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The Perceptions of Elementary Principals Regarding Their Role in Increasing Teacher Capacity

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The Perceptions of Elementary Principals Regarding Their Role in Increasing Teacher Capacity

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Approvals

In the judgment of the following signatories, this Dissertation meets the academic standards that have been established for the Doctor of Philosophy degree.

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my late father, Eugene W. Creedon. His leadership, love, and dedication to the staff, students, and families inspires me every day. I am honored and privileged to be able to walk in his footsteps.

I would also like to dedicate this dissertation to my family. To my husband, Sean Perkins, my boys, Dillan and Andrew, and my mother Kathleen Creedon, I love you. I will be forever grateful for your love and support throughout this process.

Finally, to my school family and committee, I am truly blessed to work with such dedicated educators who always put the students first. I look forward to the years ahead working together to improve the educational experiences and learning outcomes for all students.

Abstract

The Perceptions of Elementary Principals Regarding Their Role in Building Teacher Capacity is a sequential explanatory mixed methods study and includes quantitative and qualitative elements. In public schools throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the responsibility for building increased teacher capacity falls primarily on elementary school principals. This study collected the experiences and behaviors of elementary principals in Massachusetts to gain insight into their understanding of their role in building teacher capacity. This study was guided by three research questions: 1. To what extent do elementary principals consider the capacity of teachers to be a principal leadership priority? 2. In what ways do elementary principals report they build teacher capacity? 3. What are the factors and conditions that occur within the school day that elementary principals identify as supporting or inhibiting their efforts to increase teacher capacity? This study collected data from 79 elementary principals through a questionnaire, with nine of those school principals providing qualitative data in the form of follow-up interviews. The study's seven findings identified the elementary principal's primary role in building teacher capacity; and the strategies and practices that are effective in supporting this. Recommendations offer effective strategies and approaches principals can use to increase teacher capacity taking cognizance of the importance of culture and climate as an influencing factor.

Keywords: Teacher capacity, perceptions, elementary principals, culture and climate, student achievement

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CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

"Leadership, like teaching, is about heart, dedication and profound caring. There is a special kind of satisfaction and joy in supporting another person's growth" (Drago-Severson, 2009, p. 1).

The quality of leadership in schools today has been acknowledged by many as critical to a school's ability to increase student achievement (Hallinger, 2011; Leithwood, 2005; Leithwood et al., 2004; Whitaker, 2020). Leithwood et al. (2004) identify the principal as second only to the teacher in their impact on student learning. Bryk et al. (2010) further this point and identify principal leadership as a way to improve student learning by focusing on strategies to increase their staff's capacity and the school's instructional system. As reported by Michael Fullan (2014), investing in the capacity of teachers has been repeatedly shown to be a critical way to increase accountability. "Capacity building," as defined by Fullan (2019), "refers to the skills, competencies, and knowledge that individuals and groups need to be effective at accomplishing the goals at hand" (p. 6). Fullan (2019) describes capacity building as being thought of in two buckets. The first bucket focuses on pedagogy, which he calls "expert teaching and learning" (Fullan, 2019, p. 6). The second bucket focuses on "expert leadership for change" (Fullan, 2019, p.6).

Current research strongly supports the idea that to improve student achievement, the principal's top priority should be improving the capacity of their staff (Elmore, 2002; Fullan, 2014; Fullan, 2019; Leithwood et al., 2004; Robinson, 2011; Whitaker, 2020). However, in my work as Curriculum Director and Assistant Superintendent at a public school district, I have seen first-hand how difficult this task truly is. As the Assistant Superintendent, I am responsible for

developing and overseeing the implementation of the curriculum; however, this is only a small part of my job. I am also responsible for managing the Title I program, the Special Education Department, the English Language Learner Program, and the Literacy Program. In addition, and perhaps most importantly, I am responsible for working with the principals regarding curriculum and developing and providing professional development designed to increase staff capacity. During my time spent working with principals—particularly elementary principals—I became aware of some significant challenges principals faced relating to their ability to fulfill the research recommendations and increase staff capacity.

I would be remiss if I did not touch on how my experiences have contributed to my developing interest in the role principals play in building the capacity of teachers. First, the district I work in is also the one I attended as a child. I come from a long line of educators who worked within the district. My father was the principal of the elementary school I attended as a child. He eventually became the principal of one of the district's middle schools and, finally, the superintendent of schools. My mother also worked in the district as a first-grade teacher. As a result, many of my childhood experiences and adult experiences have centered on the school system.

During my childhood, the population within the district lacked diversity, and it has only been within the last 20 years that the city has seen a significant increase in minority populations. Leadership theorist and consultant Simon Western asks us to "locate ourselves" and to "acknowledge that we all carry personal, social, and historical baggage with us" (Western, 2008, p. 57). In attempting to locate myself and the historical, social, and personal context that has impacted my judgments, perhaps even at an unconscious level (Western, 2008), I would be

neglectful if I did not consider the impact that these experiences have had on my current beliefs and how those beliefs impact my perceptions, decisions and actions.

Working with eleven different elementary school principals has been an enlightening experience. These principals work extremely hard and proclaim to be concerned and focused on improving student achievement. Researchers such as Bryk et al. (2010), DuFour and Marzano (2011), Fullan (2014), Robinson (2011), and Grissom et al. (2021) have stressed the critical link between increasing teacher capacity and increases in student achievement. The principals I work with appear to understand how vital capacity-building strategies are, yet they struggle to carry this concern over to their staff. The question I have been working to understand is: Why is it that principals, in my experience, have a difficult time with this aspect of their role?

Statement of the Problem

Over the past few years, I have questioned what is standing in the way of the principal's ability to build teacher capacity. As stated earlier, I work with principals who are dedicated to their staff and, of their own volition, genuinely want to see an improvement in student achievement. They all have assessment days three times per year where they review data with their staff and set school goals, team goals, and individual goals based on the needs of the students, all of which are consistent with the research on building teacher capacity (Deal & Peterson, 2016; Leithwood et al., 2010; Marzano, 2003; Marzano et al., 2005; Robinson, 2011). They develop a school improvement plan with the help of their staff, and they offer professional development throughout the year.

But why does this work not carry over into the classroom and have the desired impact on student achievement? Even more interesting is that while all of the principals in the district

follow the same process, some seem more capable than others in increasing adult learning and capacity building within their school, despite their staff members appearing to be receptive to learning, changing, and improving their practice.

Elmore (2000) identifies accountability as a "reciprocal process" (p. 5). For principals to set goals for teachers, they need to make sure they can meet those goals and, if required, must provide support to develop the capacity to achieve them. I would argue that this idea of "reciprocal accountability" (p. 5) is relevant to teachers and applies to the principals who are expected to implement capacity-building strategies. Principals must support teachers' growth, learning, and skill development to meet improvement goals. A longitudinal data analysis completed by The Wallace Foundation that synthesized six studies designed to track the impact of a given principal over time suggested, "The implication is that if a school district could invest in improving the performance of just one adult in a school building, investing in the principal is likely the most efficient way to affect student achievement" (Grissom et al., 2021, p. 40). However, the question remains: Do principals have the necessary skills to provide this capacity-building support?

