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Leadership in School Improvement: Planning and Providing for Barriers to Student Learning

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ABSTRACT

When it comes to improving schools, context always matters (Murphy, 2013, p. 260). School leaders are “masters at brokering” (Murphy, 2013, p. 259) change. These changes are usually through the transfer of programs, interventions, and structures that worked elsewhere and pay little regard to the conditions and context that made them work (Murphy, 2013). School improvement reform will require “substantive systemic change” (Adelman & Taylor, 2007, p. 55) that considers the “current culture of schools and intended school improvements” (Adelman & Taylor, 2007, p. 56).

This study will use a qualitative, multiple case-study methodology, a semi-structured interview protocol, and a document review to identify how school leaders in five, accredited high or mid-high poverty Virginia middle schools both identified and provided resources to address barriers to student learning. The instrumentation tool for this study was based on the learning or enabling components of the Adelman and Taylor improvement model (2008). The tool was used to qualify the school leaders’ site-based school resource allocation and then analyzed for common themes. The study found that some learning or enabling supports were more represented than others. The study also found that there were three key leadership traits among school leaders who had effectively resourced the learning supports: instructional leadership; human-resource leadership; and culture and expectations leadership.

Implications from this study include the need for further research on models for school improvement that require schools and districts to identify, plan, and provide for barriers to student learning. A second implication is the need for further study on leadership traits that

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might exist in school leaders who not only recognize but are able to inspire the implicit and explicit need to plan and provide for overcoming barriers to student learning.

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GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

The process of improving schools is important. The decision-making and school improvement structures that most schools employ is one that focuses mainly on classroom instruction with little regard to planning for students who may struggle because of outside barriers, like the effects of poverty, lack of exposure to background knowledge, or insufficient schooling and experiences. This study used a qualitative, multiple case-study methodology, a semi-structured interview protocol, and a document review to identify how school principals in five, accredited high or mid-high poverty Virginia middle schools both identified and provided resources to address barriers to student learning. The study used the learning or enabling components of the Adelman and Taylor improvement model (2008) to qualify the school leaders' site-based school resource allocation and then analyzed them for common themes. The study found that some learning or enabling supports were more represented than others. The study also found that there were three key leadership traits among school leaders who had effectively resourced the learning supports: instructional leadership; human-resource leadership; and culture and expectations leadership.

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Foreword

“My grandparents knew I was at a crucial juncture in my life. These forks in the road can happen so fast for young boys; within months or even weeks, their journeys can take a decisive and possibly irrevocable turn. With no intervention—or the wrong intervention—they can be lost forever. My mother made the decision to intervene—and decided that overdoing it was better than doing nothing at all. She felt my environment needed to change and my options needed to expand. Drastically. My grandparents agreed...My grandparents took the money they had in the home in the Bronx, decades of savings and mortgage payments, and gave it to my mother so that she could pay for my first year of military school” (Moore, p. 95-96).

*“I remember watching an episode of *The West Wing* about education in America, which the majority of people rightfully believe is the key to opportunity. In it, the fictional president debates whether he should push school vouchers (giving public money to schoolchildren so that they escape failing public schools) or instead focus exclusively on fixing those same failing schools. That debate is important, of course—for a long time, much of my failing school district qualified for vouchers—but it was striking that in an entire discussion about why poor kids struggled in school, the emphasis rested entirely on public institutions. As a teacher at my old high school told me recently, “They want us to be shepherds to these kids. But no one wants to talk about the fact that many of them are raised by wolves” (Vance, p. 127).*

Two autobiographical memoirs have recently won notoriety and acclaim in the literary world. At first glance, the similarities between the two might not be obvious. In **The Other Wes Moore: One Name, Two Fates**, the narrator tells his own life story as a parallel journey to

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that of a different man who is also named Wes Moore. The author, a highly successful Black American male, Rhodes scholar, and veteran, spent his early childhood on the streets of Baltimore. After the sudden death of his father, his mother realized that Wes's behavior was worsening and moved the entire family to the Bronx to live with her parents. It is there that he is given a second (third and fourth) chance to be successful with the support of his mother and grandparents. The "other" Wes Moore grew up on the streets of Baltimore as well with a semi-supportive mother who lacked the skills, resources, and understanding to support her children. She could not combat the inevitable fate of growing up on the streets. The "other" Wes turned to drugs and violence because he saw no way out of his circumstances.

As an adult, the author becomes intrigued when he learns of the "other" Wes Moore. Much like him in description and identical to him in name, he has been sentenced to life in prison for killing a police officer during a robbery. The author decides to go and visit the "other Wes" in prison, and it is through a series of interviews he realizes that, given different circumstances, their stories could have easily been reversed. This is a story of environment and the choices people make, but from an educator's lens, it reads as a story of environment and the choices we make to either invest or not in the "other" Wes Moores of society.

In another part of the country, a different narrative is playing out. J.D. Vance's **Hillbilly Elegy** is the story of his journey out of the predicted poverty of many in rural, Appalachian America. His autobiography takes the reader from Kentucky to Ohio and back again, as he communicates his harsh reality: drugs and violence that have taken hostage much of rural America. The picture Vance paints has striking similarities to those painted by Wes Moore about the streets of Baltimore. Vance transcends the cycle of poverty that has plagued his family for many years, not with the support of his immediate family as Moore did, but by his own

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resilience: He somehow mustered the strength to remove himself from his parents and live with his grandmother. He then realized his best chance at success was to join the military and leave his home.

Both J.D. Vance and Wes Moore left their communities because either they or their parent believed that they were destined for failure if they remained. In the end, these two men were fortunate because they had the means and capacity to forge a different path. But what about those who do not? Who is responsible? Stories like these two, so very different in context yet so very similar in need, might be used as a springboard for a national focus on how schools and community services can work together to create a different reality in America: One in which the outcome *is* success regardless of zip code because the means with which you help students succeed are based on context and community. As I opened the foreword with two quotes from the personal histories of these two men, I end with one equally as profound, from Paul Reville (2017), former Secretary of Education for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the Founding Director of the Harvard Graduate School of Education's Education Redesign Lab:

...we have spent much less time focused on the *student*, and how to ensure that each student, in this era of gross income and opportunity inequality, comes to school ready to learn. Our current school system follows a one-size-fits-all model that does not account for differences in backgrounds, assets or opportunities. And so we tend to overlook strategies that are responsive to the differentiated characteristics of families, communities and schools. My concern is that an exclusively instructional focus optimizes teaching and content, but if the students aren't present and able to concentrate then we'll never be able to truly support all children on their path to realizing their full academic potential, which

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is the aspirational goal of education reform. In other words, instruction alone is not enough to help all students succeed (p. 2).

Chapter 1

Study Background

Expectations for school improvement have changed over time, but within the last three decades the changes were “infrequent” and “episodic” (Hargreaves, Lieberman, Fullan & Hopkins, 2005). Hopkins (2005) presented two meanings for school improvement:

The first is the common sense meaning which relates to general efforts to make schools better places for pupils to learn...the second more technical or specific way...is a distinct approach to educational change that enhances student outcomes as well as strengthening the school’s capacity for managing change (p. 2-3).

The need for a systematic understanding and implementation of school improvement and how it impacts governance and policy is evident (Adelman & Taylor, 2007; Murphy 2013). Efforts to translate and transfer requirements each time the state passes laws require educators and policymakers to first articulate, qualify, and then quantify their accountability methods. These activities result in schools aligning their improvement initiatives around data collection based on standardized testing. Subsequently, educators are left both “energized” and “exhausted” by this work (Seashore, 2009; Murphy, 2013).

Advocates for public education and school leadership understand the importance of an analysis of the underlying causes of underperformance (Carey, 2014). However, the search for a universal model for school improvement has proven both frustrating and impossible (Hopkins, 2005). To close achievement gaps for school effectiveness and accountability ratings, schools must look at addressing the comprehensive needs of each student they serve because as student backgrounds become increasingly diverse, so, too, does the level and detail of service that must be provided to our students (Hopkins, 2005; Lagana-Riordan, 2009).

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National, state and local-level governing agencies have established programs, incentives, rewards, and penalty structures to move schools along the continuum of “improving” (Department of Education, 2010). Most of these efforts focus on schools currently defined as underachieving (Huber & Conway, 2015). In the wake of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and the standardization of curriculum, educational leaders and policymakers faced the challenge of retooling school improvement to include a narrower definition, often categorized by standardized test scores, sub-group data, and growing achievement gaps (Suh, Malchow & Suh, 2014). The solutions for schools involve what might be considered lengthy and pricey remediation plans, and short-term fixes that satisfy narrow-testing requirements. Often, these are at the expense of the student’s own interests and passions (Peurach & Glazer, 2011; Solley, 2007).

Statement of the Problem

Educators must understand that the supports a school provides to overcome barriers to student learning and the learning itself cannot effectively and equitably exist in isolation from each other (Adelman & Taylor, 2008). Educators must confront the challenges of how to identify barriers to learning and then how to systematically *spread* practices that adequately address those barriers (Adelman & Taylor, 2007).

Coburn, Catterson, Higgs, Mertz, and Morel (2013) argued that for ideas and practices to spread and scale within any organization, those ideas and practices must be explicitly shaped by their *environmental context*. They contend that the idea will be defeated if educators fail to consider the environment. An additional cumulative risk of combined adverse environmental factors must be considered when implementing improvement efforts (Finnegan-Carr, Vandigo, Uretsky, Oloyede & Mayden, 2015). Thus, to improve, schools and school systems might best find answers by considering environmental context and leveraging community resources to

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address those issues hindering student learning (Adelman & Taylor, 2007, 2008, 2011, 2014).

To make gains and guarantee opportunities for all students, schools must employ a comprehensive system that leverages and aligns resources and talents within individual communities, identifies the root causes for student underachievement, and works towards a global understanding of how aligned supports can complement a school's instructional improvement efforts (Adelman & Taylor, 2007, 2008, 2011, 2014; Finnegan-Carr, Vandigo, Uretsky, Oloyede & Mayden, 2015; Lagana-Riordan, 2009; Cosner, 2016).

Significance of the Problem

Adelman and Taylor (2011) noted the financial implications supporting the urgency for newer models of school improvement:

...the USA loses over \$192 billion in income and tax revenues for each cohort of student who never complete high school...Dropouts contribute only half as much in taxes...They draw larger government subsidies in the form of food stamps, housing assistance, and welfare payments. They have a dramatically increased chance of landing in prison, and they have worse health outcomes and lower-life expectancies (p. 432).

The need to reengage students who are struggling to find pathways to success is both the business and responsibility of communities.

Helping schools understand how to provide structures to support the overt and covert inequalities and differences in academic achievement is important because of its predictive value on other outcomes, such as health, life expectancy, wealth, and crime (Gaddis & Lauen, 2014). The passing of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) delineated achievement gaps with the explicit expectation that these gaps be narrowed (Reardon, Greenberg, Kalogrides, Shores & Valentino, 2012). Yet, even with this expectation, schools still face challenges when addressing issues of

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equity, particularly with regards to race (Noguera, 2016). Lewis, James, Hancock and Hill-Jackson (2008) define racism as "... an elaborate process of social, political, economic, and legal domination, which maintains racial categorizations and ideologies as the method for determining which group receives the best and least of society's resources" (p. 128). Conversely, the authors further postulated that "revered" researchers do cite race as a variable in achievement-gap data, yet those researchers will dismiss the role of racism, particularly with "underachievement" of Black students (Lewis, James, Hancock & Hill-Jackson, 2008).

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). ESSA (2015) sought to reconcile some of the numerous challenges presented by NCLB. The new Act created a spotlight on subgroup performance and closing achievement gaps, but there was limited guidance and federal support on how to address those gaps (Jacob, 2017; Ladd, 2017). Under ESSA, decision making and planning are given back to state and local authorities. Now part of school accreditation is an explicit expectation that achievement gaps close for traditionally underperforming subgroups. Addressing subgroup performance to close those achievement gaps calls for an expanded school-improvement definition (Burnette, 2018).

School improvement and accountability expanded under ESSA, with states developing a system to identify their "bottom" 5% of schools, those schools with 67% or lower graduation rates, and those schools with "underperforming" (as defined by each state) subgroups (ESSA, 2015). After identification, ESSA requires states to implement and monitor comprehensive plans for improvement (ESSA, 2015). Those plans must include evidence-based programs implemented at each "underperforming" site. The consequences for schools remain significant if they cannot meet benchmarks after intervention (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015). ESSA requires that state accountability reporting include individual report cards that contain detailed

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explanations of assessment and the obligation for public posting and accountability, such as making publicly available NAEP results, per-pupil expenditures, Civil Rights Data Collection Survey, all emergency-provisionally licensed teachers, postsecondary enrollment, and the performance of English Language Learners (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015). The adoption of ESSA provides an opportunity for states to do a better job of addressing barriers to learning because of the numerous data accountability points, but the legislation continues the “piecemeal” approach to providing support (Center for Mental Health, 2017, p. 1).

Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) revisions under ESSA. The VDOE revised its Standards of Accreditation in accordance with the guidelines of ESSA. In November of 2017, the Virginia Board of Education completed its final review of the *Regulations Establishing the Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia* and agreed on a “new system for accrediting Virginia’s public schools that applies multiple measures of school quality” (pg. A). In accordance with the Board’s goal, the Board sought to reconcile the requirements of ESSA with the Virginia Board’s Comprehensive Plan for improvement. As a result, student learning accountability is based on continuous school improvement; the focus is on innovation in instructional improvement among schools; and schools must use sound practices for college and career readiness (pg. B).

In elementary and middle schools, VDOE revisions included new measures of student-learning growth towards proficiency in academic achievement for English and Math, as well as progress of English proficiency in English learners. In some cases, a student might be counted as “proficient,” even if he or she did not meet the proficiency cut score on a Standards of Learning test, so long as he or she makes adequate “growth” over his or her previous Standards of Learning Score (Cave, 2017). Even with proficiency measures now including individual student

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growth, 44 of Virginia's 179 high to mid-high poverty middle schools failed to gain full accreditation in 2018.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify how the principals of five high or mid-high poverty, accredited, Virginia, middle schools both identified and allocated resources to address barriers to teaching and learning. These middle schools came from three different Virginia school districts: one rural school, one suburban school in a small district of four schools, and three suburban schools in a large school district. I qualified how principals made site-based decisions to either create or reallocate their resources to address barriers to student learning and analyzed common themes in resource allocation (Adelman & Taylor, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2011, 2014). By learning what principals identified as challenges or barriers to student learning within the context of their community and how they uniquely addressed those barriers, I made recommendations for consideration of a universal school-improvement model that asks school and district leaders to consider community context when planning and providing for barriers to student learning.

The study looked at five mid-high to high poverty Virginia middle schools that are fully accredited, given the newest VDOE guidelines for the Standards of Accreditation (SOA). I hoped to establish both a consideration and an interest for further study as to whether effective school improvement might require individual school communities to foster and develop the resources in their respective communities to better meet the complex and unique needs of the learners they serve. I hoped to fill a current gap in literature as to the "knowledge about processes and activities by which schools can develop their capacity to change, and to what

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extent this capacity is connected to teaching and student outcomes” (Feldhoff, Radisch & Bischof, 2016).

This study used a conceptual framework based on a segment of a school improvement model originally designed by Harold Adelman and Linda Taylor (2006, 2007, 2008, 2011, 2014) to examine first what principals perceived to be barriers to student learning, and then how they allocated and distributed necessary resources for the following: classroom-based approaches; student and family assistance; community outreach and volunteers; home involvement in schooling; support for transitions; and crisis/emergency assistance and prevention (Adelman & Taylor, 2007, 2008, 2011, 2014).

The importance of school leadership. School leadership matters when it comes to school improvement (Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005; Whitaker, 2012; Drago-Severson, Maslin-Ostrowski & Blum-Destefano, 2018). The best leaders work to build the collective capacity of the entire community, building upon collective strengths to move an organization forward (Adams, 2014). The indirect ability of the principal to affect student performance revolves around his or her direct ability to shape organizational structures, internal processes, school climate, relationships and resources and is vital to the success of the school (Finnigan, 2010; Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Scott & Education Commission of the States, 2018; Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005). For a principal in a struggling school, the illusions of quick fixes are abundant, but the most proficient school leaders balance this sense of urgency with community-wide trust building (Fullan & Pinchot, 2018; Whitaker, 2012).

Marzano, Waters & McNulty (2005) contended that a critical aspect of principal leadership is the ability to select the right work and stay the course, highlighting examples of schools that have shown measurable student achievement gains by doing so. Hanover Research

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(2014) noted that the school's principal is the most visible position during the entire improvement process and that to be successful, districts must monitor the quality of their principals. The Report also illustrates the three essential qualities of an effective principal: (1) Transformative; (2) knowledgeable; (3) strategic (p. 12-13). Thus, in the current accountability climate, the principal's role has continued to evolve into policy mediator, instructional leader and change agent, with an emphasis on the principal's ability to encourage new teaching practices, leverage effective teaching resources, and strategically acquire other resources from their communities (Finnigan, 2010; Scott & Education Commission of the States, 2018).

Research Questions

The research questions were:

In high to mid-high poverty accredited, Virginia middle schools...

1. What barriers to student learning/student achievement success have individual principals identified?
2. How have principals distributed or allocated resources that address barriers to student learning?
3. Why did the principals decide to create and distribute unique resources and allocations to address these barriers?
4. Based on the enabling components of the Adelman and Taylor framework (2007, 2008, 2009, 2011), what common themes existed among accredited schools about the following?
 - A. Enhanced classroom-based approaches to learning
 - B. Support for transitions
 - C. Crisis assistance and prevention

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- D. Increased home involvement
- E. Increased community outreach
- F. Facilitating student and family access to effective services and special assistance
- G. Other

Operational Definitions

Key terms used in discussions about school improvement include the following:

- Accreditation is the process to evaluate public schools per the Board of Education regulations (VDOE).
- Accreditation Denied occurs when a school fails to meet partial or full accreditation for four or more years (VDOE).
- Accredited with Conditions occurs when one or more school quality indicators are at Level Three (VDOE).
- Achievement Gap is the difference in academic achievement between groups (ED.gov).
- Adequate Yearly Progress is the measurement of year to year student achievement on statewide assessments (ED.gov).
- Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) is a college readiness program designed to help students develop the skills they need to be successful in college (Pannoni, 2015).
- Annual Measurable Objectives is the goal that a state sets each year to define the minimum percentage of students who meet or exceed standards on standardized assessments (ED.gov).
- Benchmark is a standard for judging performance (VDOE).

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- Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) is an improvement model that requires multiple layers to school improvement, to include social/emotional programs, aligning resources, professional development, and community engagement and outreach (Borman, Hewes, Overman & Brown, 2003).
- Economically Disadvantaged is a student who is eligible for free/reduced meals (VDOE).
- Enabling Components or Learning Supports (Adelman & Taylor, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2011, 2014)
 - Crisis assistance and prevention ensures that the school has a systemic plan for responding to immediate crisis; working with the community at large to secure community resources; following up with care when necessary; and ensuring an emergency contingency plan is in place for students in crisis.
 - Enhanced classroom-based approaches to learning comprises consideration for peer tutoring; blended or personalized learning; guided and self-directed opportunities; enrichment; and school culture-building opportunities along with the professional development and accountability that is involved in these efforts.
 - Facilitating student and family access to effective services and special assistance includes mechanisms for easy access to health, mental health, and economic community assistance; a timely structure for referrals within the school; and frequent capacity building for students and family programs and partnerships.
 - Increased community outreach includes a systemic program for involving private and public agencies, colleges, universities, artists, community policy makers, businesses, and professionals.

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- Increased home involvement encompasses systemized school structures for responding to the basic needs of families in need; transparent, timely, and frequent communication plans; joint decision making for students; community/family learning and development, and family recruitment.
- Support for transitions includes transitioning between and among schools and grade levels; transition and community activities; school counseling; welcome programming; and summer programs.
- English Language Learners (ELL) are students whose first language is not English and who are in a program for learning English (VDOE).
- Equity is “fair access to and distribution of opportunities, power, and resources, within and outside of schools that can improve children’s life outcomes” (Green, 2017, p. 6).
- High poverty refers to schools where more than 75 percent of students are eligible for free or reduced lunch (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES]).
- International Baccalaureate, Middle Years Program (IBMYP) is an internationally recognized, interdisciplinary, pre-collegiate course of study offered through the International Baccalaureate Organization (VDOE).
- Mid-high poverty refers to schools with 50.1 to 74.9 percent free and reduced-lunch eligibility among students (NCES).
- Positive Behavior and Improvement Support (PBIS) is a school-wide structure for positive reinforcement of student behaviors. School communities examine the existing needs of their students and their current culture and develop positive “look for” behaviors for their students. They then celebrate these behaviors once as the students exhibit them (VDOE).

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- Professional development are the key professional learnings and expectations for implementation in which teachers and staff participate (VDOE).
- Response to Intervention (RtI) or Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) are structures for aligning school resources on tiered levels. Students are moved through the tiers given a predetermined performance (or lack thereof) threshold (VDOE).
- Safe Harbor is a provision of ESEA that allows for incremental improvement (VDOE).
- School improvement plan (SIP) is the structure, strategies, and steps to improve student achievement to include additional assistance, new programs, professional development (VDOE).
- Special Education (SPED) is specially designed instructional and related services delivered at no cost to the parent that adapts the curriculum, materials, or instruction for students identified as having educational or physical disabilities (VDOE).
- Standards of Accreditation in Virginia are established to ensure schools are implementing effective and equitable education programs (VDOE).
 - Level 1 means the school has met or exceed standard or sufficient improvement (VDOE).
 - Level 2 means the school is nearing standard or making sufficient improvement (VDOE).
 - Level 3 means the school is below standard (VDOE).
- Standards of Learning (SOL) in Virginia are criterion-referenced tests used to measure knowledge and skills acquired by the Standards of Learning (VDOE).

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- Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a process for learning that includes demonstrating understanding and acquiring new learning by engaging, or providing the opportunity to engage, in a variety of tasks (VDOE).

Limitations

This qualitative, multiple-case study consists of five middle schools from three different districts in Virginia. I developed the sample based on high to mid-high poverty middle schools that received accreditation in 2018, so the ability to generalize findings would be based on the reader's ability to relate to the information-rich, descriptive details of the school sites studied. Because of the criteria used to identify this study's participants, the findings of this study may not be representative of the needs of Virginia middle-schools or even other middle schools within the same district as those schools studied.

Delimitations

Middle schools were selected based on their respective accreditation status in 2018, given Virginia's newest Standards of Accreditation model. The new growth model allows for students to be deemed proficient for accreditation purposes if they made growth over their performance in the previous year. With this new measurement of accountability, schools that previously failed to make accreditation became accredited in 2018 which brought them under consideration for this study.

A second delimitation involves my decision to restrict the consideration of the study to those resources provided by the school principal. I made this choice to make the comparisons across schools limited to school-related resources because I selected five schools from three different districts. Schools can access different funding opportunities at the district level. For example, larger school districts may have more resources available to school-leadership teams to

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fund student-achievement efforts while smaller districts with smaller budgets might have fewer resources or more stringent funding opportunities.

Organization

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter One provides details about the study, an overview of school improvement and the importance of leadership, and the research questions that the study seeks to answer. Chapter One also provides the operational definitions, limitations and delimitations of the study. Chapter Two presents a review of school-improvement literature, current structures for school improvement, and the study's conceptual framework. Chapter Three provides rationale for the case study, qualitative methodology, and an overview of the specific protocol that was used. Chapter Four presents the data from the study in three parts, answering the research questions in order. Chapter Five provides a summary of the findings as they relate to the current literature, implications, conclusion, and a reflection.

Chapter 2

Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

The literature review is organized into five parts. The review begins by providing a discussion on the need for an expanded definition of school improvement planning and presents research on the roles of race and poverty on student achievement outcomes. Second, the review presents current structures of school improvement and two established structures of systemized school support: Response to Intervention/Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (RTI/MTSS) and Universal Design for Learning (UDL). The third section of the literature review presents both the background for the conceptual framework of the study and the actual conceptual framework used in the study, a segment from a model designed by Howard Adelman and Linda Taylor (2006, 2007, 2008, 2011, 2014). This model provides a structure for school improvement that involves articulated learning or enabling supports for students who present with barriers to their learning. The fourth section of this literature review provides research on the learning and enabling support components of the Adelman and Taylor improvement model (2008). The chapter ends in a summary.

A review of the literature of related studies included searches for “school improvement” and “response to intervention”; “school improvement” and “multi-tiered systems of support”; “school improvement” and “barriers to learning”; “school improvement” and “closing the gap.” The result yielded over 200 studies over the last 15 years. Looking at current school improvement research, I considered studies of American schools that were measuring longitudinal effects. The research presented might provide sound practices to be implemented in a shorter amount of time and still control for a shift in culture and community beliefs. “Ultimately, the sustainability of educational change (whether what matters spreads and lasts)

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can only be addressed by examining change experiences in a range of settings from the longitudinal perspective of change over time” (Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006).

The Need to Expand the Scope of School Improvement Planning

Current structures for school improvement planning are rooted in the standardized, one-size-fits-all, methodology of No Child Left Behind. Evidence suggests that results have been “irresponsible” and “inappropriate” (Solley, 2007). In *The Turnaround Challenge*, Calkins, Belfiore, and Lash (2007) noted, “School intervention strategies generally stop well short of the comprehensiveness of change required” (p. 41). They maintained that most school improvement plans require a program change or even a people change: few develop the systemic, organizational change needed to affect the most profound impact for students and the school (p. 41) with an increased focus on human resources and developing human capital (Murphy, 2013). Murphy (2013) illustrated this statement by positing an essential school improvement equation: School Improvement = Academic Press (high expectations for student learning) + Supportive Community (p. 257). He described the application of this equation in seven major categories that included progress monitoring, systemic data use, instructional improvement linkages to community agencies and organizations, culture, parent involvement, and connection (p. 259).

Why schools need to improve. A study of school improvement begins with an understanding of the drivers of why schools need to improve. Murphy (2013) hypothesized that some economic force or organizational evolution must provide the impetus for change (p. 253). A historical examination of school improvement efforts considers what society was valuing during that time, “economically, politically, and socially” (p. 254).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB). NCLB (2002) and the standards-based movement called for schools to ensure that all students find success and for states to find a uniformed method to

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assess the progress within their schools. Thus, when the era of standardization was born, and achievement gaps illuminated, initiatives such as Success for All, Project Achieve and Comprehensive School Reform were born, and the language of “achievement trends” and “comparison schools” made way to school-based discussions and state and district accountability trends (Department of Education, 2010).

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). As of 2015 and with the passage of ESSA, improvement efforts are now given back to states and localities. There is a special emphasis on alternative assessments: performance-based opportunities; and assessment that is inclusive and grounded in multi-disciplinary, multi-sensory, and multiple intelligence theory (Department of Education, 2015). However, even under the new law, “support for students continues to be fragmented and marginalized as states respond to federal guidance” (Center for Mental Health, 2017, p. 10).

Murphy (2013) argued that school improvement should be constructed in a manner that considers external factors inhibiting school improvement as being as important as the instructional, internal aspect of school improvement. “Working on the latter without attending to the former is a recipe for failure, akin to building beautiful rooms on the third floor of a house without load bearing walls” (p. 259). He continued his assessment by highlighting that research has continuously and undeniably indicated that school context always matters in the landscape of school improvement and that the “school’s culture, community, and history” be considered in any adequate improvement process (p. 260).

Achievement gaps. The literature shows the presence of achievement gaps, primarily in schools with large percentages of historically underserved subgroups (Becker & Luthar, 2002; Bainbridge & Lasley, 2002; Lagana-Riordan, 2009; Sondergold & Koskey, 2011). Educators

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must answer the question, “What is the purpose of school improvement?” (Seashore, 2009; Feldhoff, Radisch & Bischof, 2016). As school authorities rally to provide high-quality professional development to teachers and resources to students, it remains unclear why schools neglect the alignment of school-improvement planning alongside these resources (Calkins, Guenther, Belfiore & Lash, 2007; Department of Education, 2010). Proficiency, competency, and mastery dominate school-improvement conversations while schools often view barriers like attendance, behavior, crisis and mental health, and poverty as out of the school’s control or too daunting to systematically address.

Race. With school accreditation now spotlighting subgroup performance, aspects of the achievement gap widened in the 2000s: Black students were disproportionately suspended, over-identified to special-education services, and dropped out of high school at an increasingly faster rate than their White peers (Suh, S., Malchow & Suh, J., 2014). According to Suh, Malchow, and Suh (2014), in 1991, the primary reason for Black students dropping out was academic achievement. However, in 2009, the primary contributing factor(s) included whether the student lived with his/her biological parents, the size of the household, poverty level, fatherless households, and whether the mother was employed. Rod Paige, former Secretary of Education, as cited by West (2013), noted that in order to close the Black-White achievement gap, we must first understand its implications, accept responsibility, and then develop a sense of urgency.

African-American students often feel disconnected, disenfranchised, and unsupported by their communities and schools. A disproportionate number continue to fail (West, 2013). Until our measurements and support systems become more comprehensive to include social, emotional, and community aspects, it will be increasingly more difficult to assess the underlying

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factors of our achievement gap (Bainbridge & Lainsley, 2002; Freeman, Simonsen, McCoach, Sugai, Lombardi & Horner, 2015).

Poverty. Reynolds, Harris, A., Clarke, Harris B., and James (2007) outlined a call to action to better understand and meet the needs of the underserved. In particular, they stressed the need to understand the unique challenges of poverty on student achievement. They contended that students from socio-economically disadvantaged families often face the most risk of adverse results. The authors anchored their research in the work of Hopkins and Reynolds (2001), who recommended school improvement focus on outcomes, collaborative patterns, *cultural change*, and staff development. They narrowed their recommendations to four simple categories: “focus on using data to improve teaching and learning; focus on the process of teaching and learning; develop social and emotional outlets; collaborate and learn from other schools” (Reynolds, Harris, Clarke, Harris & James, 2007, p. 430).

Socio-economic status directly correlates to student achievement (Dotson & Foley, 2016). A study by Gaddis and Lauen (2014) of 6.2 million students over a nine-year period in North Carolina found that poverty proved to be the variable most predictive of student underperformance. The authors sought to understand the effects of NCLB on Black-White subgroup achievement gaps and found socio-economic status to be the best predictor of the racial achievement gap (p. 27). A longitudinal study of 8th grade students in Kentucky, conducted in 2011, 2012, and 2013, isolated two demographic variables, single parent households and free and reduced lunch status (Jones, Wilson, Clark & Dunham, 2018). The purpose was to understand how the interaction of poverty and parental marital status influenced standardized testing performance (p. 69). The study clarified the findings of Parke (2003), who synthesized research for the Center for Law and Social Policy to provide some basis for the impact of two-parent

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versus single-parent households for a child's overall wellbeing. Parke concluded that children are "better off in a number of ways" when they come from a two-parent, biological-parent household (p. 8). Conversely, the Kentucky study found that whether a student came from either a single-parent household or two-parent household was not a statistically significant predictor of his or her academic achievement *unless* the student was socio-economically disadvantaged (Jones, Wilson, Clark & Dunham, 2018). Studies like these that provide evidence of the effects of poverty on student achievement are plentiful (Jones, Wilson, Clark & Dunham, 2018).

In Sirin's (2005) meta-analysis on the effects of poverty on achievement, he found that the effects of poverty steadily increased throughout elementary school, eventually peaking in middle school and leveling in high school. Dotson and Foley (2016) studied the effects of poverty on standardized-test achievement in middle-school students, and found, "socioeconomic status and academic achievement continue to be negatively correlated" (p. 40). The implications for further research included high-quality, highly-experienced teachers and high-quality instruction, as well as parent-education opportunities and increased parent involvement, social services, and a coordination of community resources (Dotson & Foley, 2016, p. 41).

Comprehensive structures to address student needs. A qualitative study conducted on the Promising Heights Initiative in Baltimore found that in order to be successful, the Initiative must address mental and physical health, and academic and social-emotional challenges for both students and parents (Finnegan-Carr, Vandigo, Uretsky, Oloyede & Mayden, 2015). Further, Stringer (2013) developed a model for school improvement planning that required schools to analyze their culture and community, revisit their values and norms, and enlist the support of their stakeholders as integral parts of the change process. Central to her model is a school's review of external influencers and resources and the importance of school leadership that allows

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for shared values around learning and supporting learning for all students (p. 72). She ended her report by reiterating the need for holistic school improvement around parent and community knowledge-building and collective visioning (p. 98).

No valid argument exists to exclude community considerations (Riley, 2008). In a 30-year longitudinal study about school improvement, Hargreaves and Goodson (2006) concluded that improvement will come when theory and history inform structures; vision and consistent leadership align with deep and rigorous learning; and the context of the school enables diverse students from diverse backgrounds, particularly students from poverty. Furthermore, Rincon-Gallardo and Fullan (2016) presented eight critical features of effective networks in improving learning: (1) securing adequate resources; (2) ambitious learning, (3) relationships and accountability, (4) collaborative inquiry; (5) deliberate leadership; (6) frequent interaction inside the school; (7) looking outwards to learn from others; (8) and forming new partnerships among students, teachers, families, and communities (p. 10).

Current Structures for School Improvement

Hanover Research released a report in 2014 that compared popular models for school improvement: The Daggett System for Effective Instruction; Results-Oriented Cycle of Inquiry; Balanced Scorecard Model; and the Massachusetts Department of Education Theory and Action Model. The report noted that the most common metrics for school-improvement design include data points of student learning (standardized tests, social-emotional learning, attendance, drop-out rates), and consider demographics, school environment, stakeholder perceptions, and implementation/evaluation processes (p. 16). The Report concluded that the essential elements of the most successful, current improvement models studied included an initial needs assessment of the “internal and external variables” (p. 4) and how they directly relate to student learning.

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The report also noted that the most effective models currently in practice were community-driven and inspired (Hanover Research, 2014).

Figures 2.1 and 2.2 show the cyclical nature of the models presented in the Hanover Report (2014) and reflect a structure to establish priorities and assess effectiveness (p. 26):

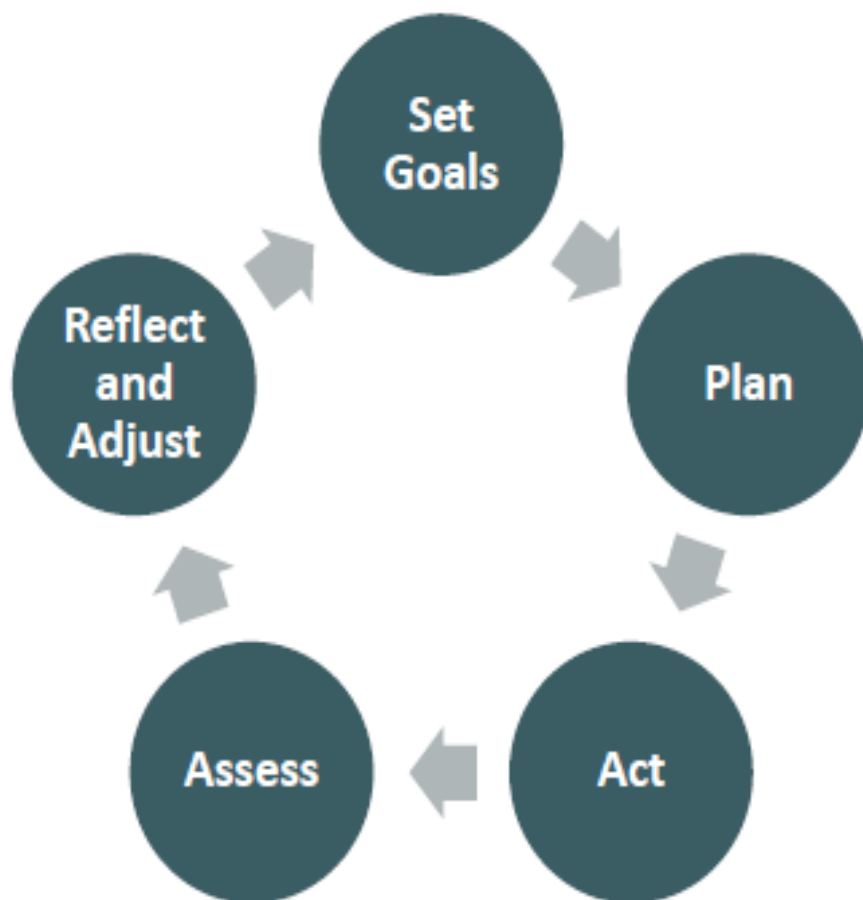


Figure 2.1. Results-Oriented Cycle of Inquiry. This figure illustrates a simple and widely-accepted, decision-making model used in school-improvement planning.

