teachers actually had impact on the classroom and, ultimately, on student achievement.

> I go to the data first. I look for trends in the building. When I was
> identifying my large group goal, I looked at systems that were either in
> place or lack of systems that were in place in the building that would help us
> identify areas that teachers needed to work on as well as students need to
> work on. I am regularly checking up on the 6 week goals. If they are
> reporting out as a whole group so that we can brainstorm and that we are
> constantly looking at data for those pieces that are missing. That for me is
> the first piece. The second piece I look at our teams or our groups of kids
> that were struggling the most. (P5)

This elementary participant was methodical in her description of how she and her teachers went about the process of setting meaningful student growth goals. Other elementary participants were equally skilled in describing the intentionality of their evaluative student growth goals.

> The connection of course is reading. The school goals are reading. The
> schools goals are connected to mine which are composite scores. I worked
> with the CSIP (Comprehensive School Improvement Plan) team on trying to
> formulate them and make sure that happened. (P9)

Another stated that "we are looking at the report card benchmarks which are aligned with the Common Core" (P10). Participants serving at the elementary level consistently

described the purpose, process, and results from their own student growth goals and those of their teachers as meaningful, intentional, and business as usual.

Secondary participants, on the other hand, had much more difficulty in identifying and describing effective goal-setting practices. Secondary participants described their goals and the impact these goals were having on the evaluation process and on student achievement in similar ways. When asked about how they went about the process of establishing their own student growth goals, several of the secondary participants provided the following narratives:

- I think I just did them. I just wrote them. Then I sent them in. That was it. (P7)

- Maybe they were just general goals. I don't know, I am almost being apologetic. (P2)

- And so for my own goals I am not exactly sure what that is going to look like. (P1)

This lack of clarity and/or investment in the process of establishing meaningful principal growth goals that positively impact practice and student achievement was described succinctly by a secondary participant that had administrative experience at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

Having been in all 3 levels I have always felt like elementary was really, really good at capturing some very frequent student growth information. They are much more informed of assessments than we have traditionally in the secondary schools. (P1)

This disparity of assessment data between our elementary and secondary schools and the differences in the descriptions of principal practice with regards to evaluative growth goals as part of a meaningful evaluation process was a substantial finding of this research study.

Research Question #2: Relationship between teacher and principal student growth goals

The need for strong collaboration skills was a recurring theme throughout the literature review. The research of Reeves (2006) and Levey (2014), in particular, point out the importance of strong collaboration skills in principal leaders, especially in goal setting and evaluation efforts. In efforts to define the leadership actions of principals that contribute to improved practice at the classroom level, Reeves developed a set of seven dimensions of leadership were critical: (a) visionary leadership, (b) relational leadership, (c) systems leadership, (d) reflective leadership, (e) collaborative leadership, (f) analytical leadership, and (g) communicative leadership. The ability to collaborate with teachers is among the strongest leadership skill that a principal can exhibit (Reeves, 2006).

Even more to the point of this study, Levey (2014) looked deeply into how principal goal-setting affected school improvement. The author defined collaboration for learning as "teachers and their principal engaged in dialogue specifically related to the improvement of student academic achievement" (Levey, 2014, p. 10). Levey (2014) concluded that although principals are adept at establishing routines for observing the classroom practice of teachers, they rarely collaborate with teachers. In addition, true collaboration for learning between teachers and principals must be based on common goals designed to improve instruction and student performance. Research further defined the collaborative skills that principals need to exhibit as built upon mutual trust and respect (Levey, 2014).

Participants in this study described the importance of this collaborative relationship in similar ways. One participant acknowledged the desire to become a better collaborator and evaluator:

I think the biggest thing for trying to work and change teacher practices is wanting to become a better evaluator myself on that piece of it. Looking at the school wide goals but also using whatever their teacher goals are and helping them work on those goals themselves. (P2)

Other participants made the following comments that reflected this need for increased collaboration as part of the goal setting process.

– We worked to set one common goal as an entire staff then my goals would reflect the work the teachers were doing in the classroom. (P1)

– We had tremendous results in our data because we worked as a team. The engagement piece is the primary focus of our building principal. (P4)

– So while it is not an area of comfort for me, I chose it as an area so that I could show my teachers that I am also growing professionally in this content area. (P3)

– I have tried to provide the scaffold and the structure with that gradual release of responsibility. (P3)

Participants in the study recognized and described the increased importance of collaboration as part of the evaluation and student growth goal-setting process.

This was especially true in the descriptions participants provided with regards to teacher goals, and less true in their descriptions of their collaborations with their own evaluators.

I'd like more collaboration with our supervisor, but it just gets sent out there as, "Here is what you will do." Maybe I will try and say, "This is what I really want to do." I feel the report cards and benchmarks are what they

> really wanted to be a really great dashboard of building health. Trying to
>
> find some collaboration around that. (P10)

Several participants expressed this desire to increase collaboration with their own evaluator in order to develop interdependent teacher and principal goals and more effective evaluation practices throughout all levels of the organization.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Recent research has prioritized five actions deemed important to policymakers including the need to establish the link between student data and teachers, implement the practices that support this link, provide ready access to this data, provide educator training on how to use this data, and improve teacher preparation programs to include this data analysis (DQC, 2012). Further policy analysis also highlighted the need for an increased focus on principal leadership and student growth goals in order to guide policy-makers in establishing the most critical development and implementation considerations to positively impact principal evaluation systems (New Leaders for New Schools, 2012).

This policy analysis combined with recent legislation changes direct that teacher and principal evaluations include results of student achievement gains. Based on enduring concerns that teacher and principal evaluations were largely unsuccessful in removing ineffective educators and convincing data that teacher and principal effectiveness were the single largest factors leading to increases in student achievement, nearly every state in the union has now adopted policy changes that make this connection between student test scores and teacher/principal evaluation results (Piro, Wiemers, & Shutt, 2012; Scherrer, 2011).