There is no question that principals have an extremely demanding job and, daily, are asked to fill the role of manager, instructional leader, leader of learning, and promoter of shared leadership (DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Hallinger, 2011; Rousmaniere, 2013). Stakeholders such as parents, teachers, and district administration view each competing role as a priority. For instance, teachers cannot do their jobs unless they have a safe environment with the supplies and materials they need to teach. Parents and teachers want the principal's time and support to be involved in the school's decision-making. The district expects principals to be curriculum experts and have the skills to evaluate and support struggling teachers. These things certainly impact

how much time principals can spend on activities that support building capacity. According to Michael Fullan, “In a 2022 survey by the RAND Corporation titled, ‘Are Principals on the Brink of a Breakdown?’ some 85% of principals reported job-related stress; 48% said they were struggling with burnout; and 28% reported symptoms of distress” (Fullan, 2023, p. xii).

From the inception of the complex role of the principal, the position has remained one of a middle manager, charged with both buffering the teachers and the classroom from the outside world (Elmore, 2000) while at the same time implementing initiatives and mandates directed down from a state, federal, and district level (Rousmaniere, 2013). As Fullan (2014) points out, pressures that are now inherent in the role have “placed principals on a pedestal” (p. 7) from which we expect “miracles” (p. 7) that few, if any, have a chance of pulling off. The principals who can do it all are in danger of burnout from the pressure and stress (Fullan, 2014).

Like their 19th-century counterparts, today's principals remain responsible for the day-to-day maintenance of the school building, discipline, attendance, curriculum management, and supervision of teachers (Fullan, 2014). Newer to the role is the expectation to implement and manage large-scale state and federal reform initiatives (Deal & Peterson, 2016; Hallinger, 2011; Rousmaniere, 2013). The modern-day principal is responsible for all this, yet they must also continue solving the daily, often highly time-consuming, problems within a school (Rousmaniere, 2013). Adding more pressure to an already stressful job is the fact that the principal is the person who is ultimately responsible for increases or decreases in student learning (Fullan, 2014) and the success or failure of the school.

An example of the pressure principals face is the implementation of the standards and accountability movement. The task of improving schools as a result of this movement is what

Fullan (2014) refers to as “back-end accountability” (p. 25). Darling-Hammond (2004) additionally points out the potential dangers high-stakes testing can have on the curriculum and a school through “curriculum narrowing and pushing instruction towards lower order cognitive skills” (p. 1049). Both Fullan and Darling-Hammond agree that a more effective approach is to build the capacity of the staff through opportunities for professional learning and growth. Accountability should focus on improving the teaching and learning within the school. In order to improve teaching and learning, principals need to improve the practice of the people providing the instruction (Darling-Hammond, 2004; Fullan, 2014; Leithwood et al., 2010). Cuban (2012), Fullan (2014), and Robinson (2011) all identify increasing teacher capacity as the most effective way a principal can increase student achievement. The current model of accountability is, according to Fullan (2014, p. 25), “boxing the principal in” and focusing on the “wrong driver” (p. 25). This focus on ineffective measures, such as the accountability system, restricts the principal’s influence on their staff yet still holds them accountable for their success or failure (Fullan, 2014).

In addition to the abovementioned challenges, principals led amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Cecilia Azorín (2020) refers to COVID-19 as a “supernova” (p. 381). It was a crisis that impacted all facets of daily life and required teachers, principals, and district leaders to reimagine the world of education, frequently at a moment's notice (Azorín, 2020; Harris & Jones, 2020). Principals are dealing with staffing shortages, increased mental health issues of both staff and students, and educational inequity that has been dramatically exacerbated as a result of the pandemic (Harris & Jones, 2020). School leaders did not have a script to follow, and there were no guidelines for navigating a pandemic except for recommendations from state and federal

agencies that changed frequently and were often conflicting. Harris and Jones (2020) compare the current school leader's role to "walking a tightrope without a safety net" (p. 244).

Whether due to the principal's lack of knowledge, the time spent on the daily responsibilities of managing a school so that it runs well, the impact of the pandemic, or the pressure associated with educational reform movements, principals seem overwhelmed by the many responsibilities associated with the role. This has certainly been my experience with principals, and is supported by evidence provided by researchers such as Hallinger (2011) and Fullan (2014). Although researchers agree that the most effective way a principal can improve student achievement is to increase the capacity of the staff within the school, principals within my district and nationwide continue to struggle to accomplish this aspect of their role.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to further research the perceptions and behaviors of elementary school principals regarding their role in building teacher capacity. Specifically, I sought to better understand the barriers that impede a principal's ability to build teacher capacity and cause them to be unsuccessful in their attempts. Additionally, I sought to develop an understanding of elementary principals' knowledge and perceptions of the effective strategies to build capacity, how often they implement these strategies, and how principals reinforce the strategies they use to ensure they are having the desired impact on classroom practices. My research also aimed to uncover principals' day-to-day undertakings that either support or inhibit them from engaging in capacity-building strategies.

I identified the following working hypotheses:

1. Many principals may have limited knowledge of capacity-building strategies and how to implement them within their building.
2. Principals believe they are implementing capacity-building strategies consistently, despite spending only a small amount of time, if any, on this critical area.
3. The most significant factor impacting a principal's ability to build capacity is the time spent during the day on the managerial aspects of running a school.

This research is a critical topic and has far-reaching implications for the quality of education students receive. The driving force behind initiating this study was a desire to support principals in building teacher capacity, both within Massachusetts and beyond. This study is also significant for district leaders as it will provide them with the knowledge to change how districts support the professional development of principals and assist in eliminating impediments to building capacity. This work will also equip principals with the knowledge required to increase their capacity, which, in turn, will assist them in building the capacity of their staff and ultimately lead to increased student achievement (Fullan, 2014; Grissom et al., 2021; Robinson, 2011). To achieve these goals, the study was guided by the following questions:

Guiding Questions

The following three (3) questions guide the study:

1. To what extent do elementary principals consider the capacity of teachers to be a principal leadership responsibility?

2. In what ways do elementary principals report they build teacher capacity?

3. What are the factors and conditions that occur within the school day that elementary principals identify as supporting or inhibiting their efforts to increase teacher capacity?

Definition of Terms

Building Teacher Capacity

According to the Glossary of Education Reform, building teacher capacity "encompasses the quality of adaptation." It is the ability of an educator to grow, develop, and learn (Glossary of Education Reform, 2013, August 29). Therefore, "building teacher capacity" in this study will refer to the efforts of elementary principals to increase the ability of teachers to grow, develop, and learn.