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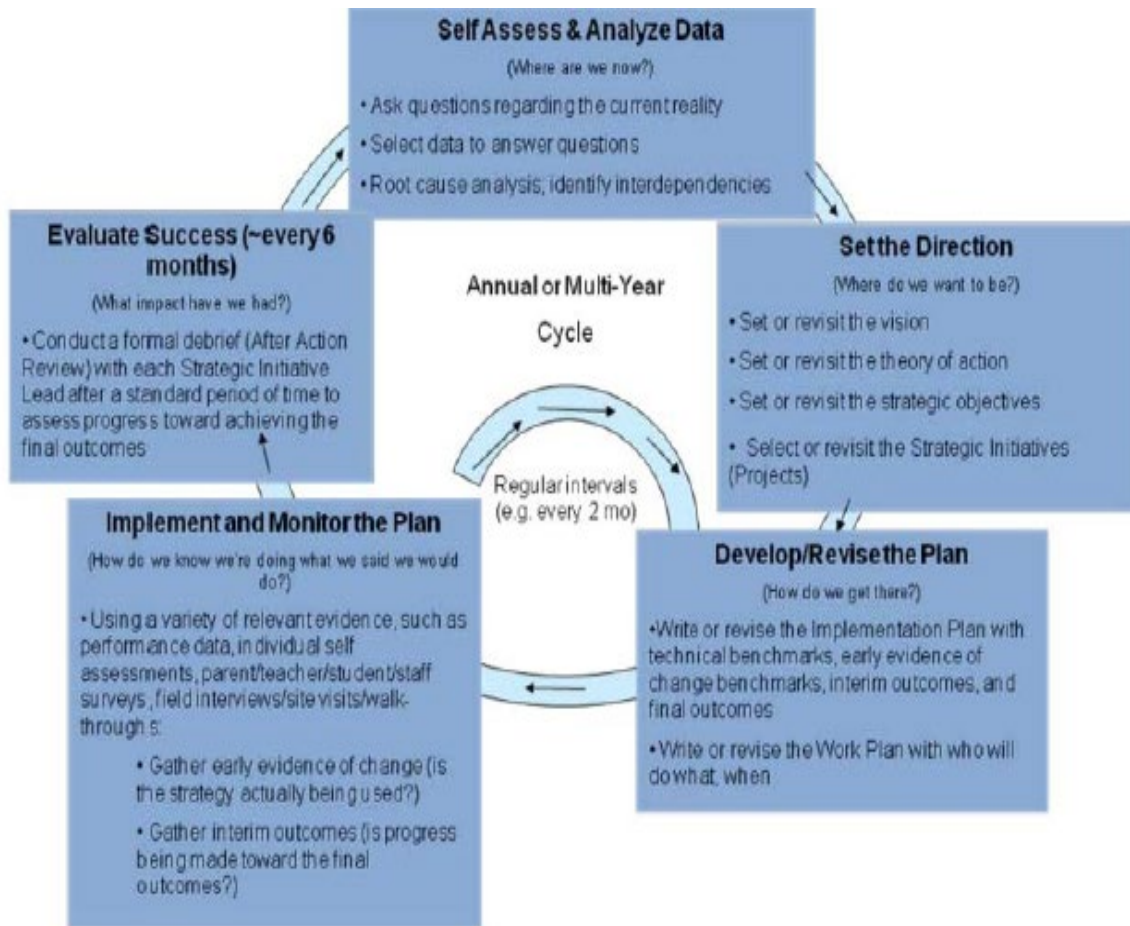


Figure 2.2. Massachusetts Department of Education-Office of District and School Turnaround, “Theory of Action” Model. This figure illustrates a well-articulated version in which a state used the premise of Figure 2.1 to develop their expectation for school-improvement planning.

Flaws in current structures. An inherent flaw in current school-improvement models, like those illustrated in Figures 2.1 and 2.2, relates to the fact that effective district leadership must not treat all schools and school-improvement efforts the same. They must direct more resources and more support to those schools with the most challenges (Southern Regional Education Board, 2010). Neither model requires a school to consider its community context or

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how environmental conditions might be contributing to student underachievement. Though the “Self Assess & Analyze Data” component of Figure 2.2 requires a “root-cause” analysis, it lacks a systemized structure to follow in completing this task.

What should be included in school-improvement planning? A report by the *Consortium on Chicago School Research* in 2006, identified necessary essential supports for schools to improve: leadership that is distributed, strategic, and focused on instruction; parent and community involvement and the school staff’s ability to leverage those ties across the school’s community through volunteerism and parent partnerships; professional capacity of the staff to grow and learn, leveraging and accepting resources across the broader school community; and, a focus on student-centered learning and ambitious instruction (p. 2). The authors found that elementary schools that were strong in these essential elements of support were ten times more likely to substantially improve standardized test scores in reading and mathematics than schools lacking in these elements. The report further noted that those schools with the strongest essential supports possessed the strongest social capital: actively-involved parent communities; strong religious organizations; low crime rates; and few abused and neglected children (p. 2-3). In the report’s final, interpretive summary, the authors stated that the presence of all these supports, cohesively working together and not in isolation, proved central to the success of the studied schools. Therefore, the most resources had to be designated to those communities with the least social capital (p. 4).

Elgart (2018) presented the AdvancED School Quality Factors, based on a study of more than 5000 schools each year. The “highly trained” research teams concluded that seven essential factors existed when determining school quality: clear direction; resource management; implementation capacity; stakeholder engagement; student engagement; high expectations; and

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the effect of instruction. They described effective instruction as knowing “how the students learn” as being as important an understanding as “whether they learn” (p. 58). The study identified that “effective continuous improvement requires contributions from all stakeholders in a school, its community, and the broader educational system that supports them” (p. 57).

Response to Intervention and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support. To address systemizing resources and practices, a popular and systemized structure for school improvement called Response to Intervention (RtI) or Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) has been implemented or considered in many schools and districts. Little research shows whether RtI or MTSS has directly impacted student achievement, though they have been widely adopted and accepted in the educational landscape (Mellard, Frey & Woods, 2012). Adelman and Taylor (2011) argue that these structures are not about developing a true system of supports but instead are about enhancing coordination of already-developed, fragmented supports (p. 436). The *interconnectedness* of supports as a continuum of services as they relate to classroom and school-wide interventions is what RtI and MTSS are missing (Adelman & Taylor, 2011, p. 437).

Some research findings suggest that the multi-tiered structure helps to offset behavioral concerns and challenges, with increased school attendance, reduced referrals, and reduced time out of class. However, most studies lack data regarding direct student-achievement impact (Albrecht, 2015). Both RtI and MTSS require developing a framework of available interventions in three tiers, in which schools place students into the appropriate interventions based on universal screeners or other academic deficit areas (Erickson, Noonan & Jenson, 2012). The current structure of these programs depicts intervention as levels of school intervention, overlooking school-community interventions and do not provide for systemic organization of what and how schools can intervene each day (Center for Mental Health, 2017). In short, with

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these models, schools create a “laundry list” of programs and services at each level, with no regard to how interventions are prescribed to individual students and families (Center for Mental Health, 2017). In *The School Implementation Scale: Measuring Implementation in Response to Intervention Models*, Erickson, Noonan, and Jensen (2012) noted that the current structures for RtI make it very challenging to overlay behavioral interventions with academic ones and fidelity to the type of intervention prescribed continues to be a challenge. They presented a rationale for a new model that integrates academics with behavior and includes an examination of school culture, professional development, evidence-based practices, and family engagement (p. 39).

Universal Design for Learning (UDL). As discussed earlier, ESSA (2015) provides the expectation for decision-making on school-improvement guidelines to be given back to state and local districts. However, the Act contains an explicit endorsement of UDL because of its multi-tiered and personalized approach to lesson design (Ferguson, 2016). Most of the limited research on UDL pertains to students with disabilities (Takemae, Dobbins & Kurts, 2018). Sailor (2014) noted that:

UDL is a framework that guides the shift from designing learning environments and lessons with potential barriers to designing barrier-free instructionally rich learning environments and lessons that provide access to all students. A rich learning environment (i.e., the location where learning is taking place) is designed around the needs of all students, not just those with an identified need (i.e. students with disabilities, students who are English Language Learners...) (p. 2).

His conclusion advocates for a shift from old models of school improvement to models that include an expectation for implementation of UDL, MTSS, and collaboration among teachers (p. 4).

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Very few studies analyze the longitudinal effect of school improvement. Even fewer studies provide a more global definition of what it means for schools to improve and assess the varying structures that such growth would entail (Adelman & Taylor, 2007, 2008, 2011, 2014). As is evidenced in RtI, MTSS, and UDL, the need and desire to develop systemized structures for improvement that can be replicated at scale, mostly for schools with a large percentage of economically disadvantaged or historically marginalized students, has been evident for decades: The era of standardization brought this to light even more (Lewis, James, Hancock & Hill-Jackson, 2008; Reynolds, Harris, Clarke, Harris & James, 2006).

Conceptual Framework

With no clearly articulated and implemented school-improvement model in current practice that directly and systematically addresses learning barriers, school principals must determine areas of focus for their school communities, many of which rely on the explication of standards and achievement tests as the main avenue of accountability (Adelman & Taylor, 2008). This study used a segment of the Adelman and Taylor (2008) school-improvement model to both thematically and individually qualify resource allocation in five different middle schools in mid-high or high-poverty school communities. By first understanding how principals identified barriers to student success, and then delineating what they allocated to address those barriers, I gained insight into provisions that have been made to improve struggling schools.

Current decision-making framework. Given the absence of a systemized structure for principals to consider when planning and providing for barriers to student learning, Figure 2.3 depicts another decision-making structure for distributing school resources:

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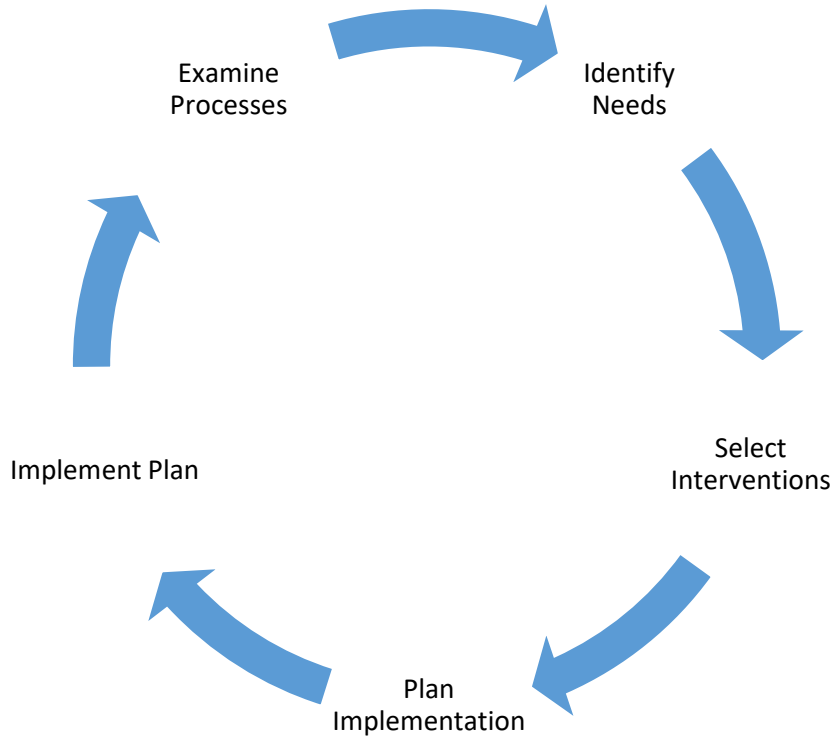


Figure 2.3. Example of Current Model for Continuous Improvement. Adapted from Georgia’s System for Continuous Improvement (2019). For the purpose of this section, this figure illustrates another current school-improvement planning model.

The current decision-making cycle fails to provide sufficient guidance, particularly for districts that have been engaging in the process of systematizing how to distribute resources to schools with large pockets of students from underperforming demographics. Current school-improvement models lack consideration of the interaction of environmental learning supports to address barriers to student learning (Adelman & Taylor, 2014; Center for Mental Health, 2017).

According to Adelman and Taylor, “Districts and schools have a variety of marginalized interventions that are implemented in a fragmented manner. They are not well integrated with each other or with the instructional management components” (2014, p. 434). Adelman and

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Taylor further illustrate the ineffectiveness of fragmented supports like positive behavior programs, Response to Intervention, Safe Schools, Coordinated School Health Program, Family Resource Centers, and full-service Community Schools initiatives (p. 434). They maintain that the current school improvement efforts to create a comprehensive system aren't enough because they involve the coordination of fragmented efforts in a haphazard way (p. 436). Until schools put in place an accountability structure that requires school communities to systematically address why students underperform, considering all environmental aspects, schools will continue to fall short (Seashore, 2009; Adelman & Taylor, 2017).

Problem types in student learning. Adelman and Taylor (2017) contend that the conditions that create barriers to student learning can be organized into three problem types: environment (Type I); the interactions and transactions between the environment and person (Type II); and, the person's internal or personal problems (Type III) (p. 1-7).

Type I problems. Type I problems are most common (Adelman & Taylor, 2017). They are primarily caused by environmental factors (Adelman & Taylor, 2017). These factors include insufficient stimuli, excessive stimuli, and intrusive and hostile stimuli (p. 1-7). Insufficient stimuli include poverty, lack of background experiences and access to learning opportunities, inferior learning opportunities, and inadequate diet (Adelman & Taylor, 2017, p. 1-7). Excessive stimuli include an overly demanding home environment or working conditions as well as overcrowding (Adelman & Taylor, 2017, p. 1-7). The final type of stimuli identified by Adelman and Taylor (2017) as a Type I problem is intrusive or hostile stimuli. Intrusive and hostile stimuli include inferior medical practices, conflict in the home, faulty child-rearing practices, dysfunction, migratory family, English as a Second Language, and social prejudices.

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Type II problems. Adelman and Taylor (2017) discussed two other problem types. Type II problems are those that occur due to a mismatching of environment and ability while Type III problems are internal and personal problems that a student has. Type II problems might include placing a student with a slow-development pattern in a highly-demanding environment, like placing a low auditory processor in a high-auditory processing environment (p. 1-7). Another Type II problem is one in which a student of a varying race or culture is not socially adjusting due to a lack of participation or feeling of belonging.

Type III problems. Type III problems include challenges such as learning disabilities, social maladjustment, and negative self-perception (Adelman & Taylor, 2017, p. 1-7). Long-term effects of a prolonged Type I problem might lead to an internalizing of negative self-perception (Adelman & Taylor, 2017).

A more comprehensive focus on school improvement. Changes in school culture require a shift in how educators view teaching and learning for unengaged and unmotivated students (Waldron & McLeskey, 2010; Huber & Conway, 2015). In a new and improved era of accountability, improving schools involves much more than improving the cycle of teaching and learning and its measures: There is a call to action for school communities to address barriers to learning (Adelman & Taylor, 2007).

Research exists on school-based instructional improvement efforts in which the findings identify moderate to significant gains in student achievement (Huber & Conway, 2015; Peurach & Glazer, 2012). Adelman and Taylor (2008) presented an all-inclusive model for school improvement that contains two primary pathways to student achievement: one aims towards instructional improvement for a learning-motivated student; and one aims towards identifying enabling components for students who present with barriers to learning (p. 4). Given the current

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school-improvement literature's call to establish a framework that includes consideration of how the school's planning and providing for barriers to student learning, I structured the conceptual framework for this study around only the learning or enabling components segment of the Adelman and Taylor model (2007, 2008, 2011, 2014).

The first Adelman and Taylor (2008) model below, Figure 2.4, provides an overview of the interdependency of current structures of school on school improvement, to include the instructional component (improvement for all students); the enabling or learning supports component (response when a student presents with a barrier to learning); and the governance and resource management component (resource allocation towards school improvement). For this study, I focused on the overlap between resource management and the enabling or learning supports component illustrated in Figure 2.4:

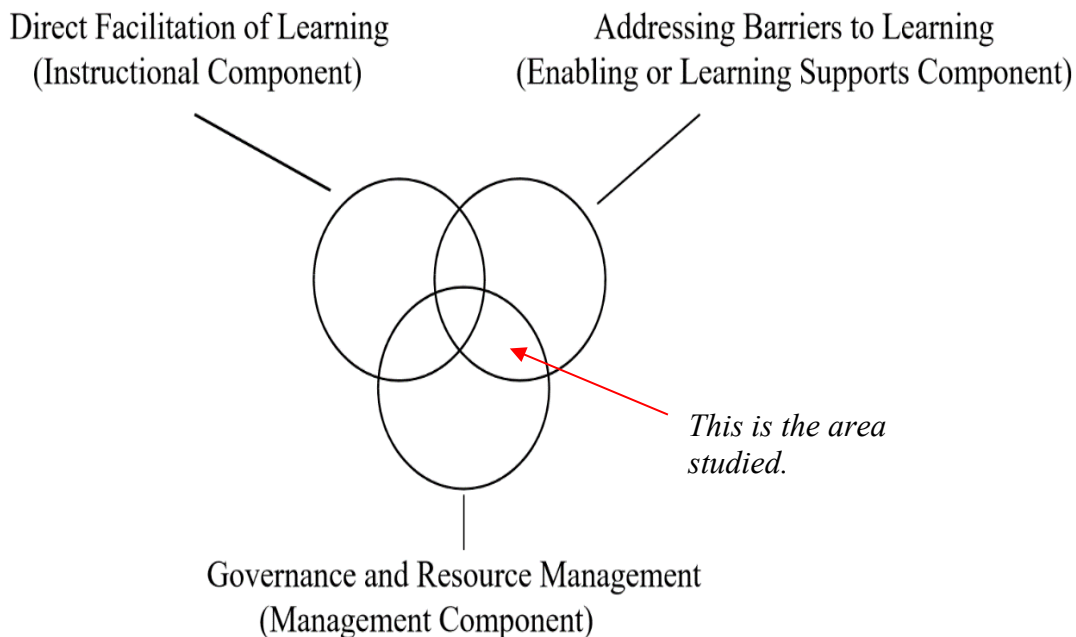


Figure 2.4 From "School Improvement: A Systemic View of What's Missing and What to Do About It." (2008). This figure illustrates the current interdependency among school components with the hypothesis of positive student outcomes for all students at the intersection of all three.

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The boxed portion of the next diagram, Figure 2.5, depicts the conceptual framework that I used in my study. It expounds upon the specific, enabling components that address the barriers to learning. The range of learners, to the left of this diagram, qualifies students in degrees of motivation. To the right of that is detailed a systematic structure for the student either immediately accessing the instructional improvement (motivated) or presenting with a barrier to learning. This barrier requires the school to assess what might be the underlying cause (not very motivated or avoidant) and then utilize the school's resources to enable the student and reengage him/her in instruction.

Considering the enabling or learning supports component of Adelman and Taylor's (2008) model, it is important for leaders to comprehensively understand how each component interacts and interferes with student learning, so they may qualify and then allocate resources into each of the individual categories. Though research has been done at some scale in areas relevant if not explicit to programs within each category (Waldren & McLeskey, 2010; Sulkowski & Michael, 2014; Gomez, Gonzalez, Nieburh, & Villareal, 2012; Mina, Anderson & Minge, 2017), with some reform movements *nearly* considering and planning for each and every component, a clear plan and connection between each component as a systematic structure has not yet proven viable (Adelman & Taylor, 2011).

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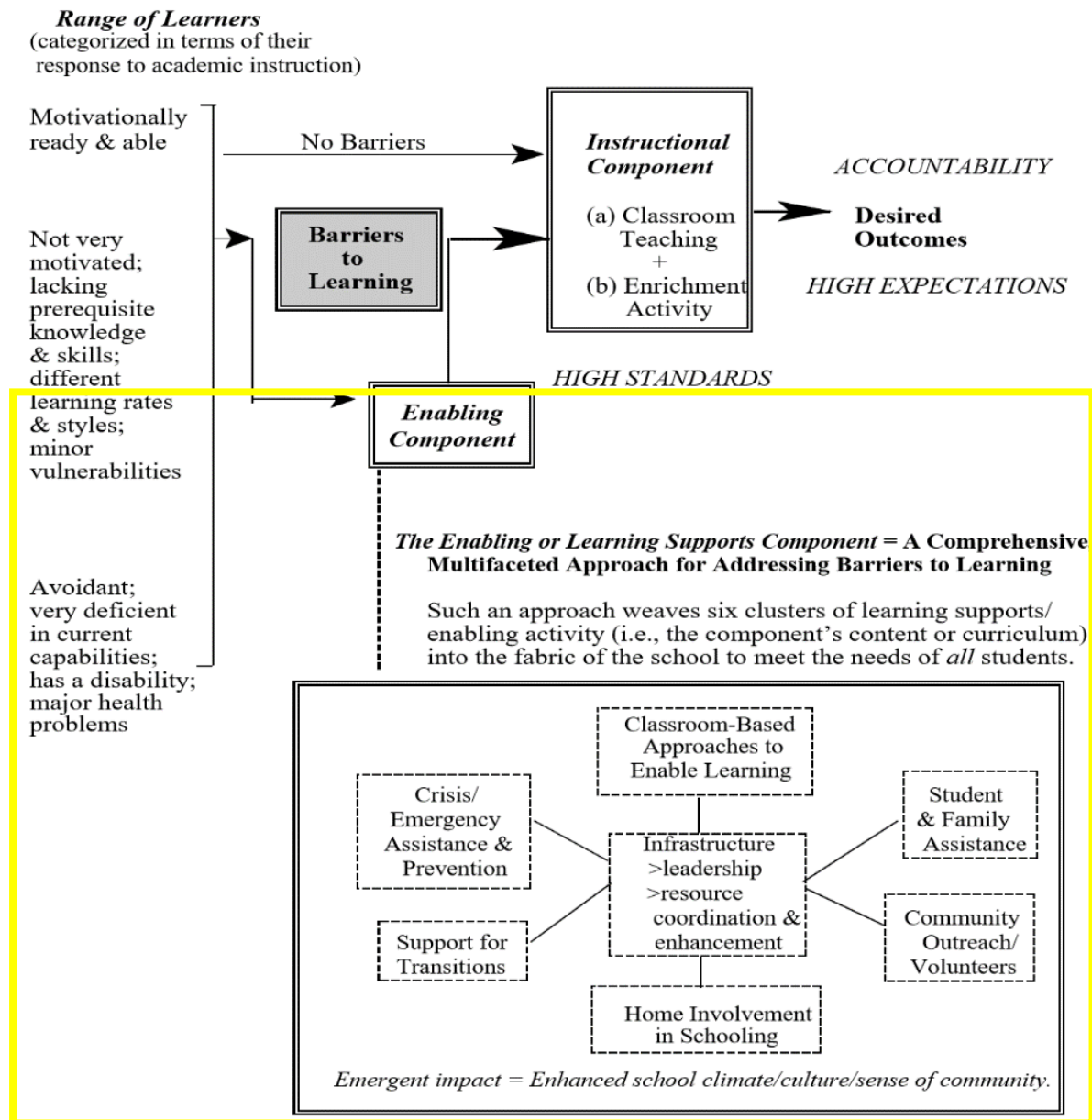


Figure 2.5. Adelman and Taylor Improvement Model. From “School Improvement: A Systemic view of What’s Missing and What to Do About It.” (2008). The *yellow box* on this figure represents the conceptual framework for this study. To the left, learners present as not motivated or avoidant. The school then plans to address the lack of motivation with an enabling or learning component support.

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Infrastructure and the role of leadership. At the center of the study's components lies infrastructure and the important role of leadership. Adelman and Taylor (2011) noted the expanding and evolving role of the principal from "manager" to "instructional leader." The report clarified instructional leadership as being about the principal's ability to engage staff and motivate and inspire student learning, collaborate around shared expectations, and include parents in the process. The findings of Adelman and Taylor (2011) parallel the turnaround principal qualities noted by Adams (2014): strong leadership; clear instructional vision and processes (that engage stakeholders and provide support); and an emphasis on collaboration (p. 17). Both Adams (2014) and Adelman and Taylor (2011) noted that the complexity of the evolving role of the principal is becoming more and more challenging, particularly in the current climate of budget cuts, initiative fatigue, and tenured-teaching contracts which make it challenging to remove teachers who are not performing to expectation (Adams, p. 2). Successful leaders must inspire a vision, build relationships with all stakeholders, and be able to clearly communicate (Adams, 2014).

In *School Success in High Poverty Schools*, Andrew and Sorder, as cited by Badenhorst and Koalepe (2014, p. 246), defined effective instructional leadership as a leader who acts in four roles: a resource provider; an instructional resource; a communicator; and a visible presence within the school. The analysis of each of these roles included the principal coordinating all staff personnel around the school's mission and vision and securing resources, both human and capital, to accomplish the school's goals. The principal establishes the expectation of continuous improvement and leads staff development. As a communicator, the instructional leader can articulate a clear vision and is accessible to staff, students, and stakeholders, holding "spontaneous conversations" regularly (p. 246). One of the findings of the Badenhorst and

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Koalepe (2014) study of principals in high-performing, high-poverty schools were that certain qualities existed among effective school principals: dedication; diligence; accountability; and results-driven. Though studies of principal-leadership characteristics and traits exist, there is a “failure to address the principal’s role related to learning supports” (Adelman & Taylor, 2011, p. 8).

Explanation of the learning supports. The Enabling or Learning Supports Component of the Adelman and Taylor model involves six focus components that school leadership must engage and coordinate resources to provide (Figure 2.5):

- A. Enhanced classroom-based approaches to learning
- B. Support for transitions
- C. Crisis assistance and prevention
- D. Increased home involvement
- E. Increased community outreach
- F. Facilitating student and family access to effective services and special assistance

The final part of this literature review provides research and strategies, resources, and programs that might qualify within each learning component; however, the listing is not exhaustive. For learning components B-F, there is limited research on the interaction of these supports as they relate to current school-improvement efforts, so I examined two reform initiatives that contain many of these components’ structures: Comprehensive School Reform and community schools.

Enhanced classroom-based approaches to learning. The principal as an instructional leader, providing collaborative and meaningful opportunities for vision creation, consensus building, and innovation is widely considered to be a measurement of principal effectiveness (Finnigan, 2010; Marzano, Waters & McNulty 2005; Scott & Education Commission of the

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States, 2018). Learning support component, A, enhanced classroom-based approaches to learning, comprises much of what is instructional leadership. Innovations and structures include peer tutoring, blended or personalized learning, guided and self-directed opportunities, enrichment, school culture-building, and collaborative opportunities along with professional development and accountability (Adelman & Taylor, 2011). Further, classroom-based approaches to learning might also include practices such as resource teachers, specialized aids, personalized instruction, and co-teaching (Adelman & Taylor, 2011).

Goalsetting. Andrzejewski, Davis, Bruening and Poirer (2014) studied the technique of teaching and applying self-regulation and goalsetting to 277 earth science students. The study included two of four science teachers who all reported strong teaming practices (common pacing and planning) within their Professional Learning Community. The students were first instructed in the technique by university staff, and then teachers then reinforced the strategy. The outcome reported for minority students demonstrated significant gains in the participant versus the control group in classroom achievement and standardized-test achievement: $p=.05$ Math classroom achievement; $p>.05$ Math standardized-test achievement; and $p>.05$ Language Arts and Science classroom achievement and standardized-test achievement.

Peer tutoring. A study of the effects of peer tutoring by Green, Alderman, and Liechty (2004) found positive effects for second-grade students and contended it to be one of the most cost-effective and cost-neutral avenues for school leaders to invest. Further, Miller (2005), stated positive academic outcomes in peer tutoring with same age and cross-age tutors, “when tutors are explicitly trained in the tutoring process” (p. 25). Implications for school leaders in all these examples are that when accountability structures align with the necessary teacher training

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and best practice research, many classroom-based approaches to enabling unmotivated students can be of little to no cost.

Differentiation. Birnie (2015) made a case for differentiation and personalized learning, dispelling myths about unmanageable planning and workloads, advocating for teamwork and reframing lesson planning, and ultimately, arguing it to be the right work to ensure success for all students. Another study that was based on teacher efficacy found it imperative that for differentiation to be successful, leaders must establish teacher buy-in of importance (State, Harrison, Kern & Lewis, 2017). The researchers suggested balancing professional development with shared-leadership opportunities for teachers to help plan for and guide the work (p. 35). Implications from each of these studies are that school leaders should work to first understand and then support the merits in personalized-learning opportunities to improve learning since it provides an opportunity for differentiation and self-regulation (Basham, Hall, Carter & Stahl, 2016).

Collaborative and shared leadership and responsibility. Collaborative and shared leadership studies are plentiful. As the role of the leader in the school setting evolves to be more about collective efficacy and leadership (Muijs & Harris, 2006), studies become more relevant. Hallinger and Heck's (2010) 4-year study around collaboration's impact over time found that collaborative leadership does appear to impact student learning indirectly and significantly, and it does impact school improvement over time (p. 668). It is important to note that the researchers did not actually examine collaborative leadership in practice, only analyzed survey data and cross referenced it to a standardized-reading achievement test.

Another example of collaborative practices is found in Chance and Segura's (2009) study of a rural high school in which they examined the structures that led to significant improvement

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over the course of a three-year period. Specifically, the school used the structures of Organizational Development (clarifying communication; improving group procedures in meetings; establishing goals; uncovering and working with conflict; solving problems; making decisions; assessing changes [p. 2]) to build capacity within its culture to collaboratively improve practices for its students.

Sondergeld and Koskey's (2011) mixed-methods, 8-year study of an urban junior-high school implementing the Gear Up Comprehensive School Reform program, found statistically significant increases in reading and math scores, statistically significant decreases in behavior reports, and increases in attendance. The researchers credit some behavior decreases to the collaborative, proactive practices of teacher teams. Teachers were arranged in clusters and designed their own discipline structures for each cluster.

Another study focused on African-American students and the use of counseling to improve test performance (Bruce, 2009). Bruce (2009) posited that the school counselor's role should evolve to be more of a "change agent," working with traditionally underachieving student groups and sharing efforts to support student success (p. 450). Though Bruce (2009) believed there was a limitation related to the caliber of students who opted to fully participate in the study, the findings were significant for the test group and provided implications for further study.

The other learning supports. The other learning supports in the Adelman and Taylor model are not as well studied, particularly as a cohesive and systematic structure that can guide schools in addressing barriers to learning (Adelman & Taylor, 2014). These are the enabling components that involve more of the aspects of the entire-school community with many supports developed outside of the classroom. Because of the limited research, I have focused on synthesizing the work of both the community-schools model and Comprehensive-Schools

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Reform (CSR) because they most closely encompass the wholistic interaction and importance of structured-learning supports that address barriers to learning.

The other learning support components consist of the following: student and family assistance; community outreach and volunteers; support for transitions; crisis emergency and prevention services; and home-school involvement. They include such strategies, structures and programs as: conferencing with parents; care monitoring; providing direct lines to mental, economic, and health services; resource coordination; insisting upon vertical alignment among schools and grade level; and implementing programs and services to personalize support for families (Adelman & Taylor, 2008). The current work within community schools provides for many of these components, with a resource coordinator helping to align, recommend, and distribute both school and community resources for students and families in need (Blank & Villarreal, 2015).

An understanding of how leaders establish, align, and provide resources to address barriers to learning is central to the enabling components of the Adelman and Taylor model (2008). With decreasing budgets and a shortage of resources, leaders and districts are creatively allocating what means they do have sometimes with and sometimes without consideration for the context and environment in which they serve (Lockwood, 1996; Seashore, 2009). At the state and federal level, policies must be defined that allow for districts and school leaders to adequately address individual student needs (Frick & Faircloth, 2007). Districts and states are working to define what is considered financially adequate, and what measures might be used to define success (Odden, Goetz & Picus, 2008). CSR and the community-schools movement have frequently been examined to better define the multiple resources needed for struggling students

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(Odden & Picus, 2011; Odden Goertz, Goetz, Archibald, Gross, Weiss & Turner-Mangan, 2008; Odden, 2000).

Comprehensive School Reform(CSR). The basic premise of CSR reform was that in order to improve, schools must completely restructure themselves (Staresina, 2004). Schools are considered the “primary unit of change” (Slavin, p. 2). Schools where 50% of the population were economically disadvantaged were encouraged to develop systems that addressed CSR’s nine elements: coordination of resources; effective research-based strategies; professional development; measurable goals and benchmarks; school support; parental and community involvement; external technical support and assistance; and evaluation strategies (Slavin, 2007). From a fiscal perspective, it was less expensive for schools to adopt already-established school improvement structures/programs from an available menu (van Elk & Kok, 2016).

CSR efforts of the early 2000s happened at an “unprecedented rate” (Borman, Hewes, Overman & Brown, 2003, p. 126). Supporting the implementation were mainly high-poverty schools with low test scores, and there were 11 main components encompassing the following: research based teaching and learning practices and structures; high quality professional staff and development; meaningful involvement of parents and community resources; involvement of federal, state, local and private financial and other resources with an expectation that schools coordinate with these entities; and, an approved monitoring and assessment framework (Borman, Hewes, Overman & Brown, 2003). Two of the most popular CSR programs were Success for All and Direct Instruction (Staresina, 2004). Success for All and Direct Instruction were primarily focused on classroom-based enhancements, with limited consideration for CSR’s other elements, and the programs still had a “one-size-fits-all approach” to school improvement (Staresina, 2004; Slavin 2007). According to Odden (2000), the varying and inconsistent cost of

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CSR made it a challenge to sustain. In *School Leadership that Works*, Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) provided a detailed examination of CSR, labeling it as “the right work.” The research they presented paints a picture of uneven effects on student achievement because most schools were inadequately implementing it, but the most compelling conclusion was that schools that implemented beyond a fifth year had “dramatic” achievement gains (pg. 62). Puerach and Glazer (2012) found benefits from the CSR were evident by the fifth year of implementation.

Community schools. In successful community schools as noted by Blank, Berg, and Melaville (2006), school leadership crossed boundaries and fostered a shared vision and sense of urgency within the communities they served. Their research reinforced that leadership among the school and community at large remains viable and connected with consistent plans for multi-level leadership and constant solicitation of broad-band public support (p. 7). Riley (2008) cautioned school leaders, encouraging a candid understanding of community, meeting the expectations of those you serve, and remaining well-informed to the hidden and overt community culture and counter culture that exist. School leadership is at the heart of the community-schools movement, building upon the strength of the principal fostering trusting relationships with community partners (Blank, Berg & Melaville 2006).

Using methods of accountability, community schools looked to strengthen leadership networks and build on extensive support and capacity building while engaging the entire school community in the process (Blank & Villarreal, 2015; Gomez, Gonzales, Niebuhr & Villarreal, 2012). However, the explicit leadership of the school’s principal, his or her view and ownership of community, and parent well-being is the driver for success in community schools (Mina, Anderson & Chen, 2017; Khalifa, Gooden & Davis, 2016). With an expanding body of research

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on the effectiveness of community schools, particularly with students of poverty, the call to develop leaders who can rally resources and inspire action is needed now more than ever (Blank, Berg & Melaville 2006; Khalifa, 2012). Examples of a few specific, effective outcomes include California's Healthy Start (Villarreal, 2005); innovative summer programming to prevent learning loss for lower income students (Gomez, Gonzales, Niebuhr, and Villarreal, 2012); longer school days, to include weekend residency time for students (Riley, 2013); and Urban School Leadership programs (Khalifa, 2012).

The Coalition for Community Schools found that a structure that seeks to align community resources and build partnerships to address all aspects of barriers to learning has long-term, positive results, such as academic success, healthy citizens, and desirable communities in which to live (Blank, Jacobson, Melaville, & Pearson, 2010). Further, Rice and Harris (2003) tackled the work of qualifying the important skills needed for leadership within community schools, particularly, in four frames: structural; human resource; political; and symbolic (p. 216-217). The conclusion found that community-school leaders employ the basic organizational or structural and human resource (relationships) framework initially, but they quickly must shift their focus to the political and symbolic to strengthen and sustain the community schools' model (Rice & Harris, 2003).

Renaissance of community schools. The National Education Policy Center released a brief (Oakes, Maier & Daniel, 2017) that sought to reconcile some of the new requirements in ESSA and how those requirements might be addressed in a renaissance of a community schools' model. Addressing the effects of poverty, the Center writes that adverse experiences, such as homelessness, food insecurity, and violence, profoundly impact a child's ability to engage in the learning process (pg. 4). Ultimately, the Center found that the community schools' approach,

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one that considers the four pillars of integrated student supports, expanded learning time, family and community engagement and collaborative-leadership practices could prove viable with regards to school-improvement efforts. The Center elaborated by qualifying implementation of this approach with the need to clearly understand the uniqueness of each community and the need for trust-building relationships with community partnerships (parents, businesses, and social services) (pg. 2).

There are increasing examples of mid-sized cities that have begun “blurring the lines” (Superville, 2018) between schools, districts, and community resources. City Connects, a citywide approach spearheaded by Harvard’s Education Redesign Lab and often affiliated with the community-schools method, seeks to use an integrated approach to student support in its schools (Superville, 2018). Central to City Connects is a challenge that traditional education has been defined by three ingredients: the child, the instruction, and the curriculum (Superville, 2018). The inherent flaw is that the child is treated as an *equal* variable in the equation (Superville, 2018). Studies have shown that a child’s instability, poverty, and mental and health challenges impact his or her achievement (Manekin & Abell Foundation, 2016).

In Salem, Massachusetts, City Connects coordinators work with each student to understand his or her needs and then develop individualized success plans. (Superville, 2018). Current success plans include housing assistance, tutoring, and extracurricular activities, focusing on four prongs of individual needs: academics, health, family, and social-emotional well-being (Superville, 2018). City Connects in Bronx, New York, develops plans that include dental work, eyeglasses, mentoring, group and family counseling, and summer-learning opportunities. Though further analysis of student data in community schools’ reform is still needed, early signs suggest positive trends in student achievement on standardized tests, in-

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school performance, and attendance (Haywoode, 2018; Manekin & Abell Foundation, 2016). However, beyond the funding concerns and challenges, the community schools' model might still have some room to develop before it is viable. As Starr (2018) noted, though community schools' support and the increased funding to address whole-child needs are greatly supported by the public, the community schools' model is still lacking in its accountability structures (Starr, 2018).

Summary

The tension placed on school principals as being crucial to a school's success, particularly in the era of accountability, often leaves principals internalizing the pressure of improving the schools in which they are charged to lead (Finnigan, 2010; Drago-Severson, Maslin-Ostrowski & Blum-Destefano, 2018). The research clearly supports that an updated definition of principal-instructional leadership must be developed with consideration across contexts of all school-level and broader community-level stakeholders (Wieczorek & Manard, 2018; Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005).