With these policy considerations in mind, and in response to the researcher's discussion and conclusions presented in this study, the following recommendations for policy and practice are made.

Barriers must be overcome for improved goal setting, achievement, and evaluation practice. Substantial barriers exist in implementing a reformed evaluation system that gives significant weight to student growth goals. Research has pointed to indicators that deserve consideration in the implementation of teacher and principal evaluations in this new area of accountability. These barriers include the lack of potential stakeholder investment, the selection of appropriate measures, a lack of training for evaluators, and issues of data integrity (Clifford, Hansen, & Wraight, 2012). Another recent study reported that the majority of teachers and participants in the study desired to use data to improve their instruction, but they noted that there were substantial barriers, including computer data systems, that prevented them from using the data in this way (Cho, Jimerson, Spikes, & Wayman, 2012). Finally, there are organizational barriers to implementation of effective educational evaluations. These organizational barriers included the symbiotic relationship that exists between teacher and principals in order to keep a school running and the autonomous nature of teacher practice inside the classroom (Murphy, Hallinger, & Heck, 2013).

Participants in this study consistently described barriers similar to those provided by the literature as they worked with teachers, and even with their own evaluators, to create growth goals that measured student achievement.

Table VII

Barriers Identified in Literature and by Participants

Barrier	Referenced in Literature	Identified by Participants
Difficulty in leading learning conversations	Sartain, Stoelinga, & Brown, 2011	P1, P2, P4, P7, P8, P9, P10
Lack of training/experience (professional development)	Clifford, Hansen, and Wraight, 2012; Lloyd, Robinson, & Rowe, 2008	P1, P2, P3, P10
Lack of quality assessment data	Edwards, 2011; Murphy, Hallinger, & Heck, 2013	P1, P4, P6, P7
Lack of time for meaningful collaboration	Earl & Fullan, 2003; Shakman, Riordan, Sanchez, Cook, Fournier, & Brett, 2012	P3, P4, P6, P8

Although the survey instrument in the study did not ask for descriptions of the barriers to effective evaluation implementation, participants spent considerable time during the study interviews describing the challenges that they have confronted in the effort to work through an evaluation system that focuses on student achievement results. The most significant challenges that participants in the study described were outlined in Chapter 4 (see Table IV). Policymakers and practitioners should spend time and resources to address these concerns.

Specifically, school principals should be trained in collaboration strategies that improve their ability to lead learning-focused conversations. This professional development should be included in preparation programs and in ongoing professional development offered through school districts and educational service districts. The increased development of these

collaborative leadership skills will improve the efficacy of principals who are engaged in student growth goal setting and evaluation conferences.

> I think there was a disconnect. The teachers write their goals and, yes, they
>
> are in their evaluation, but they did not necessarily see it as a tool to get
>
> better. P7

Additionally, participants have identified this ability to lead a learning conversation as a barrier in their practice and should be willing to benefit from training and instruction regarding the ability to participate in meaningful collaboration with their teachers.

Professional development needs to address the disparity in the ability of elementary and secondary principals in setting their own student growth goals and goals for teachers that set student achievement outcomes. Secondary principals can no longer be satisfied with setting "just general goals" (P2) or working with teachers to set goals that "are a little more surface" (P8). Secondary principals must be provided with the professional development that allows them to establish goals and engage in evaluation practices that address meaningful student learning outcomes.

Additionally, secondary teachers and principals must be provided with and must engage with meaningful student growth data. Elementary participants in the study consistently cited the plethora of student achievement data at the disposal of teachers and administrators at their level. While these elementary principals discussed student achievement data such as state test scores and standardized exam results, more often they noted assessment data that was closer to the classroom and used in a formative manner. Conversely, secondary participants reported a regular lack of quality data that could be used to establish effective growth goals to improve

student achievement. Secondary participants reported a readiness to benefit from increased

development and access to important student achievement data.

> So it is forcing us to take a harder look at what are ways we can capture
>
> information of our students and their progress set to some kind of goal more
>
> routinely rather than, hey, we are going to look at our WASL, MSP, SBAC
>
> data…whatever it is. (P1)

 While a lack of quality assessment data at the secondary level was cited by several secondary

participants, this willingness to utilize more consequential achievement data is promising and

deserves attention and action. The expanded training and use of the types of formative

assessment practices that (a) are designed to serve the specific information needs of the teacher,

(b) are based on clearly articulated and appropriate learning targets, and (c) accurately measure

student achievement of/ or growth towards established goals will benefit both elementary and

secondary principals and teachers in the meaningful development of student growth goals.

Finally, time must be afforded to principals and teachers to collaborate in robust

conversations during the evaluation process. The lack of time allotted to teachers, principals,

and even the district administrators who evaluate principals, was a pervasive barrier cited

amongst the participants in this study.

> Time! To do it really well, with teachers that need help, I can do 3-5
>
> teachers really well and get the evidence that I need be in the classroom as
>
> much as I can. But I am evaluating 26 teachers. I cannot get to the full 26 in
>
> the way I want to. So I really try and target 3-5 that I am really going to
>
> invest effort to do it authentically. The rest are a little more surface. (P8)

Although time is a finite resource, this is not an acceptable reality. If principals are to provide

impactful leadership through improved evaluation practices that include growth goals, for

themselves and for their teachers, adequate time to collaborate around these goals is a must.

District leaders should support this process with the addition of administrative staff or shifting of

more "traditional" management duties of principals to others.