Perceptions

According to Merriam-Webster (n.d.), the term perception refers to the way a person thinks about or understands someone or something. Expectations, needs, unconscious ideas, values, and conflicts may influence perceptions.

Significance of the Study

While this study may prove significant for school principals in general, it is likely to be of particular interest to principals of elementary schools because the information gathered pertains directly to their daily work. Principals may benefit from the information gathered during this study because it describes the importance of building teacher capacity, amongst other competing responsibilities. It also provides prospective principals with a snapshot of the

requirements in terms of leadership. In addition, it provides current principals with suggestions as to how they might build teachers' capacity.

The findings of this study may also be relevant for superintendents as they hire and provide support for new and veteran principals. The information can assist superintendents in providing conditions that support principals in building teacher capacity and eliminating obstacles that may hinder a principal's efforts. Information collected from this study will assist districts in developing highly effective principals, which will impact teacher retention and student achievement (Grissom et al., 2021).

District administrators and administrators within the Department of Education at the state and federal levels may also find this study significant. The information this study provides may assist these individuals in emphasizing and increasing the importance of building capacity in the *Standards for Effective Administrators*. The study may assist in their future endeavors to support districts in their efforts to build the capacity of teachers and principals.

The data revealed within this study may assist developers of principal preparation programs, programs for the preparation of administrators, and teacher preparation programs to develop programs that better meet the training needs of principals. Finally, this study may also have implications for policymakers, educators, other educational leadership doctoral students, and researchers focused on improving teacher capacity and the current accountability system.

Delimitations of the Study

This study consciously excludes elements related to site, participants, and scope and will be delimited in the following ways: The focus of this study is solely on elementary principals in

the U.S., even though this study may be relevant to middle and high school principals, as well as teachers and district administrators. This narrow focus may impact or limit the transferability of the information gathered during the study. This study provides only one perspective on the elementary principals' role in building teacher capacity: that of the principals themselves. It does not seek the perspectives of teachers, parents, or their direct supervisors regarding their effectiveness in building teacher capacity.

Overview of the Literature Review

The following research bodies were reviewed and discussed within the literature review and incorporated into the study. A brief historical review of the bodies of literature documenting the change in the responsibilities of the principalship and the accumulation of competing priorities over time (Rousmaniere, 2013) is included to provide a clear picture of the ambiguity and pressures associated with the role.

The expectations and responsibilities of the principal as “head teacher” or “principal teacher” (English, 2005; Rousmaniere, 2007, p. 111) have increased dramatically over time since the introduction of these descriptors in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Goodwin et al. (2005) describe this change not as an evolution of the role of principal; instead, it is “an accumulation of expectations” (p. 2) that have resulted in creating a complex and ambiguous role shaped throughout history by both internal and external forces. Despite changing expectations and responsibilities, it is interesting to note that the administrative and day-to-day tasks of the principal remain relatively similar to the initial inception of the principal role (Hallinger, 1992; Kafka, 2009).

The role of principal was introduced in the late 1800s as a way to address growing school populations. In urban areas, the position of the principal teacher was created to address increasing populations and the development of grade-level classes (Kafka, 2009). Initially, the principal's responsibilities included teaching part-time, monitoring attendance, managing the day-to-day operations of the building, scheduling classes, and dealing with discipline issues (Kafka, 2009; Rousmaniere, 2007). The principal was also responsible for outreach to the community and maintenance of the grounds (Kafka, 2009).

The onset of the Industrial Revolution in the early 1900s brought about a turning point in the role of the principal. The Progressive Era carried the idea of scientific management (Beck & Murphy, 1993; Cuban, 1988; English, 2005; Murphy, 1998). The principal's role, as a result, morphed into one of an administrative bureaucrat who functioned as a middle manager wedged between the demands of administration and those of the teachers (Cuban, 1988; Rousmaniere, 2013); a role that persists in the lives of principals today (Cuban, 1988; Hallinger, 2005). The literature explored included but was not limited to Cuban, Egalite, Grissom, Hallinger, Kafka, Lindsay, Murphy, Rousmaniere, and Tyack.

The literature review includes a review of educational reform movements, such as the standards-based accountability movement; the positive and negative impact these reforms have had on education; and the role of the principal. A pivotal point in the life of school principals and educators was the 1983 release of *A Nation at Risk.* The National Commission on Excellence in Education wrote this landmark paper, which claimed "the well-being of its people, the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people" (U.S. National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 1). Policymakers framed the problem in terms of a lack of

strong instructional leadership and inadequate knowledge in the area of curriculum and instruction on the part of the principal (English, 2005; Hallinger, 1992).

As a result of these reform movements, the principal is directly responsible for improving instruction and student achievement (Hallinger, 1992; Smith & Andrews, 1989). In addition to their ever-growing list of responsibilities, principals are now responsible for implementing the curriculum standards and feel the impact of failures to improve student achievement.

This literature added to the development of a deeper understanding of the expectations placed on the principal from federal, state, and district levels. Literature explored in this section included Darling-Hammond, Duncan, Elmore, Tyack, *A Nation at Risk,* and documents from the U.S. and Massachusetts Departments of Education.

Organizational and educational literature identifying strategies used to build the capacity of those within an organization was analyzed to determine effective strategies and their impact on increases in organizational, collective, and individual capacity. The literature included Egalite, Grissom, Heifetz, Kirtman, Kotter, Leithwood, Levin, Lindsay, Marzano, and Whitaker.

Research on the factors and conditions, including culture, knowledge, skills, and dispositions that support or inhibit a principal's ability to build teacher capacity, was also reviewed. Investing in building the collective capacity of staff is a crucial strategy for improving the quality of instruction and increasing student achievement (Fullan, 2014; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Hattie, 2009). In order to build the capacity of teachers in their buildings, principals use a variety of approaches. The leadership practices and strategies effective principals use to build the capacity of their staff were examined. These strategies included but are not limited to the following:

1) Analyze and support student learning.
2) Anchor the vision in the development of goals.
3) Communicate high expectations.
4) Coordinate the curriculum.
5) Develop a shared vision.
6) Encourage shared leadership.
7) Establish shared norms and values.
8) Hire and retain high-quality teachers.
9) Model the learning process.
10) Organize and promote high-quality professional development.
11) Promote teamwork and collaboration.
12) Provide developmental support.
13) Provide high-quality feedback.

Reviewed literature included Bryk, Egalite, Fullan, Grissom, Lindsay, Marzano, Reeves, Schargel, Thacker, and Whittaker.

Overview of the Research Methodology

The study's design is organized into two major sections. First, the general aspects of the design are described and subdivided into six sub-sections: design strategy selected and rationale; participants; site description; instrumentation; confidentiality and socio-cultural perspective. Second, the methodology used to gather data for this study is described in detail.