Literature supports the need for an at-scale model for school improvement that encourages school communities to look at their culture and resources and develop integrated pathways for student success and achievement, rooted in the reciprocal effect and explicit relationship of barriers to learning (Riley, 2013). Development of this at-scale model should be implemented in phases to allow for a better understanding of implications (Kaniuka, 2012; Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005), and it must allow for leaders to work on relationship building, understanding, and a continuous assessment of the culture (Adams, 2014).

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

Chapter Three describes the sampling and measurement tools used to collect data from the five high or mid-high poverty middle schools selected, and an explanation of the qualitative methods used in this study. First, I described the samples, the sampling process, the measurement tools, and the data collection and analysis procedures as well as more clearly defined the significance and appropriateness of my use of a multiple case-study methodology. Using the learning supports of the Adelman and Taylor model (2008) as the basis for qualifying data, I analyzed what barriers to student learning school principals identified and what resources they allocated to address those barriers.

The purpose of this study was to identify how the principals of five high or mid-high poverty, accredited, middle schools both identified and allocated resources to address barriers to teaching and learning. I used the enabling components or learning supports of the Adelman and Taylor model as the framework for qualifying those resources presented by each principal participant (Adelman & Taylor, 2008).

Research Questions

The research questions were:

In high to mid-high poverty accredited, Virginia middle schools...

1. What barriers to student learning/student achievement success have individual principals identified?
2. How have principals distributed or allocated resources that address barriers to student learning?

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3. Why did the principals decide to create and distribute unique resources and allocations to address these barriers?
4. Based on the enabling components of the Adelman and Taylor framework (2007, 2008, 2009, 2011), what common themes existed among accredited schools about the following?
 - A. Enhanced classroom-based approaches to learning
 - B. Support for transitions
 - C. Crisis assistance and prevention
 - D. Increased home involvement
 - E. Increased community outreach
 - F. Facilitating student and family access to effective services and special assistance
 - G. Other

Assumptions and Rationale for Qualitative Research Design

I sought to understand how principals of high poverty and mid-high poverty, Virginia, accredited, middle schools both identified and allocated resources to address barriers to student learning. I compared the allocations in these schools to those suggested in the Adelman and Taylor improvement model (2008) and analyzed the similarities and differences between the schools' allocations and those of the model. Utilizing the enabling components articulated in the Adelman and Taylor improvement model (2008), I hoped to fill a current gap in the literature as to how schools systematically and strategically used resources to address barriers to learning (Adelman & Taylor, 2014).

Multiple case-study methodology. I utilized a qualitative, multiple case-study methodology which permitted me to interview school leaders and evaluate various documents at

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the five middle schools to gain an understanding of their resource allocation in each of the six learning components. I selected this methodology because it allowed for a clearer understanding of the context behind each school leader's decision in resource allocation. I was "...attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Merriam & Tisdell, p. 15).

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) divided research into two categories: basic and applied. Researchers engage in applied research in hopes of informing or influencing policy or practice of administrators or policymakers. A form of applied research, appreciative inquiry, allows for a story to be told of innovation, positive impact, or effectiveness within an organization (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The applied aspect of this study, my second and third research question, helped me to report on the meaning making each school leader engaged in determining their resource allocations which was fundamental to the qualitative study (Patton, 2015). Referring to Merriam and Tisdell's two categories of research (2016), I reported on the allocation for each site (basic), and I analyzed the sum of the study's findings to report on common themes in school-based leadership apportionments and allowances (applied). This might be considered in a broader conversation around supporting students with barriers to student learning and the effectiveness of those practices that are currently being implemented (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

A multiple case-study format provided for transferability since I selected the schools using an instrumental-use, multiple-case and utilization-focused sampling (Patton, 2015). Instrumental-use, multiple-case samplings require the researcher to find individual cases to better understand a phenomenon, and through thematic exploration of common themes and practices, generalized findings are reported (Patton, 2015 p. 295). For any potential transferability across current-school settings, the cases selected must be highly relevant to the topic studied and permit

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a depth of analysis (Patton, 2015). In qualitative research, the most common understanding of transferability requires one to “think in terms of the reader or user of the study” (Merriam & Tisdell, p. 256). Commonplace in law and medicine, the practitioner determines what is and is not applicable to his or her current reality as it compares to the reality of the study’s participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I sought to report on what allocations or resources principals allocated to each learning support, in search of common themes that might have some transferable relevance to other practitioners.

Utilization-focused sampling. I also used the second approach to applied research, the utilization-focused sampling. A utilization-focused sampling includes finding and reporting on cases in which the intended user, or in this case, reader, has specific interest in the outcome of the study, again contributing to some transferability (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015). The utilization-focused evaluation seeks to generate useful and actionable findings that can “support decision-making and support programs, practices, and or policy improvements” (Patton, 2015, p. 295).

Autonomy in decision making. The high to mid-high poverty middle schools selected for this study have not been under state sanctions. Because variables cannot be separated from their context (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), the experiences of leaders under state sanctions differ from leaders with more freedom to make site-based resource decisions for their schools. State sanctions often require that schools adopt certain programs and resource allocations with limited, autonomous school-based leadership decision-making and also provide for greater fiscal resources not available to most schools and districts. Therefore, avoiding schools that are under state sanctions allowed for the potential of the findings to be more generalizable to schools in

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need of improvement but who have more freedom in decision making than schools under state sanctions.

Context. The context of each individual school site, as defined by the school's priorities, challenges, setting, demographics, decision-making timelines, and community and business resources, provided background for the study (Stake, 2010). Each one of the learning support components of Adelman and Taylor's improvement model (2008) inherently offered the consideration of a school's context in developing supports to student learning (Adelman and Taylor, 2008). Thus, with an instrumental case study of five high to mid-high poverty schools that have received accreditation, the criteria for an instrumental, multiple-case inquiry according to Stake (2006) were met: (1) Relevance on the focus of inquiry; (2) Diversity across contexts; (3) "Good opportunity to learn about complexity and contexts" (p. 23).

School Selection Procedures

I utilized a purposeful sample to "discover, understand, and gain insight" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) into school-leadership resource allocation in high to mid-high poverty schools. I selected five high to mid-high poverty middle schools that received accreditation according to the Virginia Standards of Accreditation. The schools studied were from three different school districts in Virginia. The purposeful sample was a comparison-focused sampling, allowing for comparison and contrast to unveil common themes (Patton, 2015). I based the individual school-site data on each site's principal's interview and the document review. I obtained general, background information for the school and district by examining the school and district's publicly-released profiles. I also obtained background information for this study about the district and school by examining their respective, available strategic plans and public-information sites.

Participant Selection, Permission, and Informed Consent and Procedures

Following all guidelines established by both the Western Institutional Review Board (WIRB) and the school districts in which each school is located, I began the collection of data by finding five high to mid-high poverty middle schools from three different school districts that have received accreditation under the new Virginia Standards of Accreditation guidelines. I emailed the letter found in Appendix A, requesting permission from each school's principal. Once each school site's principal decided to participate in the study, I provided the principal with Appendix B, which contained more explicit information about the study. I, then, scheduled a time for the interviews. Appendix C provides the script for the telephone and semi-structured interview. Appendix D provides the details about each learning support component, and it was provided during the semi-structured interview. I triangulated the data using both member checking and a document review. I provided each principal with coded transcripts on the instrumentation tool to determine whether I had accurately captured data, and to provide assurance to the participants who agreed to the study (Creswell & Miller, 2000). I gave participants the option to express concerns in writing or in person, and they were permitted to withdraw from the study at any time.

Assurance of Confidentiality

As an ethical researcher, I protected the confidentiality of participants (Patton, 2015). I used a pseudonym of a fruit for each school site and coded data accordingly. I maintained a key that links the actual names of those school sites to the pseudonyms and stored it separately from all other research. For example, if I utilized information from a unique community partnership as an example for one of the learning supports, I coded the partnership's name by the pseudonym. I stored all data and transcriptions on a password-protected computer in a locked

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and secured location. I retained written or printed copies of transcriptions and artifacts in a locked and secured filing cabinet. I kept recordings on a password-protected personal recording device and password-protected computer.

Research Ethics

In qualitative research, neutrality is not always easily managed and bias must be accepted and acknowledged. Thus, to maintain credibility, I remained aware of “selective perception, personal biases, and theoretical predispositions” (Patton, 2015, p. 58). Creswell and Miller (2000) illuminated a paradigm in qualitative study: the critical perspective. This includes the idea that “researchers should uncover the hidden assumptions about how narrative accounts are constructed, read, and interpreted” (p. 126).

As a result, I acknowledge that I am a long-time, public-school educator, who may be perceived as having a bias towards public education and a professional obligation to ensuring that the public-school system is positively represented. In addition, I have chaired school-improvement initiatives and efforts at both the middle and high school level for a sum of 10 years.

Understanding the importance of ethics and the need to report findings with objectivity and honesty (Resnik, 2015; Creswell & Miller, 2000), I isolated the study’s findings from my personal experiences and beliefs about intention and outcome data, limiting my interviews to the semi-structured interview protocol and not speaking to my own experiences. Based on extensive leadership and development of systems of supports in the schools I have led, I focused the research on schools in which I have not had any impact, collaboration, or training. I discuss the data-quality techniques later in the chapter.

Context for Instrumentation Tool

Section 4018 of Every Students Succeeds Act (ESSA) (2015) legislation includes the expectation that schools and districts receiving federal monies use portions of those funds to promote parent activities; coordinate school and community-based programs; provide school-based mental health services; and establish partnerships with community-based businesses and resources (Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2016). In the report from the National Summit on ESSA and Learning Supports held at UCLA in 2017, Adelman and Taylor claimed that schools and districts have deployed resources to address barriers to learning that are outside the school but have done so in a “much fragmented” and unorganized way. The following graphic illustrates the current work in many schools and divisions (Figure 3.1):

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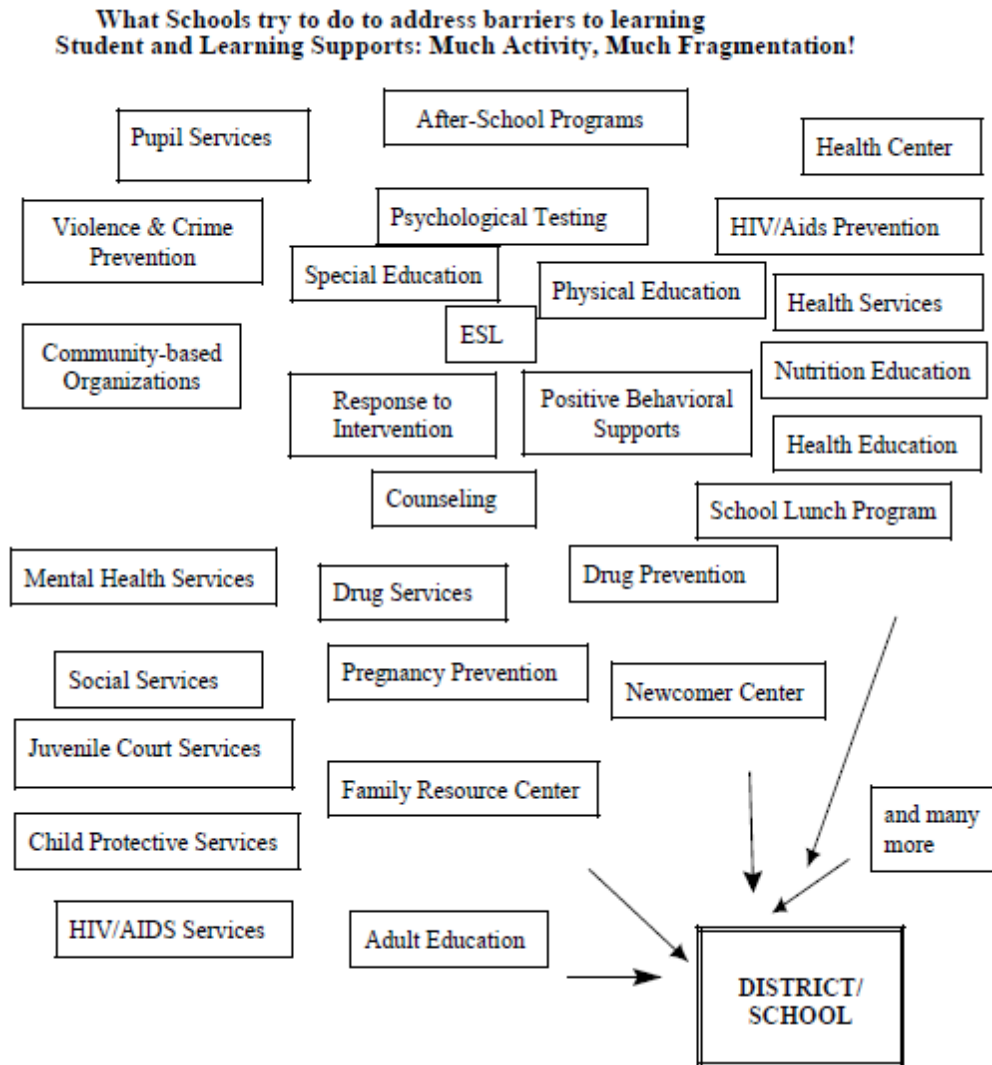


Figure 3.1 Fragmentation of Supports. From “ESSA, Equity of Opportunity and Addressing Barriers to Learning” by the Center for Mental Health in Schools, (2017).

They further claimed that research suggests that these fragmented structures have led to poor cost effectiveness, repetitive and unnecessary duplication of efforts, and a “counterproductive competition for sparse resources” (Center for Mental Health, 2017).

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In the same report, Adelman and Taylor (2017) asserted that their research identified six learning supports for leadership and infrastructure to plan for and address barriers to student learning. This is illustrated in Figure 3.2 (Center for Mental Health, 2017):

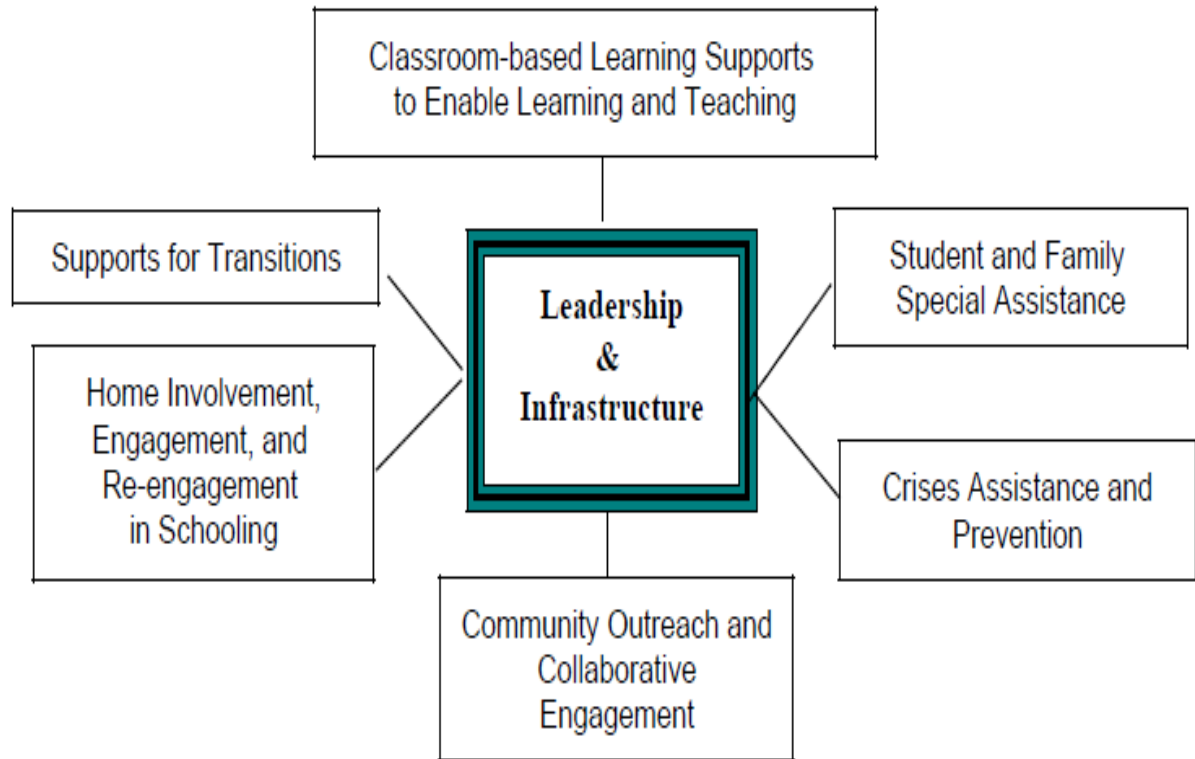


Figure 3.2. Six Learning Supports. From “ESSA, Equity of Opportunity and Addressing Barriers to Learning” by the Center for Mental Health in Schools, (2008).

This study focused on identifying principal-perceived barriers to student learning and how resources were allocated to overcome those barriers. Since the leadership in the schools studied did not *knowingly* implement the Adelman and Taylor (2008) school-improvement model, I qualified each school site’s resource allocation based on where it would most appropriately match the learning supports illustrated in Figure 3.2: Classroom-based learning supports; supports for transitions; home involvement, engagement, and re-engagement in schooling;

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community outreach and collaborative engagement; crisis assistance and prevention; student and family assistance. I included in my data collection tool an “other” category to qualify supports that might not appropriately fit into any of the learning supports. Later in this chapter, I provided a table that presents examples of what resources and allocations would qualify in each learning-support component, per Adelman and Taylor’s research (2008). A structured and comprehensive report such as this study provides, qualifying resource allocation according to the Adelman and Taylor improvement model, had yet to be created (Adelman & Taylor, 2014; Center for Mental Health, 2017).

Adelman and Taylor presented a prototype for schools and divisions to organize and evaluate their current resources, map existing conditions, and analyze areas of critical need to redeploy and reallocate resources accordingly (Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2017).

Figure 3.3 is the prototype illustrated:

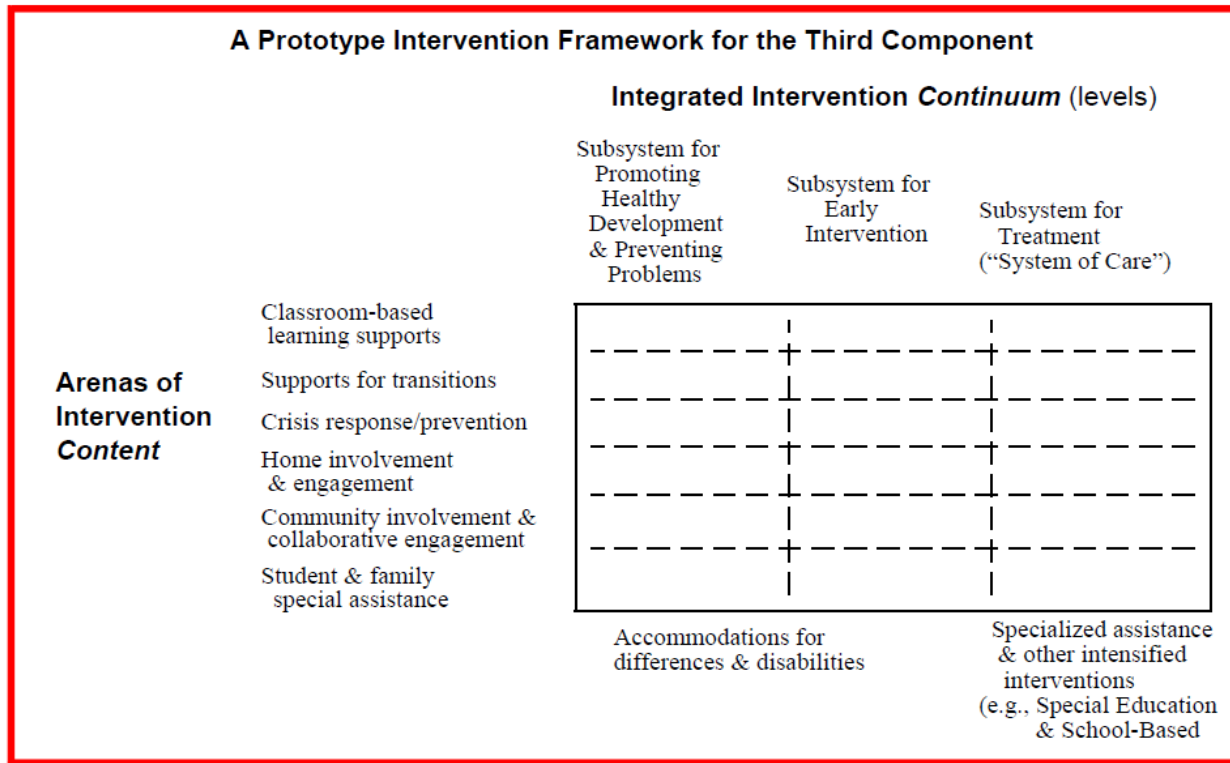


Figure 3.3 Prototype Intervention Framework. Adelman and Taylor (2008). The instrumentation tool, Table 3.1, was based on this prototype.

For the instrumentation tool, I used an adapted version (Table 3.1) of the prototype presented above in Figure 3.3 during the study. For the data collected from interviews and the documents review, I qualified each school principal’s intentional and unique resource allocations into each of the six components. Sometimes, an intervention qualified into more than one learning component.

I found common themes of resource allocation for each of the six categories: classroom-based learning supports; supports for transitions; crisis response and prevention; home involvement and engagement; community involvement and collaborative engagement; and student and family assistance. I also included a category labeled “other” for allocations that did not fit any of the six categories. I did not include in my research findings any school resource

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allocation that was not site based. This might include normal district-wide staffing allocations (number of teachers, office assistants, administrators, custodians, etc.), and uniform, district-wide textbooks and learning materials. I described if a school does something differently with its standard allocation (i.e. traded teacher staffing and textbook funds). Thus, I presented the data only for those *unique* school principal-resource allocations that supported barriers to learning for both individual school sites and holistically analyzed for common themes.

Instrumentation Tool

I recorded the interviews on two devices and maintained copies of each document reviewed to qualify learning supports using the chart in Table 3.1:

Table 3.1

Instrumentation Tool. Adapted from “Not Another Special Initiative”. Every Child Journal. (2014). Every Child Journal.

| | <i>Early development and prevention techniques</i> | <i>Early intervention techniques</i> | <i>Intervention and care</i> |
|--|--|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <i>In classroom</i> | | | |
| <i>Support Transitions (particularly into the middle school transitions)</i> | | | |
| <i>Increase home involvement and engagement</i> | | | |
| <i>Respond to, where feasible, prevent school and personal crises and traumatic events</i> | | | |
| <i>Increase community involvement, engagement, and support</i> | | | |
| <i>Facilitate student and family access to effective services and special assistance</i> | | | |
| <i>Other (Allocation that cannot be qualified according to the arenas)</i> | | | |

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I have included the interview protocol that I used in Appendix C. I completed the initial interview (Appendix C, part 1) by phone, carefully following the script. If any data were presented that might be used in the study, I asked for the principal to be prepared to speak to that during the recorded interview (Appendix C, part 2). Each principal participated in a follow-up email exchange to review the resource qualifications that I coded according to the Adelman and Taylor improvement model (2008).

Data Collection and Analysis

Following the approval from the Western Institutional Review Board (WIRB), I contacted the selected school sites to request permission from the school's principal to study his/her school (Appendix A). Once permission was granted, I developed a schedule for interviewing and reviewing school documents gathered during the second interview (Appendix B and C). There were two separate interviews with the principal at each school site, one, via phone, introduced the framework and allowed for questions, and the other was a formal, in-person, semi-structured interview. Appendix C provides details about both visits. A semi-structured interview allowed for clarifying questions and further elaboration when necessary.

Data collection: interview and member checking. Since each of the five schools that were studied did not directly and intentionally utilize and plan for the Adelman and Taylor (2008) improvement model, a semi-structured interview protocol was used (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Though the interview was guided by a list of questions (Appendix C), I clarified details to prompt thinking in each of the enabling components (Appendix D). I prompted the participants when necessary to further elaborate on specific programs or areas of intervention, remediation, or enrichment. Since the principals articulated why they had allocated resources

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throughout their respective semi-structured interview, I found that the question about what prompted leadership decision making was not necessary.

I recorded and transcribed the interviews according to the learning supports. Utilizing the transcripts from each interview, the available innovation and/or improvement plan, the school's master and daily schedule, yearly calendar, professional learning, staffing allocations, website and communication, I qualified learning supports using the instrumentation tool. I then emailed with each participant the data collected for each site on the completed instrumentation tool to ensure that I accurately represented the leadership resourcing at his or her school.

Utilizing Adelman and Taylor's Enabling Components (2008) as the framework for classifying resource allocation, I used the principal interviews as the primary source of data for the study. I then conducted a review of the following documents when available: (1) school improvement plan; (2) available communication (only those disclosed by site principal or in open forums such as newsletters, website, emails, etc.); (3) master calendars and daily schedules; (4) and professional learning plans, to determine what, if any, creative staffing allocations, innovative resources, communication, productive community partnerships, and outreach programs each school site implemented.

Analysis. I compared the data that emerged from the interviews with the data and prevalent themes from the document review. Either through email, the web, or during the school site visit, I collected school improvement planning information, calendar and bell schedules, staffing allocations/master scheduling information, professional learning plans, and any other communication the school's principal wanted to share with me. This constant, comparative method (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) allowed for common and emerging data and patterns among

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the interview and document review sources to be qualified into the learning supports on the instrumentation tool.

Case-study write-ups. I reported the results in a manner that was information rich. According to Patton (2015), information rich reporting allows for an in depth understanding of the causes and outcomes of the site-principal's decision making (p. 53). Each school's information was written up in the following format, and then specific details and themes were qualified into the categories on the instrumentation tool, Table 3.1, previously illustrated:

All

- I. Background on district
 - a. Number of schools
 - b. Number of students in district
 - c. District philosophy/support for schools in need of additional resources
 - d. State philosophy/support for schools in need of additional resources
 - e. Per pupil expenditure
 - f. Demographics of district

Each School Site

- II. Background on school
 - a. Suburban
 - b. Number of students in school
 - c. Demographics of school
 - d. Length of school leadership's tenure
 - e. Principal leadership philosophy and areas of focus
- III. Test scores

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- a. Longitudinal Reading and Math SOL (new SOA considers Writing as a combined rate)
- b. Important information to note about any anomalies
- IV. School improvement and innovation overview
- V. Enabling components chart with narrative information
 - a. Enhanced classroom-based approaches to learning
 - b. Support for transitions
 - c. Crisis assistance and prevention
 - d. Increased home involvement
 - e. Increased community outreach
 - f. Facilitating student and family access to effective services and special assistance
 - g. Other

All

- VI. Enabling components-Summary
 - a. Cross-school comparison

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Examples of learning supports. Table 3.2 below expounds upon what might be qualified in each learning support:

Table 3.2

Learning Support Examples

Adapted from Exhibit 1 of "School Improvement Planning: What's Missing," (p. 5-6). (2008).

| Learning Support | Examples |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Classroom-Based Approaches | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening the classroom door to bring available supports in • Redesigning classroom approaches to enhance teacher capability to prevent and handle problems and reduce need for out of class referrals • Enhancing and personalizing professional development • Curricular enrichment and adjunct programs • Classroom and school-wide approaches used to create and maintain a caring and supportive climate |
| Crisis Assistance and Prevention | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring immediate assistance in emergencies so students can resume learning • Providing follow-up care as necessary • Forming a school-focused Crisis Team to formulate a response plan and take leadership for developing prevention programs • Mobilizing staff, students, and families to anticipate response plans and recovery efforts • Creating a caring and safe learning environment • Working with neighborhood schools and community to integrate planning for response and prevention • Capacity building to enhance crisis response and prevention |
| Support for Transitions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcoming & social support programs for newcomers • Daily transition programs |

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- Articulation programs
 - Summer or intersession programs
 - School-to-career/higher education
 - Broad involvement of stakeholders in planning for transitions
 - Capacity building to enhance transition programs and activities
- Home Involvement in Schooling
- Addressing specific support and learning needs of family
 - Improving mechanisms for communication and connecting school and home
 - Involving homes in student decision making
 - Enhancing home support for learning and development
 - Recruiting families to strengthen school and community
 - Capacity building to enhance home involvement
- Community Outreach for Involvement and Support
- Planning and implementing outreach to recruit a wide range of community resources
 - Systems to recruit, screen, prepare, and maintain community resource involvement
 - Reaching out to students and families who don't come to school regularly – including truants and dropouts
 - Connecting school and community efforts to promote child and youth development and a sense of community
 - Capacity building to enhance community involvement and support
- Student and Family Assistance
- Providing extra support as soon as a need is recognized and doing so in the least disruptive ways
 - Timely referral interventions for students and families with problems based on response to extra support
-

- Enhancing access to direct interventions for health, mental health, and economic assistance
 - Care monitoring, management, information sharing, and follow-up assessments to coordinate individual interventions and check whether referrals and services are adequate and effective
 - Mechanisms for resource coordination and integration to avoid duplication, fill gaps, garner economies of scale, and enhance effectiveness
 - Enhancing stakeholder awareness of programs and services
 - Capacity building to enhance student and family assistance systems, programs, and services
-

As noted previously, to prevent identification of a specific school, I assigned a pseudonym of a fruit to each school for reporting purposes only. Also, I estimated school enrollment to the nearest 50 to further hinder identification of specific schools or locations.

Data Quality Procedures

Creswell and Miller (2000) stated that the validity in qualitative research comes, not from the data directly, but from what can be inferred from the findings of the data. Because qualitative research can never be completely objective, it is important to incorporate validity procedures (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Creswell and Miller (2000), also suggested that there are nine well-known methods for establishing validity, and of the nine, I utilized these six: member checking; triangulation; disconfirming evidence; researcher reflexivity; thick and rich description; and peer review.

Trustworthiness. In Table 3.3, I qualify each one of the six validity procedures that I used according to the framework of trustworthiness. It is essential to establishing rigor in this study (Amankwaa, 2016).

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Table 3.3

Trustworthiness. Adapted from "Creating Protocols for Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research," Journal of Cultural Diversity, (2016).

| Criteria | Technique |
|-----------------|---|
| Credibility | Triangulation; member checking; disconfirming evidence |
| Transferability | Thick, rich description, reflexivity |
| Confirmability | Triangulation, reflexivity (journal of decision making) |
| Dependability | Peer debriefing |

Credibility. Credibility is confidence that there is truth to the study (Amankwaa, 2016). I established credibility through member checking, triangulation, and disconfirming evidence. Member checking is the verification from the individual school sites that the information, as presented, is an accurate representation of the data (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Member checking was achieved by recording each interview, qualifying the sum of each school's interview and document review findings according to the instrumentation tool employed, and then working with each individual school site to ensure that the data representation was accurate. I used different data sources to achieve triangulation for trustworthy findings, reliability and validity (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Triangulation is a method of seeking convergence or similarities among multiple data sources to uncover themes or commonalities (Creswell & Miller, 2000). It is a powerful strategy to increase credibility because it provides proof that a study's finding is an anomaly (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I interviewed each school site's principal. To triangulate the findings, I examined the master schedule and available staffing allocations, daily schedule, yearly calendar, the school's innovation and improvement plan when available, the professional learning plan for

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the school, website, and any available school-wide and community communication and newsletters. I selected these documents since each one is the product of site-based decisions, under the purview of the school's leadership to create and implement.

Creswell and Miller (2000) outlined two lenses by which a researcher can establish validity: the researcher's lens, and the participants' lens. I employed the use of the participants' lens in the study. The principal reviewed the findings that were qualified on the instrumentation tool and approved them for his or her school. Thus, validity was further established as it accurately represented the perceived reality of the senior leadership at each school site (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Any disconfirming, or negative evidence, was also identified (Creswell & Miller, 2000). This included the identification of innovations that might align with the "other" category or innovations/allocations that were not successful but align with the six learning supports presented. The challenge in this study was the use of questioning around the articulated conceptual framework as it might have lent itself to "the proclivity to find confirming rather than disconfirming evidence" (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Using the critical-aspects approach, or researcher reflexivity, helped to bring to light the biases in which I may have and am aware. I utilized a reflexive journal that outlined critical decisions that were made when qualifying data, and I electronically mailed any specific questions that I had about data or resource allocations to each school site's principal during the coding stage of the study. This written and electronic record allowed for the influences and shifts in decision making to be visible and acknowledged (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Transferability. Transferability is showing that the findings have applicability in other contexts (Amankwaaa, 2016). Earlier in the chapter, I referred to "generalizability" which can be

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used interchangeably with transferability. The use of thick, rich description in the case-study write ups served as a strategy to ensure external validity, or in this case, transferability to other school settings in other areas (Amankwaa, 2016). Since it is the responsibility of the reader to determine whether the findings can be transferred to his or her situation or context, it then is the responsibility of the researcher to provide enough detail to paint a picture that the readers are or might be experiencing (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Amankwaa, 2016).

Confirmability. Confirmability is how neutral the findings are, or how well the findings are shaped by the respondents and not of the researcher (Amankwaa, 2016). Justification of confirmability in this study was present in the credibility and transferability portion of this chapter. Through triangulation, member checking, and the reflexive journal, I involved the respondents in the sum of the findings from the individual-site interviews and document review.

Dependability. Dependability is how consistent the findings are (Amankwaa, 2016). I established dependability by consulting with a peer and debriefing my study's findings with her. By doing so, my peer was able to challenge the methods, findings, and interpretations throughout the duration of the study, playing the devil's advocate and serving as a close collaborator (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Summary

This chapter provided an explanation of the methodology used in this study, its limitations, and my responsibility as an ethical researcher. By using a qualitative, multiple case-study methodology, rich detail, and a purposeful sample, I presented background information and then reported how school leaders have both identified barriers to learning, and then allocated school resources to support and potentially overcome those barriers. Utilizing the Adelman and Taylor improvement model (2008), I created a synthesis of learning or enabling

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supports from the five high to mid-high poverty school sites selected. I identified the principal-perceived barriers to student learning, and then compared, analyzed, and thematically qualified principal-resource allocation that addressed those barriers.

Chapter 4

Results

The foreword paralleled the similarities between two memoirs: **The Other Wes Moore** and **Hillbilly Elegy**. It provided insight into the lives of two men relatively the same age, one from rural Appalachia and one from inner-city Baltimore. Both the authors, J.D. Vance and Wes Moore, left their communities and became successful. They did so by learning self-discipline, building resilience, and being given opportunities that they both believed they would not have had if they had remained. On the most primary level, both memoirs were about the will and drive of the human spirit to overcome obstacles. Both memoirs also paint a vivid picture of the fate and hopelessness of the multitude of people who were not able to successfully navigate their circumstances and transcend their environments to find success. Poignant examples like these inspired this study.

This chapter contains the findings of this study, derived from the data collected from the principal interviews and the review of principal-provided document review from all five mid-high to high poverty middle schools. I wrote up each school-site's analysis according to the case-study, write-up structure articulated in Chapter Three. In order to establish a clear understanding of each school site and its available resources, as well as a background understanding of each principal's leadership philosophy, I organized Chapter Four as follows: Research Questions; School Demographic Comparative Data for the Five Schools; Individual School Site and District Data and Information; and Data for Research Questions (reported in both table and narrative form [when applicable]). The chapter ends with a summary of the data presented here.

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Research Questions

The research questions were:

In high to mid-high poverty accredited, Virginia middle schools...

1. What barriers to student learning/student achievement success have individual principals identified?
2. How have principals distributed or allocated resources that address barriers to student learning?
3. Why did the principals decide to create and distribute unique resources and allocations to address these barriers?
4. Based on the enabling components of the Adelman and Taylor framework (2007, 2008, 2009, 2011), what common themes existed among accredited schools about the following?
 - A. Enhanced classroom-based approaches to learning
 - B. Support for transitions
 - C. Crisis assistance and prevention
 - D. Increased home involvement
 - E. Increased community outreach
 - F. Facilitating student and family access to effective services and special assistance
 - G. Other

School Demographic Comparative Data for the Five Schools

The criteria for the sample selection was high to mid-high poverty Virginia middle schools that received accreditation based on the Virginia Standards of Accreditation. Recently revised, the Standards of Accreditation for middle schools include overall proficiency pass rates

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in English, Mathematics, and Science; achievement gap rates in English and Mathematics; and chronic absenteeism. The state defines chronic absenteeism as missing 10% or more of school, regardless of the reason (VDOE). Schools are granted accreditation based on the level of performance for each indicator (see operational definitions).

The sample included a rural school and four suburban schools from three districts, all located in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Four of the five middle schools included grades 6-8, with the remaining middle school only serving grades 7-8. Though the only qualifying indicators for study participation were poverty level and accreditation, four of the selected five schools also shared the commonality of Hispanic students representing the largest racial/ethnic group in the school, with (nearly) half or more of their students labeled as English Language Learners. All schools in the study received additional federal assistance. Table 4.1 displays background information for each of the five schools.

Table 4.1

Background Information for Five Schools

| School | Suburban/ Urban/Rural | Per Pupil Expenditure | Length of Principal's Tenure |
|------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Lemon | Rural | \$10,307 | 3 |
| Lime | Suburban | \$11,212 | 1 (AP previously) |
| Orange | Suburban | \$14,399 | 3 |
| Strawberry | Suburban | \$14,399 | 3 |
| Apple | Suburban | \$14,399 | 4 |

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Tables 4.2 and 4.3 present demographic information by ethnicity and at-risk categories.