Addressing the barriers discussed above (by increasing professional development that is

designed to improve the level of learning-focused conversations of teachers and principals, by

targeting increased professional development to secondary principals, by developing student

growth measures that are useful at the secondary level, and by finding ways to create time in the

system for teachers, principals, and their evaluators to engage in these evaluation conversations),

will also address several of the related barriers cited by participants. For instance, fear, mistrust,

turnover, and lack of clarity are each indirectly addressed in the implications and

recommendations above.

Recommendations for Further Research

It is important to continue studying the impact and effectiveness of educational

evaluation reform efforts. Future researchers should use the theoretical framework developed for

this study as a guide for further study.

Figure 1. The impact of evolving evaluation practices on educator practice and student outcomes

Theoretical Framework built upon the research of Marzano, Elmore, and Reeves
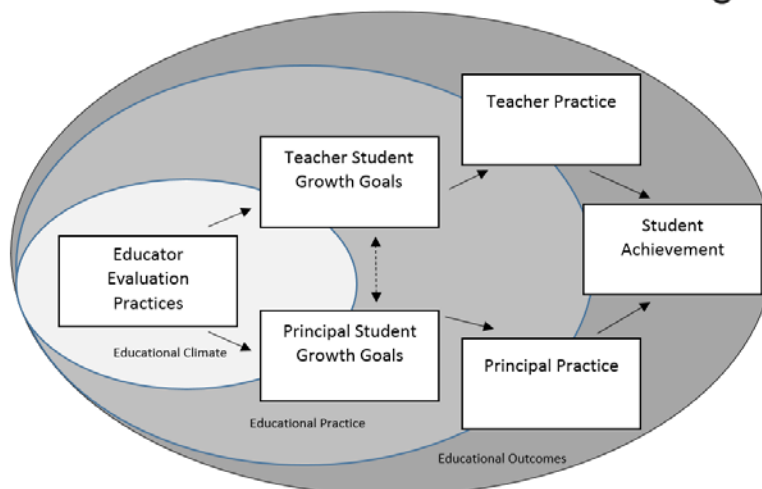
Using the literature review, theoretical framework, and the methods and results from this study as a benchmark, the following suggestions are recommended.

Future researchers should expand their data collection to more schools. Although the data collected in this study employed purposeful sampling in order to include descriptions from participants from urban and suburban school districts, from participants at both elementary and secondary schools, and from participants with varying degrees of administrative experience, there would be benefit to expand the research to rural school districts.

Future researchers should consider inclusion of teacher descriptions of the goal setting process and the associated impacts on teacher practice. This research was limited to principal participants and descriptive interviews. The relationship between principal goals, teacher goals, and to teacher practice could be explored in more detail and would address a portion of the theoretical framework that this study did not address.

Future researchers should consider including quantitative analysis of student achievement scores as a result of goal setting and evaluation practices. While the purpose of this study was to describe the impact of principal practice in setting student growth goals as part of the evaluation process, the relationship between practice and the resulting student achievement results could add considerably to the research.

Conclusion

Reform efforts have mandates significant changes in educational standards and practice in recent years (Elmore & Fuhrman, 2001; Lyon, 2009; Scherrer, 2011). These changes include the inclusion of student growth measures as a substantial component in both teacher and

principal performance evaluations (Fetters, Sharrett, & Zhu, 2013). This research project explored the connection between teacher and principal student growth goals and whether this focus on student achievement impacts changes in principal leadership practices. Qualitative interviews of current principals provided rich data describing the goal-setting, evaluation, and leadership practices of the participants. These topics and the participant descriptions of current and desired leadership practices indicate the need for both changes to the support and structure of principal evaluation practice and for further research.

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Appendix A

Human Research Review Committee Approval

Appendix B

National Institute for Health Certification

Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that **Brian Lowney** successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course "Protecting Human Research Participants".

Date of completion: 06/10/2014

Certification Number: 1485057

Appendix C

Application to Conduct Research

Request to Conduct Research

Applicant Name   <u>Brian Lowney</u>   Date <u>11/1/2014</u>

Applicant Address   ██████████████████   Phone <u>253-278-8796</u>

                     <u>Puyallup, WA 98371</u>

Affiliation and Title   <u>Chief Academic Officer, Puyallup School District</u>

If student applicant: Faculty Supervisor Name   <u>Heidi Curtis</u>

                         Faculty Phone Number   _____████████<u>8011</u>

                         Faculty Signature   _____

Proposed Research Title/Topic: *Focus on Student Growth Goals: The Impact of Evaluative*

Student Achievement Goals on Principal Practice

Desired Start Date <u>May 2015</u>   End Date <u>June 2016</u>

Date of Final Report to ██████ Schools <u>June 2016</u>

Ultimate purpose of project (e.g., thesis, publications, etc.): <u>Doctoral Dissertation</u>

_____

1. Brief description of project: <u>The intent of this study is to examine the relationship between an</u>

<u>increased focus during principal evaluation on student growth scores on principal practice . As</u>

<u>educators seek to discover a connection between teacher evaluations and student</u>

<u>achievement, this researcher believes there is a clear need to see if there is a strong connection</u>

between student data, effective teacher and principal practice, and positive student

achievement outcomes.

2. Anticipated contribution to education practice or theory: There is a need to connect the

teacher and principal evaluation process to evidence of growth and increased student

achievement. Washington, together with states from around the country, has moved to a new

evaluation process for both teachers and principals that focuses on growth and requires

teachers and principals to set and achieve student growth goals and examine student growth

data. While there are many who approach this system with some angst regarding the

implementation, the majority of *this dissertation focuses on whether or not growth and student*

test results actually results in improvement in the classroom, in the school, in the learning

outcomes.

3. Anticipated contribution to ▮▮▮▮ Public Schools: Research on the effectiveness of

principal student growth goals will add to the leadership practices in the district for the same

reasons as stated above.