General Aspects of the Design

Design Strategy and Rationale

The overall methodology used to conduct this study was a mixed methods study. The rationale for choosing this design strategy was based on the need to develop a deeper understanding of principals' perceptions regarding their role in developing teacher capacity through reviewing multiple sources of information (Creswell, 2013). Creswell (2015) identifies a rationale for using mixed methods when the sole use of qualitative or quantitative methods is insufficient for developing an understanding of the research problem. More specifically, using quantitative and qualitative data in the research provided a more comprehensive understanding and data than either methodology would have yielded alone (Creswell, 2015). Using both qualitative and quantitative perspectives provided me with a better understanding of the behaviors and perceptions of principals and the managerial and organizational processes (Yin, 2014) that support or hinder the ability to increase teacher capacity.

Participants

To conduct this research, a non-probability convenience sampling strategy was used. Three considerations were made as a result of this sampling strategy (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011): participants in the sample; sample size; and data collected.

This study focused on the elementary principals' role in building teacher capacity; therefore, the participants consisted only of public school elementary principals within the state of Massachusetts. Participants were limited to elementary principals from schools that included grades pre-kindergarten through six, or a variation of these grade levels. This produced a list of

790 individuals. This study attempted to recruit a minimum of thirty percent of the 790 elementary school principals or 237 principals across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Recruiting many participants lowers the potential risk of sampling error and provides a more reflective sample of the total population (Creswell, 2015, 2022). Principals were contacted using their school email addresses. The elementary school principals who participated in this study were informed of the general purpose of the study and provided consent prior to participating (Appendix A).

Instrumentation

I collected data from multiple sources for this study. This included a survey of participating principals and a follow-up interview with select participants. A survey was developed and provided to the participants using Google Forms. The survey assisted in gaining a better understanding of the time principals spend on capacity-building activities and the types of capacity-building strategies they rate as a priority. In addition, principals identified which of the capacity-building strategies, identified by the research, they feel are effective. The results of the survey assisted in identifying discrepancies between research findings and the principals' responses. Data was compiled and analyzed using a combination of Google Forms, SPSS, and Dedoose.

Confidentiality

To protect the anonymity of the participants, names and email addresses were only collected from those participants who volunteered to be interviewed. All other responses were anonymous. Names were replaced with numbers to protect the confidentiality of the participants

who agreed to be interviewed. School and district names were given an alias to further ensure confidentiality. Paper and electronic documents, including names and identifying information, were redacted to protect the research subjects. All participants were also given a letter of informed consent detailing the purpose of the research, procedures, potential risks and benefits, procedures for ensuring confidentiality, data storage, withdrawal information, and my contact information for further questions (Appendix A). All paper documents were locked in a secure filing cabinet during the research period, and electronic files were stored on a password-protected computer. In addition, any collected paper documents were shredded and destroyed at the conclusion of the research.

Sociocultural Perspective

Having a long history within a Massachusetts district, although beneficial in terms of access to information, also brings with it the potential to influence the analysis and data-gathering methods used during the research process. To protect the integrity of the research, it was essential to acknowledge and be consciously aware of the effect this could have on the research throughout the study. Potential influencing factors included my current role within a Massachusetts district as the Assistant Superintendent, which could affect both the analysis and interpretation of the results. It was crucially important that I, as the researcher, acknowledged these potential biases and consciously considered them throughout the research process to ensure that they did not influence the study in any way.

Data Collection

Data was collected in a variety of ways during the study. Data was stored in electronic files to protect the confidentiality of the participants. Files were created for each data source and stored in a secure Google cloud account. All files were backed up on a flash drive, and the flash drive was stored in a locked filing cabinet. In addition, a personal log was kept as a back-up and stored in a locked filing cabinet (Stake, 2006).

Data from the administered survey was collected using Google Forms. The data from the survey was transferred into graphs and tables using Microsoft Excel and SPSS software. This data analysis allowed me to identify common themes among the principals as well as areas that require further investigation through the survey and interview process. All graphs and tables were stored electronically, saved in a Google Cloud file, and backed up on a flash drive.

All information collected pertaining to elementary schools in Massachusetts was also stored electronically in a secure Google Cloud. Information was collected via the school website or the School and District Profile page available through the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. All information was numbered and stored. A summary of the information was created in a Word document and stored with the collected information.

All notes, survey information, and interview transcripts were transcribed into codes or categories. Information gathered from the abovementioned data sources helped develop themes that were used to assist in interpreting the findings. Identified themes consisted of aggregated codes identified within the data. I analyzed the data collected from the individual participants to identify patterns and themes across individuals. All themes and corresponding data will be reported on in Chapter 4.

Outline of the Chapters

The following is an outline of the chapters included in this dissertation:

- Chapter One introduced the topic, followed by the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, guiding questions, definition of terms, the study's significance, and delimitations.
- Chapter Two encompasses the literature review. A brief history of the role of the principal and a review of educational reform literature and its impact on the principalship is explored. Also included within this chapter is a review of the organizational and educational literature identifying strategies used to build the capacity of those within an organization; and research on the factors and conditions that support or hinder a principal's ability to increase capacity.
- Chapter Three provides a detailed description of the study's design. A rationale for the use of the mixed methods methodology, a description of the participants, the instruments used to collect data, as well as detail relating to data collection and storage are included in this chapter. In addition, methods for data analysis and protecting the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants is presented.
- Chapter Four describes the data collected from the survey and a review of documents. The emerging themes are discussed; patterns within and across participants are explored; and explicit connections are made to the results of the data collected and the guiding questions used to frame the research.
- Chapter Five includes a summary and discussion of the findings, as well as implications for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: Review of Literature

> A serious discussion about the deep leadership role of principals has been a long time coming. We have spent at least 30 years bouncing from one extreme to another on the false dichotomy of *principal as instructional leader* versus *principal as autonomous school leader*. We now know—a classic change finding actually—that neither works. (Fullan, 2023, p. 17)

The literature outlined in this chapter provides some context relating to the principal's complex role and the impact a principal has on their school. A historical review of the evolution of the role of the principal—including the theoretical, professional, and research literature—is discussed to develop an understanding of the demands and expectations that have grown over time. Relevant literature on Educational Reform, the Standards-Based Accountability movement, and the impact these movements have had on leadership styles and strategies are reviewed, along with research on the effective approaches principals use to build teacher capacity. This chapter also informs the reader of the factors and conditions that support or inhibit a principal's efforts to increase teacher capacity.

The literature and research in this chapter aligns with, informs, and provides context for the study's Guiding Research Questions, which are as follows:

1. To what extent do elementary principals consider the capacity of teachers to be a principal leadership responsibility?

2. In what ways do elementary principals report they build teacher capacity?

3. What are the factors and conditions that occur within the school day that elementary principals identify as supporting or inhibiting their efforts to increase teacher capacity?