Table 4.2

Ethnicity Information for Five Schools

| School | Enrollment | %White | % Native | %Asian | % Black | % Hispanic |
|------------|------------|--------|----------|--------|---------|------------|
| Lemon | 350 | 77.9% | .3% | .5% | 3.2% | 14.9% |
| Lime | 850 | 15.6% | N/A | 5.5% | 9.6% | 63.5% |
| Orange | 1000 | 16.1% | .3% | 4.3% | 27.1% | 47.7% |
| Strawberry | 950 | 16.2% | .3% | 20.1% | 20.1% | 41.2% |
| Apple | 1900 | 23.5% | .2% | 23.5% | 11.4% | 51.1% |

Table 4.3

Demographics by At-Risk Category for the Five Schools

| School | Enrollment | % English Language Learners | % Chronic Absenteeism | % Free and Reduced Lunch | % Special Education |
|------------|------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| Lemon | 350 | 11.8% | 17.2% | 51.5% | 14.9% |
| Lime | 850 | 56.7% | 16% | 56.7% | 12.8% |
| Orange | 1000 | 49.8% | 14.3% | 64.4% | 18.3% |
| Strawberry | 950 | 65.7% | 9.1% | 64.4% | 19.4% |
| Apple | 1900 | 65.5% | 11% | 68.5% | 16.1% |

Individual School-Site and District Data Information

Part two is organized by individual school sites. First, it provides the district information for each school site, and then it provides the demographic profiles and performance data, leadership philosophy, and school-improvement efforts.

Lemon School

District description. Lemon School's district has nine comprehensive schools and two specialty schools. There are three elementary schools, three middle schools, and three high schools. The district's "specialty" high schools are: a governor's school and a technical school. It serves approximately 6,000 students in grades Pre-K-12.

Lemon School's district just released a six-year strategic plan that outlines five priorities: a culture of respect and positivity; developing students' passions; community engagement; valued staff; and, updated, future-ready facilities. Highlights from their plan include the development of college and career-work experiences, social-emotional learning and trauma-informed care. The district is focused on systematic implementation of the "five C's": collaboration, creativity, communication, critical thinking, and civics. The district's superintendent stresses the importance of community involvement and business partnerships as paramount to the success of its schools.

As of fiscal year, 2016, Lemon School district's per pupil expenditure was \$10,307. With 51.4% received from the state; 6.1% from the federal government; and 42.5% provided from the local government comparable to the state's averages of 52%; 7%; and 41.1% respectively. The district spends 67.6 % of its budget on instruction and 32.4% of its budget is allocated for other division expenditures. The discipline data for Lemon School's district identify

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disproportionality with regards to short and long-term suspensions for Black and Hispanic students.

Tables 4.4 and 4.5 provide demographic information for Lemon School's district.

Table 4.4

Demographics Lemon School District by Race and Ethnicity

| Race and Ethnicity | Membership Percentage |
|--|-----------------------|
| White | 77.9% |
| Hispanic | 14.9% |
| Black | 3.2% |
| Asian | 0.5% |
| American Indian/Alaskan Native | 0.3% |
| Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander | 0.0% |
| 2 or more races | 3.3% |

Table 4.5

Demographics Lemon School's District by Subgroup Categories

| Subgroup | Membership Percentage |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Special Education | 13.5% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | 44.8% |
| English Learners | 8.8% |

Lemon School site information. Lemon School serves 350 students in grades 6-8.

Closely aligning with its district's membership percentage, Lemon School serves 79.1% White

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students; 17.1% Hispanic students; 0.8% Black students; 2.8% Two or more races; and 0.3% Asian students. Higher than the district, Lemon School's economically disadvantaged students' percentage is 51.5% and English Learners percentage is 11.8%, while the special education percentage is 14.9%.

The interview of Lemon School's former principal revealed a "whatever it takes" attitude. When the district approached him with the opportunity to lead Lemon School in 2015, the school was already in its second year of state sanctions. "If I was going to reset the culture, if I was gonna get us out of school improvement and stay true to the process, I had to be there. Nobody could work harder than me." The principal led the school with the simple belief: Do right by kids. The Principal of Lemon School stressed that because of the size of his school, he was able to more easily connect with the staff and students. It was not uncommon for him to go to a student's home or pick up students who did not have transportation. He would also drive students in need to the Wellness Center, housed on the campus of the elementary, middle and high school.

Lemon School's discipline data displays some anomalies. Percentage-wise, its Hispanic students nearly doubled their overall school percentage in short-term suspensions, while White students composed 100% of the representation for long-term suspensions and expulsions.

Lemon School accreditation. Lemon School is fully accredited, Level 1 in all school quality indicators. Tables 4.6 and 4.7 shows English and Mathematics Standards of Learning proficiency rates for Lemon School over the past five years.

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Table 4.6

Lemon School English Standards of Learning Proficient and Pass Advanced Combined Rate by Subgroup; Overall Pass Rate 75% (2018)

| Group | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|----------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Black | ** | ** | ** | ** | ** |
| White | 67 | 77 | 71 | 73 | 76 |
| Asian | ** | ** | ** | ** | ** |
| Hispanic | 44 | 72 | 71 | 67 | 74 |
| Students with Disabilities | 33 | 61 | 49 | 51 | 62* |
| Economically Disadvantaged | 58 | 68 | 65 | 64 | 67* |
| English Learners | 26 | 59 | 60 | 61 | 86 |

*Safe Harbor; **Sample not large enough

Table 4.7

Lemon School Mathematics Standards of Learning Proficient and Pass Advanced Combined Rate by Subgroup; Overall Pass Rate 78% (2018)

| Group | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|----------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Black | ** | ** | ** | ** | ** |
| White | 76 | 86 | 85 | 84 | 79 |
| Asian | ** | ** | ** | ** | ** |
| Hispanic | 56 | 89 | 84 | 76 | 66 |
| Students with Disabilities | 48 | 76 | 71 | 63 | 66 |
| Economically Disadvantaged | 65 | 83 | 79 | 79 | 70 |
| English Learners | 33 | 86 | 82 | 62 | 86 |

**Sample not large enough

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Lemon School improvement overview. Lemon School developed its improvement plan from the state's improvement template. It focused its improvement efforts on identifying strengths and weaknesses within core instruction and developing strategies to address student-learning needs. Because of the measurable deficits among the students and the school's limited resources, the principal looked to implement strategies and spend school funds that would provide the "most bang for your buck." In his first year, he identified writing as an area of focus, so the school developed a writing portfolio. The second year, the teachers focused on non-fiction strategies. In his third year, the school staff focused on assessment and rigor.

Lime School

District description. Lime School's district has four schools: 2 elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. The district serves approximately 3,700 students in grades Pre-K-12. Lime School's district prides itself on its diverse community. Its mission and beliefs include a commitment to critical and creative thinking, as well as collaboration and communication. The district committed to integrating and optimizing technology use with a K-12, 1:1 computer initiative. Aligning with the Profile of the Virginia graduate, Lime School's district strives to expand opportunities for its students through a community-based approach. Its strategic initiatives include community-engagement programs, expansion of career exploration, and civic readiness programs.

As of fiscal year, 2016, Lime School district's per pupil expenditure was \$11,212, with 60% received from the state, 6.3% from the federal government, and 33.8% from the local government, meaning it gets more funds from the state than the typical district. The district spends 71.7 % of its budget on instruction and allocates 28.3% of its budget for other division expenditures. Lime School's district discipline data closely aligns to their membership

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percentages in short-term suspension rates. Tables 4.8 and 4.9 provide race, ethnicity, and subgroup demographics for Lime School's district.

Table 4.8

Demographics Lime School District by Race and Ethnicity

| Race and Ethnicity | Membership Percentage |
|--|-----------------------|
| White | 16% |
| Hispanic | 63.9% |
| Black | 8.8% |
| Asian | 5.8% |
| American Indian/Alaskan Native | 0.1% |
| Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander | 0.1% |
| 2 or more races | 5.4% |

Table 4.9

Demographics Lime School District by Subgroup Categories

| Subgroup | Membership Percentage |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Special Education | 12.3% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | 51.9% |
| English Learners | 48.9% |

Lime School site information. Lime School is a suburban middle school, educating 850 students in grades 6-8. Closely aligning with its small district's membership percentage, Lime School serves 63.5% Hispanic students; 15.6% White students; 9.6% Black students; 5.8% Two

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or more races; and 5.5% Asian students. Lime School's economically-disadvantaged percentage of 56.7% and its English Learners percentage of 54.6% slightly exceeds the comparable percentages of its district. The special education percentage is 12.8% at Lime School. Lime School's principal began his tenure in July. However, he transferred from another leadership position within the Lime School District. Because of the size of the district, central-office administrators and school-based administrators collaboratively develop the leadership philosophy, allocations of staffing, and additional resources for all school sites. This approach ensures consistency in expectations each school year. Therefore, Lime School's current principal, as a leader in the district, has been involved in the professional learning, staffing, and resource-allocation discussions of Lime School for all three years of his tenure.

Lime School's principal leads with innovation, equity, and the belief in a caring and charismatic learning environment. The principal mainly allocates his resources with an "eye on equity." The principal empowers teachers to ask difficult and challenging questions of each other and believes that "no idea is a bad idea." Lime School's principal is proud of his school, the district, and their current successful outcomes for their students. He believes that, given the current demographic makeup and high-needs of the student body, the district outperforms expectations.

Lime School's discipline data contains some anomalies. Percentage-wise, its Hispanic and White short-term suspension rates exhibit disproportionality, showing elevated percentages over racial-enrollment percentages for both subgroups.

Lime School accreditation. Lime School is fully accredited, Level 1 in all school quality indicators. Tables 4.10 and 4.11 provide Standards of Learning proficiency rates for Lime School.

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Table 4.10

Lime School English Standards of Learning Proficient and Pass Advanced Combined Rate by Subgroup; Overall Pass Rate 86% (2018)

| Group | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|----------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Black | 77 | 84 | 82 | 80 | 79 |
| White | 75 | 88 | 88 | 84 | 89 |
| Asian | 88 | 94 | 91 | 95 | 96 |
| Hispanic | 64 | 82 | 80 | 80 | 86 |
| Students with Disabilities | 30 | 59 | 45 | 53 | 59* |
| Economically Disadvantaged | 63 | 79 | 78 | 80 | 83 |
| English Learners | 48 | 77 | 75 | 87 | 95 |

*Safe Harbor

Table 4.11

Lime School Mathematics Standards of Learning Proficient and Pass Advanced Combined Rate by Subgroup; Overall Pass Rate 93% (2018)

| Group | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|----------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Black | 89 | 98 | 93 | 89 | 90 |
| White | 86 | 98 | 96 | 94 | 95 |
| Asian | 96 | 98 | 98 | 100 | 98 |
| Hispanic | 87 | 95 | 92 | 95 | 93 |
| Students with Disabilities | 62 | 80 | 73 | 79 | 80 |
| Economically Disadvantaged | 85 | 96 | 92 | 94 | 93 |
| English Learners | 84 | 93 | 88 | 97 | 96 |

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Lime School improvement and innovation overview. Lime School's improvement efforts align to the district's five-year strategic plan. As part of the expectation from the superintendent, all schools in the district work towards the same goals. Focus areas include refining career exploration units, 1:1 learning, and the design of a comprehensive program that incorporates the 5 C's.

Orange School, Strawberry School, and Apple School

District description. Orange, Strawberry, and Apple Schools are all part of the same large, suburban school district. The district has 198 schools and centers, with students speaking over 200 languages. The district has 141 elementary schools, 23 middle schools, 21 high schools, 3 secondary schools, 3 alternative high schools, 9 special-education centers, 12 interagency alternative schools, and one magnet high school. It serves approximately 188,000 students in grades Pre-K-12.

The district's strategic plan focuses on four priorities: student success; caring culture; premier workforce; and resource stewardship. Measurements for success among its schools include equitable advanced and honors enrollment percentages among subgroups, social-emotional well-being, attendance, and community partnerships. The district recently established a centralized Office of School Support, focused on supporting schools with extraordinary challenges in accreditation.

As of fiscal year, 2016, the district's per pupil expenditure was \$14,399 with 22.5% received from the state, 4.4% from the federal government, and 73.1% from the local government. Comparable to other districts in the state, this district received less funding from the state and federal government than the average. The district spends 68% of its budget on instruction and 32% of its budget on other division expenditures. The discipline data identifies

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that the district's Black short-term suspension percentages nearly tripled their subgroup overall representation, while Hispanic short-term suspensions were 1.5 times their subgroup representation. For long-term suspensions, Black and Hispanic percentages nearly doubled their overall subgroup representation. For expulsions, the Black and Hispanic subgroups equally represented 80% of the overall total. Tables 4.12 and 4.13 provide demographic data for the district:

Table 4.12

Demographics Orange, Strawberry, and Apple School District by Race and Ethnicity

| Race and Ethnicity | Membership Percentage |
|--|-----------------------|
| White | 38.5% |
| Hispanic | 25.9% |
| Black | 10% |
| Asian | 19.6% |
| American Indian/Alaskan Native | 0.2% |
| Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander | 0.1% |
| 2 or more races | 5.5% |

Table 4.13

Demographics Orange, Strawberry, and Apple School District by Subgroup Categories

| Subgroup | Membership Percentage |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Special Education | 14.5% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | 31.4% |
| English Learners | 29.6% |

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Orange School site information. Orange School is a suburban middle school, serving 1000 students in grades 7-8. Varying from the district's profile, Orange School is 47.7% Hispanic; 27.1% Black; 16.1% White; 4.3% Asian; 4%; 0.5% Native Hawaiian; and 0.3% American Indian. Orange School's student demographics differ substantially from those of the district, with 64.4% economically disadvantaged students, 49.8% English Learners, and 18.3% of the students receiving special-education services.

The interview with the principal of Orange School unveiled unique history. In a rather large, suburban district, Orange School is an "island school." This means that none of the students from the surrounding neighborhoods attend Orange School, so students are all bussed to there. The principal suspects the attendance zones arose largely due to social engineering to shift the "dynamics" in that area of the district. Orange School's principal has been an administrator for four years, two as an assistant principal at Orange School and two as the principal. He has been in education for twenty-five years, teaching at the high-school level and serving as a high-level central-office administrator. His experiences in teaching range from some of the most affluent to most underserved communities in this large, suburban district.

The principal of Orange School identified these challenges: academic rigor from feeder schools; interrupted education; poverty; food insecurity, which is likely the result of poverty; transiency from nearby, competing lower-income housing units that offer special discounts for families who move into them; mental health challenges that are likely the result of trauma; and the impact of deployments and the military lifestyle on military-connected students. He believes in the power of relationship building and offering equitable experiences for his students. When he became an administrator at Orange, the enrollment into the arts programs was at an all-time low. He worked to reinvigorate these programs, believing that Orange's students should be

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given the same experiences as other middle-school students. He believes that one of his most important responsibilities involves putting the “right people” into positions of influence for his students. He hired all his administrative team, his instructional coaches, his community resource position (discussed later), and at least twenty-five of his instructional staff of eighty.

The district classifies Orange School as “intensive” under its improvement ratings, meaning Orange School receives the highest level of support. The district provides extra resources to intensive schools: funding of approximately \$30,000 for professional development and extra planning days, an instructional coach, and dedicated support from the district’s office. The support includes education specialists in the areas of data, math, collaborative teaming, special education, and English Language who work intensively with Orange School’s staff.

The principal believes that the district’s resources provide an “amazing support.” He gives free access to the school to all the district’s support personnel, allowing for them to assist his teachers and staff at any time. He believes their work to be a partnership. Orange School became accredited with warning when the principal first began and is fully accredited now.

Orange School’s discipline data identifies some anomalies. In 2018, its Hispanic and Black short-term suspension percentages were slightly higher than the overall subgroup representation. Orange School’s long-term suspension percentages for Hispanic students were smaller than their subgroup percentage while their Black long-term suspension percentages more than doubled their subgroup representation.

Orange School accreditation. Orange School is fully accredited, Level 1 in all school quality indicators. Tables 4.14 and 4.15 provide standardized testing information for the last five years:

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Table 4.14

Orange School English Standards of Learning Proficient and Pass Advanced Combined Rate by Subgroup; Overall Pass Rate 78% (2018)

| Group | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|----------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Black | 59 | 70 | 70 | 68 | 72 |
| White | 74 | 89 | 90 | 89 | 84 |
| Asian | 71 | 86 | 89 | 90 | 93 |
| Hispanic | 58 | 76 | 80 | 74 | 77 |
| Students with Disabilities | 28 | 55 | 50 | 61 | 58 |
| Economically Disadvantaged | 56 | 72 | 74 | 71 | 73 |
| English Learners | 41 | 77 | 75 | 86 | 90 |

Table 4.15

Orange School Mathematics Standards of Learning Proficient and Pass Advanced Combined Rate by Subgroup; Overall Pass Rate 75% (2018)

| Group | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|----------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Black | 58 | 74 | 63 | 68 | 70 |
| White | 79 | 89 | 82 | 87 | 82 |
| Asian | 82 | 85 | 86 | 91 | 93 |
| Hispanic | 64 | 79 | 67 | 70 | 73 |
| Students with Disabilities | 34 | 55 | 35 | 51 | 52 |
| Economically Disadvantaged | 62 | 74 | 62 | 69 | 72 |
| English Learners | 52 | 74 | 61 | 77 | 83 |

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Orange School improvement and innovation overview. Orange School’s improvement plan focuses on writing across the curriculum, particularly complete-sentence writing. The leadership team is committed to supporting and monitoring the implementation of writing in its classrooms. A second focus area is on engagement/teaching strategies like the LEARN model: **L**ink to background knowledge; **E**ngage and explain; **A**ctive learning; **R**eflection; **N**ext steps. Cris Tovani, a well-known specialist in the field of disciplinary literacy, created a framework for engagement utilized in the school-improvement planning for Orange school. AVID, a program designed to empower first-generation college students with the study and organizational skills needed for success, is also found in the school-improvement planning for all students at Orange School. Orange School also focuses on International Baccalaureate (IB) professional-learning opportunities and teacher collaboration.

Strawberry School site information. Strawberry School is a suburban middle school, serving 950 students in grades 6-8. Different from the district’s membership percentage, Strawberry School serves 16.2% White students; 41.2% Hispanic students; 20.4% Black students; 1.8% students with two or more races; and 20.1% Asian students. Strawberry School’s student demographics differ substantially from those of the district, with 64.4% economically disadvantaged students, 65.7% English Learners, and 19.4% of the students receiving special-education services.

Strawberry School’s discipline data showed an anomaly. In 2018, Black students were disproportionately short-term suspended at almost twice their subgroup ethnicity representation percentage (21.4% to 42.2% respectively).

Strawberry School’s principal has served in a variety of educational roles. As a fluent Spanish speaker, the principal leads the “majority minority” school with the belief, “Don’t let

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your bleeding heart get in the way of your expectations.” Though the principal values professional autonomy for her instructional and support staff, her belief in collective responsibility primarily drives her leadership philosophy. The principal also has seen the sharp rise in socio-economically disadvantaged students at Strawberry during her tenure. Strawberry School’s district permits students eligible for gifted and talented education to attend a different middle school to receive their services, so almost 10% of students who should attend Strawberry School attend a different middle school site. Strawberry School also has a large special-education Category B program for students with severe disabilities. Its campus houses one of the district’s alternative learning centers. The center is not affiliated with the school, though they share district resources, to include clinical staff.

The principal highlights her pride in the diversity of Strawberry School. Approximately 25% of the students are in the English Learner Levels 1-4. In addition, over half of the student population recently exited English Learner services. The principal identified the following barriers: poverty, which she thinks leads to a lack of exposure; low literacy levels; and lowered adult expectations of student learning, which she believes is due to their “bleeding heart.”

The principal believes in Strawberry School and its community. She ended the interview expressing the hope that people understand that it is a great school. Instead of focusing on websites that establish school ratings with test scores, the principal believes the focus should be on the quality of learning experiences and the community. She expresses pride in both.

Strawberry school accreditation. Strawberry School is fully accredited, Level 1 in five school quality indicators and Level 2 in two school quality indicators. Tables 4.16 and 4.17 provide English and Mathematics Standards of Learning proficiency rates for Strawberry School.

Table 4.16

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Strawberry School English Standards of Learning Proficient and Pass Advanced Combined Rate by Subgroup; Overall Pass Rate 83% (2018)

| Group | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|----------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Black | 74 | 82 | 79 | 79 | 78 |
| White | 85 | 87 | 87 | 89 | 89 |
| Asian | 89 | 93 | 91 | 89 | 91 |
| Hispanic | 70 | 79 | 72 | 70 | 76 |
| Students with Disabilities | 65 | 63 | 55 | 54 | 64* |
| Economically Disadvantaged | 71 | 80 | 75 | 76 | 79 |
| English Learners | 71 | 83 | 69 | 85 | 89 |

*Safe Harbor

Table 4.17

Strawberry School Mathematics Standards of Learning Proficient and Pass Advanced Combined Rate by Subgroup; Overall Pass Rate 78% (2018)

| Group | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|----------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Black | 85 | 92 | 89 | 77 | 70 |
| White | 92 | 94 | 89 | 89 | 88 |
| Asian | 93 | 98 | 96 | 93 | 92 |
| Hispanic | 83 | 89 | 80 | 70 | 68 |
| Students with Disabilities | 73 | 84 | 63 | 56 | 56 |
| Economically Disadvantaged | 84 | 91 | 84 | 76 | 71 |
| English Learners | 86 | 90 | 81 | 86 | 86 |

Strawberry School improvement and innovation overview. Strawberry School’s published improvement plan includes a single, targeted focus area: writing. The school seeks to

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close achievement gaps for Black, Hispanic, ELL, and SPED students. The strategies include school-wide expectations for writing and structured professional learning on the District's allocated professional-learning days. Strategies also include the creation of learning targets and informally assessing student learning more frequently. Strawberry staff is committed to intentional and purposeful data talks by student name and need, scaffolding or leveling student texts and implementing the previously noted (Orange School) engagement or workshop model for learning in all classrooms.

Apple School site information. Apple School is a suburban middle school, serving 1,900 students in grades 6-8. Varying from the district's profile, Apple School is 51.1% Hispanic; 27.1% Black; 11.4% White; 23.5% Asian; 4%; and 2.3% Two or More Races. Apple School's student demographics differ substantially from those of the district, with 68.5 % economically disadvantaged students, 65.5% English Learners, and 16.1% receiving special-education services.

Both the principal and the director of student services attended the Apple School interview. The principal reported that Apple School is very large and diverse, with 65 countries and over 55 different languages represented. The school is an AVID National Demonstration site and an International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program (IBMYP) school. Apple School also supports a center for gifted and talented students. The principal reports that the diversity excites and challenges the Apple School staff. The size and diversity lead to Apple School experiencing numerous barriers to academic achievement among its students. The principal reports that for some students, language is the barrier. For other students, access is a barrier, mainly because parents, themselves, never experienced a formal school structure. The principal believes Apple's greatest challenge involves pushing students academically and socially given

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the wide and diverse needs of the student population. School staff struggle to describe the “volume of issues that we face on a daily basis.”

Apple School’s students come from approximately fifteen different elementary schools. The director of student services shared that last year, 44% of the students entering sixth grade at Apple read below grade level by more than a year. (Overall percentage does include gifted/talented). She also stated that trauma concerns exist at Apple for students from all socio-economic classes.

The principal leads Apple with the “Apple” mindset commitments, and he often cites this mantra: “The best is yet to come.” The vision is alive and engrained into the community at Apple. The vision promotes accepting, appreciating, and relishing in the school’s diversity and aspires for students to see learning as an anchor-life skill. The director at Apple articulated the desire that diversity be viewed as something that helps Apple rather than a challenge or barrier.

Apple School’s commitments are as follows: All kids can learn; we have collective ownership; we have a culture of problem solving; we embrace data; and we assume positive intent in conversations and relationships. The leadership team created the “looks like and sounds like” for each of these commitments. The principal reported that the staff has embraced these commitments and have been empowered by these expectations.

Apple School’s director and principal report that they are intentional about distributed leadership. It is a lever to address staff concerns. They limit the number of initiatives to ensure that those that they implement are done so with “an intentional focus on implementation.” The principal states, “We’ve intentionally pruned so that we can do these other things that we have committed to with greater depth.” The principal believes that a focus on instructional practices and engagement is what has been most effective. “...as our instruction has improved, students

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feel more engaged into their academics...we've seen our discipline decrease as a result of our instruction going up.”

Apple School’s discipline data has some anomalies. In 2018, though its Hispanic subgroup represented 51.1% of its overall population, they represented almost 79% of their short-term suspensions and almost 92% of their long-term suspensions.

Apple School accreditation. Apple School is a fully accredited, Level 1 in four school quality indicators and Level 2 in two school quality indicators. Tables 4.18 and 4.19 provide the overall pass rates for both the English and Mathematics Standards of Learning.

Table 4.18

Apple School English Standards of Learning Proficient and Pass Advanced Combined Rate by Subgroup; Overall Pass Rate 86% (2018)

| Group | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|----------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Black | 71 | 81 | 79 | 84 | 88 |
| White | 88 | 93 | 92 | 90 | 94 |
| Asian | 82 | 90 | 88 | 92 | 92 |
| Hispanic | 56 | 76 | 72 | 67 | 78 |
| Students with Disabilities | 39 | 61 | 53 | 51 | 65* |
| Economically Disadvantaged | 62 | 80 | 74 | 72 | 81 |
| English Learners | 54 | 82 | 70 | 78 | 89 |

*Safe Harbor

Table 4.19

Apple School Mathematics Standards of Learning Proficient and Pass Advanced Combined Rate by Subgroup; Overall Pass Rate 86% (2018)

| Group | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|-------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Black | 73 | 81 | 74 | 86 | 90 |

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| | | | | | |
|----------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|
| White | 85 | 93 | 89 | 90 | 92 |
| Asian | 87 | 91 | 88 | 92 | 96 |
| Hispanic | 57 | 76 | 63 | 75 | 79 |
| Students with Disabilities | 37 | 58 | 43 | 56 | 59 |
| Economically Disadvantaged | 63 | 79 | 69 | 78 | 82 |
| English Learners | 60 | 77 | 63 | 83 | 86 |

Apple School improvement and innovation overview. Apple’s school improvement plan includes three strategies: literacy across content areas, positive culture building, and focusing on Tier 1 instruction. The plan includes the establishment of an instructional feedback cycle and the need to formalize instructional rounds. It also articulates an increased focus on the Professional Learning Communities model. The literacy strand of the plan includes a shift towards the workshop model in the hard and soft sciences and the implementation of balanced-literacy approaches in the English classrooms. Apple’s culture building efforts in their plan include an increase in AVID strategies school wide and the revision of their instructional council to more fluidly disseminate and solicit information among teacher leaders at Apple.

Data for Research Questions

Part three of this chapter specifically addresses the data found in response to the research questions. First, I report on each school site and the individual, principal-perceived barriers. This includes their perceived, aligned resource allocation. Then, I present the common themes that emerged.

Principal Perception of Barriers to Student Learning and Resource Allocation

To address the research questions, I asked each principal the question: “What specific challenges are your students facing to their success?” The challenges identified and the principal’s perceived efforts to address those barriers are reported by school site in this section.

Lemon School. Lemon School’s rural setting is geographically the most unique to the five schools participating in the study. When asked the question about challenges, its principal provided insight into the unique challenges his students face: generational-rural poverty and familial pride, lack of access to medical services, social-emotional challenges, lack of access to experiences, and deficits prior to arriving to Lemon School.

Generational rural poverty and familial pride. Lemon School’s principal recognizes the challenges that come with working in a rural school. He believes it poses one of the most challenging aspects. Family resources are limited and have been for several generations. He cites an example of a narrative he has often heard from students:

My dad worked on the chicken farm. I’m going to work on the chicken farm. My grandfather worked on the chicken farm. That’s what we’re gonna do...and I don’t need any help because nobody in my family ever needed any help.

Resource allocation. The principal makes every effort to connect with parents as much as possible, implementing such measures as waiving suspensions if a parent agrees to an in-person meeting and home visits if a student misses more than three days:

I just made it what I am going to do. If you missed three days in a row, and we didn’t know where you were, I was going to do a home visit. And that turned into a lot of home visits, not just because of attendance, but because I was worried about my kids.

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Often going to lunch out in the community, he worked to build strong relationships. The principal took every opportunity to talk to any stakeholder who wanted to engage with him.

It takes a while to earn the trust of the community. Being the principal in that area, it's not always, 'Oh, he's the new guy, we're going to trust him.' It didn't work that way.

You go out and aren't afraid to...on a work day... go out to lunch in the middle of one of the towns and talk to everybody or go to the next town on the next work day and talk to everybody there. Be visible within the community and be able to talk whenever they wanted to talk.

Lack of access to medical services. Lemon School's principal shared that many of his students lack the ability to go to a medical doctor or a dentist. With one doctor in the entire community, he would often face the challenges of the basic needs of students not being met, "We'd have kids come to school sick as a dog...her teeth were rotting out of her mouth."

Resource allocation. Since Lemon is located on the same campus as the feeder elementary and high school, the principals and district created a wellness center on campus for students. The center has medical doctors, dentists, and mental-health specialists on site.

Social-emotional (effects likely due to poverty and food insecurity). Lemon School's principal recognized that many of his students had been through some form of trauma. At the end of the 2018 school year, he noted:

I mean, I was absolutely exhausted, and I don't normally...I am not a tired person. So, I wrote down every student that I had seen that year that had been to the office...had been sexually abused, drugs or alcohol, or attempted suicide. Just in those three categories, I had fifty-three students. (Lemon School has just under 350 students total.)

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It got to the point where my assistant principal and my counselor and I...we were on call and would take turns on the weekend.

Resource allocation. Recognizing trauma as an area of understanding and learning for the community, Lemon School secured a grant from a renowned trauma expert and received additional mental-health first-aid training. The principal also sent a team of five teachers to the Social Emotional Well Being Institute on Best Teaching Practices for Equity, Poverty, and Diversity at James Madison University.

Lemon School has community-based resources in place known as the family assistance partnership. Meeting weekly, the team consists of student services, the community services board, family members of the respective student being discussed, and court-appointed liaisons. The principal believes that the compassion they showed students was impactful:

We loved on them. And, we always asked for permission, but man, we hug kids. I taught my boys how to tie ties and shake hands because they didn't have a male role model that would tell them or show them how do those things...If today was a test day, and they didn't look right...we didn't test that day. 'You'll test tomorrow, buddy'.

Lack of access to experiences. Lemon School's principal said that his students do not have access to some of the resources that students in larger, better-funded counties might have. "Just take a look at our campus. We are in the middle of a corn field. Our kids don't have the same opportunities as kids do, in say, a Fairfax."

Resource allocation. The principal's fiscal belief that all funding should go to directly supporting students led to numerous field trips. Students enjoyed such experiences as a Shakespearean play and higher-end restaurants. They also developed social-skills learning opportunities for students, like how to shake hands and tie ties.

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We have a Black Friar's Theater...I took them all down there, and they had no idea what they were saying, but their eyes were as big as saucers...Took the entire student body out to eat at a resort, and I made them order from a menu. Many of them had never sat down and ordered from a menu before.

Deficits prior to arriving at Lemon School. Most of the resource allocation at Lemon School came in the intervention, remediation, and instructional improvement category. Lemon School's principal stated, "I think one of the biggest challenges we faced are kids coming from the elementary school that were not reading anywhere close to grade level...what do you do when the [MTSS] pyramid is upside down?"

Resource allocation. Lemon School supported students with learning deficits by implementing a targeted intervention period, double-block English and Mathematics (teamed together), a new, structured writing portfolio system, targeted observations tools around student engagement, and the full implementation of data-driven, standards-aligned assessments. The principal took the lead, requiring assessments to be submitted to him. He would personally review each question, ensure it aligned with the standards, and give his teachers feedback. To support student goal-setting, Lemon's principal also implemented the **I'm Determined** goal-setting component into the rising sixth-grade transition. Setting the tone for the higher-level of supervision and involvement that Lemon's principal believed was necessary:

And I can remember...we were in a meeting probably within the first two months I was there...I'm just listening...they finally looked at me and said 'What do you think?' and I said, 'What's best for the kid? Nothing personal, but I really don't care what you want to do. What's the best thing for the kid. We're the adult; we're the professional; we're

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getting paid. It's supposed to be harder on us. What are we doing for the kid?' That really kind of set the tone from there.

Inequity in resources. Lemon School's principal recognized that one result of poverty was a lack of resources for his students, like access to healthcare, additional educational support (technology), and access to food.

Resource allocation. Seeing the need to provide access to technology as an equity challenge, he worked with a local business partnership to support internet connectivity, and then secured the funding to allow his students to have a Chromebook. He invested in staff professional-learning opportunities and educated the community.

Students didn't have the time or ability to 'just get work done...so, we taught them how to download information and work offline, and then reconnect when they came back...it's still an ongoing process, and we feel we've gotten better at it.

Lime School. Lime School, located in a very small urban school district, had a unique feeder pattern that allowed for student needs to be collaboratively identified and addressed alongside both district and elementary and high-school leadership teams. The small community feel provided one of the assets cited by the principal, but still challenges exist. The principal identified those challenges as the sharp divide between students who have wealth and students who do not, the small tax base, even with a high residential tax, poverty, trauma, and new students in an established, tight-knit community.

Sharp Divide in socio-economic status and educational experiences. Lime School's principal recognizes that the sharp contrast in socio-economic experiences among its students lends itself to different priorities and learning opportunities outside of school.

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Most of our community is living comfortably or they're struggling to get by...we have students who are fresh from Central America, who have no experiences prior to walking into the door with us, all the way to students who have been in [our district] all of their life and who have had all of their experiences with us. Finally, I will have students of ambassadors who have had the finest education experiences prior to coming to school with us.

Resource allocation. To help navigate the differences, Lime's school developed a comprehensive website that explains all the school offers its students. The school staff work intentionally on promoting a culture of inclusion. Through such programs as "Capturing Kids Hearts," school professionals help students navigate their personal goals while promoting a sense of community. Utilizing a "homeroom model," Lime School welcomes newcomers and builds community by naming student ambassadors and maintaining a peer mentoring program.

To celebrate and recognize the differences that each student and "group" brings to Lime, they celebrate an International Festival each year and host a career fair. The fair functions as a parent-outreach event because it highlights the entire community:

This is showing our students and staff all the different ways our community earns money. We've had everything from an oyster shucker, to military, to diplomats, and this year, we are going to have a taxidermist. I didn't even know we had a taxidermist in our community.

The district's ability to provide resources. Lime School's district is very small, with a small tax base, almost entirely residential. The principal reports that it is challenging to provide resources:

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We have the highest residential tax in Northern Virginia...when you have to look at every dollar, you have to think about how to stretch it as far as possible.” The principal elaborates on a previous experience he had in a larger school district. “When I talk to people I used to work with, I tell them... ‘you know this person [job]? Yeah, I do that [job]. Remember that person [job]? Yeah, I do that now [job]’...we invest in our people and stuff for kids.

Resource allocation. Using the small-district structure to the best advantage, Lime School’s entire leadership team (all administrators K-12) meet to plan for school improvement and transition. The district often structures events that support families as K-12 events as well. Lime also uses the small-community services available, an example being the ALICE (active shooter) training provided by the local police department: “The training empowers everyone to do what is best for them.”

Lime’s principal believes that the greatest strength of his school lies in its design. Teachers get classrooms and home “offices” housed in a shared pod. Teachers can collaborate frequently about unique and individualized student needs.

Poverty. Lime School’s principal recognizes the impact of poverty on his students: “Students who are in poverty have issues that come with that...we have to make sure we can take care of Maslow’s before we take care of Bloom’s.”

Resource allocation. To accommodate for the emotional and physical needs of these students, Lime School has implemented Grab and Go breakfast, a monthly Family Market for families to receive groceries, free eye exams and subsidized eyeglasses, and a partnership for local school supplies. He also believes that opportunities for parent involvement build

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community in vital ways. “It’s important to provide opportunities for parents to feel like they are inside the school during the school day.”

To accommodate some of the inequities from poverty, a 1:1 computing program is in place at Lime School. Families attend the 1:1 event to receive the laptop:

1:1 is like a big community celebration. We get to see parents and greet them... Giving a laptop to a student is giving one to the family. When we get the computers back to reimagine them, some of them had QuickBooks installed. Families were using the device to help manage their finances.

Trauma. The principal of Lime has spent resource allocations on structures to support students who have been through or are currently going through trauma.

I like to call them potholes, because these are things you can’t see. When you have a child who has come to America because they saw their parent raped and murdered in their home country ... when you have a story with such an intense element and that student shuts down for two days, it might be because a memory has been jogged up, and he isn’t going to talk to you about it anyways.

Resource allocation. Establishing and supporting such structures as counselor groups, therapeutic-day treatment, and the community-services board, Lime School accommodates several challenging circumstances. Lime’s teachers have gone through trauma training as well, with Lime School’s principal noting an example from one teacher.

Their [teachers’] trauma was significant to them... one teacher, her parents divorced, and she thought that was the ‘worst thing in the world.’ She then found out that one of her eleven -year-olds was raped by her uncle after her parents left her to move to America.

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She doesn't know her parents, they are strangers, and she doesn't trust male figures. It's an empathy check for our teachers.

New Students. The principal acknowledges that they celebrate newcomers, though not in the traditional sense. Students who move into the small district often feel like outsiders to Lime School because they have built such a strong sense of community. "This is something that can be a little intimidating to kids."

Resource allocation. To constantly provide opportunities to build community, Lime School participates in numerous community parades and events. The principal noted:

It's great when you are in a parade, walking behind high-school students who went to [Lime School]. Everyone is out on the streets and cheering you on. You might be pulling a little red wagon full of books or treats for the kids in elementary school, or just saying 'hi' to students from [Lime School]. It is just a great way for everyone to feel like they are a part of something bigger and included.