Anticipated contribution from ▮▮▮▮ Public Schools: (explain in Summary of Proposed

Research):

	# Individuals	Hours/Individual	Total Hours
Administrators	12	4	48
Instructional Staff			
Support Staff			
Students a. instructional time			

b. non-instruct. time			

5.   Attach a Summary of Proposed Research using the format described. *See below:*

Name and Affiliations of Investigator:

Brian M. Lowney

Chief Academic Officer, Puyallup School District

Doctoral Institution: Northwest Nazarene University

Dissertation Title

A Focus on Student Growth Goals: The Impact of Evaluative Student Achievement Goals on

Principal Practice

Purpose Statement

There is a need to connect the teacher and principal evaluation process to evidence of growth and

increased student achievement. Washington, together with states from around the country, has

moved to a new evaluation process for both teachers and principals that focuses on growth and

requires teachers and principals to set and achieve student growth goals and examine student

growth data. While there are many who approach this system with some angst regarding the

implementation, the majority of *this dissertation focuses on whether or not a focus on growth*

and student test results actually results in improvement in principal practices and quality

teacher growth goals.

Research Questions

- How do principals describe the impact of evaluative student growth goals on their leadership practice?

- In what ways are teacher student growth goals reflected in the student growth goals that principals set?

Methods

The study employed a qualitative methods approach in designing, implementing, and analyzing the connection between principal growth goals and principal practice. The qualitative method was especially powerful in that researchers could choose "information rich" subjects and leverage these samples to gain an in-depth understanding of the issue and/or research questions and (Creswell, 2012).

Interviews: After conducting a pilot of interview questions, interviews with principals provided the most significant contribution to the following research into the effectiveness of principal evaluations focused on student achievement. Further, there was added value to the research design in conducting interviews. These interview participants were utilized to collect understandings principals and consisted of eight to twelve participants.

Anticipated Final Product

I intend to complete the research project in June 2016 and anticipate distributing final product results from the research at that time to the ████████ School District.

I am so appreciative of your efforts to support my educational and professional growth in allowing me to conduct research in your school district. Please contact me with your feedback at

blowney@nnu.edu. Thank you and I look forward to working with you.
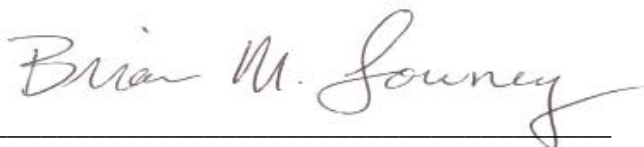
Ethical Principles for Research in ▨▨▨▨ Public Schools

The following principles must be adhered to by anyone conducting research involving human subjects in the ▨▨▨▨ Public School District:

1. The investigator is responsible for seeing that both he/she and his/her collaborators and/or assistants treat the research participants fairly and ethically.

2. The study must not invade the privacy of students and their families, or district employees and their families.

3. Schools, students, and staff cannot be identified by name or any other identifying manner in any reports or publications, unless otherwise agreed upon in writing.

4. The investigator must make full disclosure to and answer all questions of participants regarding features of the research that might affect their willingness to participate.

5. When the validity of a study necessitates concealment or deception, the researcher must make clear to the participants the reasons for such action prior to the commencement of the research.

6. The investigator must respect the right of families, students, and staff to decline participation and to discontinue participation at any time. Participants must be informed of this right prior to the commencement of the research.

7. The investigator must make clear to the participant, from the outset, both the investigator and participant's responsibilities. Commitments made at this time must be honored.

8. The investigator must protect participants from physical and mental discomfort, harm, or danger, and other undesirable consequences.

9. After the data are collected, the investigator must provide participants with full clarification of the study and remove any incipient misconceptions.

10. The investigator must treat information obtained about research participants as confidential. If others have access to such information, the investigator must, before undertaking the research, explain the possibility and his/her plans to continue to protect confidentiality.

I, the undersigned, agree to adhere to the above principles.

_____   11/5/2014
_____

        Proposer of Research   Date

Research Contract Guidelines for

███████ Public Schools

The following guidelines must be adhered to by anyone conducting research in the ███████
Public School District:

1. Approved research proposals are regarded as contracts with the ██████ Public Schools.
   Any deviation from procedures described in the approved proposal must be approved by
   the Executive Director of Assessment or his/her designee. Unapproved procedural
   changes will be considered grounds for termination.

2. A ██████ School District certificated employee must supervise all activities involving a
   non-district person with students.

3. In all experimental and/or observational studies, explicit parental/guardian consent must be
   secured prior to pupil participation, and explicit staff consent must be secured prior to staff
   participation. See Consent Guidelines for regulations regarding research involving surveys
   and extant records.

4. Investigators must, upon request, meet with interested staff, parent, community, and/or
   student groups to explain the purpose, methods, and possible implications of the proposed
   activities.

5. All consent forms and formal correspondence with families, students, and staff must be on ▮▮▮▮▮ Public Schools letterhead, and be signed by the Director of Assessment or his/her designee.

6. Upon completion of the study, investigators must submit a written report (format provided) summarizing the project to the ▮▮▮▮▮ Public Schools Office of Assessment and to the school(s)/department(s) involved.

7. All data, data collection instruments, reports, publications, and results related to this study will be available to the district without charge, unless otherwise agreed upon in writing.

8. No research activities may be conducted in the schools after April 30th.

I, the undersigned, agree to abide by the above regulations.

_____   _____

Proposer of Research   Date

Appendix D

Student Information Release

Agreement for Release of Student Information
for the Purposes of
Conducting a District-Approved Research Project

Brian M. Lowney *(as researcher on behalf of Northwest Nazarene University)* (Name of entity receiving the information, hereafter referred to as "Research Entity") hereby acknowledges and agrees that the personally identifiable student information, a detailed description of which is attached (Student Information) being disclosed to it by ▉▉▉▉ School District No. 3 and will be used only for that purpose.