This chapter is organized under the following headings: The Changing Role and Responsibilities of the Principal; Education Reform; The Standards-Based Accountability Movement; The Approaches Principals Use to Build Teacher Capacity; Factors and Conditions that Support Building Teacher Capacity; and Factors and Conditions that Inhibit Building Teacher Capacity. This chapter concludes with a brief summary.

The Changing Role and Responsibilities of the Principal

A study synthesizing two decades of research completed by Grissom et al. (2021) found that the impact of an effective principal on student achievement is nearly as impactful as an effective teacher's impact on student achievement. Grissom et al. (2021) reinforced a conclusion drawn by Leithwood et al. (2004), by indicating that "leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school" (p. 5). They went on to highlight how vital the principal role is to improving student achievement by recommending, "if a school district could invest in improving the performance of just one adult in a school building, investing in the principal is likely the most efficient way to affect student achievement" (Grissom et al., 2021, p. 40). Bryk et al.(2010), in their work with Chicago Public Schools, also emphasized the importance of leadership and referred to it as one of their essential supports for school improvement in low-performing schools (p. 45).

Over time, the role of the principal has shifted dramatically. Most notably, over the past two decades, with the implementation of the accountability movement, the teacher evaluation system, and the increased focus on educational equity, the expectation is that principals have a greater knowledge base and can improve student outcomes (Grissom et al., 2021). School leaders today face many challenges; a highly prioritized one is creating an environment where all students can learn (Smith & Andrews, 1989).

Creating this environment is complicated by the ever-increasing demands placed on the principal. Over time, expectations of the principal have increased from being a manager of operations to focusing on transformative leadership to serving as the instructional leader (Fullan, 2023). Smith and Andrews (1989, p. 9) indicate that principals or instructional leaders should possess the key qualities of resource provider, instructional resource, communicator, and visible presence. DeWitt (2020) goes further, describing instructional leadership as being focused on "understanding how to implement improvements effectively, build collective efficacy during that implementation process, and work together with teachers and staff to build a focus on learning, so that we can improve our teaching strategies and increase student engagement" (p. xix). Robinson (2010) refers to instructional leadership as "leadership practices that involve planning, evaluation, coordination, and improvement of teaching and learning. It is also referred to as learning-centered leadership" (p. 2). Recent research also identifies an essential component of instructional leadership as gathering evidence to measure our impact as leaders on both the staff and the students (DeWitt, 2020; Hattie & Smith, 2021).

Michael Fullan (2023) describes the shift to instructional leadership as heading down a tiny path and forcing principals to spend an exorbitant amount of time micromanaging instruction when they could be focused on the more productive task of building professional capital. Fullan emphasizes the role of the principal as a "lead learner" (Fullan, 2023, p. 6). This type of leader helps staff learn through their interactions with others while also serving as a role model for those they lead (Fullan, 2023).

Although instructional leadership, as described in the definitions above, may be a "narrow path" (Fullan, 2023, p. 19), a common thread throughout the definitions is that the leadership role of the principal involves creating an environment where all teachers grow and

learn through their interactions with their principal, colleagues and students (DeWitt, 2020; DuFour & Marzano, 2009; Fullan, 2023; Hattie & Smith, 2021; Robinson, 2010; Smith & Andrews, 1989). Marzano et al. (2005) reinforce this definition of a principal as one who actively supports and promotes the professional growth of their faculty. Principals facilitate this growth by providing opportunities for their staff to engage in professional learning that is designed to build teacher capacity (Drago-Severson, 2009; DuFour & Marzano, 2009; Fullan, 2014, 2023; Robinson, 2011; Whitaker, 2020).

Building teacher capacity is particularly relevant to principals today as recent studies have found strong correlations between a principal's ability to promote and participate in teacher learning and increases in student achievement (Robinson et al., 2008). Teacher capacity, as defined by the Glossary of Education Reform, "encompasses the quality of adaptation" (Glossary of Education Reform, 2013, August 29). It is the ability of an educator to grow, develop, and learn. Bryk et al. (2010) identify capacity building as one of the essential supports necessary to improve student outcomes. Whitaker (2020) emphasizes that the most critical work of a school principal is improving the people in our schools. According to Wagner et al. (2005), creating a system that is focused on improving instruction is a significant component of improving student learning outcomes.

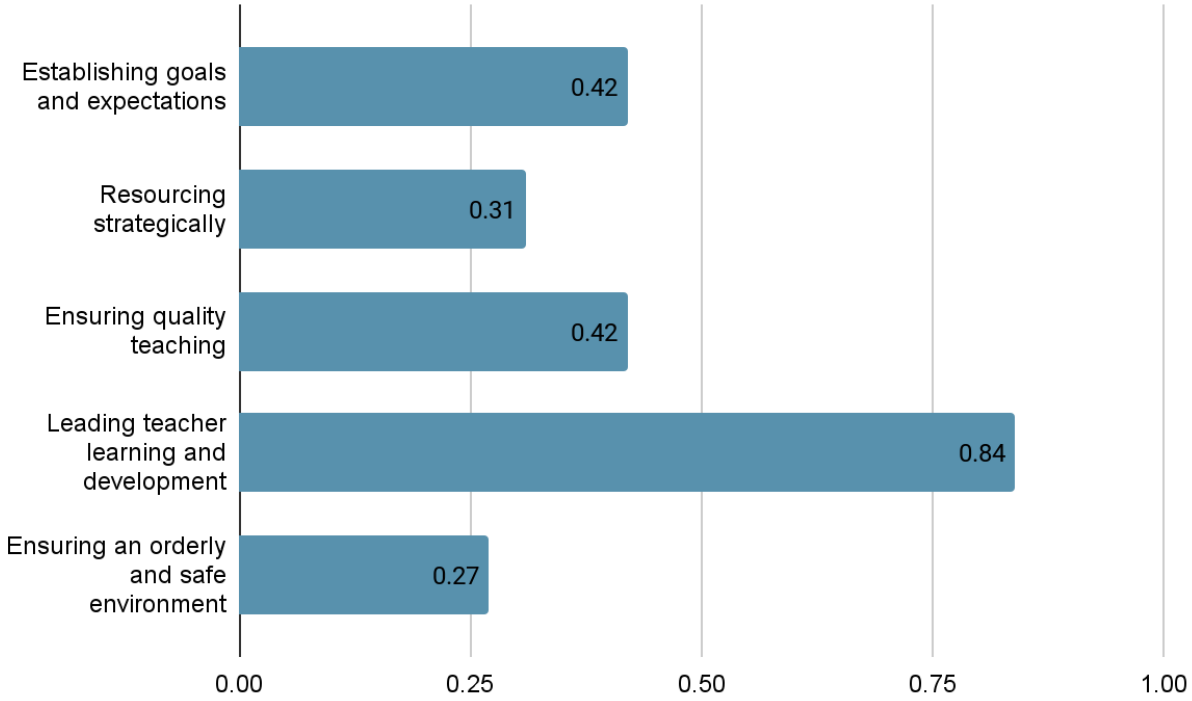
As principals consider the various ways to build teacher capacity and improve student outcomes, they must also consider the context and climate of their school (Hallinger, 2011). Hallinger (2011) defines context as the school's organizational, institutional, and environmental position. School climate is additionally described as the attitudes and actions of the faculty towards teaching and learning (Hallinger & Leithwood, 1998). Context and climate must be considered when building teacher capacity (Hallinger, 2011; Hallinger & Leithwood, 1998).