The principal also believes in a comprehensive communication structure that includes a weekly message, access to multiple resources via the website, and opportunities for parents to come into the building to learn English. The website has a quick tab that also allows for easy translation to another language. Student ambassadors acclimate new students to the tight-knit community.

When you're new at [Lime School], your homeroom is going to buddy you up with another student who will give you a tour and be there for you while you learn about [Lime School]. When you go to the cafeteria, they will make sure you have someone to sit beside. There are many times that students will say that at their old school, they didn't see students mixing as much as they do at [Lime School]. I have had students who have

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moved away who get in touch with us and say that at their new school, students that are different from each other really don't hang out or talk. We just want everyone to feel comfortable and get along with everybody else, and we promote that as much as we can.

Orange School. As the district's only community school, Orange School is in a unique position with regards to resources the principal might provide. Also atypical is the previously mentioned detail that none of the immediately surrounding neighborhood students attend Orange School. The principal reported its challenges as access to rigor, particularly in previous experiences prior to their arrival to Orange; English Language Learners and deficit skills; poverty; transiency between schools; and the effects of military life on students who are connected to the military.

Access to rigor. Orange School's principal believes that the quality of instruction, prior to the students arriving to Orange, was limited with regards to grade-level expectations, likely because feeder elementary schools were working to accommodate so many other basic needs for their students. "I'm not sure the level of rigor was where it needed to be...a lot of students come in academically behind their grade-level peers from different parts of [Orange School's district]."

Resource allocation. Orange's principal has implemented a variety of structures to ensure that students have access to high-quality instruction. By trading staffing for more instructional coaches and deans of students, his assistant principals can focus on instructional leadership and norming the collaborative learning team expectations. Examples of instructional leadership expectations include that he expects assistant principals to provide norm writing feedback to collaborative teams and the no-excuse checklist. This checklist has specific writing requirements for all classrooms. He also strategically hired leaders who brought varying instructional expertise.

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The principal tightened up structures around the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program and its expectations, ensuring that vertical articulation from middle to high-school was occurring:

We partnered with George Mason University, and we did some PBL (Problem Based Learning), and I think it was with mixed success. I think some teachers embraced it more than others in terms of ... letting the kids sort of figure out the answers ... it's really hard ... especially in a school where you feel like you really need to make sure the kids are getting what they're supposed to get ... we did do that, but I think we've had better success by going down the IB route with having the teachers really come up with unit plans and think about how to do cross-disciplinary things.

English language learners. Orange School's principal noted that disrupted or non-existent schooling prior to arriving to Orange School for many of the English Language Learners creates a challenge to students accessing grade-level learning, "Of course our English Language Learners might have interrupted education coming from mostly our Central-American countries."

Resource allocation. To help promote school, the principal provides parenting and financial literacy classes to parents. Through a high level of collaborative learning team structures, the principal ensures that students participate in common assessments and timely skills-based remediation (cycling every five weeks). The school's website can also quickly be changed to accommodate other languages.

The entire staff has been through Trauma 101 Training, a district training about understanding the effects of trauma on a person. Utilizing a structure for multi-tiered systems of

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support (MTSS), Orange School also facilitates “kid talks” to problem solve unique student needs.

Poverty. The principal of Orange School cites that extreme generational poverty is a barrier to student learning: “Just the poverty that many of them are coming from...the majority of them are coming from food insecurity and health issues.”

Resource allocation. The school became the first community school in the district, securing a lucrative funding source and providing wholistic support to students in need. A site-resource coordinator connects students and families to community-support services. The school has also coordinated a monthly Family Market through another source that provides an opportunity for families to come and select groceries.

So, if my social worker identifies a family who's getting kicked out because of rent she [community-resource site coordinator] connects them with rent assistance. If I currently have a pregnant student who ... parents could not get the girl to doctor's appointments, she makes arrangements for transportation ... So it's both on an individual and whole group She's [site-resource coordinator] now reignited the mentor program and ... is working with my attendance person on incentives ...

A community room is also available with clothing, shelf-stable food, and other resources for families. School supplies are at the ready through donations. Once a year, the entire pyramid of schools coordinates a resource fair for families to see what community-based resources exist.

The principal successfully lobbied for full-time clinicians and has a therapeutic-day treatment professional that he secured for some of his most at-risk students. The school provides gifts and food over holidays as well.

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Transiency. As previously noted, Orange is an “island” school. This means that none of children from the neighborhoods in the immediate surroundings of Orange attend school there. The principal suspects social engineering occurred when the school first opened, but because of this and the extreme poverty, transiency is an issue. “A lot of times the apartment complexes will offer one month free rent if you move ... so then they’re switching schools quite often ... a lot of times just trying to figure out the best rent deal.”

Resource allocation. The principal has secured grant funding to allow for a jumpstart program and an intercession program over the summer for students in need. He also meets with the principal of the school in which the students are usually transitioning from or to, to ensure that the open line of communication and collaborative problem solving for students is freely dispersed between the two schools.

Effects of military-connected family members. A challenge noted by the principal of Orange were those of the military-connected child. Ensuring that these students are serviced in the MTSS “kid talks,” and that they feel a part of the community is important to the principal. He notes another challenge, “Having between 300-400 military children, a lot of their parents have PTSD, or they are deployed for long periods of time. So, some of the basic needs are real challenges as well as mental-health issues.”

Resource allocation. Securing full-time clinicians and supporting community-building activities, like ceiling-tile painting of various military branches, countries, and cultures, the principal encourages his staff to stay connected. The robust after-school program with high-interest activities also builds community for new students.

Strawberry School. Strawberry School is unique in that it shares clinical resources and support with an alternative learning center (ALC) located on its campus. The ALC serves

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students from all over the district who have been reassigned due to disciplinary reasons. The principal believes this arrangement creates an extra strain on its resources. The principal identified poverty, English Language Learners, and adult expectations as the challenges facing her students.

Poverty. The principal of Strawberry recognizes the effects of poverty on student learning ability and outcomes, “So I think poverty is a barrier definitely...and with that, I think there’s some exposure to what’s out there. A lot of our kids don’t have access....”

Resource allocation. She designated resources to accommodate the lack of experiences for many students. With a robust after-school program, students receive exposure to a variety of opportunities, from the liberal arts to STEM extensions. She also runs a summer camp, in which students can come for three weeks to focus on skills-based areas of need. Through the AVID site program, Strawberry’s students can attend college visits and hear from guest speakers. Kid talks help professionals craft plans for students who aren’t finding success.

Strawberry School provides school resources towards growing the school’s 1:1 computing program. In 2018-2019, the school gave 8th grade students laptops and beginning in the Fall of 2019, the seventh-grade students will join the program. The principal believes, from an equity standpoint, in the importance of this program for her school.

Many teachers receive training in Responsive Classroom. This structure builds social-emotional learning into the classroom, allowing for teachers to understand how to implement whole-child learning experiences.

The other part of learning about Responsive classroom is learning about where kids are developmentally. We were getting frustrated about things that are totally normal for a

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twelve-year old kid. So, it's like shifting our mindset to what are the supports that we need to put in place to help them be successful.

English Language Learners. The principal of Strawberry notes that the unique needs of English Language Learners (ELL) present a barrier. When she arrived at Strawberry, the school lacked sufficient ELL teachers on staff to accommodate the needs of the students. "... Over half our population is either in their first four years of the English learner program or they've exited at some point."

Resource allocation. Strawberry's principal doubled the staffing, ensuring, even amid staffing reductions, she maintains the same number of ELL teachers. She maintains an ELL teacher on each collaborative learning team so that they can serve as both a resource and as a team teacher. She secured a leader for the ELL department who thinks flexibly about student placement. They creatively schedule individual students as they progress, not awaiting a yearly "move" after a single assessment.

Working with other staff, Strawberry's principal outlined a comprehensive plan for community engagement based on a needs assessment the parents completed. She also tasked various leaders in the building in planning for these learning opportunities with topics like how to navigate school and gang involvement and prevention.

Adult expectations. Strawberry's principal notes that one of the greatest challenges are the "good intentions" of the professionals in the building, "What I'm finding is that sometimes people pick schools like [Strawberry] to work in because they have kind of a bleeding heart that doesn't always match with high expectations."

Resource allocation. The principal leads with the expectation that classrooms have rigorous-learning opportunities. Instructional coaches help guide teams in building rigor into

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their curricular expectations. Through personalized professional development, teachers could opt into blended-learning implementation or expanding literacy practices:

Professional development has been pretty slow, school wide, for the last few years...this year, we did professional learning networks where the staff could pick a topic, and they focused on it for six sessions...that was very well received this year.

Apple School. Apple School had the most diverse student population of the five schools in this study. With both a community comprised of primarily socio-economically disadvantaged students and a gifted-and-talented center for learning, Apple's principal believes that his school faces too many challenges to address with only the resources they receive. They found themselves often overwhelmed by the needs of their students. The principal believes their most important challenges include the following: Apple's size; the needs of ELLs; trauma and its effects; appropriate levels of rigor and teacher perception; and deficits prior to arriving to Apple School.

Size. Apple School is an exceptionally large and diverse middle school. With the number of students, the principal states,

...given the size and diversity of our schools and our students in our school, I think across the board, our kids face every different type of barrier to learning ... One of the things we have a hard time explaining to those who have never worked in this school or in this Pyramid is just the volume of issues that we face on a daily basis.

Resource allocation. To help offset some of the challenges size creates, Apple created a structure for what it qualifies as its most at-risk students known as the "Team." Like a traditional freshmen academy, these students share the same core teachers. Though they are separated from

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the main school site for the core courses, they are integrated for all electives and lunch. The current data is very promising:

We select about 90 of them after sixth grade, and we put them on an interdisciplinary team. They come off the bus and have breakfast in the classroom...during the first two blocks, they have either Math and Science one day or English and History the other day. Then they transition into the building for lunch and their electives, usually PE or World Language class. Then, after our last block, they transition back to the modules for a [study support] class...They stay together for all of seventh and eighth grade.

The survey results from Apple's principal show 20% to 50% overall gains in students' connectedness, feelings of support, and self-efficacy.

English Language Learners (ELL). A challenge of ELLs noted by Apple's principal. "Access challenges that they [ELL parents] may face when they and their parents may not be as educated in how school works or how to correctly advocate for their kids."

Resource allocation. The principal of Apple ensures that there are team teachers in almost every general-education class. Understanding that many ELL students at Apple have had limited exposure to outside-school learning opportunities, he encourages field trips. He staffs a Systems of Support Advisor, whose main task consists of matching students and families with resources and managing the child-study process. This advisor possesses a professional, school-counseling background as well. Apple School participates alongside its pyramid schools in a resource fair.

Trauma. Apple's principal names trauma as a barrier to student learning: "... they are having to overcome [trauma] from previously, or even during their schooling that they are having to overcome."

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Resource allocation. To help navigate the impact of trauma, Apple staffs a full-time social worker and school psychologist. Apple also has a structure in place for direct referrals to crisis centers in the area.

Apple School has an advisory period on Mondays and Fridays. The advisory teacher is an academic teacher for one other period. The purpose is to help deliver lessons around social-emotional learning and study skills to students. These lessons are differentiated at each grade level.

There is a lot of social-emotional learning that happens in there, like a lot of lessons on building empathy, a lot of lessons on goal setting, a lot of lessons on appreciating diversity; a lot of lessons on how to de-escalate conflict with peers and how to manage stress and anxiety.

Appropriate rigor. With the diverse socio-economic status of students, Apple also has a gifted-and-talented center. This means that some students have had diverse and enriching educational experiences, so maintaining appropriate rigor and challenging these students is difficult.

Resource allocation. Apple School has a structure for professional development that includes a modified instructional round. Teachers are expected to select a high-leverage instructional-practice focus area in which they would like to improve, and then, at random, a team completes a drop-in observation. Data feedback is given to the teacher around their individual goal, and the teacher then selects a time for a follow-up observation. The principal of Apple believes that this structure has been the most-impactful on the quality of instruction:

Parents of kids in private school around the area are hearing about Apple, and they're wanting to come and visit. I'm like, let's just go into some of these classrooms, and I

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walked [with parents] into a team-taught special education class, I walked into an honors class, I walked into a double-block gen-ed class, and I'm like, this is the kind of instruction you are going to see. No one freaks out when you come in these rooms.

Deficits prior to arriving at Apple School. Apple School's principal noted that the learning deficits of students entering their school presents another barrier: "I think for many of our students, there is an access challenge. [They] have never been to school, or when their parents may not be as educated in how school works and how to correctly advocate for their kids..."

Resource allocation. Through summer-intercession activities, their intervention period, and the expectation that all classrooms have built-in remediation and high-leverage literacy strategies in general instruction, Apple has worked to accommodate the needs of students:

We know is...44% of our incoming sixth graders this year were reading below grade level by more than a year...so when you're coming in with those types of literacy gaps, it's just a challenge to make sure that kids don't fall further behind.

Recognizing that several of Apple's students need increased support above Tier 1 (44% with a reading deficit as an example), Apple's teachers are expected to differentiate in the general classroom since the school's intervention classes cannot support the large number of students in need of intervention. Apple School invested in an Academic Dean, narrowed the range of the Instructional Council, and traded staffing for instructional coaches in each of the four core content areas.

So, what [Principal] did was map them [coaches] directly to a content area, to an admin, and said, 'You are partners in pushing the instruction forward in this department. You're going to be meeting with every teacher giving high-quality feedback three times a year.'

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Common Themes

Each of the five participants in the study created supports for student learning based on their own experiences with their community, survey data, and/or student-achievement data. For many of the principals, once I proposed the Adelman and Taylor enabling components for their review, they identified resources that qualified in each category, though the interpretation of how a support might fit varied among the principals. Some supports arose because of tradition or an intuitive need based on a hunch. As Strawberry School's principal noted: "We do have a partnership with George Mason. I don't know how this came about. I've never heard of it, but they give one of our eighth graders a scholarship to George Mason every year." She also noted an upcoming revision to Strawberry's intervention time based on anecdotal observations of a deficit in executive functioning skills:

But they'll also have a menu of things that that they are going to have to get done during [intervention] time. So, like, 'I want to [reward offered during intervention time], I get to when I have all my homework done. So, I will check my stuff on [online gradebook] to make sure that I have it done. I will read quietly.' It's like developing those daily habits for kids.

When using the Adelman and Taylor (2008) enabling components to qualify resource allocation, common programs and themes emerged. Some schools had very similar supports in place as the other middle schools in this study, but they did not mention them or recognize them as unique resource allocations. Sometimes, one principal recognized a service as qualifying into a different learning support than another principal did. When able, I reported the data the principal's shared based on what barrier they believed was being addressed by a support.

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Appendix H includes the complete listing of each support from the interviews along with the coded data in thematic categories. Table 4.20 qualifies the total number of supports in each category:

Table 4.20

Number of Supports Qualified into Each Learning Support

| | Lemon | Lime | Orange | Strawberry | Apple |
|------------------------------------|-------|------|--------|------------|-------|
| Classroom | 16 | 10 | 13 | 10 | 13 |
| Transitions | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 7 |
| Home Involvement and Engagement | 5 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Crisis | 10 | 8 | 4 | 6 | 4 |
| Community Involvement and Outreach | 8 | 18 | 4 | 8 | 6 |
| Family Assistance | 2 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 4 |
| Other | 2 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 2 |

During the interviews, each principal took some time to review the list that was provided to prompt their responses.

Classroom-based approaches to student learning. Principals interpreted the classroom-based approaches to student learning differently. Lemon’s principal talked at length about his instructional leadership in the realm of assessment and observation, while Lime and Strawberry’s principal focused on unique classroom-based approaches or learning opportunities, staffing allocations, and classroom climate/relationship building programs. Though Orange School’s principal discussed the revival of the Professional Learning Community, he also mentioned culture building and specific, consistent classroom tools and expectations, as well as instructional

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programming: "...concentrating [all classrooms] on the reflection at the end, making sure that kids have an opportunity to reflect on what they were supposed to learn that day...we really focused on learning targets." Lemon's principal observed, "I've got a core instructional problem. I don't have something that I can put tiers in to make it work."

Apple's principal was more directed in classroom-based approaches, choosing to focus more on classroom tools and tighter instructional and teacher-observational structures:

We started to focus on tier-one instruction as the bedrock to what we thought would enable access for kids who have barriers to learning. Our theory of action was, 'If we don't address the quality of instruction happening on a day to day basis in classrooms, everything else we do will just be band aids on a gushing wound.'

Strawberry's principal stated about the need for increased rigor and high expectations for all students:

I'm working a lot with my staff...increasing rigor. Real-world opportunities, making real-world connections to the content that they're learning that we know are high-level meaningful tasks for every child in the building.

Table 4.21 lists the common themes for classroom-based approaches and number of times they appeared in the principal interviews:

Table 4.21

Classroom-Based Approaches Common Themes in Order from Greatest to Least

| Themes for Classroom-Based Approaches | Number of Supports |
|--|--------------------|
| Curricular Enrichment and Adjunct Programs | 30 |
| Available Instructional Supports | 29 |
| Enhancing Professional Development | 19 |

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| | |
|---|---|
| Classroom and Schoolwide Approaches for a Caring and Supporting Environment | 7 |
| Classroom Design Changes | 4 |

Curricular enrichment and adjunct programs. All five schools had enrichment opportunities available for their students. From robust after-school programs in four of the sites, to an intervention period that included opportunities for remediation and enrichment, each principal shared a belief that students should have access to enhanced programming. Three of the school principals shared their support of the arts, specifically. Orange School’s principal noted:

One of the things that I’ve done and really focused on is concentrating on the arts programs and rebuilding them. Because of intervention classes, they had really started dwindling to the point that I only had barely a half-time band director or a part time art teacher. No real orchestra to speak of. Now, I have a full-time band director and art teacher. It’s really making sure that there’s equity of experiences. Our kids should have the opportunity to participate here.

Available instructional supports. All five principals had reallocated staffing to create more opportunities for collaboration among teachers, push-in reading and behavioral specialists, and co-teaching opportunities. Four of the five schools had high numbers of English Language Learners (ELL), though only one school site spoke about intentionality in ELL staffing use. All five school sites cited leadership decision making around ensuring that certain practices were universally evident in all classrooms whether through a teaching model or assessment.

Orange School’s principal noted:

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We embraced the Tovani Model for engagement. That's basically that you need to have...we call it 'Do Now' so that kids first start learning from bell to bell...there needs to be a mini lesson, and then the majority of the time needs to be student working. We actually graph that for teachers when we do an evaluation, so we can show them how much time they were talking versus the kids were talking versus they were just doing busy work.

Equitable access to diverse learning experiences was also evident, with four of the five principals speaking specifically about technology and working to allocate resources to support students who may not have access. Lemon School's principal shared his efforts to ensure that students also had internet access:

We worked with one of our local businesses, [business], to get help and internet services to our students who have free and reduced lunch. We really tried to increase the opportunities for students to have access to information and to be able to read; to be able to write; to be able to do things more often whether you had internet service or not. We taught them how to download information and work offline, and then reconnect when you came back.

Strawberry School's principal traded staffing for money that she could then use to purchase laptops with plans to expand to another grade level this year.

So...it's important to me that we are not just about closing gaps, but we also innovate. This year, we went 1:1 for our eighth graders...that was a choice that I made with the help of our tech team. And it really has made a difference in terms of our engagement and provided equitable access to technology.

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Other examples of additional instructional supports are found in the use of instructional coaches, specifically addressing content coaching, the use of student-learning plans, and schoolwide learning expectations that are implemented in all classrooms, such as learning targets and the engagement model.

Enhancing professional development. The importance of staff professional learning was evident in each interview. Four school sites had delivered intentional staff training on trauma-informed teaching, and each school site had developed their own staff learning guided by the principal's leadership style for adult learning.

At Apple, a modified version of instructional rounds is utilized to enhance teaching practices. A staff-created list of high-impact teaching strategies guides the work:

So, at the beginning of the year, we go to CTs and we say, 'If you are delivering instruction that is really impactful for students, what would we see or hear a lot of in your classroom?' And, they pick two or three areas they think will matter most ... it is a pretty short list, and we go in, uninvited, and collect as much evidence as we can in those two or three areas.

With the implementation of station-based activities at Lime School, the principal mentioned:

One of the ways this is fabulously successful is that in English, this builds in one-to-one writing workshop time with the teacher and student ... you can meet the students where they are, and you can challenge them appropriately, using that teacher's time really wisely as opposed to doing a whole-group lecture, and then the teacher just walks around trying to help the five kids who are scattered across the room and then correcting behaviors....

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At Strawberry School, teachers could select their professional-development study. Teachers can choose from six topics: blended learning, AVID strategies, responsive classroom, cultural proficiency, IBMYP, and service learning.

Classroom and schoolwide approaches for a caring and supporting environment. The notion of “outrageous love” came up in three of the interviews, though each school principal noted the importance of a positive learning environment as a key to success. Lime School specifically invested in a program, Capturing Kids Hearts:

We begin the year by asking our students and staff, ‘What do you want school to be?’

And then, we hold each other accountable for that...Students and staff are always amazed that I am smiling every single day. I tell them that is a conscious choice I make. To be happy. A caring and supportive climate comes from every single interaction, every single day.

At Lemon School the principal noted:

We got kids the help they needed. They didn’t always like us for it, but in the same token, we got them what they needed. And, we loved on them. And, we thanked them. Just the little things that you know go a long way in the world we live in. We always asked for permission, but we hugged them. We gave high fives and taught them how to tie ties.

Classroom design changes. Three of the schools had implemented school or classroom design changes to support student learning, investing school funds in furniture that might lead to easier collaboration and faster classroom reorganization, kidney tables for station learning, and flexible seating opportunities in classrooms. Lime School completely redesigned the library into zones for learning.

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Strawberry School’s principal stated:

We’ve had some structural differences...I’m encouraging people to be more flexible on how they design their classrooms...I used my surplus...purchased a lot of kidney tables to encourage small-group instruction. So, that’s been a shift as well...small-group instruction to better meet student needs. It’s not just a bunch of whole-class teaching.

Supporting transitions. All five of the principals interviewed stated that they had a vertical-transition day with rising sixth (or seventh for one school) classes visiting each respective school site. Three of the five school sites, all of whom are in the same district, offer summer intercession for their students, with two of those schools also funding a rising ninth-grade opportunity for their respective “feeder” high schools. All five principals, regardless of location, qualified some level of “teaming” as a support for transitions since it allowed for horizontal “teacher talk” about students in need of additional support who might be struggling. Strawberry School’s principal noted “looping” of administrators and counselors (following students from sixth through eighth grade) as a proactive strategy she implemented.

Two of the five schools are in a campus model for students in grade K-12. Those two schools noted their bell schedules and strategic staffing allocations to better support students transitioning with literacy and numeracy strategies as a major support for students who were transitioning with deficiencies. Table 4.22 provides the common themes found for supporting transitions in the principal interviews.

Table 4.22

Supports for Transitions Common Themes in Order from Greatest to Least

| Themes for Supporting Transitions | Number of Supports |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|

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| | |
|---|----|
| Stakeholder (broad) Involvement in Planning for and Designing Transitions | 14 |
| Daily Transitions | 13 |
| Vertical Articulation Programs and Structures | 9 |
| Summer or Intercession Programs | 6 |
| Support for Newcomers | 5 |

Stakeholder (broad) involvement in planning for and designing transitions. Four of the five school sites reported that administrators or counselors visit the feeder schools to gather detailed information about specific students prior to their transition into their schools. Three school sites also reported working with teams of teachers, counselors, and specialists to determine intervention and remediation for students in need of extra support.

Orange School’s principal reports:

My lead counselor...again, another example of putting the right person in the right seat. She came from one of our feeder elementary schools, and now she goes to each one of the feeder elementaries and gets behavior updates on the sixth graders who are coming in so that when we meet as a whole admin team in the summer and with my clinical staff, we already have plans in place for different kiddos based on what worked for them in elementary.

Daily transitions. All five school sites noted that they had experimented with various bell schedules and intervention-block periods for their students to help with transitioning. At Lemon School, the principal stated: “I am constantly evaluating our program schedules and bell schedules...the time that I have with my teachers and where they [the students] need to go.” Three of the five school sites spoke about transition lessons that were taught during the

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intervention block, while one school, Lime, touted the use of student ambassadors to help new students in daily transitions.

Vertical articulation programs and structures. Two of the schools, Lemon and Lime, operate in a campus model, which allows for all three levels, elementary, middle, and high school, to be in the same location. There is a community feel from the moment students enter the elementary school. At the end of the interview, Lime School's principal noted:

I just really want you to understand how beneficial it is to be a small, tight-knit community like we are able to be in [Lime School's district] ... Our students know us from kindergarten through twelfth grade, our superintendent is at the elementary schools giving a handshake or high five every Friday, and we all participate in each other's school events. It is just a community feel.

At Orange School, the principal supports vertical articulation among the IBMYP teachers at his school and the primary high school that his students attend. His recommitment to the IB program has allowed for more rigorous learning for all students.

Strawberry School's principal described a newer structure for student transition, "The high school came down to talk to us kid by kid. Transition planning is much more intentional."

Summer or intercession programs. Three of the five school sites mentioned summer intercession programs for their students. Two of the five school sites use school funds to support a summer intercession for rising ninth-grade students.

At Strawberry, the principal stated, "So, we have two programs in the summer for kids transitioning from fifth grade. One for kids struggling academically...its three weeks, and one for students who just need to get to know the building."

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Support for newcomers. The principals (four school sites) mainly described newcomers as English Language Learners (ELL). Each school site used the WIDA consortium standards for placement of their ELLs and looked to their ELL teachers to transition students. Lime School's principal was the only principal who shared about support for students new to Lime, even citing it as one of his barriers.

An example of the expectation for ELL leadership from Strawberry's principal:

I've also changed my leadership in ESOL. I've got the leadership now who thinks flexibly. So, it's not just like once you're assigned, once you're a level two, you are a level two all year and that's where you stay ... Kids aren't like that; kids are unique.

Home involvement and engagement. All five principals noted the importance of home involvement, and the difficulty/challenges they faced. Three of the principals (Lemon, Lime, and Apple) used the word "trust." These principals believed that the trust the parents had in the school to make decisions explained the limited home involvement. Four of the five schools, with majority, minority populations, had translation services readily available for their parents. All five principals had developed strategic plans to increase parent involvement, typically tied to a resource fair or other major event.

Strawberry School's principal had intentionally distributed time and resources to home involvement and parent outreach. During the meeting, the principal showed a chart grid in which she had worked with her leadership team to develop numerous parent outreach events, the funding source attached to each event, and the school leader appointed as the designee.

Table 4.23 illustrates the common themes that emerged from the principal interviews for home involvement and engagement.

Table 4.23

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Supports for Increasing Home Involvement and Home Engagement in Order from Greatest to Least

| Themes for Home Involvement and Engagement | Number of Supports |
|--|--------------------|
| Learning Needs of the Family | 15 |
| School-Home Connection Opportunities | 11 |
| Home Involvement in Student Decision Making | 5 |
| Recruiting Families to Strengthen School and Community | 2 |

Learning needs of the family. Translation services were available at four of the five school sites. All five principals interpreted and attempted to meet the various learning needs of their families in unique ways. From the needs-assessment used at Strawberry to use of the Family Market at Orange to coax parent learning, each principal established opportunities for their parents.

Apple's principal noted about a parent event they hosted:

Having conversations with teenagers isn't always the easiest thing to do. There was this PTA meeting that was awesome, and I wish we did more stuff like that. We had parents come in and actually role-play dialogues with their teenagers. Just the diversity of parents who came out was incredible...it was just so lovely, there were probably six Spanish-speaking groups going, Arabic groups going....

Strawberry School's principal commented on the good intentions of many of her school's support groups to address the needs of families, but they were not directive or as impactful as she had hoped:

So, one of the things that we did this year was ... try to be much more intentional about our parent outreach. We had all these avenues ... our schoolwide stuff, our PTA, our

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English Learners, our Family Engagement Grant. It was kind of like a personal sort of mission for individual staff members, but we are trying to be more strategic because we knew our audience would be different in different settings.

School-home connection opportunities. Two school sites used the laptop distribution as an opportunity to make connections between school and home. Two sites reported using staff strategically for attendance issues to reach out to parents. One school site, Orange, had become a community school with a resource coordinator who helped to organize community resources for parents and students. Each principal strongly desired parent involvement, but the challenges of their demographics, and particularly the need for parents to work, sometimes two or more jobs, created a barrier to their participation in many offerings. The most successful opportunities were those attached to another resource, like laptops and food pickup.

Orange's principal remarked about Family Market:

At the same time, when all those parents, particularly of our neediest kids, are coming through, that's when we set up tables or we grab them in for trainings...if they come early to a seminar, they get a ticket, so they get to the front of the line [at Family Market]. Maybe 20 minutes, how to check your kid's grade online kind of thing...and they get that magic ticket.

Home involvement in student decision making. Like the other common themes in this learning support, principals seemed to have some way to entice parents to become more involved. With reverse suspensions at Lemon, parents had to come in to waive the student's suspension, with the principal always willing to accommodate the parent's schedule, no matter the time. Two school sites also reported home visits to involve parents in the decision making for students. Four of the five schools had rather comprehensive school websites, complete with

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the ability to translate to a different language instantaneously, allowing for parents to quickly and easily access school information.

Recruiting families to strengthen school and community. Two school sites worked with families to recruit for participation in schoolwide events, mainly through an avenue, such as laptop distribution, to gain interest. Lime School’s Career Fair asks for parents to present to the students, demonstrating what types of careers people have who live in their community: “We’ve had diplomats and oyster shuckers.”

Crisis response and prevention. All five principals expressed concerns about trauma and its impact on student learning. Two of the five school sites successfully secured Therapeutic-Day Treatment for select students, with one full time (Orange) and one part-time (Lime) coming to school to work individually with students. Four of the five schools had also secured full-time clinicians on staff to work preventatively and as an intervention with students.

Three of the five school site principals spoke explicitly about staff professional learning around trauma and its effects, with one site securing a grant to fund a national expert (Lemon), one site working with its central administrators on a district-wide training (Lime), and one site working with its district to secure an optional training for its staff (Orange). One school site (Strawberry) spoke specifically about using a Signs of Suicide (SOS) screener. Table 4.24 describes the common themes in the principal interviews for crisis response and prevention.

Table 4.24

Supports for Response and Prevention of Personal Crisis and Traumatic Events in Order from Greatest to Least

| Themes for Crisis Response and Prevention | Number of Supports |
|--|--------------------|
| Leadership Developed Prevention and Intervention | 16 |

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| | |
|---|----|
| Staff/Students/Families Crisis Awareness and Capacity Building | 13 |
| Community Resources and Others Integrate Crisis Response and Prevention | 4 |
| Crisis Team | 3 |
| Immediate Assistance in Crisis | 3 |
| Follow-Up Care | 2 |

Leadership developed prevention and intervention. Each school site had some manner of teacher and staff donation that was supported by the school, and all five sites had school principals who had recognized and provided for crisis-awareness trainings, clinicians, and culture building around expectations for students in crisis.

About trauma training from a leading expert, Lemon’s principal also noted:

A nationally known trauma-informed person has been working with us all year on best practices. Just little things that you don’t think of like, when you’re in your room and you’ve got the projector on, and you turn the lights off, and it’s dark in the room. Well, bad things happen to kids in the dark. Turn the lamp on. Open your shade, little instructional practices.

The role of best practices in social media was mentioned at Strawberry. They have become one of the district’s first Common Sense Schools, teaching their students about appropriate online behavior and technology use.

Staff/students/families crisis awareness and capacity building. Three of the school sites directly referred to bullying and bullying prevention, with two of them noting bullying-prevention as one of the lessons taught through intervention time. Staff members at Lime are taught three, progressive steps that occur when reporting bullying or harassment is reported: (1)

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counselor triages; (2) division social worker when founded; (3) school administration involved. Lime's principal also noted that he uses his counselors to establish groups based on the needs of students. Topics include anger, self-control, and executive functioning.

At Strawberry, students sign a commitment to not bully which is displayed in their cafeteria. Students also participate in a Signs of Suicide (SOS) program as seventh-grade students. Based on the SOS screening tool, students are referred to counselors and treatment when needed.

Community resources and others integrate crisis response and prevention. Four of the five principals spoke specifically about the use of family-assistance partnerships or the community-services board to help create solutions for students who are experiencing a mental-health crisis. These schools worked alongside community-service professionals to ensure that students were placed with needed resources in a timely manner.

Crisis team. Though each school provides clinical support, only two principals identified a crisis team as an enabling component. Apple School's principal noted the following about the effectiveness of their counselors and clinicians:

I got a call from a [high school] counselor. One of the teachers over there was like "Oh my gosh, you know, my student told me his sister is over there, and she's cutting herself. She is in so much trouble." I go to follow up and sure enough, we already know about it and we have plans in place.

Immediate assistance in crisis. Two of the school sites have therapeutic-day treatment counselors (TDT), while four of the school sites refer directly to day treatment centers when students are in crisis. Lemon School, located in rural Virginia, gave an example of his frustration with the lack of resources and training for his staff when a student was in crisis:

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There were times, I mean, I can remember a day where we had four kids, and they decided today was the day they were going to let us know [suicide]. I've got one counselor, one AP and myself, and with four kids in crisis, that didn't work. I have one in the conference room, and I [have] one in my office, and I was bouncing back and forth between kids. I told my AP and counselor, 'just make it work.'

Follow-up care. At Lemon School, when a student has been out due to mental-health concerns, there is a structured social-emotional return to learning structure in place. Two specific examples of follow-up care were noted by principals, with Strawberry School's principal noting the comprehensive Signs of Suicide program and its follow-up structure: Counselors meet with students whose screener result indicated concern:

So, my director of student services and counselors the last two years have done the signs of suicide program with seventh-grade which has been unbelievable. Even though it's only been one grade, it has had an impact across all three grades. So, they will go in and do lessons, and they do a risk assessment. They immediately turn around [counseling/referrals] based on those scores...over 300 kids in the course of four days. They turn right around, and based on scores, pull parents in, recommend counseling, and for some kids, they immediately are taken to [treatment center].

Community involvement. All five school sites focused on efforts to build community among their staff, students and parents. Activities included visiting feeder schools, arranging a unity night (Strawberry), and working extensively with the community at large on community/school events (Lime). Lemon's principal, who was in an accredited with warning status, spent resources working with a like school that had found success. He also joined and learned from a state consortium.

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All five schools expressed frustrations with the challenges of securing partnerships within the community, though Strawberry’s principal spoke at length about several business partnerships they had secured over the years. All five principals expressed interest in learning more about what and how others are securing more business partnerships.

Having seen the other end of the spectrum, working in an elite magnet school in the same district, Apple’s principal sums up one challenge:

You know, this is difficult because finding the time and energy and effort to create business partnerships, is, you know...my schedule is pretty packed every day...I came from a school [elite magnet school] where they have so many different types of partnerships. I’ve had some intense conversations with the division. We can’t talk about equity when there’s not a great effort to create partnerships with some of our most at-risk schools.

Table 4.25 describes the common themes for community involvement from the principal interviews.

Table 4.25

Supports for Increasing Community Involvement to Recruit and Retain Community Resources in Order from Greatest to Least

| Themes for Community Involvement | Number of Supports |
|---|--------------------|
| Community Connections (includes community building) | 32 |
| Outreach to Community to Recruit and Retain Resources | 22 |
| Social Marketing | 6 |

Community connections (includes community building). Through visibility in the community, hosting talent shows, multicultural or unity nights, and creating opportunities for the

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community to donate items to schools, each principal expressed a vested interest in building community. Lemon's principal appeared to have the most difficulty. Citing their remote location and the large, geographical area they serve, he believed that his ability to make connections in the community was greatly stifled: "I mean, it's hard. It's really, really hard. Part of it is because they trust us, but part of it is that they just don't have the ability to help."

At Lime School, community building was one of his strongest allocations, working with leaders in the district to plan for events like the Parade of Lights, the Student Help Desk, and New Teacher Induction. The principal spent a lot of the interview speaking about all that his community does for his school and the district.

Outreach to community to recruit and retain resources. Going out in the community, Orange School does a lot of outreach to retain and recruit resources. The community-school designation, and the community-resource coordinator at Orange, allow for a more strategic alignment and recruitment of resources outside its walls. Orange's principal noted about their increased ability to serve families:

We went from being able to serve 30 kids to 220 families. Having the community school and having that person in my corner, your capacity to serve people and sustain is increased. It not dependent on a staff member who has a pet project that they like to do.

Other examples from principals include visiting local community centers and partnering with sororities and fraternities for student donations. Also, some local businesses offer support to after-school programs. Apple School's principal noted on business partnerships: "This is our first year with [business], and I think they are over the moon with working with us. How responsive we are to them. This is something that means a lot to us."

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Social marketing. Four of the five principals spoke explicitly about the use of social media and the internet to improve community connections and outreach. Strawberry School's principal shared her pride about their hashtag, #theresnoplacelike[Strawberry], and at Apple School, a large television screen in the main office waiting area has Twitter feeds from staff members. Also active on Twitter, the principal frequently posts events and activities happening at Apple. Lime's principal uses his website to celebrate students and organizations, to include a weekly message that highlights individual Twitter feeds. He often includes videos of students working on various projects.

Student and family access to effective services and special assistance. All five school principals provide varying levels of support for the basic needs of their students and families. Lemon School's campus model allows for a wellness center, complete with doctors, dentists, and social workers for students and families in crisis. Lime School works with a local food bank, as does Orange School, to provide a Family Market each month. Both Lime and Orange have feeder-school opportunities to ensure that there is potential for a family in need to receive food for the entire month.