Further, the Research Entity is subject to compliance with all relevant laws and regulations pertaining to the possession and maintenance of such Student Information, including, but not limited to the federal Family Education Rights and Privacy Act, 20 U.S.C. Section 1232g and 34 CFR Section 99 et.seq., and in particular 34 CFR 99.33 pertaining to the redisclosure of personally identifiable information from education records, and the Washington RCW 28A.605.030 and RCW 42.17.310.

This compliance includes the following limitations:
- The study has been approved in writing by the Office of Assessment for the District;
- The study is being conducted to improve instruction;
- The study and its reports shall be conducted and displayed in a manner that does not permit personal identification of parents and/or students by individuals other than the representatives of the Research Entity; and
- The Student Information provided by the district will be destroyed when no longer needed for the purposes for which the study was conducted.

In addition, the personally identifiable information about a student provided by the District will not be disclosed to any other party without the prior written consent of the parent or eligible student or as is otherwise authorized by law or regulation.

In exchange for access to this Student Information, the Research Entity agrees to defend, indemnify and hold harmless the District, its officers, employees and agents, from any and all complaints, charges, causes of action, claims, or damages of every kind and nature whatsoever relating to an improper release of the Student Information by the Research Entity.

The undersigned hereby certifies that he/she has the authority to execute this document on behalf of the Research Entity.

Brian M. Lowney *(as researcher on behalf of Northwest Nazarene University)* _____
Name of Research Entity

By: _____
Signature

Brian M. Lowney
Printed Name

Its: Researcher / Doctoral Student
Position of person signing

Date: 11/17/14

11

Appendix E

PSD Research Application/Approval

SCHOOL DISTRICT

A Tradition of Excellence

Timothy S. Yeomans, Ed.D., Superintendent

November 18, 2014

Northwest Nazarene University
Attention: HRRC Committee
Helstrom Business Center, 1st Floor
623 South University Boulevard
Nampa, ID 83686

Re: Research Authorization for Brian Lowney

Dear HRRC Committee,

Brian Lowney has been granted permission to conduct dissertation research in the ████ School District. Administration of the ████ School District have reviewed Mr. Lowney's dissertation proposal, *A Focus on Student Growth goals: The Impact of Evaluative Student Achievement Goals on Principal Practice*, including proposed research methods (both qualitative and quantitative methods), subjects, data and collection procedures, and data analysis.

This site authorization is offered with the following stipulations:
- Research is to be conducted between May 2015 and June 2016.
- Participation by ████ School District employees in the research study is voluntary.
- The school district will receive a copy of the research study results and/or dissertation.

I support this effort and will provide assistance for the successful research implementation of the proposed study. If you have any questions, please call me at 253-841-1301.

Sincerely,

Dr. Glenn E. Malone
Executive Director of Assessment, Accountability and Student Success

Appendix F

TSD Research Application

Request to Conduct Research in the

⬛⬛⬛⬛ Public Schools

Applicant Name:	Brian Lowney, Chief Academic Officer, Puyallup School District	Date:	Jan 25, 2015

Address (City, State, Zip):	⬛⬛⬛⬛⬛⬛⬛

Phone:	253-278-8796	Email:	blowney@nnu.edu

Proposed Research Title/Topic:	A Focus on Student Growth Goals: The Impact of Evaluative Student Achievement Goals on Principal Practice

Desired Start Date:	July 2015	End Date:	Jan 2016	Date of Final Report:	May 2016

Purpose of project (e.g., thesis, publication, etc.):	Dissertation

Summary of Proposed Research (outline format):

1. Brief description of project (*overview and intent of study, type of investigation, design and procedures*):

Much has been written in recent decades regarding leadership and teacher practice that effectively improve student learning results (Marzano, 2006; Reeves, 2009; Rice, 2010). Many of these studies, however, reveal a significant gap in the research. One research gap is in drawing the connection between teaching strategies and student achievement. For instance, Marzano (2009) points out that over-reliance

and over-generalization of teaching strategies that have been labeled "high-yield" strategies are not necessarily leading to corresponding gains in student achievement. Rather, there is a significant argument to be made that many districts are employing a checklist mentality to their approach in adopting a teaching framework and menu of effective practices that barely skim the surface impacting substantial changes in teacher practice and/or student results (Marzano, 2009). Although Marzano (2009) notes that effective teaching strategies are not the end goal of the teaching profession and that the ultimate indicator of successful teaching ought to be on increases in student knowledge, the effective use of teaching strategies as a routine course of action in the classroom can produce a positive effect on student achievement. When educators utilize these strategies on a regular basis and as a part of a comprehensive view of quality teaching, there is a high probability of improved student learning (Marzano, 2009).

Recent policy analysis also points to the need for an increased focus on principal leadership and student growth goals. In a 2012 policy report, the results of research and policy from several prominent and recent peer-reviewed authors (including Marzano, Chenowith, and Reeves) were examined in order to guide policy-makers in establishing the most important design and implementation considerations for effective principal evaluation systems (New Leaders for New Schools, 2012). The results of the analysis indicate that while 70% of a principal's evaluation should be based upon the student and teacher outcomes, the remaining 30% should focus on the following principal practices: vision for results and equity, planning and operations, culture, teaching and learning, staff management and development, and principal leadership and growth (New Leaders for New Schools, 2012).

Legislators from around the country agree. Recent legislation and the corresponding policy changes that mandate teacher and principal evaluations include value-added analysis of student achievement gains (Scherrer, 2011). Nearly every state in the union has now adopted policy changes that make this connection between student test scores and teacher/principal evaluation results (Piro, Wiemers, & Shutt, 2012). Piro et al. (2012) make the case that primary drivers for states in making this shift include two primary factors:

- Ongoing concerns that teacher and principal evaluations are largely unsuccessful in removing ineffective educators.