“Effective leadership is both shaped by and responds to the constraints and opportunities extant in the school organization and environment” (Hallinger, 2011, p. 127). Fullan (2023) refers to this as “contextual literacy” (p. 63). Contextual literacy is the ability of a leader to develop knowledge, understanding, and care for the context in which they are working (Fullan, 2023, p. 63). Fullan further describes it as “deep empathy on the part of leaders for the people and their circumstances of life” (Fullan, 2023, p. 63).

Robinson et al. (2008), in their study referred to earlier, analyzed five specific leadership practices, which they refer to as the “leadership dimensions” (p. 658). Of the five leadership practices identified, dimension four, “Promoting and participating in teacher learning and development” (p. 663), was found to have the most significant effect size (0.84) on increasing student outcomes. Leaders whom staff view as being involved in their staff's learning and who participated, modeled, and were considered to be “leading learners” (p. 663) had the most significant impact on student outcomes. Figure 1 shows the five dimensions of student-centered leadership with leading teacher learning and development having the largest effect according to Robinson (2011, p. 9).

Figure 1

Five Dimensions of Student-Centered Leadership



Note. From *Student centered leadership* (p. 9) by V. Robinson, 2011, Jossey-Bass.

The Principal Teacher

The expectations and responsibilities of the principal as "head teacher" or "principal teacher" (English, 2005; Rousmaniere, 2007, p. 111) have increased dramatically since these terms were introduced in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Goodwin et al. (2005) describe this change not as an evolution of the role of the principal, but rather "an accumulation of expectations"(p. 2) that have resulted in creating a complex and ambiguous role shaped throughout history by both internal and external forces (Rousmaniere, 2013). State and federal educational reform efforts and changes in the development of leadership theory and its

connection to school leadership have contributed significantly to this layering of expectations (Fullan, 2023; Goodwin et al., 2005). Despite changing expectations and responsibilities, it is interesting to note that the administrative and day-to-day tasks of the principal remain relatively similar to the initial inception of the principal's role (Hallinger, 1992; Kafka, 2009). Managerial tasks associated with the administrative aspect of the role often compete for the time principals need to fulfill critical leadership responsibilities (Cuban, 1988; Fullan, 2014, 2023; Hallinger, 2005) such as building the capacity of others.

The role of principal was introduced in the 1800s as a way to address growing school populations. In urban areas, the position of principal teacher was created to address increasing populations and the development of grade-level classes (Kafka, 2009). Initially, the principal's responsibilities included teaching part-time, monitoring attendance, managing the day-to-day operations of the building, scheduling classes, and dealing with discipline issues (Kafka, 2009; Rousmaniere, 2007). The principal was also responsible for outreach to the community and maintenance of the grounds (Kafka, 2009). During this time period the principal was viewed by many as a type of clergyman (Beck & Murphy, 1993; English, 2005; Murphy, 1998), charged with providing a "common religious and political education" (English, 2005, p. 112).

Training for potential principals was uncommon, and what training did exist focused on management and philosophy (Murphy, 1998). A well-organized teacher was often promoted to principal without leadership experience (Murphy, 1998; Rousmaniere, 2013). Early leadership instruction concentrated on "Trait Theories"(Murphy, 1998, p. 361) or the "Great Man Theory" (Murphy, 1998, p. 361), theories which implied that there are certain features of an individual's personality that endow them with the ability to be great leaders (Western, 2008). These early principals lacked job descriptions, educational law, or professional training opportunities. They

answered to a school board typically comprised of local laypeople and a superintendent in more urban areas. They existed in relative autonomy, although not wholly lacking in conflict with their community supervisors (Goodwin et al., 2003; Rousmaniere, 2013).

Administrative Bureaucrat

The onset of the Industrial Revolution in the early 1900s brought about a turning point in the role of the principal. The Progressive Era carried the idea of scientific management (Beck & Murphy, 1993; Cuban, 1988; English, 2005; Murphy, 1998). Reformers believed schools would benefit from implementing the factory model, whereby scientific principles would be employed, and a hierarchical administration system would be developed (Cuban, 1988; English, 2005; Rousmaniere, 2013; Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Tyack, 1974). The superintendent was compared to "a conductor on the educational railroad" (Tyack, 1974, p. 41). The principal's role morphed from spiritual leader into that of administrative bureaucrat who functioned as a middle manager dealing with the competing demands of the administration and those of the teachers (Cuban, 1988; Rousmaniere, 2013). The middle manager is a part of the role that persists in the lives of principals today (Cuban, 1988; Hallinger, 2003, 2005).

In addition to the bureaucratic role of the principal, a second role also emerged due to the changing times. Although principals were still held responsible for the managerial duties of running a school, they also became the supervisors of teachers, curriculum, and instruction, a role Cuban (1988) refers to as the "Principal as Instructional Leader" (p. 57). Principals were expected to implement a standardized curriculum and supervise and evaluate teachers, elevating their position above mundane and menial tasks to one of a "teacher of teachers" (Cuban, 1988, p. 58). However, as the demands of an increasingly bureaucratic top-down hierarchical structure grew, the principal's priorities became increasingly divided between administrative duties and

instructional responsibilities (English, 2005). In fact, in a study of how principals spent their time, Cuban (1988) examined over seven decades of information drawn from different sources and found that "Managerial tasks consumed most of a principal's time; instructional supervision was clearly secondary in proportion of time spent on it" (p. 60). With the onset of the 1940s, the principal's role was altered once more.

Democratic Leader

The advent of the 1940s brought about yet another change to the role of the principal. World War I, the Great Depression, and World War II greatly impacted the American public's view of education. The top-down managerial approach was no longer sufficient to promote the societal values of the times. Democratic leadership, whereby principals create models of democracy in the school and encourage parents, community members, and teachers to participate in the decision-making process (Beck & Murphy, 1993; English, 2005; Western, 2008), was the model of choice. Principals moved away from the bureaucratic and autocratic standards of the past and were responsible for preparing students to become democratic citizens (Beck & Murphy, 1993; Western, 2008).