Orange's principal elaborates on the opportunity that the Family Market affords his community:

We take tables and line them up on this hallway...the idea is to maintain their dignity.

So, they shop. We don't put together a bag and give it to them. They take their bag, and they shop for what they want...We do that on the third Wednesday of the month.

With social work support and the care of their staff members, each school site spoke about their ability to provide school supplies, backpacks, coats, and other items to students in

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need. Four of the five school sites rely on staff donations of time and material items to supplement the needs of their communities.

Lime’s principal noted, “After my son outgrew his newborn clothing, I brought it in, and it was taken by community members in need. We have clothing donations at every Family Market event.”

Table 4.26 describes the common themes for student and family assistance and supports from the principal interviews.

Table 4.26

Supports for Student and Family Access to Effective Services and Special Assistance in Order from Greatest to Least

| Themes for Student and Family Services | Number of Supports |
|---|--------------------|
| Access to Direct Health, Mental Health, and Economic Assistance (includes food and other basic needs) | 18 |
| Enhancing Stakeholder Awareness of Services | 9 |
| Timely Support for Parents | 9 |

Access to direct health, mental health, and economic assistance (includes food and other basic needs). Already mentioned are the crisis supports in place for students in need. Each school site noted opportunities for students in need of food and clothing, with two of the school sites providing a monthly Family Market for families in need of food to come shop. With the community coordinator, Orange provides immediate, community-based support and services to families in need.

Lemon School uses its campus to its advantage. With a wellness center on school grounds, students who are sick or in need of immediate medical attention are first triaged by the

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school nurse and then directed to the wellness center. They can receive prescriptions and a medical diagnosis at this site:

And so, we started working with some outside agencies, and when it was all said and done, we were able to get a wellness center at our elementary school on the southern campus. We did medical; we did dental; and we did social work...so a student has a toothache or a fever, and I'm like, 'OK, get in the car,' and I take them over to the center to get a prescription.

Enhancing stakeholder awareness of services. Like the previous theme, the community school's model at Orange School creates a seamless opportunity to distribute resources to families in need. Four of the five school sites provide formal resource fairs for families, with vendors and agencies available to offer services and answer questions. One of the school sites (Lime) provides an immigration attorney to help families navigate their rights and the rules of citizenship and immigration.

Timely support for parents. The Family Market and parenting classes, like the Financial Aid Information Session, help to keep parents informed of available supports. With the Wellness Center, opportunities for free eye glasses, and staff/community donations around holidays, parents at all five schools are given some level of timely support from their respective school communities.

Other-leadership traits. The Adelman and Taylor school improvement model (2008) provided a programmatic qualification for every learning support the principals had allocated. At the center of the learning supports is leadership, which supported the study's focus on the principal's decision making with regards to resource allocations (Figure 3.2). Interestingly, what emerged from this study were parallel and similar *principal traits* among the five school

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sites, not qualifiable in the learning or enabling supports of the Adelman and Taylor improvement model (2008). Central to the improvement of each one of these schools was the selection and empowerment of the school's principal to make decisions on behalf of their schools.

Lemon School's principal summed up the tenacity needed to lead in these school sites well when he stated, "... I realized that I had chewed on a monster." The leadership traits that can emerged from the study of these five principals are found in Table 4.27.

Table 4.27

Other Supports not Qualified in Order from Greatest to Least

| Themes for Other Supports Not Qualified | Number of Supports |
|---|--------------------|
| Principal Leadership in Human Resources | 5 |
| Principal as Culture and Expectations Builder | 4 |
| Principal as Instructional Leader | 2 |

Principal leadership in human resources. Principals were strategic in whom they hired, and how they staffed positions. At Orange School, the principal intentionally hired deans to handle discipline so the assistant principals could focus on instruction; conversely, at Apple, the principal hired a dean to focus on academics. Lime's principal believed the hiring practices of his district were what led to the high-quality learning environments because clear expectations for collaboration were established prior to being selected to the staff.

Principal as culture and expectations builder. These principals loved their schools and community, and they felt accountable to the work and the vision. Each school's principal gave examples of collective-responsibility building and pride in a positive school environment. From

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a “no-venting” policy at Lime School to a “nobody can work harder than me” belief at Lemon School, the principals were invested in the mission that all students can learn.

Principal as instructional leader. Most examples of the principals’ ability to lead instruction could be qualified into the learning supports, but at Lemon particularly, the overwhelming ability for the principal to both lead, monitor, and assess instruction was evident. He interfaced with the Standards of Learning and required teachers to submit assessments to him for his review to ensure they aligned to the standards. He learned how to use data effectively, developing structures to make it relevant to teachers and developing expertise within his staff.

Summary

Though participants in this study had no knowledge of the Adelman and Taylor improvement model (2008), they had planned and provided for barriers to student learning, with common themes or categories emerging. With both like and unlike characteristics among each school site, the data found that these effective principals did contextually plan for structures to support the populations they serve.

Each principal closed with a final takeaway that they wanted to ensure was understood. Lemon School’s principal noted,

It was fun. It was hard. I mean it was really hard. I mean blood, sweat and tears. There were times where I would talk to parents, and I would cry because of the situation because we didn’t perform at the level I wanted to.

Lime School’s principal remarked, “We slow the conversation down. We are a tiny family, and we have to work together.”

Orange School’s principal stated, “I’m curious to see when I’m in this job for five years. It’s already been a lot. A lot.”

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Strawberry School's principal remarked in her closing, "Know that we are a great school. Even though the [rating] websites don't always show it."

Apple School's principal final statement was, "I love it."

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to identify how the principals of five high or mid-high poverty, accredited, middle schools both identified and allocated resources to address barriers to teaching and learning. This study used a case study methodology with qualitative analysis to describe how five middle-school leaders in high to mid-high poverty schools planned and provided for barriers to student learning. The data collection techniques for this study included a principal interview and document review for each school, with the respective principal member checking the instrumentation tool and providing feedback or clarification when necessary. I based the design for this study on a review of the school-improvement literature and the application of the learning supports of the Adelman and Taylor improvement model (2008) to the current work in the five schools. As noted, each principal had not previously been aware of the Adelman and Taylor model.

In this chapter, I first present the findings as they relate to the literature and considerations for further discussion. I then provide the practical implications for principals which provides guidance as to what a principal or district leader might implement or do as a result of this study's findings. Finally, Chapter Five provides recommendations for further research, a conclusion, and a reflection.

Key Findings

This study was designed to contribute to research that identifies how school leaders understood and then planned and provided for barriers to student learning, considering the communities they serve. The findings of this study indicated two primary areas for further discussion as they relate to the current research and literature: (1) principals' perceptions of

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what barriers to learning exist; and (2) significant common themes in resource planning that existed in the five middle-school sites studied. Central to the findings of this study was the autonomy in almost all the school settings for each principal to make programmatic decisions based on the needs of their community.

Barriers to student learning. A finding from the study was that all five principals were able to recognize and articulate school-site specific barriers to learning; however, all five participants had not previously been asked to consider barriers to student learning in an intentional or reflective way. Consistent to the findings of Adelman and Taylor, school leadership teams are keenly aware of what challenges their students face (2017, p. 1-8). Adelman and Taylor (2017) further contend, though school leaders are aware of barriers to student learning, they often plan for a reactive, rather than proactive, approach to addressing these challenges, as depicted in the school leader decision-making models outlined in the literature review, Figures 2.1; 2.2; 2.3.

The literature review detailed the three problem types that Adelman & Taylor (2017) identified. Type I problems are environmental; Type II problems are those that occur due to a mismatching of environment and ability; and Type III problems are internal or personal problems that a student has (Adelman & Taylor, 2017).

A second finding from the study was that all five of the perceived barriers to student learning identified by principals, except one, qualify as a Type I problem (Adelman & Taylor, 2017). This finding is in accordance with research that suggests that the primary cause of almost all barriers to learning are external factors that are beyond the control of the student (Adelman & Taylor, 2017, p. 1-9).

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Table 5.1 provides a summary of the barriers to student learning identified by the principals.

Table 5.1

Table of Summary Barriers to Student Learning (from Chapter 4)

| Lemon | Lime | Orange | Strawberry | Apple |
|---|---------------------------------|-------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| Generational Poverty | Poverty | Poverty ELL Rigor | Poverty ELL Adult (low) Expectations | ELL Rigor |
| Prior Deficits Inequity in Resources | Trauma District Resources | Transiency | | Trauma Prior Deficits |
| Lack of Access to Medical Social Emotional | Socioeconomic- Status Divide | | | Size |
| Lack of Access to Experiences | New Students (*II) | Military Connected | | |

*Type II problem

Environmental (Type I problems). The principals in this study discussed poverty and lack of background experiences and access to learning as affecting their students.

Poverty. Four of the five principals noted poverty and its implications, specifically, as a barrier to student learning. Poverty’s adverse role on student achievement is well documented, with numerous study’s showing that schools must intervene early and provide unique resources and learning opportunities to students from low socio-economic status (Jones, 2018; Finnigan-Carr, Vandigo, Uretsky, Oloyede & Mayden, 2015; Dotson & Foley, 2016). Working with

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social, public, and civic organizations, principals in this study arranged for clothing and food donations and medical and dental services.

Deficient background experiences. All five of the study's principals cited some level of deficient educational experiences or inadequate schooling as a major barrier to student success. Three of the school principals discussed the importance of high-teacher expectations for students in high to mid-high poverty schools, and particularly, that teachers must ensure access to rigor and perceive students are able to do so. Tabitha Dell' Angelo (2016) found that teacher self-efficacy, even in schools with large enrollment numbers, was the number one factor in student achievement gains. Dell' Angelo stated, "Lowered expectations of students as a function of attributing obstacles to student learning as completely beyond the teachers' control is a maladaptive coping strategy that negatively impacts the teacher's ability to support student learning (p. 254)."

Large enrollment. Apple's principal noted that the size of his school presented an obstacle. He thought the problem involved his inability to secure the many resources needed for his school. Overcrowding appeared to be less of a problem, in part because Apple's principal established a structure, known as "The Team," that offers a sub-school environment for rising seventh graders who need additional support. The Team mirrors much of Adelman and Taylor's (2017) recommendation that organizing into sub schools and smaller programs within larger schools offers one way to combat overcrowding and school size effectively (p. 2-5). I discuss one aspect of The Team in greater depth later in this chapter.

Trauma. Trauma, at some level, was readily alluded to in each interview, with graphic examples of staff-learning opportunities to better understand the needs of students who had been through it. Principals in this study retained trauma-informed specialists, teams for crisis-

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response, and professional learning opportunities for their staff. Villareal (2015) details the importance of school crisis teams to recognize and plan for the often “unmet mental health needs of students experiencing trauma” (p. 4).

Military connected. A unique example by one principal of the military-connected student was given with the belief that the mental health of the parents who are deployed and subsequent post-traumatic stress disorder provide a barrier in his community (Orange). The most current research on military-connected students demonstrates the need for further study on how best to accommodate their specific and unique mental health needs (De Pedro, Astor, Gilreath, Benbenishty & Berkowitz, 2018).

Interaction between the student and the environment problem (Type II). As noted in the literature review, Type II problems occur when there is a mismatch between the student and the environment. Only one of these problem types was identified as a barrier during this study.

Community building. One principal articulated only one barrier that would qualify into a different problem type than the environmental or Type I problem. Lime’s principal noted that because of the small community and district, students new to the school often felt out of place and as if they did not belong. Riley (2013) noted that central to the success of schools is the school leader’s ability to create “a sense of shared community” (p. 270). Through the use of community-building opportunities like student ambassadors and community-outreach activities like festivals, parades, and international nights, he was intentional in community-building opportunities at Lime School, noting more community engagement and outreach activities than any other principal interviewed.

Barriers to learning further discussion. Though funding and programs alone do not improve a school, Lockwood (1998), suggested that the conditions for productivity would be

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best met if schools are given the time to answer the simple question: “What other conditions, outside of school, are in place that affect learning?” (p. 15). The five principals in this study were asked to reflect on a similar question during their interview. The fact that all the barriers to student learning that principals identified, save one, fell into the category of a Type I problem according to Adelman and Taylor (2017) implores some discussion about how districts might provide more *effective* funding and resources to address these, Type I, environmental challenges, specifically, and then give principals the autonomy to lead the work in their schools. Principals who maintain high expectations of achievement in low income schools have long been cited as being the most effective, but until research begins to identify the current levers of change within schools, school improvement continues to be a “haphazard affair” (Seashore, 2009, p. 136).

The current decision-making structures referenced in Chapter Two posited that principals and districts often lead school communities in problem solving student underachievement based on hunches or disaggregated test data by subgroups. The principals then allocate resources with measurements for success and accountability to those allocations being unsystematic. The principals in this study easily and readily identified barriers to student learning when questioned and had resources in place that supported those barriers. However, except for the curricular and instructional based supports that weren’t necessarily designed to address barriers and utilized SOL tests and common-assessment data as the measurement of success, only one principal had developed a system for measuring the effectiveness of an innovation: Apple’s, The Team. Data and outcome measurements specific to addressing each of the barriers to student learning might provide the levers mentioned in the preceding paragraph needed for schools to truly improve (Seashore, 2009; Murphy 2013).

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School and district leaders might consider engaging in a more purposeful and intentional structure of identifying barriers to learning, systematically organizing interventions, programs and resource allocations to address those barriers, and then assessing effectiveness. This study provided perspectives from five principals in three different school districts and their resource allocation. The findings indicated there was some intentionality that principals expressed in alignment but also indicated the need for a more cohesive structure.

Common themes: learning supports. Considering only those learning supports that had greater than 10 resource allocations, there were noteworthy common themes in resource allocation that emerged in each one of the Adelman and Taylor learning-supports components. The study found that, given these five principal interviews, Adelman and Taylor’s learning-supports components provided for a qualification of all supports that these principals provided. For discussion purposes, it was interesting that clear principal-leadership qualities emerged for these effective principals: There was an obvious tone, tenacity, and resolve in each principal interview. This is interesting since it provides an avenue for discussion related to the conceptual framework that I had not originally foreseen: The attributes of a school leader who effectively provides resources to overcome barriers to student learning (see Figure 3.2 [center of figure]). For discussion purposes, I use a crosswalk (Table 5.2) of the principal-leadership qualities that emerged in the “other” category and the prevalent learning supports (greater than 10) as they relate to the literature.

Table 5.2

Leadership Qualities from “Other” Category and Prevalent Theme Crosswalk

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| | Principal as Human Resources Coordinator | Principal as Instructional Leader | Principal as Culture and Expectations Builder |
|--------------------------------|--|---|---|
| | | Curricular Enrichment | |
| Classroom Based Approaches | Instructional Support (Staffing) | Instructional Support | |
| Transitions | | Enhancing Professional Development Daily Transitions | Stakeholder Involvement |
| Home Involvement | | | School-Home Connections Learning Needs of the Family |
| Crisis Response and Prevention | Crisis Awareness and Capacity Building | | Prevention and Intervention |
| Community Involvement | Community Resources | | Community Connections |
| Student and Family Assistance | Access to Health and Other Services | | |

Principal as human resources coordinator. A finding from this study was that at varying levels, all five principals had creatively planned for staff training around crisis awareness; traded or negotiated staffing resources to increase instructional capacity and align resources to the vision of their schools; and, leveraged the community's resources. Human resources management is about clearly articulating the objectives of an organization and then deploying its resources to maximize efficiency, reach the objectives, and meet the organization's stakeholders needs (Anghel, Jaradat, Gherman & Gabrea, 2015).

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Crisis awareness and capacity building. Each principal spent professional learning time and staffing resources on crisis awareness and capacity building within their respective school environments and continued to spend time and resources to look for more opportunities for their staff to grow. Orange School's principal noted:

We did the Trauma 101 training. We are looking forward to bringing the Trauma 102 training when it is released because it goes into more strategies. I think all my staff really got it, and said 'Yes, a lot of our kids are coming from areas of trauma, but how do we deal with it? How do we help them?'

When Lemon School's principal recalls the presentation to a state's designee about his school-improvement journey, he noted:

I told her, please tell me what else I can do? Look at all I've done, and if you have other ideas, I'm all ears. I don't have anything else that I know to do. She told me that I had done more than most schools, and that they really do not have an answer or any better solutions to offer.

Community resources. Whether it be through staffing "trades" or advocacy at the district level, each principal worked to ensure that the appropriate staff was in place and that appropriate training was provided. For four of the principals, full-time clinicians and an active community-services presence was in place, and for one of the school principals, grant funding afforded his school a community services specialist as a full-time staff member. Strobach (2019) cited that an estimated 1 in 5 students have mental health issues and approximately 80% do not receive any services for them (p. 16). Strobach furthers by stating that among those that do receive services, the "vast majority receive them in the school setting" (p. 16).

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All five of the school sites interviewed had partnered in some way with the community to secure resources for their students. Lime School's principal stated:

Our police department is great. They have come in to do training with our staff in the event of an emergency...and we have a TDT [therapeutic-day treatment] counselor who comes in to work with some of our students who qualify for Medicare.

Instructional support (staffing). These school leaders thought beyond the hiring practices of instructional staff and viewed themselves as coordinating the staffing inside and outside the classroom. Coordination of school staff was varied based on the principal's leadership style and the current state of his or her leadership team. As an example, at Orange School where the principal was able to hire his entire administrative team, deans were also hired so that APs could focus on instructional leadership. At Apple School, a Dean of Academics was created to focus on instructional leadership to support the already-established administrative team. Apple also resourced each core content area with a full-time coach.

Orange School's principal noted about his AP hiring:

As you know, discipline and safety and behavior can be its own monster, and basically all the assistant principal does. But, I didn't hire my assistant principals for that reason. They come in with a lot of different expertise in different areas.

Conversely, Apple School's principal stated:

I think creating an academic dean was a big one. It is probably the first thing [most proud]. You know, in a school of our size, we have some terrific admin, but at the same time, reflecting on my own journey, I don't know how much secondary-level assistant principals, in general, instructional leaders are. They are great managers, but we really had to build up our skill set.

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Principal as instructional leader. Another finding was that the principals in this study were all instructional leaders: Empowering their staff through collaboration and a shared vision and modeling instructional expectations in their day to day interactions (Adams, 2014). They were dynamic leaders and highly visible in their communities (Badenhorst & Koalepe, 2014). In all five interviews, instructional practices comprised the bulk of their understanding of addressing barriers to learning for students. The Principal of Strawberry School believed that rigor and adult expectations of student abilities were barriers. Lemon, Orange, and Apple School's principals believed that the prior quality of instructional experiences (elementary) presented barriers. Each school leader gave insight, as discussed in the next section, into the importance of high expectations for student learning and classroom-based interventions.

Curricular enrichment. It was clear from each interview that a focus on learning essentials and targets and the will and skill to ensure their communities were active Professional Learning Communities were core leadership beliefs for all five principals. Each school's principal had implemented consistent requirements and expectations for all classrooms, with four of the five articulating a clear structure for formal and individualized feedback around those requirements.

Formative assessments. Lemon School's principal required constant, formative assessment, purchasing over 100 white boards for classroom teachers to use. Students were expected to immediately practice new learning, so that teachers could quickly gauge their students' progress. The purpose of formative assessment is to improve teaching and learning and diagnose student difficulties, and it is usually informal (Dixson & Worrell, 2016). The formative assessment expectations at Lemon School align with the philosophy that they should serve as a

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teacher's gauge as to the quality of learning and teaching, and if used correctly, modifications and corrections can be made instantaneously (Dixson & Worrell, 2016).

Writing Across the Curriculum. A focus on writing at Orange School requires that each collaborative team, organized by subject and grade level, selects a time to complete a writing assignment with their students. The principal and his team collect one example from each collaborative team of what they consider to be low, medium, and high writing, according to their rubric, and the leadership team gives feedback to the teachers. Writing Across the Curriculum(WAC) is founded in the idea that writing is crucial in a person's intellectual development and career preparation (McLaren, 2013). Though the actual quantifiable outcomes of WAC have been difficult to measure, it is likely because most WAC programs have been more results oriented than research oriented (McLaren, 2013,p. 19) The use and norming of rubrics helps Orange school's principal determine what professional learning or further assistance his teachers need to fully implement WAC.

Engagement/Workshop model. Three of the five school principals reported a specific focus on the Engagement or Workshop Model. One principal, Lemon School's, reported a structure for teacher observation that mirrored expectations for many of the Model's components as well. Cris Tovani's Workshop model consists of a division of instructional time into segments that include direct instruction and independent work time, with the work time being the longest portion of the model (Tovani, 2012). Proponents of the model see the potential for immediate feedback to students after learning targets are introduced and a mini lesson is completed by the teacher. It also limits the amount of time the teacher is lecturing and allows for individualized, two-way communication between the teacher and the student (Tovani, 2012). At Apple, Strawberry, and Orange School, there is an expectation for implementation of the Engagement

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Model. At Lemon School, the principal uses an observation model similar to the Engagement Model. He observes teachers and copiously writes down how much time is in teacher talk versus student talk:

I had my tools where I collected data, and then I made the data fit the form....I would write down every question that the teacher would ask within a five-minute block and chart who was talking and who wasn't talking. And then I would give the percentage to the teacher, and I would ask, 'Did you know you were talking 80% of the time? Who's working harder, you or the kid?'

Instructional support. Leading the use of technology to promote equity in the classroom was central to three of the five principals' beliefs about instructional leadership. Adelman and Taylor (2017) cite the ever-evolving landscape of technology and its implications on instructional leadership as being a challenge among school leaders. All three of those principals who had provided for technology in their plans for improvement had embraced its importance in teaching and learning. Lime School's principal stated, "It's amazing what our students can do with a Chromebook and the cloud. They just get it, and they know how to use it to learn."

Like instructional rounds, Apple School's leadership team has developed a modified system that supports a continuous improvement cycle for teaching and learning, treating teachers as active learners (Fullan, 2006). The process of Rounds consists of the following: A problem of practice; observation; observation data debrief; and identification of the next level of work (Meyer-Looze, 2015). At Apple, a teacher identifies an area in which they would like to improve. A team of observers randomly observes and records data. The team revisits for another random observation to gather more data. The team then meets with the teacher to present the data, and discuss next steps, or possible strategies the teacher might implement to

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improve in the area the teacher had previously identified. The team revisits the teacher's classroom for a scheduled observation to observe the teacher's intentional implementation of the strategies and recommendations of the initial Rounds:

[It] is just really objective feedback that you're trying to capture as much as you can...so if it's student discourse, I would write down as much evidence as I saw about student discourse, like students reading, writing, thinking, discussing, and then we align with the level of thinking the student was doing...then, you sit down with the teacher and you say, 'here's the evidence'.

Instructional rounds have been found to be a powerful tool for improving the teaching, learning, and feedback cycle for teachers and administrators (Meyer-Looze, 2015). Not only does it keep the dialogue focused on instruction, providing a common dialogue among school leaders and teachers, but it also provides a school with some direction on what is and isn't working in their classrooms (Meyer-Looze, 2015).

Enhanced professional learning. "Leaders must recognize that coaching teachers and helping teachers stimulate one another's growth is 'people' work, not 'process' work" (Rodman, p. 18). Each of the five principals designed professional-learning opportunities, two based on personalized learning and three based on school-wide assessment needs with uneven effectiveness as evidenced by the consistent redesign of professional learning at all five school sites. Though professional learning is often the technique districts and schools employ, the most effective professional learning would include a consistent focus on the topic and on the actual "intellectual work" of students and teachers (Lockwood, 1998, p. 21), not a one-shot in service with the hope that teachers acquire a certain strategy. Teachers and school leaders need to understand the valuable role that each play in school improvement and planning (Rice & Harris,

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2003). Much like Strawberry School implemented with choice-professional learning and the instructional-rounds, personalized observation structure at Apple, the research would best support a model that allows for teachers to select their professional-learning areas for improvement based on individual interests and the needs of the school (Rodman, 2018).

Daily transitions. All five school principals went into detail about their leadership in modifying daily transitions, with a focus on the remediation and enrichment opportunities for their students. In *Role Call* (2019), Dr. Robert Canady posits that building the daily schedule for students is among the administrator's most important tasks, with instructional implications on technology use, quality of authentic assessment opportunities, and quality of viable participation in electives classes (p. 11). He further contends that principals should consider alternative and individualized schedules within the current bell-schedule schools follow (p. 11). One of the five principals offered such a structure. Apple School's The Team, grouped the same 120 students for all four core classes, placed them in a separate structure, and asked those teachers to partner and "ignore the bells." All five schools had created and implemented an intervention period that did allow for enrichment, based on student interests, and remediation, based on student needs.

Principal as culture and expectations builder. A finding from this study was that the principals all expressed their belief in the importance of culture and expectations building in some capacity. The belief of all five principals was that with the correct structures and supports in place, all students could be "saved." Three of the principals believed that middle school provided the greatest opportunity for students to realize their potential, and all five principals expressed both their willingness to innovate and think outside the box and their respective district's support of their leadership.

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Lemon School's principal stated his belief in the arts as did Orange and Strawberry School's principal. Lime's principal spoke about enrichment opportunities during their intervention time and in after-school programs, and Apple's principal developed new teaming positions and leadership structures to support more rigorous classroom instruction. The leaders' willingness and sense of urgency to innovate, particularly at the middle level, is supported by the literature (Shaefer, Malu, & Yoon, 2016; Weilbacher, 2019). The research points to the need for teachers to adopt a philosophy of high expectations and a willingness to uniquely problem solve the challenges of individual students as having the most impact on student achievement (Dell, 2016).

Stakeholder involvement, community and school-home connections. All but one (Lime School) principal spoke about the challenges of making connections with businesses, parents, and other stakeholders. The importance of creating structures that engage all stakeholders is well documented, with high-performing schools often receiving the highest parent scores on parent surveys (Elgart, 2017). Yet, schools with the most at-risk students are often those who still struggle to establish strong connections with all stakeholders (Pavlakis, 2018). Each of the five school sites had partnered with community organizations to provide support with clothing donations, food donations, and mental-health resources, but still the principals believed that their efforts were still lacking. Apple School's principal expressed the most frustration, believing that the time and energy it took to gain business partnerships and leverage more community support wasn't feasible in his overly taxing workload. His feelings of frustration about managing all the "roles" of the modern principal align with the findings of Adelman and Taylor (2017). Principals in this study believed that the principalship had taken a toll on their ability to spend

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time with their family, and many in the study perceived themselves to be ineffective because of their myriad responsibilities.

Pavlakis (2018) presented six key drivers for making connections with stakeholders: help families in their home environments; provide an understanding for how parents can help learning at home; create effective forms of two-way communication; encourage volunteerism within the school; include stakeholders in decisions that are made; and collaborate often within the community (p. 1051). All five principals interviewed had attempted structures that pertain to some of these drivers, suggesting that a menu of methods and techniques to increase stakeholder engagement might be warranted to help principals manage the challenge and subsequent stress it creates.

Learning needs of the family. Discovering the learning needs of families was challenging because of the principals' perceived inadequacies in making home-school connections. Though every principal understood and spoke about the impact of the lack of support from families, all five principals also noted that for many parents of their most struggling students, it is because of their own lack of understanding about the subject matter being taught. This aligns with the findings of Pavlakis (2018) which found that "Some parents believed that their own education hindered their ability to oversee homework..." (p. 1065). His research suggests that schools look for more scaffolds for these parents (p. 1065). From rural Lemon School's challenge of parents who believed their children's fate was already decided based on their own experiences, to the predominantly Central American parents who had trouble conceptualizing American schools, each principal attempted parent programs that might address their needs. Only one school, Strawberry, used a needs-based assessment to craft a parent program. In communities that struggle with supporting parent needs, Pavlakis (2018) suggests that a menu of resources be

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readily provided to parents, and school social workers become the mediators to direct students to support.

Prevention and intervention. The school's principal is the primary driver of the school's vision, ensuring all resources align (Adams, 2014). Principals in this study led with the belief that it was the school's responsibility to find supports for student needs. From second breakfasts at three schools, to a crisis list maintained by the Principal of Lemon School, each principal gave examples of their own initiative to proactively address the needs of their students, at any expense. When Strawberry School's principal began the journey to become a 1:1 environment, she partnered with Common Sense Media to become a Common-Sense School. When Apple School's principal noted the need to have a staff member who managed the support structures in place for students, he recruited a staff member with a professional-school counseling background to manage their processes.

School leadership and common themes further discussion. During the interview of all five of these principals, compelling leadership traits emerged which provides some consideration for further discussion of the type of leader needed for substantive, community-based changes like Adelman and Taylor school improvement model (2008) would need. The common themes among each one of the learning-supports categories validate that school principals are aware of the need to accommodate barriers to student learning (Adelman & Taylor, 2017). However, the fact that there is not an organized manner that is articulated for each principal is what leads to the disparities in resource allocation (Adelman & Taylor, 2017). Only one principal spoke about attendance challenges, and though student mental health and wellness were discussed, the systematic way that schools might measure the effectiveness of the supports they have in place for these students was not evident, despite prompting, during the interviews. In addition, though

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supports were in place for family assistance, like food banks or clothing donations, all five principals relied on some level of students, peers, or families reporting their needs in order to access support. The student(s) had to know to ask.

Though the study did not originally seek to identify leadership traits of principals who serve in accredited high to mid-high poverty middle schools, they did emerge from the findings. In a recent rural-schools study, the Alabama State Department of Education sought to create a program that helped provide a pipeline for turnaround principals, focusing on three major tenets that they found viable in turnaround-principal leadership: (1) the ability to address poverty (culture and expectations); (2) retaining and attracting high-quality teaching staffs (human resources); (3) the ability to cobble together resources in an innovative way because of a lack of funding (instructional leadership) (Reames, 2018). Though only one of the principals in this study was from a rural community, all the principals had leadership qualities that aligned with Alabama's turnaround-principal traits. A second study, published in the *Academy of Educational Leadership Journal* found that the strongest correlations to student achievement in National Blue Ribbon, Title 1 Schools were the principal's ability to inspire a shared vision (culture and expectations builder), challenge the processes (instructional leadership), enable others to act (instructional leadership/human resources), and encourage the heart (human resources/culture and expectations builder) (McKinney, Labat M., & Labat C., 2015, p.163).

The findings from what was commonly provided in the five schools was just as important as what was not common among the schools and provides a platform for further discussion. Is the lack of certain learning supports in a school environment contributing to the lack of success of certain students? Epstein (2011) introduced a theory of overlapping spheres, one that suggests that schools, the community, and the family must be equal partners in the education of students.

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For schools like those interviewed, the limited resources from the community, lack of ability and availability of familial support, and the lack of funding to the schools, often creates a perfect storm; one that is very challenging for school leaders to effectively weather.

Implications from the Study's Finding for Principals

The implications of this research are found at multiple levels: school, district, state, and national. Though ESSA (2015) required school accountability with regards to subgroups, and states have developed structures to measure success through standardized test and attendance data, guidance is still needed as to how schools and districts might address students who are underperforming according to these measures. An accountability structure that requires schools and/or districts to consider the environmental and personal conditions that might be contributing to a student's performance and plan for learning supports to accommodate those conditions might do the following:

Address all the factors that affect performance. Continuous improvement requires examining leadership, resource allocation, teaching and learning, and student engagement and helps school leaders shift the focus from outcomes (such as low-test scores or absenteeism) to the multiple factors that contribute to them (Elgart, 2018, p. 55).

From a practitioner's lens, there are implications that principals or district leaders might consider for each learning component.

Consider what barriers to student learning exist within your community. Principals from the interview had not considered barriers to student learning in a structured and reflective manner such as was provided in the interview. All five principals were able to articulate barriers to student learning when prompted in the semi-structured interview, yet not all of them were able to produce precisely tailored solutions to those barriers. A reflective structure that allows

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principals to be asked and answer the question of what barriers to learning exist, and then develop intentional resource allocation, might help narrow school-wide resources into a more systematic and intentional use.

Develop intervention time during the school day. The creation and constant evaluation of an intervention block, whether daily or every other day, was consistent among school sites, though how each school used this time still varied. Statistically Lime was the most successful with regards to student-achievement data and used the block for remediation and acceleration opportunities for its students.

Implement a Professional Learning Community. Professional Learning Communities, or collaborative-learning teams, were vital to the success of each school site as well, with instructional coaches and school administrators serving as facilitators of their work. These collaborative teams worked to ensure that curricular expectations were the same and aligned with the standards, implementing such uniformed, schoolwide structures as learning targets and the Engagement Model.

Implement structures to support transitions for students. Each school site offered summer transition programs and created unique bell schedules, from double-block English and Math (Lemon and Lime) to bell-less blocks for Apple's The Team. Principals should consider the transition opportunities for students who are new to their school and consider how they can alter their current bell structure to ensure those students who need additional time or a varied learning environment, might best be served.

Create intentional and targeted opportunities for parent engagement. Being purposeful about parent-learning opportunities is an important implication from this study.

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School principals might consider clearly identifying the unique needs of their parent community, and then crafting a communication/outreach plan for each stakeholder.

Conduct home/community visits. Principals should consider creating home involvement or engagement opportunities that take them out into the community, like home or community-center visits. Since each principal from this study expressed some frustration with parent involvement, another implication for principals might be to consider how many opportunities require a parent's or student's initiative, such as reading a newsletter or self-identifying with a need.

Hire clinical staffing. The need for clinical staffing was a clear finding in this study, with three principals noting their school's partnership with the Community Services Board to ensure the community's resources were used in supporting students. Principals should consider what clinical staffing and community-resource supports they currently have and align those for crisis prevention and intervention. Principals should also consider utilizing school counselors for early-intervention programs.

Implement trauma-informed teaching strategies. Trauma and its effects were noted at each of the five school sites. Principals and district leaders should offer or develop trauma-informed professional development activities. Such activities might include awareness, empathy-building, and best practices in instruction.

Use social media and partner with like schools. Principals can easily begin using social media as both a support mechanism and an avenue to leverage community support. Another implication for principals from the study is the need to identify like schools and partner to find solutions for students in need.

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Partner with the community’s social services and civic organizations. Principals should look towards their community-services board and local churches and civic organizations to provide services and donations to students and families in need.

Prioritize principal professional development. Principals should always remain the lead learner in the community they serve. The leadership-learning implications and expectations for principals to engage in are as follows: (1) continue to expand knowledge of instructional leadership, especially as it pertains to Professional Learning Communities; (2) consider creative uses of staffing, innovative professional learning for staff, and strategic hiring; (3) and, build and believe in a culture of school pride and high expectations.

Recommendations for Further Research

Further research might include the study of schools that were not able to meet state-accreditation guidelines to determine whether certain learning supports are missing or scarcely resourced in comparison to schools that are making accreditation. Gaining permission for a study such as this from a school-site principal might be challenging. Other opportunities for further study exist in a more detailed and rigorous examination of each of the learning supports categories or in a study that is designed to provide more quantifiable evidence of the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of specific-learning supports. With a purposeful implementation of the Adelman and Taylor improvement model (2008) in a variety of a school settings, a study could be done on the effectiveness of the entire model as it relates to improving overall student achievement outcomes.

A replication study of more middle school sites or the expansion into high and elementary schools might provide more detail on the common themes and specific programs within those common themes that emerge. This could be used as the basis for programmatic

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evaluation prior to spreading or scaling up. A replication study might also provide more insight into the viability of a school improvement model such as Adelman and Taylor's provide.

Though Adelman and Taylor (2008) contend that all the learning supports must be in place, a detailed study of each individual learning support might provide more literature to be considered for review. For example, a more focused and detailed study on the common themes of transition support as a learning support in and of itself, might provide an avenue for a more comprehensive development of a menu of options for that learning support. Though Adelman and Taylor provide what might qualify in this category, there is still much research needed (Adelman & Taylor, 2014).

Finally, the emerging leadership qualities and traits provide an unexpected opportunity for further research as well. At the center of the learning supports is leadership and resource coordination, and though much research exists on the dynamic traits of turnaround principals, the leadership characteristics of school principals who allocate resources specific to the Adelman and Taylor improvement model (2008), has not been studied. This is likely because the model itself has only recently been brought to scale in some districts and states.

Conclusion

This broad study provided details on how five school principals of high to mid-high poverty middle schools identified and then provided resources to address barriers to student learning. Using a case-study methodology, I provided a detailed description of the principal-perceived barriers to student learning and allocated resources to address those barriers, and I qualified those in the learning supports components of the Adelman and Taylor improvement model (2008). The study found that all the learning supports that the five principals used could be qualified into one of those already determined by Adelman and Taylor (2008), though the principals had

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no knowledge of the model prior to the interview. Surprisingly, certain leadership traits of those principals who had planned for barriers to student learning emerged as prominent themes in the study.

The research presented in the literature review evidences consideration for further study on more comprehensive structures for school improvement. Though educational reform has brought glimpses through efforts like Comprehensive School Reform and community schools, often the cost of sustaining these efforts has led to a limited ability to gather definitive research; however, the achievement and equity gaps remain, even in those schools studied.

How might school leaders plan for leading a comprehensive approach to student learning? In *Systemic Change and School Improvement*, Adelman and Taylor (2007) provide a detailed pathway for implementation; one that includes a multi-year implementation structure that allows for knowledge-building of all stakeholders. Each of the detailed four phases were created to build towards the ongoing evolution of the school's organization (p. 62):

Phase I: Creating readiness and culture

Phase II: Initial Implementation

Phase III: Institutionalization

Phase IV: Ongoing evolution

The journal article concludes with recommendations for large-scale improvement to be better researched and scaled-up models to be articulated (Adelman & Taylor, 2007). As the climate of school improvement continues to become more diverse, only those that carefully include both human and systemic capital and consider both environmental and person conditions can be most effective (Adelman & Taylor, 2011).