- Significant data that teacher and principal effectiveness are the single largest drivers of increases in student achievement.

With these policy considerations in mind and in response to the apparent lack of recent published studies of evidence-based "claims" of what constitutes effective principal leadership, Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008) conducted a meta-analysis of the research around effective principal-leadership practices. The authors cite several strong claims and present the evidence that points to the certainty of effectiveness of these practices. Not all of the claims that the authors present represent equal influence on student achievement results. Among those claims that have the largest bearing on the evaluation process is the following: Leaders ought to make greater direct contributions to staff capacity (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008). This "claim" has significant implications on the significance of further study of effective evaluation practices that focus on principal growth.

The examination of these problems will serve the purposes of two main audiences: policy makers and practitioners. First, the focus on the correlation between student growth data in principal evaluations and actual principal practice should be of interest to policy makers around the country, specifically in the Northwest United States. As the process for teacher and principal evaluations is evolving, research that addresses the results of this data focus in educator evaluations could help to establish clear policy and guidelines for districts. Educators and administrators will benefit from research questions that center on effective collaborative practices, which create significant increases to student learning.

Research Questions

This research project is focused on providing answers to the following questions:

- How do principals describe the impact of evaluative student growth goals on their leadership practice?

  − In what ways are teacher student growth goals impacted by the student growth goals that

  principals set?

Overview of Research Methods

Building a conceptual framework around the educator evaluation policies, practices, and results

was central to determining the research questions, methods, and analysis in this study.

The creation of the theoretical framework has been important in defining the research process for this

study. Ravitch and Riggan (2012) argue that the process of developing a conceptual framework may be

even more valuable than "finding" a ready-to-use framework. While personal interests can lead one to the

research topics and the literature review will shape the research questions and context of the problem or

issue that is being studied, it is the theoretical framework that explains the relationships among the

moving parts of theory and research (Ravitch & Riggan, 2012). Further, in this research study, the

theoretical framework has been instrumental in defining which aspects of the research warrant deeper

examination, both through literature review and research methods.

After considerable effort in building both a conceptual framework and a theoretical framework, a

qualitative methods approach has been selected for this study. Qualitative methods will add considerably

to the existing research. Because qualitative research methods help researchers gain a deep understanding

of people and behavior, this research method has become increasingly popular during the last twenty

years (Hazzan & Nutov, 2014). These qualitative methods are typically utilized to research social

processes that involve human interaction and shine a light on these processes from a variety of

perspectives (Hazzan & Nutov, 2014). In this study, qualitative inquiry skills such as intuition based on

experiences, observation without passing judgment, and the ability to recognize patterns have contributed

greatly to an understanding of how goal-setting processes impact practice (Hazzan & Nutov, 2014).

The data collection procedure that yielded the most in-depth review of principal goal-setting and

perceptions of principal practice was qualitative interviews. After gaining consent from two suburban

school districts to conduct interviews with principals, interview questions were pilot tested with district

and school administrators not participating in the actual interviews. Twelve principal participants were then recruited to participate in two semi-structured interviews. The researcher used an interview protocol that consisted of ten open-ended questions with a scripted opening and closing for each interview and results were audio taped, transcribed, and coded for qualitative analysis.

2.   Anticipated contribution to ▮▮▮ Public Schools:

There is a need to connect the teacher and principal evaluation process to evidence of growth and increased student achievement. Washington, together with states from around the country, has moved to a new evaluation process for both teachers and principals that focuses on growth and requires teachers and principals to set and achieve student growth goals and examine student growth data. While there are many who approach this system with some angst regarding the implementation, the majority of this dissertation focuses on whether or not growth and student test results actually results in improvement in the classroom, in the school, in the learning outcomes. ▮▮▮ Public Schools will benefit from the discussion and results of this study.

Anticipated contribution from ▮▮▮ Public Schools (*what will we need to provide to you?*):

Permission to interview 2-4 principals on or off site and outside of the instructional day (on a voluntary basis). Total interview time for each principal will be limited to less than 120 minutes total time.

Appendix G

TSD Research Approval

Tue 5/12/2015 1:39 PM

PATRICK CUMMINGS

RE: Request to Conduct Research

To   Lowney, Brian M.

I finally got back from my out-of-state travel and made it through all my emails. Your study, A Focus on Student Growth Goals: The Impact of Evaluative Student Achievement Goals on Principal Practice was approved. I understand you want permission to interview 2-4 principals on or off site and outside of the instructional day (on a voluntary basis). Total interview time for each principal will be limited to less than 120 minutes total time.

Please consider this email as the approval of your study.

Thank you and I would appreciate a summary of your study upon completion.

Pat

Patrick Cummings | Director of Research & Evaluation

Appendix H

Informed Consent Form

A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

Brian M. Lowney, M. Ed., a doctoral student in Educational Leadership at Northwest Nazarene University is conducting a research study related to principal student growth goals, the evaluation process, and principal practice. We believe that the results of this study will add considerable depth to understanding of how principal evaluation and growth goals focused on student achievement results impact principal practice. The research is being conducted in two suburban school districts in Western Washington. The interviews are being conducted with principals in these two districts.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a current public school principal with experience in both "traditional" evaluation systems and "reform" evaluation systems that include student growth goals and measures.

B. PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate in the study, the following will occur:

1. You will be asked to sign an Informed Consent Form, volunteering to participate in the study.

2. You will meet with Brian Lowney, primary researcher, for two interviews, at your convenience.

3. You will be asked to answer a series of interview questions about your experiences with setting student growth goals, the evaluative process associated with these goals, and the resulting principal practices. These interviews will be audio taped and it will last up to an hour.