The principal's role during World War II also included a focus on developing a more social curriculum that considered all students' social and health needs. Principals and teachers were encouraged to go beyond customary subjects and focus on the social concerns of the time (Beck & Murphy, 1993). The evaluative role of the principal also shifted from that of a manager/supervisor to that of collaborator and facilitator (Beck & Murphy, 1993).

The 1950s and '60s were the beginning of a period of great upheaval in the school structure and the expectations placed upon principals. Administrative responsibilities increased dramatically during the postwar era with the intervention of the State and Federal government in

the daily operations of schools (Rousmaniere, 2013). The first noteworthy federal intervention in schools occurred in 1954 with the Supreme Court decision, *Brown v. Board of Education,* which required schools to desegregate. Education became the "staging ground for the quest for social justice" (Tyack, 1974, p. 279).

The 1957 launch of Sputnik also significantly impacted the educational landscape by releasing federal funding to improve Science and Technology through the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) (Fullan, 2023). Policymakers of the time saw education as a defense against the war on communism (Tyack, 1974). The teachers' union movement of the 1960s and '70s forever altered the principal's relationship with their staff. The introduction of legal procedures, collective bargaining, and regulations overshadowed interactions between the two groups.

Furthermore, the provision of federal funds to provide additional support for poor children with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Elementary and Secondary School Act of 1965 had enormous repercussions for the role of principal (Rousmaniere, 2007). The incidence of poverty rose dramatically between the 1940s and 1970s, and principals of high-incidence schools, in addition to the roles and responsibilities previously identified, now needed to find ways to provide "compensatory education" (Tyack, 1974, p. 281) for students who were considered to be "culturally deprived" (Tyack, 1974, p. 281).

In addition to providing services in schools for economically disadvantaged students, principals of the 1970s were responsible for developing programs to address the needs of students with disabilities. The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 was another federal intervention in the daily operation of schools and opened the school doors to a whole new

population of students with varying educational needs. Implementing these federal initiatives required extensive support from the school principal (English, 2005; Rousmaniere, 2013).

Principals in the time period between the 1940s and '70s were faced with an ever-growing and diverse population with varying social and academic needs. Continual attacks were directed at the principal's office as being responsible for the chaotic nature of schools (Rousmaniere, 2013). With all of these changes came additional administrative duties that made the managerial aspects of the role of the principal extremely time-consuming. Amidst all of these changes and the increasing demands placed on the principal, the initial responsibilities and frustrations of the role remained relatively similar to those of the head teacher.

> As the broader context of education changed, the core purpose of the school principal remained stably embedded in the center of the school, and the position maintained many of the organizational problems that had frustrated educators over the previous century, including competing demands of administrative work over educational supervision, low status, and unclear professional identity. (Rousmaniere, 2007, p. 87)

Education Reform and the Standards-Based Accountability Movement

As the landscape of the educational community continued to change during the 1980s, the principal's managerial work of maintaining the facilities, managing the school's day-to-day operations, handling attendance, scheduling classes, and dealing with discipline continued. Additionally, due to increased involvement at a state and federal level, the principal's responsibilities now included implementing and reporting on mandates and being responsible for their success or failure (Rousmaniere, 2013). The new decade brought with it a renewed focus on the principal as the instructional leader of the school (Beck & Murphy, 1993).

A pivotal point in the life of school principals and educators was the 1983 release of *A Nation at Risk.* This landmark paper, written by The National Commission on Excellence in Education, claimed "the well-being of its people, the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people" (U.S. National Commission on Excellence in Education,1983, p. 1). Policymakers framed the problem in terms of a lack of strong instructional leadership and inadequate knowledge in the area of curriculum and instruction on the part of the principal, with little to no direction on how to improve (English, 2005; Fullan, 2023; Hallinger, 1992).

More than ever before, the role of the principal during this decade is highlighted as being the central figure in the selection and implementation of the curriculum and instruction. The principal is directly responsible for improving instruction and student achievement (Hallinger, 1992; Smith & Andrews, 1989). In his article on effective schools, Edmonds identifies strong leadership as a critical trait of instructionally effective schools (Edmonds, 1979). Smith and Andrews (1989, p. 23) further define the role of instructional leader as containing four essential elements:

1. The principal as a resource provider
2. The principal as an instructional resource
3. The principal as a communicator
4. The principal as a visible presence

Hallinger (1992) describes the instructional leader as the prime source of knowledge and key to developing the school's instructional program.

As an answer to the call for action created by the release of *A Nation at Risk* and the demand for high expectations for all children, virtually every state created a task force charged

with the creation of standards and methods of assessment (Rousmaniere, 2013). By the end of the 1980s, in addition to the ever-growing list of responsibilities, principals were now responsible for implementing what came to be known as the Standards-Based Reform Movement. Likewise, they began to feel the impact of failures to improve student achievement.

Transformational Leader

By the turn of the century, waves of reform brought the concept of school restructuring. Mounting concern over the idea that schools were not adequately preparing students resulted in a call for change to the school's organizational structure. Reformers advocated for control over curricular decisions to be moved to the school site, and teachers and parents became active participants in the decision-making process (Hallinger, 1992).

A new leadership model also emerged, focusing on the principal's ability to empower and motivate their staff to improve (Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood, 1992; Northouse, 2013). Transformational leadership, as described by Northouse (2013), "is a process that changes and transforms people. It is concerned with emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals" (p. 185). Leithwood and his colleagues emphasize the difference between instructional leadership and transformational leadership by defining the instructional leader as one who leads from the front or the middle. In contrast, the transformational leader leads from behind (Leithwood et al., 1994). Furthermore, transformational leadership focuses on the relationship between a leader and his followers and the leader's ability to stimulate change through a shared model of leadership (Hallinger, 2003).

Bennis and Nanus in 1985, Podsakoff and his associates in 1990, and Kouzas and Posner in 2002 (as cited in Northouse, 2013) define critical components of transformational leadership. First, successful transformational leaders develop a clear vision, communicate it frequently, and

inspire others to work collaboratively toward its realization. Second, transformational leaders are what Bennis and Nanus call “social architects” (Bennis & Nanus, as cited in Northouse, 2013, p. 197). Leithwood further defines this aspect of transformational leadership as “maintaining collaborative culture” (1992, p.10). Transformational leaders promote and communicate the cultural norms and value system. They provide opportunities for teachers to collaborate, set goals, and share the responsibility for school improvement (Leithwood, 1992; Northouse, 2013). Transformational leaders consistently model the behaviors and values espoused by the school's vision and mission (Northouse, 2013).