Reflection

Being passionate about the interaction and interdependency between schools and the communities they serve, this study provided some evidence that a universal model for school improvement might be viable, if community-context and community consideration is a part of its structure. In qualifying the supports provided by each of the five principals who participated in this study, finding that the Adelman and Taylor improvement model (2008) had essentially articulated a category where each support fit was both surprising and inspiring.

It was surprising in that the original template for this model was developed over twenty years ago. Though it has been refined and clarified, as both public and private education in America has long toiled with how to close achievement gaps, seeing that a potential model does and has existed is very surprising. A cursory internet search provides that Drs. Adelman and Taylor have long advocated for its implementation. Only recently, with the passage of ESSA, have more states, districts, and schools attended to the model.

For the same reason it was surprising, it was also inspiring. Instead of starting anew, with careful and more thorough study and consideration, districts and schools might consider how to align their supports, ask and answer the question of what barriers exist for their students, and think about a more structured method of addressing those barriers. In my own career, the Adelman and Taylor model will inspire improvement in the schools and communities that I lead moving forward.

For me, a hope from this study was to learn whether or not the learning components of Adelman and Taylor were viable and all-inclusive of school supports, and the responses and qualifications from these five schools show strong, positive evidence. This allows more insight and more substantial structures to educating the “whole child.” To sum, using the language of

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Adelman and Taylor (2008), the learning components *are* “What’s missing in school improvement?”

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Appendix A
Email Script

Dear PRINCIPAL,

My name is Erin Lenart, and I am currently a doctoral student with Virginia Tech University's Educational and Policy Studies Department. I am conducting a study on how middle-school leadership teams from high to mid-poverty schools have allocated resources and enabled students who have had barriers to learning, and I am interested in studying the work that you have done at NAME OF SCHOOL. I would like to study your school because of your notable success with the criterion I am using for identifying school's that have improved: A mid-high or high poverty school that received state accreditation according to the new Virginia Standards of Accreditation. I will be using the data to complete my doctoral dissertation which may include submission for publication, but you and your school's information will be kept anonymous unless express permission is granted from NAME OF DISTRICT and you. Dr. William Glenn, professor at Virginia Tech, is serving as my dissertation's chair and supervisor.

I will share the findings and the data for your school site with you, prior to my including it in the dissertation to ensure that it is an accurate representation of the work you have led to notably impact your school's student-learning outcomes. Our initial interview should be approximately 30 minutes long, a follow-up interview should be approximately 60 minutes, and then a final review of findings should be approximately 30 minutes. In the initial interview you will be provided with examples of the types of improvement efforts that will be studied and be afforded the opportunity to ask questions. At any time, I will be available to answer any follow up questions for you as well.

LEADERSHIP IN BARRIERS TO STUDENT LEARNING

If you are willing to participant, I will send more information. I am impressed by your work and commitment to the students and community at NAME OF SCHOOL, and I believe that the information and findings from this study will help other school leaders effectively find and allocate resources for their schools.

Thank you for your consideration,

Erin Lenart

Doctoral Candidate

Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

Appendix B
Email Follow Up

Dear (PRINCIPAL) of (NAME OF SCHOOL),

Thank you for agreeing to consider participation in this study, *Leadership in School Improvement: Planning and Providing for Barriers to Student Learning*. This study has been approved through Western IRB (WIRB). You may contact the WIRB at (800) 562-4789 or help@wirb.com. For your information, this study is WIRB #18-1115. Your participation will be from March through April 2019. I am looking forward to working with you and your school to understand and then qualify and explain what leadership decisions you have made to enable students who have presented with barriers to student learning.

For your reference, I will be using the work of Drs. Adelman and Taylor from the UCLA Center for Mental Health in Schools as a model to qualify the findings. To paint the clearest picture of your leadership in allocating resources to your students and community, I would also like to review other document sources that might be available, such as your staffing and allocation models, calendars, daily schedule, school improvement plans, professional learning plans, your school's website, and any public newsletters or communications you would like to share. As written previously, the complete findings for your school will be given to you to confirm and validate, prior to use in this dissertation.

For your knowledge, my research questions are as follows:

1. What are the barriers that individual principals have identified to student learning/student achievement success?
2. How have principals distributed or allocated resources that address barriers to student learning in schools high to mid-high poverty schools that are accredited?

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3. What were reasons/driving factors behind the principal's decision to create and distribute unique resources and allocations to address these barriers?
4. What common themes and unique resource allocation exist across various school contexts?

The next step in the process is for us to set up a time for our initial interview. I will share with you some of the essential components to the Adelman and Taylor improvement model that I am using to qualify the resource allocation for this study, and some examples of what programs or initiatives might be included as well. At our initial interview, should you agree to continue with the study, I will obtain your signed consent, and I have attached it to this email for your review. As a final reminder, you will have *full review* of the findings, with the ability to adjust, add, approve, disapprove, and provide clarity about your school's data, *prior* to use in the dissertation. At any time, you may choose not to participate in the study as well.

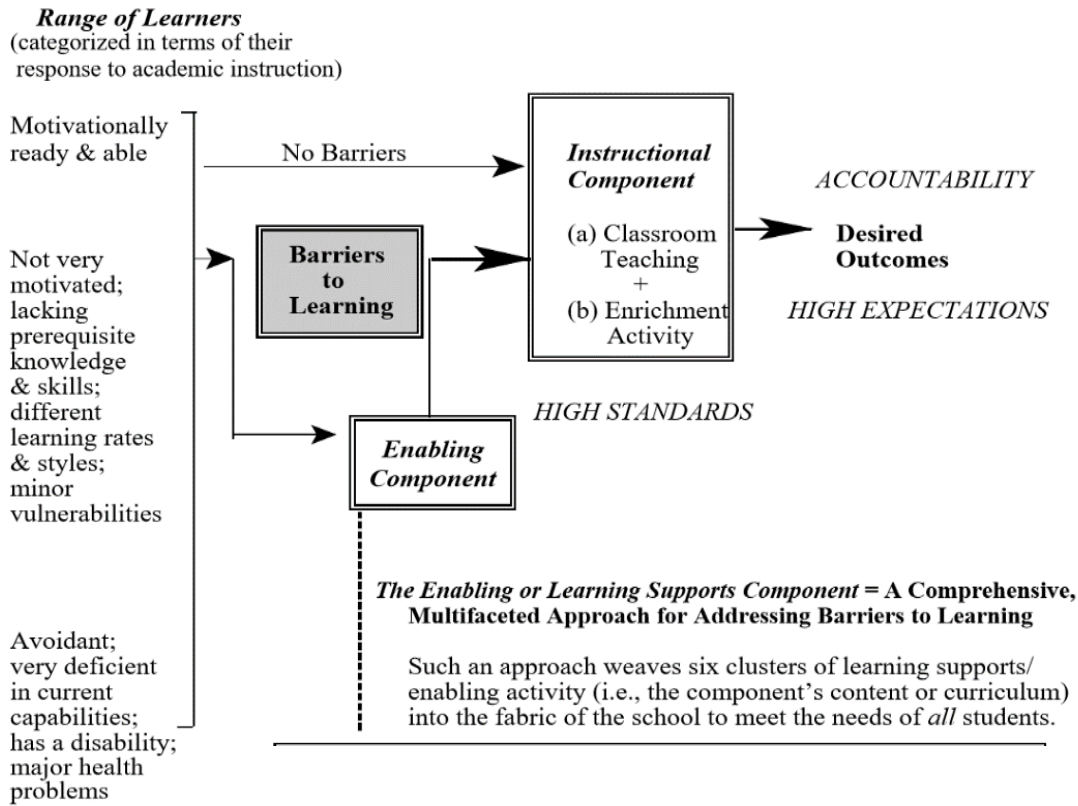
Thank you, again, for a leading the learning with underserved students in great need of extra support. I look forward to our work together.

Most respectfully,

Erin Lenart
Doctoral Candidate
Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

Appendix C
Part 1
Semi-Structured Interview
Interview Date 1: Phone (30 minutes)

Interviewee will be given a copy of the following:



Script: *The graphic represents the model for school improvement that Drs. Adelman and Taylor have created. They are currently the directors at the Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA. As you can see, the authors posit that for schools to improve, they must have an instructional improvement, such as blended learning, PBL, etc., **and** a plan to address barriers to learning that are preventing a student from accessing the instructional improvement. These*

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students are often considered “unmotivated” as you can see from the information on the left of the diagram.

This study is about how principals have provided for barriers to student learning. I understand that you have likely done so without knowledge of this model, but the study is seeking to understand whether models for school improvement should exist that require plans and structures to address barriers to learning, particularly in schools that serve historically at-risk subgroups, like yours. Do you have any questions or wonderings?

Next, I will present the following table to the interviewee:

Examples

- Opening the classroom door to bring available supports in (e.g., peer tutors, volunteers, aids trained to work with students-in-need; resource teachers and student support staff work in the classroom as part of the teaching team)
- Redesigning classroom approaches to enhance teacher capability to prevent and handle problems and reduce need for out of class referrals (e.g. personalized instruction; special assistance as necessary; developing small group and independent learning options; reducing negative interactions and over-reliance on social control; expanding the range of curricular and instructional options and choices; systematic use of prereferral interventions)
- Enhancing and personalizing professional development (e.g., creating a Learning Community for teachers; ensuring opportunities to learn through co-teaching, team teaching, and mentoring; teaching intrinsic motivation concepts and their application to schooling)
- Curricular enrichment and adjunct programs (e.g., varied enrichment activities that are not tied to reinforcement schedules; visiting scholars from the community)
- Classroom and school-wide approaches used to create and maintain a caring and supportive climate
- Ensuring immediate assistance in emergencies so students can resume learning
- Providing Follow up care as necessary (e.g., brief and longer-term monitoring)
- Forming a school-focused Crisis Team to formulate a response plan and take leadership for developing prevention programs

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- Mobilizing staff, students, and families to anticipate response plans and recovery efforts
- Creating a caring and safe learning environment (e.g., developing systems to promote healthy development and prevent problems; mindfulness, bullying and harassment abatement programs)
- Working with neighborhood schools and community to integrate planning for response and prevention
- Capacity building to enhance crisis response and prevention (e.g., staff and stakeholder development, enhancing a caring and safe learning environment)
- Welcoming & social support programs for newcomers (e.g., welcoming signs, materials, and initial receptions; peer buddy programs for students, families, staff, volunteers)
- Daily transition programs for (e.g., before school, breaks, lunch, afterschool)
- Articulation programs (e.g., grade to grade – new classrooms, new teachers; elementary to middle school; middle to high school; in and out of special education programs)
- Summer or intersession programs (e.g., catch-up, recreation, and enrichment programs)
- School-to-career/higher education (e.g., counseling, pathway, and mentor programs; Broad involvement of stakeholders in planning for transitions; students, staff, home, police, faith groups, recreation, business, higher education)
- Broad involvement of stakeholders in planning for transitions (e.g., students, staff, home, police, faith groups, recreation, business, higher education)
- Capacity building to enhance transition programs and activities
- Addressing specific support and learning needs of family (e.g., support services for those in the home to assist in addressing basic survival needs and obligations to the children; adult education classes to enhance literacy, job skills, English-as-a-second language, citizenship preparation)
- Improving mechanisms for communication and connecting school and home (e.g., opportunities at school for family networking and mutual support, learning, recreation, enrichment, and for family members to receive special assistance and to volunteer to help; phone calls and/or e-mail from teacher and other staff with good news; frequent and balanced conferences – student-led when feasible; outreach to attract hard-to-reach families – including student dropouts)
- Involving homes in student decision making (e.g., families prepared for involvement in program planning and problem-solving)
- Enhancing home support for learning and development (e.g., family literacy; family homework projects; family field trips)

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- Recruiting families to strengthen school and community (e.g., volunteers to welcome and support new families and help in various capacities; families prepared for involvement in school governance)
- Capacity building to enhance home involvement
- Planning and implementing outreach to recruit a wide range of community resources (e.g., public and private agencies; colleges and universities; residents; artists and cultural institutions, businesses and professional organizations; service, volunteer, and faith-based organizations; community policy and decision makers)
- Systems to recruit, screen, prepare, and maintain community resource involvement (e.g., mechanisms to orient and welcome, enhance the volunteer pool, maintain current involvements, enhance a sense of community)
- Reaching out to students and families who don't come to school regularly – including truant and dropouts
- Connecting school and community efforts to promote child and youth development and a sense of community
- Capacity building to enhance community involvement and support (e.g., policies and mechanisms to enhance and sustain school-community involvement, staff/stakeholder development on the value of community involvement, “social marketing”)
- Providing extra support as soon as a need is recognized and doing so in the least disruptive ways (e.g., prereferral interventions in classrooms; problem solving conferences with parents; open access to school, district, and community support programs)
- Timely referral interventions for students & families with problems based on response to extra support (e.g., identification/screening processes, assessment, referrals, and follow-up – school-based, school-linked)
- Enhancing access to direct interventions for health, mental health, and economic assistance (e.g., school-based, school-linked, and community-based programs and services)
- Care monitoring, management, information sharing, and follow-up assessment to coordinate individual interventions and check whether referrals and services are adequate and effective
- Mechanisms for resource coordination and integration to avoid duplication, fill gaps, garner economies of scale, and enhance effectiveness (e.g., braiding resources from school-based and linked interveners, feeder pattern/family of schools, community-based programs; linking with community providers to fill gaps)
- Enhancing stakeholder awareness of programs and services

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- Capacity building to enhance student and family assistance systems, programs, and services

Script: These are just some examples that schools and divisions have used to address barriers to learning. Please take some time to review these. Do you have any questions or wonderings?

At our next meeting, I will ask open ended questions about the work you have led at NAME OF SCHOOL.

Part 2
Interview Date 2
Semi-Structured Interview
Day 2 (60 minutes)

Part 1: Background

1. Briefly introduce yourself and how long have you been the principal of your school.
2. We are going to be discussing the improvement journey of your school. Describe your students and your community.
3. What specific challenges are your students facing to their success?
4. Do you have a philosophy or a mantra by which you lead your school?

Part 2: The Enabling Components

5. Considering the examples provided to you in our first interview, what unique techniques/resource allocations have you used to address barriers to student learning?
6. What other information might you provide about any unique classroom-based approaches in your school that has not been mentioned?
7. What other information might you provide about support for transitions in your school that has not been mentioned? Support for transitions might include welcome programs for newcomers, daily transitions, transitions from grade level to grade level or into your school and out to the feeder high school. Transitions might also include students who transition midyear.
8. What other information might you provide about increased home involvement and home engagement initiatives in your school that has not been mentioned?
9. What other information might you provide about crisis prevention and response in your school that has not been mentioned? Crisis prevention and response include the creation of

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systems to respond to a student in crisis; develop and promote a healthy school environment; bullying and harassment abatement; mental health crisis and prevention initiatives.

10. What other information might you provide about community outreach for involvement and support?
11. What other information might you provide about family assistance programs in your school that has not been mentioned?
12. Please describe and include when/what precipitated your decision. *(Interviewer will list what was shared. If the principal already answered in his response, the interviewer will recapture what was stated/implied.)*

Part 3: Interview Closing

1. Thank you for this interview. Is there anything else you would like to share?

Appendix D

“Barriers to Student Learning” Examples

From: *School improvement: A systemic view of what’s missing and what to do about it. (2008)*

Exhibit I

“Content” Areas for a Component to Address Barriers to Learning

(1) Classroom-Based Approaches encompass

- **Opening the classroom door to bring available supports in** (e.g., peer tutors, volunteers, aids trained to work with students-in-need; resource teachers and student support staff work in the classroom as part of the teaching team)
- **Redesigning classroom approaches to enhance teacher capability to prevent and handle problems and reduce need for out of class referrals** (e.g. personalized instruction; special assistance as necessary; developing small group and independent learning options; reducing negative interactions and over-reliance on social control; expanding the range of curricular and instructional options and choices; systematic use of prereferral interventions)
- **Enhancing and personalizing professional development** (e.g., creating a Learning Community for teachers; ensuring opportunities to learn through co-teaching, team teaching, and mentoring; teaching intrinsic motivation concepts and their application to schooling)
- **Curricular enrichment and adjunct programs** (e.g., varied enrichment activities that are not tied to reinforcement schedules; visiting scholars from the community)
- **Classroom and school-wide approaches used to create and maintain a caring and supportive climate**

Emphasis at all times is on enhancing feelings of competence, self-determination, and relatedness to others at school and reducing threats to such feelings.

(2) Crisis Assistance and Prevention encompasses

- **Ensuring immediate assistance in emergencies so students can resume learning**
- **Providing Follow up care as necessary** (e.g., brief and longer-term monitoring)
- **Forming a school-focused Crisis Team to formulate a response plan and take leadership for developing prevention programs**
- **Mobilizing staff, students, and families to anticipate response plans and recovery efforts**
- **Creating a caring and safe learning environment** (e.g., developing systems to promote healthy development and prevent problems; bullying and harassment abatement programs)
- **Working with neighborhood schools and community to integrate planning for response and prevention**
- **Capacity building to enhance crisis response and prevention** (e.g., staff and stakeholder development, enhancing a caring and safe learning environment)

(3) Support for Transitions encompasses

- **Welcoming & social support programs for newcomers** (e.g., welcoming signs, materials, and initial receptions; peer buddy programs for students, families, staff, volunteers)
- **Daily transition programs for** (e.g., before school, breaks, lunch, afterschool)
- **Articulation programs** (e.g., grade to grade – new classrooms, new teachers; elementary to middle school; middle to high school; in and out of special education programs)
- **Summer or intersession programs** (e.g., catch-up, recreation, and enrichment programs)
- **School-to-career/higher education** (e.g., counseling, pathway, and mentor programs; Broad involvement of stakeholders in planning for transitions; students, staff, home, police, faith groups, recreation, business, higher education)
- **Broad involvement of stakeholders in planning for transitions** (e.g., students, staff, home, police, faith groups, recreation, business, higher education)
- **Capacity building to enhance transition programs and activities**

(cont.)

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Exhibit 1 (cont.) "Content" Areas for a Component to Address Barriers to Learning

(4) Home Involvement in Schooling encompasses

- **Addressing specific support and learning needs of family** (e.g., support services for those in the home to assist in addressing basic survival needs and obligations to the children; adult education classes to enhance literacy, job skills, English-as-a-second language, citizenship preparation)
- **Improving mechanisms for communication and connecting school and home** (e.g., opportunities at school for family networking and mutual support, learning, recreation, enrichment, and for family members to receive special assistance and to volunteer to help; phone calls and/or e-mail from teacher and other staff with good news; frequent and balanced conferences – student-led when feasible; outreach to attract hard-to-reach families – including student dropouts)
- **Involving homes in student decision making** (e.g., families prepared for involvement in program planning and problem-solving)
- **Enhancing home support for learning and development** (e.g., family literacy; family homework projects; family field trips)
- **Recruiting families to strengthen school and community** (e.g., volunteers to welcome and support new families and help in various capacities; families prepared for involvement in school governance)
- **Capacity building to enhance home involvement**

(5) Community Outreach for Involvement and Support encompasses

- **Planning and Implementing Outreach to Recruit a Wide Range of Community Resources** (e.g., public and private agencies; colleges and universities; local residents; artists and cultural institutions, businesses and professional organizations; service, volunteer, and faith-based organizations; community policy and decision makers)
- **Systems to Recruit, Screen, Prepare, and Maintain Community Resource Involvement** (e.g., mechanisms to orient and welcome, enhance the volunteer pool, maintain current involvements, enhance a sense of community)
- **Reaching out to Students and Families Who Don't Come to School Regularly – Including Truants and Dropouts**
- **Connecting School and Community Efforts to Promote Child and Youth Development and a Sense of Community**
- **Capacity Building to Enhance Community Involvement and Support** (e.g., policies and mechanisms to enhance and sustain school-community involvement, staff/stakeholder development on the value of community involvement, "social marketing")

(6) Student and Family Assistance encompasses

- **Providing extra support as soon as a need is recognized and doing so in the least disruptive ways** (e.g., prereferral interventions in classrooms; problem solving conferences with parents; open access to school, district, and community support programs)
 - **Timely referral interventions for students & families with problems based on response to extra support** (e.g., identification/screening processes, assessment, referrals, and follow-up – school-based, school-linked)
 - **Enhancing access to direct interventions for health, mental health, and economic assistance** (e.g., school-based, school-linked, and community-based programs and services)
 - **Care monitoring, management, information sharing, and follow-up assessment to coordinate individual interventions and check whether referrals and services are adequate and effective**
 - **Mechanisms for resource coordination and integration to avoid duplication, fill gaps, garner economies of scale, and enhance effectiveness** (e.g., braiding resources from school-based and linked interveners, feeder pattern/family of schools, community-based programs; linking with community providers to fill gaps)
 - **Enhancing stakeholder awareness of programs and services**
 - **Capacity building to enhance student and family assistance systems, programs, and services**
-
-

**Appendix E
Consent Form**

RESEARCH SUBJECT CONSENT FORM

Title: Leadership in School Improvement: Planning and Providing for Barriers to Student Learning

Protocol No.: 18-1115

Sponsor: William Glenn

Investigator: Erin Lenart
3076 Holmes Run Road
Falls Church, VA, 22042
USA

Daytime Phone Number: 571-279-7913

24-hour Phone Number: 703-474-3565

You are being invited to take part in a research study. A person who takes part in a research study is called a research subject, or research participant.

In this consent form “you” generally refers to the research subject. If you are being asked as the legally authorized representative, parent, or guardian to permit the subject to take part in the research, “you” in the rest of this form generally means the research subject.

What should I know about this research?

- Someone will explain this research to you.
- This form sums up that explanation.
- Taking part in this research is voluntary. Whether you take part is up to you.
- You can choose not to take part. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.
- You can agree to take part and later change your mind. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.
- If you don't understand, ask questions.
- Ask all the questions you want before you decide.

Why is this research being done?

The purpose of this research is to identify how principals have provided resources for barriers to student learning.

About 3 subjects will take part in this research.

How long will I be in this research?

We expect that your taking part in this research will last 2 hours.

What happens to me if I agree to take part in this research?

You will take part in an initial interview for approximately 30 minutes. This will not be recorded and will simply explain what the formal interview of 60 minutes will entail. During the 60-minute semi-structured interview, you will discuss how you allocate resources for at-risk or underserved students at your school. I will also review your school improvement plan, and ask to review your master staffing allocation and any parent, student, or staff communication that you can share.

The researcher will then prepare a chart that qualifies your resource allocation into themes and electronically mail it to you for your review. At this time, you may clarify/add appropriate information that you feel is missing or misrepresented.

At the end of the study, the researcher will provide you with a copy of the study's findings, eliminating any identifiable information from the five school sites that were selected.

What are my responsibilities if I take part in this research?

If you take part in this research, you will be responsible to:

- Participate in the interview
- Provide staffing allocation
- Provide access to parent newsletter, student communication, and/or staff newsletter as you see relevant/pertinent.

Could being in this research hurt me?

This will be confidential and a pseudonym will be used to represent your school.

Will it cost me money to take part in this research?

There is no cost for participating in this study.

Will being in this research benefit me?

We cannot promise any benefits to you or others from your taking part in this research. However, possible benefits to you include a review of the findings that might include how other school principals have provided resources to address barriers to student learning. You might consider the findings in planning for future school years.

What other choices do I have besides taking part in this research?

Your alternative is to not take part in the research.

What happens to the information collected for this research?

The information will be shared with individuals and organizations that conduct or watch over this research, including:

- The research sponsor
- People who work with the research sponsor

We may publish the results of this research. However, we will keep your name and other identifying information confidential.

We protect your information from disclosure to others to the extent required by law. We cannot promise complete secrecy.

Who can answer my questions about this research?

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think this research has hurt you or made you sick, talk to the research team at the phone number listed above on the first page.

This research is being overseen by an Institutional Review Board (“IRB”). An IRB is a group of people who perform independent review of research studies. You may talk to them at (800) 562-4789, help@wirb.com if:

- You have questions, concerns, or complaints that are not being answered by the research team.
- You are not getting answers from the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone else about the research.
- You have questions about your rights as a research subject.

What if I am injured because of taking part in this research?

If you are injured or get sick because of being in this research, call the study doctor immediately. The study doctor will provide emergency medical treatment. Your insurance may be billed for this treatment. The sponsor will pay any charges that are not covered by insurance policy or the government, provided the injury was not due to your underlying illness or condition and was not caused by you or some other third party. No other payment is routinely available from the study doctor or sponsor.

Can I be removed from this research without my approval?

The person in charge of this research can remove you from this research without your approval. Possible reasons for removal include:

- The research is canceled.
- You are unable to keep up with the interview schedule.
- It is in your best interest.

What happens if I agree to be in this research, but I change my mind later?

If you decide to leave this research, contact the research team so that the investigator can remove your information from the study.

Your specimens (even if identifiers are removed) may be used for commercial profit. You will not share in this commercial profit.

Statement of Consent:

Your signature documents your consent to take part in this research.

| | |
|--|---------------|
| _____ Signature of adult subject capable of consent | _____ Date |
| _____ Signature of person obtaining consent | _____ Date |

Appendix F
Virginia Tech IRB Approval



Office of Research Compliance
Institutional Review Board
North End Center, Suite 4120
300 Turner Street NW
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
540/231-3732 Fax 540/231-0959
email irb@vt.edu
website <http://www.irb.vt.edu>

MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 11, 2019
TO: William Joseph Glenn, Erin Boothe Lenart
FROM: Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572, expires January 29, 2021)
PROTOCOL TITLE: Leadership in School Improvement: Planning and Providing for Barriers to Student Learning
IRB NUMBER: 18-1115

Dear Investigator(s):

RE: Protocol Submission for WIRB Review

The Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (IRB) office screened this study and determined that it is ready for WIRB review.

Please download the "Instructions for the PI to Transfer the VT IRB Protocol to WIRB":

<https://secure.research.vt.edu/external/irb/wirb-submission-instructions.pdf>

Please go to <https://connexus.wcgclinical.com> to complete the protocol submission process to the WIRB.

ATTENTION:

* William Joseph Glenn **MUST BE LISTED AS THE PI ON THE WIRB SUBMISSION.**

* All references to the VT IRB (including phone number and email address) **MUST** be removed from all study documents and replaced with Western IRB - (800) 562-4789, help@wirb.com.

*Special instructions, if any, are included on the top of the next page.

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An equal opportunity, affirmative action institution

Appendix G
Western IRB Approval Letter



January 23, 2019

William Joseph Glenn, JD, PhD
Virginia Tech
7054 Haycock Rd, Office 442
Falls Church, VA 22043

Dear Dr. Glenn:

SUBJECT: IRB EXEMPTION—REGULATORY OPINION
Investigator/Sponsor Contact: Dr. William Glenn, JD, PhD
Sponsor/Institution Protocol #: 18-1115
Protocol Title: Leadership in School Improvement: Planning and Providing for
Barriers to Student Learning

This is in response to your request for an exempt status determination for the above-referenced protocol. Western Institutional Review Board's (WIRB's) IRB Affairs Department reviewed the study under the Common Rule and applicable guidance.

We believe the study is exempt under 45 CFR § 46.104(d)(1), because the research examines educational practices in a commonly accepted educational setting using a record review and structured interviews with school administrators.

This exemption determination can apply to multiple sites, but it does not apply to any institution that has an institutional policy of requiring an entity other than WIRB (such as an internal IRB) to make exemption determinations. WIRB cannot provide an exemption that overrides the jurisdiction of a local IRB or other institutional mechanism for determining exemptions. You are responsible for ensuring that each site to which this exemption applies can and will accept WIRB's exemption decision.

Please note that any future changes to the project may affect its exempt status, and you may want to contact WIRB about the effect these changes may have on the exemption status before implementing them. WIRB does not impose an expiration date on its IRB exemption determinations.

If you have any questions, or if we can be of further assistance, please contact Sean W. Horkheimer, JD, CIP, at 360-252-2465, or e-mail RegulatoryAffairs@wirb.com.

SWH:dao
D1 Exemption-Glenn (01-23-2019)
cc: Erin Booth Lenart, VA Tech
WIRB Accounting
WIRB Work Order #1-1149447-1

Western Institutional Review Board®

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Appendix H

Learning Supports Collated and Coded According to Theme

Classroom-based approaches to student learning

- A. Available instructional supports
- B. Classroom design changes
- C. Enhancing professional development
- D. Curricular enrichment and adjunct programs
- E. Classroom and schoolwide approaches for a caring and supportive environment

Lemon

1:1 (A)

Teachers participated in professional learning (twice/month).

Alignment of Assessments to the Standards of Learning (D)

Lemon School's principal spent time disaggregating the data with regards to the correlation of student-grade earned and their performance on the SOL. What he found was that teachers had inappropriate assessments. Assessments were monitored and feedback was given to ensure they aligned with the Standards of Learning for the course.

Benchmark Assessment Data (C and D)

Percent correct on items common assessments were developed into data sets. Green-75% or greater; yellow 60%-74%; and red 59% and below. These assessments were used for the principal to drive instructional conversations.

Collaborative Learning Spaces (B)

Furniture was added to the commons area to increase student-learning spaces. White board tables were purchased.

Constant Feedback on Learning (D)

Lemon School learned from a trip to a highly-successful like school the importance of questioning and instant feedback. Purchasing over 100 white boards, the students were required to answer every question, every day.

Developing Data Expertise (C)

Lemon School worked to better understand the implications, experiences, and information found in their students' individual data. The principal spent the first two years ensuring staff understood how to use data for intentional improvement.

Focus on Reading and Writing Across the Curriculum (D)

Lemon School made a commitment to ensuring that disciplinary literacy was in place in all classrooms. When he changed the bell schedule, he also asked that all teachers, to include electives, do reading and writing and make sure students are given exposure to and the

LEADERSHIP IN BARRIERS TO STUDENT LEARNING

expectation (graded) of three basic grammatical rules: Capitalization, punctuation, and verb tense agreement.

Individualized Professional Learning (C and D)

Teachers would identify areas in which their students struggled, and they would meet with the principal to develop plans to help them grow in their practice.

Intervention and Enrichment Period (A and D)

30-minute period every day. Enrichment was not assessed, and it had to be high interest for the students. Enrichment opportunities like yoga, robotics, outdoor club, games, aquaponics emerged. Small-group remediation was also occurring during this time.

Observation Tool (C)

Lemon School's principal used observation to record the amount of teacher talk to student talk, number of student responses, time working one on one with a student, quality of questions as they related to the standard.

He completed a follow up with each teacher after the observation, asking why and how it aligned to the Standards of Learning expectations.

Outrageous Love (E)

Purposeful Classroom Libraries (A and D)

Lemon School's principal did not approve the purchase of more than five of any title. The principal believed that the libraries needed to diversify, with different ability levels and different reading levels. Every student should have material of interest and that he/she could read. There was an expectation that teachers were selecting books that scaffolded a students' ability so that the Lexile level would be increasing as the year progressed.

Nonfiction reading was a challenge, so teachers were not permitted to buy only fiction books.

Purposeful Teams (A and C)

The principal shifted from department wide meetings to grade-level and content-specific meetings for teachers to problem solve the unique and complex problems at each grade level and content.

Push In for Specialists (A)

The principal reallocated his staffing for the reading specialist to do small group learning that included special education students. This was flipped into a push in, rather than pull out, model.

Screening Tool (A)

IReady is used. It is a diagnostic tool that gives detail in specific areas of challenge for individual students.

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Specialized Plans for Individual Students (A)

Lemon School qualified students into growth model students and bubble students and made individualized plans for each one. Notebook was kept that organized the targeted intervention for each student.

Writing Portfolios (A)

Lemon School created a writing portfolio for each student in grade 6-8. With the elimination of the grade 5 Writing SOL, there was a noticeable decrease in the writing instruction from the feeder elementary schools. [Collins Educational Associates](#) was the reference for the development of the portfolio. It included a rubric, a rating, and expectation for artifacts, and a teacher narrative for areas of strength and areas for growth.

Lime

1:1 (A)

Every student is issued a laptop.

After school program (D)

Multiple clubs are available after school with free transportation. Topics include enrichment, interscholastic, high-interest, STEM, and community-service.

[Capturing Kids Hearts](#) (E)

Program in which students report, [“What do you want school to be?”](#)

The program helps the community build relationships with others systematically.

Inclusion-based model for special education (A and D)

Most special education students are serviced in the teamed environment with smaller classes(when able).

Intervention Block (D)

Lime School provides a 34-minute block for students on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays in which they rotate through their core blocks, only. This provides an additional time for students in ELA and Math every week, and Science/Social Studies respectively. The time is designed for remediation, recovery, acceleration and personal projects. Electives teachers may invite students with a specialized pass.

More Literacy/Numeracy Core Staffing (A)

Lime School currently has twelve math teachers, 13 English teachers, 5 Social Studies teachers, and 5 Science teachers on staff.

Professional Learning (C)

Lime School’s staff has engaged in professional learning and development about the following:

(A) trauma informed teaching (1 year)

(B) Station-based activities (4 years—self-directed learning as focus)

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Reading Strategically Selected (A and D)

Books that pertain to the content area and provide connectedness to the learning are used in book studies. An example, this year's Math 8, an ELL-heavy population, is studying [The Number Devil](#).

Redesigning Library (B)

The addition of an expanded makerspace and student-owned learning "zones."

-Collaboration Zone

-Soft Seating Zone

-Large-Group Instructional Zone

Students of the Month (E)

Lime School recognizes outstanding students each month.

Orange

After School Program (D)

There is a thriving after-school program at Orange that also has feeder high-school students who lead activities. There are enrichment and intervention opportunities for students and transportation is provided.

Authentic Professional Learning Communities (PLC) (C)

The principal ensured that the collaborative teams were accountable to the work of the PLC learning communities. He created a structure in which every CT had the appropriate specialists and administrator, and that they were actively following and documenting the work they were doing according to the cycle.

Co-teaching Professional Development (C)

Using some of the additional funds from the district, professional learning around effective co-teaching has been given. He has paid for a retired special-education specialist to work with these teams.

Instructional Coaches (2) (A and C)

The district provides one instructional coach, and the principal trades one staff member for the second coach. He believes in the [content-coaching model](#), and has fostered a growth-producing feedback mentality among staff.

International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program (D)

Orange School has focused on true implantation of the IB MYP program and units. There is still work to be done on assessments, and they have made great progress.

Inter-rater Reliability (C)

Orange School uses extra money to provide a day of collaboration for each collaborative team to have time to norm their writing grading practices to ensure that teachers are assessing writing in the same way.

LEADERSHIP IN BARRIERS TO STUDENT LEARNING

Investment in Arts (D)

The principal of Orange ensures has worked to build full-time music and theater programs, believing that the Arts are extremely important for and to his population.

No Excuse Checklist (A and D)

Every student at Orange School must write in full sentences, must use a capital letter, and they must use a complete thought.

Outrageous Love (E)

With the help of the instructional council, Orange School has just developed a simple program...Love kids even when they are their most unlovable.

PBIS Point System (E)

They have piloted a point system, but they feel like this is still under development. They have worked intimately with the support office to see when/if they should better respond to a student with behavioral problems.

Uniformed Structure for Learning: Learning Targets (A and D)

All classrooms use a three-tiered learning target structure: (1) What am I learning; (2) Why am I learning it; (3) How will I be able to demonstrate that I've learned it?

The implementation of the learning targets began with individual teachers but in order to ensure consistency of learning expectations, they are now part of the collaborative team process.

Tovani's engagement model as a Schoolwide Classroom Approach (A and D)

All classrooms are expected to align with this model that consists of a bell ringer (Do It Now), a mini lesson and then release time for students to work. Classroom observations consist of administrators graphing the amount of time that is teacher talk versus student talk.

Writing Feedback from Leadership (C)

Orange School has embraced disciplinary writing, with each discipline selecting a time for students to complete writing prompts, and then assessing them via the VDOE Writing Rubric. Administrators then collect a sample from each discipline of what the team considers a low, medium, and high, and they give feedback on how the team might improve their assessment of writing.

Strawberry

1:1 (A)

The principal invested in laptops for all 8th grade students and will be adding seventh-grade next year.

After School Program (D)

There is a thriving after-school program at Strawberry that also has feeder high-school students who lead activities. There are enrichment and intervention opportunities for students and transportation is provided.

LEADERSHIP IN BARRIERS TO STUDENT LEARNING

AVID (A and D)

Strawberry School provides AVID instruction to 7th and 8th grade students, and AVID strategies are promoted throughout the school. These students are also given opportunities to further explore career and higher education opportunities through field trips and guest speakers.

Flexible Seating (B)

Strawberry School bought furniture so teachers can offer opportunities for small-group instruction.

Increasing Rigor and Relevance (C and D)

To promote the importance of high expectations, Strawberry's principal has worked with staff on rigor and real-world connections

Instructional Coaches (A and C)

The principal of Strawberry invests in additional staffing for a full time IBMYP coordinator and a literacy coach. They also have an additional administrator to help alleviate discipline demands, and a math resource teacher. The principal plans to add another instructional coach next school year as well as a half-time behavior coach.

Investment in Arts and Electives (D)

The principal of Strawberry ensures that no electives are part time. Teachers who do not have full schedules will be utilized in other more creative ways to enhance student learning.

Investment in ELL Staffing (A and D)

When Strawberry School's principal arrived, there were only half the current ELL teachers that the school currently has. There is an ELL teacher on every collaborative learning team who both serves as a resource to promote strategies for ELLs and team teaches. The principal actually financially supports keeping more ELL teachers than the current allocation.