4. You will be asked to reply to an email at the conclusion of the study asking you to confirm the data that was gathered during the research process.

These procedures will be completed at a location mutually decided upon by the participant and the primary researcher and will take a total time of about 120 minutes.

C.   RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

1.   Some of the interview questions may make you uncomfortable or upset, but you are free to decline to answer any questions you do not wish to answer or to stop participation at any time.

2.   Confidentiality: Participation in research may involve a loss of privacy; however, your records will be handled as confidentially as possible. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications that may result from this study. All data from notes, audio tapes or files will be encrypted and password protected known only the primary researcher. In compliance with the Federalwide Assurance Code, data from this study will be kept for three years, after which all data from the study will be destroyed (45 CFR 46.117).

D.   BENEFITS

There will be no direct benefit to your from participating in this study. However, the information you provide may help educators to better understand the value of student growth goals as part of the principal evalution process.

E.   PAYMENTS

There are no payments for participating in this study.

F.   QUESTIONS

If you have questions or concerns about participation in this study, you should first talk with the researcher. Brian Lowney can be contacted via email at blowney@nnu.edu, via telephone at (253) 278-8796. If for some reason you do not wish to do this, you may contact Dr. Heidi Curtis, Doctoral Committee

Chair at Northwest Nazarene University, via email at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮, via telephone at ▮▮▮▮▮7612, or by writing: 623 University Drive, Nampa, Idaho, 83686.

G.   CONSENT

You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. You are free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point. Your decision as to whether or not you participate in this study will have no influence on your present or future status in your online school.

I give my consent to participate in this study:

_____   _____

Signature of Study Participant   **Date**

I give my consent for the interviews to be audio taped in this study.

_____   _____

Signature of Study Participant   **Date**

I give my consent for direct quotes to be used in this study. No identifying information will be used in the report from this study:

_____   _____

Signature of Study Participant   **Date**

_____   _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent   **Date**

THE NORTHWEST NAZARENE UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH COMMITTEE HAS REVIEWED

THIS PROJECT FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH.

Appendix I

Lowney CVI Rating Instrument

Introduction:
I am researching the influence/impact of principal goal-setting on principal practice, specifically the impact of principal goals that center on student achievement results. I intend to interview practicing principals in order to describe this process and I would like **your input** in order to gain valuable insights from principals.

Directions:
Please rate each of the following ten questions in terms of its relevance to the following research questions:
  − How do principals describe the impact of evaluative student growth goals on their leadership practice?
  − In what ways are teacher student growth goals reflected in the student growth goals that principals set?

Interview Questions:
1. ***Describe your experiences with principal evaluation. How has principal evaluation changed during your experience in education?***

1	2	3	4
not relevant	somewhat relevant	quite relevant	highly relevant

2. ***Describe your experiences with teacher evaluation. How has teacher evaluation changed during your experience in education?***

1	2	3	4
not relevant	somewhat relevant	quite relevant	highly relevant

3. ***How would you describe the process you are using to establish student growth goals?***

1	2	3	4
not relevant	somewhat relevant	quite relevant	highly relevant

4. ***How has your evaluator been involved in this process?***

1	2	3	4
not relevant	somewhat relevant	quite relevant	highly relevant

5. *How has the discussion of student growth goals impacted your own evaluation?*

1	2	3	4
not relevant	somewhat relevant	quite relevant	highly relevant

6. *How do student growth goals impact your interactions/conversations/behaviors/priorities with teachers?*

1	2	3	4
not relevant	somewhat relevant	quite relevant	highly relevant

7. *How have your student growth goals influenced your leadership practice?*

1	2	3	4
not relevant	somewhat relevant	quite relevant	highly relevant

8. *How have the student growth goals that you set influenced your teacher's student growth goals?*

1	2	3	4
not relevant	somewhat relevant	quite relevant	highly relevant

9. *How have the teacher's student growth goals influenced the student growth goals that are part of your evaluation?*

1	2	3	4
not relevant	somewhat relevant	quite relevant	highly relevant

10. *How will you approach your work in setting your student growth goals and working with teachers to set their student growth goals during the next evaluation cycle?*

1	2	3	4
not relevant	somewhat relevant	quite relevant	highly relevant

11. *Is there anything else you would like to share about the impact of student growth goals in your evaluation on your-day-to-day work?*

1	2	3	4
not relevant	somewhat relevant	quite relevant	highly relevant

Appendix J
Content Validity Index Analysis

Question #	Respondent 1	Respondent 2	Respondent 3	Respondent 4	Respondent 5	Respondent 6	Respondent 7	Respondent 8	Respondent 9	Respondent 10	Mean	Median	Mode		CVI Score
1	1	3	2	3	4	3	3	3	1	2	2.50	3	3		0.6
2	1	3	2	3	4	3	3	2	4	2	2.70	3	2		0.6
3	2	3	4	4	4	4	2	4	4	3	3.40	4	4		0.8
4	2	2	4	3	4	3	1	4	3	2	2.80	3	4		0.6
5	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	3.80	4	4		1
6	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	3.90	4	4		1
7	2	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3.70	4	4		0.9
8	3.5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3.95	4	4		1
9	3.5	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	2	4	3.65	4	4		0.9
10	4	4	4	3	4	3	4	4	4	4	3.80	4	4		1
11	3	3	3	4	4	4	3	4	2	4	3.40	4	4		0.9

For each question, the number of content experts assigning a rating of 3 or 4 (relevant) was divided by the total number of experts (Polit & Beck, 2006).
It was predetermined that a CVI score of .70 or higher would validate the interview question and scores below .70 would be discarded and/or edited and re-scored.

Questions
1. Describe your experiences with principal evaluation. How has principal evaluation changed during your experience in education?
2. Describe your experiences with teacher evaluation. How has teacher evaluation changed during your experience in education?
3. How would you describe the process you are using to establish student growth goals?
4. How has your evaluator been involved in this process?
5. How has the discussion of student growth goals impacted your own evaluation?
6. How do student growth goals impact your interactions/conversations/behaviors/priorities with teachers?
7. How have your student growth goals influenced your leadership practice?
8. How have the student growth goals that you set influenced your teacher's student growth goals?
9. How have the teacher's student growth goals influenced the student growth goals that are part of your evaluation?
10. How will you approach your work in setting your student growth goals and working with teachers to set their student growth goals during the next evaluation cycle?
11. Is there anything else you would like to share about the impact of student growth goals in your evaluation on your-day-to-day work?

Appendix K
Interview Protocol and Questions

Interview Protocol Form

Interviewee (Title and Name): _____

Interviewee Age: _____ Interviewee Gender: _____ Interviewee Ethnicity: _____

Interviewer: _Brian Lowney, Doctoral Student, Northwest Nazarene University_ _____

Date of Interview: _____ Location of Interview: _____

Survey Section Used:

⊠ A. Interview Background

⊠ B. Goal Setting Process

⊠ C. Impact on Practice

⊠ D: Other Topics Discussed

Documents Collected: _____

_____

Post Interview Comments or Leads:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Evaluation/Goal-Setting Interview

Introduction Protocol

To facilitate my note-taking, I would like to audio tape our conversations today. Please sign the release form. For your information, only researchers on the project will be privy to the tapes which will be eventually destroyed after they are transcribed. In addition, you must sign a form devised to meet our human subject requirements. Essentially, this document states that: (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) I do not intend to inflict any harm. Thank you for your agreeing to participate in this process.

I have planned this interview to last no longer than 45 minutes. During this time, I have several questions that I would like to cover. If time begins to run short, it may be necessary to interrupt you in order to move forward and complete the interview.

Introduction

I have selected you to speak with me today because you have been identified as a principal that is engaged in the work of teacher evaluation. My research project focuses on the goal setting process as part of the evaluation process, with particular interest in how the process of establishing principal student growth goals impacts principal practice. My study does not aim to evaluate your techniques or experiences around evaluation or goal-setting. Rather, I am trying to learn more about the goal-setting process of principals and teachers, and hopefully learn about evaluation practices that help improve student learning outcomes.

<u>INTERVIEW</u>

A. Demographic Data Collection / Interviewee Background

- How long have you been a principal?

- How long have you been in your present position?

- What is your educational background (were you a teacher? what did you teach? any other positions?)

C. Goal-Setting Process

1. How would you describe the process you are using to establish student growth goals?

D. Impact on Practice

2. How has the discussion of student growth goals impacted your own evaluation?

3. How have your student growth goals influenced your leadership practice?

4. How have the student growth goals that you set influenced your teacher's student growth goals?

5. How have the teacher's student growth goals influenced the student growth goals that are part of your evaluation?

6. How will you approach your work in setting your student growth goals and working with teachers to set their student growth goals during the next evaluation cycle?

E. Other Topics Discussed

7. Is there anything else you would like to share about the impact of student growth goals in your evaluation on your-day-to-day work?

Post Interview Comments and/or Observations:

Appendix L

Member Checking Email

February 26, 2016

Good afternoon-

I hope that you and your school communities are doing well. Thank you for your participation in the study entitled *Student Growth Goals: The Impact of Evaluative Student Achievement Goals on Principal Practice.* I wanted to take a moment and let you know of some of the themes that have emerged from the interviews of all participants in this study (see below). Please let me know if these themes accurately capture our conversation. If you have any suggestions, modifications, or questions, please let me know by Monday, March 7, 2016.

This purpose of this study was to describe the relationship between evaluation practices for teachers and principals that rely significantly on student growth achievement and to examine principal practice in establishing and supporting these student growth goals.

The guiding research questions in this study are:
- How do principals describe the impact of evaluative student growth goals on their leadership practice?
- In what ways are teacher student growth goals reflected in the student growth goals that principals set?

There were several themes that emerged from the interviews that you and other current principals participated in. After reading, re-reading and coding the transcripts, the results could be organized into three main sections. The first section described the goal-setting process that principals have employed in the evolving evaluation system. The second section presented the ways that principals describe the relationship between their principal growth goals and the goals that teachers have set around student achievement. The third section described principal perceptions of the impact that the inclusion of student growth goals in the evaluation process has had on their own practice.

Goal Setting: Principals in this study were able to succinctly describe the ways that they went about setting their student growth goals. Their descriptions generally fell into one of two categories: first, they described the collaboration that they engaged in towards the development of their student achievement goals, and second, they were able to articulate how the goal setting process has changed over the course of years and the implementation of a new state model for evaluation.

Relationship Between Principal and Teacher Goals: Principals were also able to describe the relationship between their principal growth goals and the goals that teachers set around student achievement. Although there were few instances of principal descriptions of this relationship that were wholly teacher-derived or completely principal-derived, principals provided thick description of the relationship that could be categorized in one or more ways.

Impact on Principal Practice: The participants of this study described varying practices and varying degrees of implementation of these leadership practices as a result of setting student growth goals for themselves and in working with their teachers to set goals for student achievement. Themes and descriptions around improved supervision and evaluation practices, improved professional development practices, and improved instructional leadership practices emerged during the analysis of participant interviews.

If these themes do not reflect your experience or you would like to comment further, please respond to this email or contact me at the number below. Than you again for participating in my dissertation study. It would not have been possible without you!

Brian Lowney
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