Personalized Professional Development (C)

Professional Learning Networks were implemented. Staff selected into a professional learning opportunity and they participated in six sessions. The topics included Responsive Classroom; Cultural Proficiency; Behavior Management; IB; Servia Learning; AVID Strategies; Literacy; Blended Learning

Responsive Classroom (E)

Responsive classroom is utilized at Strawberry School by a number of teachers. The Responsive Classroom builds SEL in its curriculum as well as child-development research and science

Apple

Academic Dean (C)

Apple School allocated staffing to create an academic dean. The Dean focused on instruction and bringing alignment between instructional coaches, administrators, and collaborative team

LEADERSHIP IN BARRIERS TO STUDENT LEARNING

leaders. The Dean worked to build on existing knowledge of instructional leadership. The principal also believes that, with the numerous programs in place at Apple.

After School Program (D)

There is a thriving after-school program at Apple. There are enrichment and intervention opportunities for students and transportation is provided.

Alignment (A and D)

Clear alignment around instructional focus areas at Apple.

Checks for Understanding (A)

Apple School had the expectation that teachers check for understanding daily through exit tickets, data tools, or warm ups. That way, they could intervene immediately rather than waiting for another intervention at a later time.

Double Block English (Sixth Grade) (A and D)

Apple School double blocks English in sixth grade in a teamed setting. The same two teachers see students who were previously identified as in need of extra support for 90 minutes every single day. This is intentionally done in the sixth grade.

General Education-Team Taught (A)

Most of Apple's general education classes are team taught with special education teachers. All of Apple's sixth grade general-education classes are team taught.

Instructional Coaches (A and C)

Apple School allocated staffing to instructional coaches in each of the content areas as well as two district-allocated instructional coaches. The coaches meet together to problem-solve around particular classroom concerns/challenge they are facing.

Intentional, Differentiated Support in Classrooms (A and D)

Recognizing that several Apple students need increased support above Tier 1 (44% with a reading deficit as an example), Apple's teachers are expected to differentiate in the general classroom since the school's intervention classes cannot support several students in need of intervention.

Learning Targets (A and D)

Apple School implemented learning targets but did so in conjunction with higher-order thinking skills. With Tier 1 instruction, or the quality of instruction as the focus, the learning target evolved into something Apple School believed to be more meaningful.

Lesson Planning Document (A, C, D)

Each collaborative team meets together to create lessons plans according to the lesson planning document and the engagement model.

Systematic Approach to Teacher Feedback (C)

A commitment to being concise, clear and actionable in the feedback cycle led to a walkthrough structure for Apple School. After working with individual collaborative teams on what impactful structure looks like, each team picked two to three items that they believed were most important. The instructional coach and administrator then visit classrooms at random and look for the examples the teams developed. They then deliver engage in dialogue with the teachers on how often they saw the impactful strategy during their observation.

The Team (A, B, D, and E)

Apple School looked at data from their sixth-grade students, selecting ninety students who struggled academically and for some, behaviorally. They created “the team.” These students are in an intense environment for most of the day with some of Apple’s most talented teachers. They transition into the general population for electives, PE, lunch, and World Languages, and all are enrolled in a study skills/homework support-type course for the final hour of the day. Because of their environment, their time is flexible. The initial results are very promising. Though there has been some speculation that the students would not feel a part of the community, survey results indicate otherwise.

Workshop Model (A, C, and D)

With the large number of students in need of additional support, Apple’s teachers began implementing workshop model to ensure that students have access to intervention during class time.

Support Transitions)

- A. Support for newcomers
- B. Daily transition support (consistency in learning expectations across classrooms included)
- C. Vertical articulation programs and vertical-articulation structures
- D. Summer or intercession programs
- E. Stakeholder (broad) involvement in planning for and designing transitions

Lemon

Bell Schedule (B)

The principal changed the bell schedule to reallocate back into core instruction. The schedule consists of two Related Arts periods on an A/B schedule. Students in need of intervention, at most, would not participate in one of the two Related Arts periods. Philosophically, the always ensure that students had multiple exposure to electives and did not remove all electives for intervention/enrichment.

Campus Model (C)

Lemon School is set up as a campus. Staff can walk to elementary, middle and high schools.

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Focus on Reading and Writing Across the Curriculum (B)

Lemon School made a commitment to ensuring that disciplinary literacy was in place in all classrooms. When he changed the bell schedule, he also asked that all teachers, to include electives, do reading and writing and make sure students are given exposure to and the expectation (graded) of three basic grammatical rules: Capitalization, punctuation, and verb tense agreement.

I'm Determined (C)

Lemon School's principal led the school in including one component of the I'm Determined program (special-education program), in the orientation into sixth grade.

Individualized Placement (A)

ELL students were placed appropriately by age, with a targeted plan for language acquisition. One that begins with intensive classroom learning and social opportunities with peers and progresses to full inclusion.

Intervention and Enrichment Period (B)

30-minute period every day. Enrichment was not assessed, and it had to be high interest for the students. Enrichment opportunities like yoga, robotics, outdoor club, games, aquaponics emerged. Small-group remediation was also occurring during this time

Teacher Owned Transition Orientation (C)

Lemon School's principal shifted the model. Teachers did the transition orientation.

Teams: Math and English (B)

Lemon School teamed their Math and English teachers. They shared the same students.

Lime

After School Homework Help-2 hours (B)

Students stay with teachers who volunteer their time for homework support. The counselor coordinated this initiative.

Bell Schedule (B)

Every student receives 80-90 minutes of Math and English every day. Science and Social Studies are a semester-long 90-minute block. Students have two electives at 45 minutes each.

Common Planning for Grade Level with Weekly Meeting (B)

Lime School has weekly meetings at each grade level to discuss student concerns.

Counseling Page Videos (C)

Videos are posted online by counselors that explain Lime School, how the school works, laptop 1:1 expectations, school rules, etc. There are also high-school transition videos.

Design (C)

Lime School houses grades 6-8. They are set up for ease in vertical and horizontal articulation in its architecture. It is on the same campus as the high school it feeds, so

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resources can be shared 6-12. Each grade level is in a studio, with each teacher at each grade level sharing an office space known as a pod. Teachers have classrooms, but the pod allows for quick conversation about grade-level specific challenges or student concerns. Students are keenly aware of their “space.”

District-Wide Retreat (E)

All leadership in the division will meet for a 2-day retreat, whether at the end of the year or at the start of the next school year. They review data, recap the school year, and develop their leadership staples, or consistency, among all levels for the next year. Like expectations are established K-12.

Newcomers (A)

Lime School has a homeroom model that names student ambassadors in each homeroom. When a new student enrolls or registers, the ambassador becomes a peer support for them, giving them a tour and peer mentoring them.

Parade (E)

Entire community participates in a parade each year with feeder high school

Vertical Transition Opportunities (C)

Lime School hosts a rising 6th grade orientation and transition program. Students and parents are given information about Lime School at the orientation. During the August transition program, students are given a tour, a run through their schedule, and the opportunity to meet their teachers. They then return with their parents and the new students guide their parents through their schedule.

Orange

Grant Monies for Summer Intercession (D)

Orange School uses grant monies to identify approximately 60 rising seventh grade students who need additional reading and math support. They bring them in for summer-time support. They also support a group of rising ninth grade students as well. English and Math teachers design curriculum based on individual student needs. Read 180 has also been utilized as a program.

The program is four weeks M-F.

IBMYP-IB Vertical Articulation Meetings (E)

Working with the feeder high school, Orange School has coordinated two vertical articulation meetings to ensure that there is vertical articulation in expectations from middle to high school.

Jumpstart Program (D)

Orange School hosts a summer jumpstart program.

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Interdisciplinary Teams (B)

Orange School has interdisciplinary teams intact, and namely, has put mathematics back on team. This means that teachers of the core content area share their students.

Lead Counselor (E)

The lead counselor at Orange School goes to the feeder elementary school and gets the behavior updates for the rising seventh-grade students. The entire administrative team and clinical staff then meet over the summer to develop plans for these students.

Literacy Data Transferred from Feeder Elementary Schools (E)

The district has created a literacy data tool that uploads individualized data for students, like SOL scores. It also allows for feeder schools to upload pertinent data. They have expanded the current tool to include mathematics. Orange School has begun using this data to purposefully place its students in intervention.

Online Video for Transferring and New to Orange School (C)

The website provides a video of course offerings for students who are transitioning into Orange School.

Strategically Designed Intervention Period (B)

The first half hour of each day is the intervention period. Every five weeks, Orange uses common assessments to develop a list of students in need of remediation by name and need. They then rotate, based on the common-assessment data each five weeks. The focus is on students who cannot fit a remediation class into their schedule.

Orange also identified a cohort of students who needed something more intensive but could not fit the remediation into their schedule, and they put them in Reading Success—taught by teachers of all content areas.

Students who aren't in need of the five-week intervention are given enrichment opportunity. School beautification projects are also a part of this time.

Updated Bell Schedule (B)

Orange School went away from a seven-period bell schedule to a 90-minute block. The number of transitions previously were too much for many of the students.

Working with School in which Transition is Likely (E)

Orange School has identified the school in which most students transfer between and has an open communication structure with that school.

Strawberry

Admin “Talks” (E)

Strawberry’s administrators meet with and the feeder elementary administrators to have “kid talks.” The same conversation occurs with feeder high school.

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Counselor for ELL (A and E)

One counselor is assigned to all ELL students in Levels 1-4.

Flexible “Thinking” (A and E)

Leadership at Strawberry School to the ELL department is “flexible.” There aren’t fixed, year-long, schedules. Once a student “makes progress,” change are made.

Intervention Period (B)

Strawberry has built in a return to each class period and then a homeroom. During the first three weeks of school, the homeroom is the only intervention period students attend (no return), so that they can have school/student-based lessons on expectations and community building.

Strawberry also has skill-specific intervention. Content areas are given a “priority” during certain rotations, and then each collaborative team identifies students who will not participate in the “return” part of the intervention period but will come to an intervention.

Kid Talks (E)

When there is a “concern,” many of Strawberry’s staff will meet to discuss solutions.

Looping APs and Counselors (A and E)

Strawberry School loops the APs and counselors with each grade level.

Strawberry Principal attends Feeder PTA (E)

The principal attends the PTA meetings of feeder elementary schools to answer questions that parents might have.

Student Speakers (E)

Strawberry School invites alumni to come to speak with its students about high school and college planning.

Summer Programs (D)

Students transitions program (3 weeks) for students who have unique learning needs.

Summer Jump Start (D)

Strawberry offers a summer jump start program.

Unity Night (C)

Strawberry School participates along with other schools in a unity night—this takes place at the feeder high school. Faculties compete against each other in a basketball tournament. Students and families are welcomed in a wholistic, inclusive event.

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Apple

After School Program (B)

Apple School has a robust after-school program on Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday, affording students the opportunity to stay for enrichment opportunities, homework help, and individual teacher help.

Counselors Transition (E)

Counselors from Apple visit the feeder elementary schools for registration.

Grant to Support the Feeder High School (D)

Apple School uses a grant for a rising ninth grade transition program to its feeder high school.

Intervention Period (B)

Apple has built in a return to each class period and then a homeroom. Mondays and Fridays are used for an advisory-type structure, with support and learning about effective study habits and social-emotional learning, and the remaining days used to help students in need of intervention.

Jumpstart Program (D)

Apple School provides a Jumpstart Program over the program.

Sixth Grade Transition (C)

Apple School provides a sixth-grade transition day the Thursday before the start of school—this is a required time for teachers. This day is different from the time provided for seventh and eighth grade which is open house style and not required.

Apple School provides a sixth-grade parent transition night in the Spring the year before. The principal of Apple is often at the feeder elementary schools often.

Increase home involvement and engagement

- A. Support for the learning needs of the family
- B. School-home connection opportunities
- C. Home involvement in student decision making
- D. Recruiting families to strengthen school and community

Lemon

1:1 (A, B and D)

After the professional learning with the staff, Lemon School hosted a launch night for parents to keep them informed of how the device will impact student learning and digital citizenship. Without parent permission, the students did not take the Chromebooks home. Students were taught how to use the Chromebook to their advantage and in their individual circumstances (downloading, uploading, etc.)

LEADERSHIP IN BARRIERS TO STUDENT LEARNING

Attendance Drive (B)

If a student missed three days in a row, the principal did a home visit.

Literacy Event (A and D)

Marc Nobleman, author, was invited and presented to students about research. He also presented to parents and students in a follow-on event.

Open-School Summer (B)

The doors to Lemon School were open all summer for students to visit and practice lockers and bell schedule.

Reverse Suspension (B and C)

The principal would assign 10-day suspensions, that would be excused pending a parent conference.

Lime

1:1 Laptop Distribution Event (A)

Families attend this event to receive their student's laptop.

Career Fair (D)

Each year, Lime School hosts a career fair. It is a parent outreach that focuses showcasing the many occupations of the parents in the community.

Parent English Acquisition Opportunity (A)

The parent liaison works in conjunction with the local community center to offer an adult literacy center to provide opportunities for parents to learn English. This was advertised in the principal's newsletter as well

Translation Services on School's Website (A)

Lime School's main web page can be translated, and remain interactive, into other languages.

Orange

After School Programs (C)

The weekly after-school programs are available to parents and students on their website, as well as a sign-up sheet. The link addresses both parents and students to encourage their collaborative decision making.

Home Visits (B and C)

Orange School conducts home visits. When the lead counselor learns of the students in need of the most support, an administrator and a teacher will go to meet with the family and students prior to their arrival at Orange School.

LEADERSHIP IN BARRIERS TO STUDENT LEARNING

Translation Services on School's Website (A)

Orange School's main web page can be translated, and remain interactive, into other languages.

Utilizing the Family Market to Leverage Home Involvement (A and B)

When families attend the family market, Orange School sets up tables with other resources and offers trainings. Families, for attending, can receive a ticket to move to the front of the line. Trainings like, checking your student's grade online can get you the opportunity to move to the front of the line.

Strawberry

Hispanic Parent Nights (A)

Strawberry School hosts parent nights for Hispanic families. Topics have included social media, bullying, sex trafficking, and immigration and schools.

Mini Conferences (B and C)

Strawberry School hosts mini conferences for parents to learn about their student's performance

Needs Assessment (A and B)

Through a needs-assessment of its community, Strawberry School created the parent-learning opportunities.

Parent Coffees (A and B)

To accommodate schedules, Strawberry School will offer many of its evening PTA topics at a parent coffee.

Translation Services on School's Website (A)

Strawberry School's main web page can be translated, and remain interactive, into 104 other languages.

Apple

Just Call Home (C)

There is an expectation that teachers at Apple "just call home" when they have specific student concerns.

Parent Coffees (A)

Apple's principal hosts parent coffees to answer parent concerns.

Parent Programs (A and B)

Apple School provides language-acquisition programs for parents; and how to advocate for your child in an educational setting.

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Parent Liaison (A and B)

Apple School staffs a Spanish and Arabic speaking parent liaison. These professionals work with the student services department to ensure access to Student Services. They encourage involvement and give resources

Social Service Programs (A)

Apple School has social-emotional health and wellness, immigration, etc.

Translation Services on School's Website (A)

Apple School's main web page can be translated, and remain interactive, into other languages.

Respond to, where feasible, prevent school and personal crises and traumatic events

- A. Immediate assistance in crisis
- B. Follow-up care
- C. Crisis team
- D. Leadership-developed prevention and intervention programs
- E. Staff/Students/Families understand or can anticipate crisis based on learning opportunities and capacity building
- F. Community resources and other schools work to integrate crisis response and prevention

Lemon

Crisis List (D)

Lemon School's principal created a crisis list of students who had reported significant trauma.

Family Assistance Partnership (C and F)

Team that meets each week, consisting of student services, community services board, family members of the student, court appointed liaisons

Grant: Dr. Allison Sampson Jackson (E)

Lemon School was awarded a grant to understand best practices of the trauma-informed teacher.

Mental Health First Aid (D and E)

All of Lemon School's teachers were trained in mental health first aid by the local law enforcement

Second Breakfast (D)

*The principal noticed that many students were not eating breakfast, likely because of the hour to hour and half bus ride. At 9AM, they offered breakfast. **Over half their** student population ate breakfast at this time.*

LEADERSHIP IN BARRIERS TO STUDENT LEARNING

Social-Emotional Return (B and C)

The core team planned for the return of students from prolonged absences, creating and implementing a transition plan.

Social Emotional Well-Being-Institute on Best Teaching Practices for Equity, Poverty, and Diversity (E)

5 teachers participated in the training at James Madison University.

Social Skills (E)

Lemon School spent time demonstrating to students appropriate behavior. From tying ties to shaking hands to understanding the impact of an inappropriate gesture, it was there responsibility to show students appropriate behavior.

Staff Donations (D)

The staff would donate funds to adopt families for Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter.

Testing Accommodation (D)

They ensured that tests started after 9AM, and every student had breakfast.

Lime

ALICE Training (D and E)

All staff members were trained in Alice, or the active-shooter response training, along with the community's police department. With students, staff members also practiced how to barricade in their classrooms.

Bullying Prevention (E)

Ongoing conversations, and explicit teaching of sexual harassment. Bully Box is available, and SafeSchools Alert can be used.

Community Services Board (CSB) (F)

Through the County, the school uses the CSB as a first-round triage and resource for families.

Bullying Report 3 Steps (E)

- (1) Counselor triages—Is it really bullying?*
- (2) If yes, Division social worker (all schools) conducts a full investigation.*
- (3) If yes, school administration then addresses, and family of the victim and aggressor are also included. The victim will (if they qualify) be referred to TDT, and they usually agree.*

Capturing Kids Hearts (D)

Program in which students report, "What do you want school to be?" Part of the program consists of celebrating the good things in your life. The principal opens staff meetings with this, and counselors host "Good Things" groups. "The training teaches us that a fist bump will get you a friend, but a handshake will get you a job."

LEADERSHIP IN BARRIERS TO STUDENT LEARNING

Counselor Groups (E)

Counselors will host targeted student-groups. Students participate in a survey, and then they are assigned into these lunch groups. Current group topics include study skills, anger and self-control, changing families, grief and loss, and general social skills.

Therapeutic Day Treatment (TDT) (A and F)

Through the National Counseling Group, two (soon three) TDT counselors are on staff. They service students who are on Medicaid with “issues that are interfering with learning.” Since the TDT counselors are on site, they can work with the “other” staff as well.

Timely Communication (D)

The principal uses his weekly communication in mixed media to foster a community understanding of such challenges as (1) juicing; (2) attendance; (3) social media

Strawberry

Bullying and Harassment (E)

Strawberry’s principal reports that counselors and administrators do a robust training on bullying and harassment. Students sign a “commitment to not bully” and a display is created in a “chain” to show their unity.

Common Sense School (D)

Strawberry is a “common sense school.” This designation comes to school environments that commit to promoting a healthy technology-use school culture and implementation of technology.

Crisis Information (E)

Strawberry’s principal sends out crisis management and drill information to parents at the beginning of the school year

Digital Citizenship Wellness Week (D)

To support appropriate technology usage and awareness, Strawberry hosts a wellness week. Breaks from technology use and student reflection on ways to appropriately use technology are built into the learning expectations.

Signs of Suicide (A, B, D, E and F)

Student Services has done a Signs of Suicide program with seventh-grade students. Based on individual student data, they will immediately begin working with parents and students, recommend counseling, or even immediately refer to treatment centers.

SOAR Checklist (D)

Recognizing that students weren’t doing well due to a lack of development in successful daily habits, Strawberry is working to implement a new structure for intervention that will include a checklist of optimal study skills and student-work habits. Students will work through the checklist with teachers during the intervention period in hopes that they will build those needed executive functioning skills.

LEADERSHIP IN BARRIERS TO STUDENT LEARNING

Apple

Full Time Social Worker and School Psychologist (A and C)

Apple School has full time clinicians.

Intervention/Advisory Time (D and E)

Apple School has an advisory period on Mondays and Fridays. The advisory teacher is an academic teacher for one other period. The purpose is to help deliver lessons around social emotional learning and study skills to students and is differentiated at each grade level.

During the first five weeks of school, every day, the time is used to help students understand basic school rules, protocols, and procedures.

The intervention block on Tuesday-Thursday looks different. They use the thirty-minute time to do intervention around Language Arts/Math and Science. The intervention can be remediation or enrichment.

Intervention Time (D and E)

Using the advisory block on Mondays and Fridays, Apple's principal believes that they have trained their students to know where to go and when to report. They have created a culture in which students feel safe and cared for.

Systems of Support Advisor (D)

Apple School allocated a position to a Systems of Support Advisor, a professional with a counseling background who proactively works with students and manages the child study process. Referrals to the position are from administrators and counselors who collaboratively field teacher referrals and determine whether the student needs the child study process.

This position also coordinates small groups and coordinates resources.

Increase community involvement, engagement, and support

- A. Outreach to recruit and retain community resources
- B. Community connections (includes community-building)
- C. Social marketing

Lemon

1:1 (A)

The school partnered with a local business to ensure students who were free and reduced have access to internet.

All Hands on Deck (B)

All staff in the school community worked with to support intervention and remediation. This ensured that students were able to receive small, group and targeted support for skill deficits.

Comprehensive Instructional Program (A)

Lemon School started working with this consortium to better understand their student data, and how they might use it to make impactful decisions.

Field Trips (A)

Entire student body went to the Shakespeare theater and out to eat at a resort. These are experiences that the students would not, likely, have otherwise had.

Outreach to Successful Like Schools (A)

Lemon School visited a like school, with a like population that was finding success.

Principal Visibility in Community (B)

The principal would try to go have lunch in one of the smaller towns that feeds his school or go to a different neighboring town to make himself available to his community.

Run the Gauntlet Event (B)

Revamped back to school night. Parents had to attend where they learned about the PTO, gym uniforms, athletic events and clubs, the school, lunch, the school nurse, etc. At the end, they would be given a copy of their student's schedule.

Sorority Partnership (A)

A sorority adopted Lemon School and would send hygiene products for its students.

Lime

Annual Talent Show (B)

Lime School's sixth grade students host an annual talent show.

Book Fair (B)

Lime School's main purpose for their book fair is to allow students to choose books for their library, adding almost all books that students select.

Convocation (B)

All staff in the district come together to at the end of the year to celebrate their work and present awards.

Kick off (B)

All staff in the district come together for the a "kick-off" event.

Lime School/Local Community School Supply Partnership (A and B)

Lime School partnered with a local church and the police department to gather school supplies for students in need.

Multicultural Night (B)

Families are invited in to celebrate in the culture of the school. They are invited to bring in "food from home" to share, and the gifted and talented students are presenting research projects on different countries/cultures.

LEADERSHIP IN BARRIERS TO STUDENT LEARNING

The event includes singing and dancing and middle/high school groups.

New Teacher Induction (B)

District-wide shared event.

Parade of Lights (B)

Community event on the main thoroughfare during a holiday season. Staff members are present and give away donated books during the Parade.

Parade (B)

Entire community participates in a parade each year with feeder high school

Principal's Weekly Message (A, B, and C)

(A) Virtual Lost and Found

Lime School posts images weekly of their "Lost and Found." This way, parents can see/vouch for student belongings as well—important for the demographics they serve.

(B) Upcoming events

(C) Highlighted live Twitter feeds from teachers (celebrating students)

(D) Important pictures from events of the week

(E) Principal's message (often includes personal connections he is making with the community)

(F) Faces new to the community

(G) Often includes videos of students

Senior Leadership Presence (B)

The Superintendent is at schools every Friday at dismissal to shake hands with students as they leave for the weekend. When he cannot attend, A cardboard cutout of him is at the elementary schools so students can go by and give him a high "five" as they leave on Fridays.

Special Education Advisory Committee (A)

The division hosts monthly meetings to ensure the needs and voices of this community are met.

Sprint Partnership (A)

Lime School's district has partnered with Sprint to ensure that all families have access to the internet.

Student Help Desk (A and B)

Form routes technology issues to student techs. Student techs are trained, with many earning Dell credentials in high school.

Surveys (B)

Lime School provides several surveys to their community about District challenges/areas for improvement and ways to improve school structures (like the 1:1 distribution).

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Timely Communication (B)

Use of [Naviance](#) (B)

Naviance is a tool that parents, and students use for goal, academic, and career planning

Website Celebrations (B and C)

The website of Lime School includes multiple celebrations about the feeder high-school (formerly their middle school students), and the upcoming events of their feeder elementary schools, promoting a community feel.

Orange

Community Center Meetings (A)

There are classes offered at local community centers

Coordination with Public Transportation (A and B)

Orange's principal has worked with public transportation offices to secure a bus route to Orange that is more direct from their most underserved and under-resourced neighborhood feeder.

Donations to Orange School (A and B)

Orange School has a link on their homepage to donate to their school.

Major Business Partnership (A and B)

A Major Business partnership led to a grant that allowed for a site coordinator for community programs. The grant program is coordinated through [United Youth Ministries](#).

Strawberry

Branding (C)

Strawberry School has created hashtags to represent the high expectations and sense of community it is creating and expecting among its students and staff.

Building Community (B)

Mix It Up: A few times a year, Strawberry has its students, during lunch, draw a colored "straw." They then have to go to that colored part of the cafeteria to get to know the students there. There are conversation starters available.

Strawberry School also has multiple spirit weeks for students.

Coding Partnership (A and B)

A local company has worked with Strawberry on a coding program offering.

Local Community Center (A and B)

A local community center worked with Strawberry's after school program on a Techsploration opportunity. This is a STEM opportunity for its students.

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Mentor Parent (A and B)

Strawberry School recruits parents to serve as mentors to its students.

Performing Arts Partners (A and B)

A major theater company has partnered with Strawberry to offer an opportunity for students to learn from industry professional about theater and create and act in their own play.

Scholarship (A and B)

There is a major university who awards one scholarship to an 8th grade student.

Twitter (C)

Active on Twitter, the many events of Strawberry are publicized.

Apple

Business Partnerships (A and B)

Apple's principal has partnered with two companies.

Direct Referrals to a Mental Crisis Facility (A)

Utilizing the Columbia Screener, the counselors at Apple School will directly refer students to the center.

Field Trips (B)

Apple's principal believes in field trips for students to get them out in the community so that they feel a part of it. There are numerous field trips to colleges as well.

New Initiatives through Instructional Council (B)

Apple School works to ensure that there are opportunities for staff input when new programs or initiatives are being created on a school-wide level.

Principal Communication (A, B, and C)

Apple's principal sends a weekly newsletter that keeps parents informed and connected. He highlights important information and upcoming events for his community. One example from a previous newsletter was his solicitation of gift cards from families to give to teachers. The response was overwhelming, and it allowed for Apple's principal to reward staff members throughout the year. It also allowed the community to give back.

Social Media and Newsletters (B and C)

Apple's principal has been intentional about social media use and his newsletter to communicate the needs and happenings of Apple.

Facilitate student and family access to effective services and special assistance

A. Timely support for parents

B. Access to direct health, mental health, and economic assistance (includes food and other

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basic needs)

C. Enhancing stakeholder awareness of services

Lemon

School Nurse (B)

Lemon School's nurse was often the "pre check" for students. If there was a concern, she would refer them to the Wellness Center where the student could be diagnosed and receive a prescription.

Wellness Center (B)

Lemon School, in conjunction with other schools on their campus had a center that had medical, dental, and social work.

Highlights are completely repairing the dental needs of students and addressing significant mental health needs.

Lime

Breakfast (B)

Lime School shifted the breakfast model to Grab and Go, with the allowance to eat breakfast in the classroom. This tripled their numbers. The principal reports a drop-in discipline referrals and increased productivity among students.

CASA (A and C)

Legal support for immigrant families is made available to the community.

Financial Aid Information Session (A)

Lime School pairs its rising 9th grade orientation with the financial aid information session.

Family Market (A)

Food program for families through all schools (elementary, middle, and high). Once a month, families can visit the food pantry, with many leaving with up to two weeks' worth of food for the family (approximately 120,000 pounds of food distributed last year).

Free Eye Exams and Access to Eyeglasses (B)

Through a partnership with a local business, free eye exams are provided and the opportunity to purchase heavily-subsidized eyeglasses.

Winter coats and Staff-Clothing Donations (B)

Winter coats and other clothing are made available to students through a reallocation of unclaimed lost and found and staff donations.

Community Services Board (CSB) (B)

Through the County, the school uses the CSB as a first-round triage and resource for families.

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Orange

Community Room (B)

Orange School's principal converted a classroom into a community room. It has food (food pantry), clothing (all ages) and resources for families.

Community Schools (A, B, and C)

Orange School is the first community school in the large school district. Partnering with a local organization and the United Way, Orange has a full-time site coordinator whose entire job is to connect Orange School's families with the resources they need.

Family Backpack Program (B)

Orange School provides food on Fridays for over 60 students.

Family Gifts at Holidays (A and B)

Orange School gave gifts to students and also gave options for students to give gifts to their siblings. This is funded through United Youth Ministries, staff members, and sorority/fraternities.

Family Market (A and B)

Partnering with a local area food bank, six pallets of food are delivered, ranging from fresh vegetables to meats. The market is serving about 600 of their families. With respect to their dignity, they don't hand bags of food. Each family "shops" for what they would like to have. Two feeder elementaries also participate in the program, so they can be fed for the entire month. Teachers volunteer to support the market.

Parenting Classes (C)

The community support site coordinator hosts financial literacy classes, parenting classes, and drugs and alcohol awareness classes.

Resource Fair (C)

The entire "pyramid," elementary, middle and high school, participates in a resource fair. There are a number of community-based resources, and the entire administrative team and clinical staff participates.

Strawberry

ATOD (C)

Participating with its feeder high school, Strawberry School hosts an Alcohol and Other Drug Parent Information Night.

Parent Liaisons (A, B, and C)

Strawberry School's parent liaison is able to connect families to needed resources.

Gang Involvement Intervention Night (C)

Strawberry School hosted an intervention night for parents and family members around gang involvement.

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Partnership for Clothing and Food Drives (B)

Some local churches and charities lend support during food and clothing drives. Strawberry's principal feels that they have not had as much success with pantries.

School Social Worker (A, B, and C)

Strawberry School does not have a full-time social worker, but its current staff member is able to connect families in need to appropriate resources.

School Supplies (B)

Strawberry School has a number of public donations for school supplies for its students but faces some challenges with storage and distribution.

Apple

Backpack Distribution (B)

Apple School has backpacks with school supplies and hygiene products that they deliver at the beginning of the year.

Clothing and Hygiene Products Available (B)

Apple School has backpacks, jackets, socks, gloves and hygiene products available in the school counseling department.

Connecting Resources (A, B, and C)

Apple School works to connect student and families to social services as needed. They utilize a local food program and a local family service organization. They have a religious organization that also has a clothing closet that they refer students and families to.

Resource Fair (C)

At the beginning of each year they do a resource fair as a K-12 continuum of schools.

Other: Principal as...

- A. Human resources coordinator
- B. Instructional leader
- C. Culture builder

Lemon

Principal as Human Resource Coordinator and Program Evaluator/Manager (A)

Lemon School's principal was strategic in his evaluation of his school's current state. He considered the bell schedule, the program schedule, and the talents of his teachers prior to making school-based changes. An example was the removal of a previous independent reading time, Drop Everything and Read. The principal was actively engaged in data monitoring, ensuring that there was a balance between reading and math interventions and opportunities.

LEADERSHIP IN BARRIERS TO STUDENT LEARNING

Anything that was outside the realm of teaching and learning, the principal ensured that was removed from the teacher's workload.

The principal also dismissed teachers who were not on board with the process.

All funds were distributed in one of three categories: (1) Improve instruction; (2) Improve school pride; (3) Help the community

Principal as Instructional Leader (B)

Lemon School's principal led the team dialogue and was intimately involved in instruction. He required assessments to be submitted to him, two weeks prior to being given, and he gave feedback with the expectation that the feedback was implemented, prior to the assessment being given. He delegated the same practice to his assistant principal for math. Meeting with and checking on progress.

He was an expert in the curriculum frameworks, and he ensured that the right questions were being asked.

Lime

Intentional Hiring and Management of Human Resources (A)

Considering the culture of the building, the goals of the District and school, and the social dynamic among teacher groups, the administrators directly hire staff members into each school site.

Pride in the Facility (C)

Lime school's principal believes that ensuring that students have a nice facility is important. When he arrived as a new principal to the building, he had walls and bathrooms repainted, and he personally cleaned graffiti as it appeared. Students responded by reporting whenever graffiti was present.

Principal as Culture Builder (C)

The principal of Lime School has implemented a wider range of allowance for feedback: No idea is a bad idea. He also believes in the power of a positive perspective and a no-venting policy.

Principal as Instructional Leader and Staff Support (B)

The principal engages staff members in crucial conversations around benchmark testing performance, supporting their reflective thinking.

Orange

Assistant Principal (3) focus on instruction over discipline (A [leads to B])

Orange School's principal traded staffing for a second safety and security assistant and a Dean of Students. He did this to ensure that the APs were focused on instruction.

Strategic Hiring (A)

LEADERSHIP IN BARRIERS TO STUDENT LEARNING

When given the opportunity to hire administrators and support staff, Orange School looks for a balance to the team and different areas of expertise.

Strawberry

Building Collective Responsibility (C)

Strawberry School's principal highlights the importance of all staff members working together for all students.

Throughout the interview, it was clear that Strawberry School's principal even worked to ensure that programs and initiatives were "owned" by various instructional and teacher leaders at Strawberry.

Apple

Accountability (C)

The principal has created a culture of accountability. From the principal to any staff member, they hold each other accountable for their professional expectations

Realignment of Current Leadership Structures (A)

Principal developed a CT lead cohort and a smaller instructional council. The groups were able to make decisions and give guiding input. The CT cohort became a combination of professional learning and input-giving for leadership initiatives.

Appendix I

Instrumentation Tool

Instrumentation Tool Key

School Initiatives/Support will be qualified into one of the three categories. Supports that “cross Categories” will use a → to the extent that support meets the criteria in each category it crosses.

| <p>Focus on ensuring students have the “feeling” of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Competence *Self-Determination *Relatedness | <p><i>Early development and prevention techniques</i></p> | <p><i>Early intervention techniques</i></p> | <p><i>Intervention and care</i></p> |
|--|---|---|-------------------------------------|
| <p><i>in classroom</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Available instructional supports o Classroom design changes o Enhancing professional development o Curricular enrichment and adjunct programs o Classroom and schoolwide approaches for a caring and supportive environment | <p>Quotes from interviews will be included in red.</p> <p><u>Live links will be included in blue and underlined when they do not/cannot lead to school-site identifiable information.</u></p> <p>Each initiative/support. <i>The description will be in italics beneath it.</i></p> | | |

Each learning support component will have its own column with example/descriptor language beneath

Instrumentation Tool

| <p><i>Focus on ensuring students have a “feeling” of the following:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Competence *Self Determination *Relatedness | <p><i>Early development and prevention techniques</i></p> | <p><i>Early intervention techniques</i></p> | <p><i>Intervention and care</i></p> |
|---|--|--|--|
| <p><i>In classroom</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Available instructional supports ○ Classroom design changes ○ Enhancing professional development ○ Curricular enrichment and adjunct programs ○ Classroom and schoolwide approaches for a caring and supportive environment | | | |

LEADERSHIP IN BARRIERS TO STUDENT LEARNING

| | <i>Early development and prevention techniques</i> | <i>Early intervention techniques</i> | <i>Intervention and care</i> |
|---|--|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <p><i>Support Transitions)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Support for newcomers ○ Daily transition support ○ Vertical articulation programs ○ Summer or intercession programs ○ School-to-career/higher education programs ○ Stakeholder (broad) involvement in planning for and designing transitions | | | |

LEADERSHIP IN BARRIERS TO STUDENT LEARNING

| | <i>Early development and prevention techniques</i> | <i>Early intervention techniques</i> | <i>Intervention and care</i> |
|--|--|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <p><i>Increase home involvement and engagement</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Support for the learning needs of the family ○ School-home connection opportunities ○ Home involvement in student decision making ○ Home support learning enhancement ○ Recruiting families to strengthen school and community | | | |

LEADERSHIP IN BARRIERS TO STUDENT LEARNING

| | <i>Early development and prevention techniques</i> | <i>Early intervention techniques</i> | <i>Intervention and care</i> |
|--|--|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <p><i>Respond to, where feasible, prevent school and personal crises and traumatic events</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Immediate assistance in crisis ○ Follow-up care ○ Crisis team ○ Leadership-developed prevention programs ○ Staff/Students/Families understand or can anticipate crisis based on learning opportunities ○ Community resources and other schools work to integrate crisis response and prevention ○ Capacity building | | | |

LEADERSHIP IN BARRIERS TO STUDENT LEARNING

| | <i>Early development and prevention techniques</i> | <i>Early intervention techniques</i> | <i>Intervention and care</i> |
|---|--|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <p><i>Increase community involvement, engagement, and support</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Outreach to recruit and retain community resources ○ Attendance outreach ○ Community connections ○ Social marketing | | | |

LEADERSHIP IN BARRIERS TO STUDENT LEARNING

| | <i>Early development and prevention techniques</i> | <i>Early intervention techniques</i> | <i>Intervention and care</i> |
|---|--|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <p><i>Facilitate student and family access to effective services and special assistance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Timely support for parents ○ Access to direct health, mental health, and economic assistance ○ Follow-up to ensure that supports are effective ○ Evidence that resources are coordinated to avoid duplication (feeder schools with siblings, etc.) ○ Enhancing stakeholder awareness of services | | | |

LEADERSHIP IN BARRIERS TO STUDENT LEARNING

| | <i>Early development and prevention techniques</i> | <i>Early intervention techniques</i> | <i>Intervention and care</i> |
|--|--|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <i>Other (Allocation that cannot be qualified according to the arenas)</i> | | | |