In addition to a new leadership model, principals of the 1990s were faced with school restructuring and the accountability movement. No longer was the principal responsible for solely the implementation of change reforms created by others; their role was once again expanded requiring them to be problem finders and problem solvers (Hallinger, 1992; Murphy & Louis, 1994). Murphy and Louis (1994) identify four forces that have drastically influenced the role of the principal:

> (a) the demands for accountability coming from a variety of sectors; (b) the crisis in the economy and the expectation that schools play a role in improving this situation; (c) the changing nature of the social fabric in our nation, communities, and schools; and (d) the evolution toward a post-industrial world. (Murphy & Louis, 1994, p. 5)

The 1990s brought a great deal of change to the role of the principal and a great deal of pressure. With the advent of high-stakes testing, the principal became the person ultimately responsible for the success or failure of their school. As the turn of the century approached, the idea of principal leadership was scrutinized again, and a new role began to emerge—a role

considered by many to be a hybrid of leadership styles (Fullan, 2014; Hallinger, 2011; Robinson, 2011)—which Robinson referred to as a "shift from an emphasis on leadership styles to leadership practices" (Robinson, 2011, p. 3).

Leadership for Learning

The pendulum of educational reform swung again with the passing of The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), which applied to all K-12 public schools in the United States. The NCLB mandate landed squarely on the principal (Fullan, 2023). It included that all students starting in grade 3 would be tested in math and reading, and based on the results of these assessments, schools would be responsible for achieving "adequate yearly progress" (AYP). Schools that did not meet AYP would be faced with accelerating consequences, which could include eventual school closure for schools that continually did not meet AYP. An additional requirement of NCLB was that all students would be proficient by the year 2014. In 2009, President Obama introduced the Race to the Top initiative. This reform acknowledged the prescriptiveness of NCLB and introduced new conditions such as the new national Common Core Standards, assessments, merit pay, and a focus on turning around low-performing schools (Fullan, 2014). In 2015 the NCLB was replaced by The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (Fullan, 2023). Although ESSA has restored some control to state and local education systems, it maintains the accountability provisions established in NCLB (Congressional Digest, 2017, September). As a result of these initiatives, the education landscape changed once again, with tremendous impact on the role of the principal.

In recent years a new role began to emerge, leading to new descriptions of leadership, such as "leadership for learning" (Hallinger, 2011, p. 126) and "learning leadership" (Fullan & Kirtman, 2019, p. 95). Robinson (2011) described this new style as a combination of approaches

that school leaders employ to increase student outcomes, with an emphasis on student learning. According to Hallinger (2011) leadership for learning is a leadership style incorporating instructional, transformational, and shared leadership. Fullan (2014) describes a similar role, which he labels the "learning leader—one who models learning but also shapes the conditions for all to learn on a continuous basis" (p. 9). Central to this role is "leadership as the driver for change" (Bryk et al., 2010, p. 45). These leadership descriptors emphasize the learning process required to improve teaching and the importance of creating the conditions that allow this learning to occur while also modeling this process by learning alongside teachers (Fullan, 2014; Fullan & Kirtman, 2019; Robinson, 2011). Improvement within this model is not limited to students; it also includes staff improvement. Building the collective capacity of the staff to increase student learning is the critical focus of this emerging leadership model (DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Fullan, 2014; Fullan & Kirtman; 2019; Robinson, 2011).

Furthering this idea of the lead learner, researchers such as Marzano, DuFour, Fullan, Hallinger and Robinson identified specific strategies that principals of the 21st century need to employ to build their staff's capacity successfully, therefore increasing student learning. Although a principal's leadership is considered to have an indirect effect on student learning, leadership directly impacts teaching quality, which in turn has a significant and direct impact on student learning (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). A principal's ability to increase the capacity of the staff is the central lever to increased student outcomes (Fullan, 2014; Robinson, 2011).

The contemporary principal faces many unique modern challenges that could not ever have been imagined by their early 19th-century counterpart (Rousmaniere, 2013). Like the head teacher, the principal remains responsible for the day-to-day maintenance of the school building, discipline, attendance, curriculum management, and teacher supervision. New to the role is the

expectation to implement and manage large-scale state and federal reform initiatives while serving as the instructional leader, transformational leader, and promoter of shared leadership (Hallinger, 2011; Rousmaniere, 2013). The modern-day principal is responsible for all of this, yet they must also continue solving the daily problems within a school (Rousmaniere, 2013).

The leader of learning within their building—the principal—is ultimately responsible for increasing student learning. According to Cuban (2012), Fullan (2014), and Robinson (2011), the most effective way a principal can increase student learning is by increasing teacher capacity. The following section highlights the successful strategies, according to research, that principals use to increase teacher capacity within their buildings.

The Approaches Principals Use to Build Teacher Capacity

Effective schools, according to Hattie (2009), are "only effective to the extent that they have effective teachers" (p.72). The quality of instruction a student receives is the central variable in a school's ability to increase student achievement (DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Hattie, 2009). The principal's primary responsibility is to ensure students receive high-quality instruction (DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Kirtman, 2014; Wagner et al., 2005). Investing in building the collective capacity of staff is a crucial strategy for improving the quality of instruction and increasing student achievement (Fullan, 2014, 2023; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Hattie, 2009). Principals use a variety of approaches to build the capacity of teachers in their buildings,. The following section identifies the successful leadership practices and behaviors principals use, according to research, to build the capacity of their staff.

Developing a Shared Vision

Principals must work collaboratively with their staff to develop a shared sense of purpose and direction within their school in order to build the capacity of their staff (Hargreaves & Fink, 2005; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2012; Senge, 2006). A shared vision must be created collaboratively through discussion and not forced upon the organization by one individual (Robinson, 2011). Senge (2006) discusses the crucial nature of establishing a shared vision that provides the organization with the "focus and energy for learning" (p. 192), creating what he refers to as a "learning organization" (p. 192). Fullan and Kirtman (2019) indicate "creates a commonly owned plan for success" (p. 16) as a competency for highly effective leaders. According to Kotter (2012), a shared vision serves three primary purposes. First, it clarifies the general direction of the change. Second, it motivates people to take action in the right direction and creates buy-in from staff. Lastly, it helps coordinate the actions and improvement efforts of everyone involved. According to research, a successful vision is also anchored by specific goals (Fullan & Kirtman, 2019; Leithwood et al., 2010; Robinson, 2011).

Anchoring the Vision in the Development of Goals

The vision, as highlighted above, informs the staff of the direction and focus of the organization—in this instance the school. The development of specific goals and benchmarks assists in making the vision a reality and guides the planning process (Leithwood et al., 2010). Goals make the vision more than just words (Robinson, 2011). Similar to creating a vision, setting goals that people feel committed to and believe they can achieve helps focus and coordinate the efforts of the staff (Fullan, 2014; Robinson, 2011). In a six-point conceptual framework for leading innovation, improvement, and change, Gould (n.d.) discusses the importance of collaborative goals providing a daily focus for schools. Goals must be clear,

concrete, specific, and designed to build the capacity of the staff. Goals must also include clear expectations for improvements in student achievement (Fullan, 2014; Fullan & Kirtman, 2019; Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2012; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Marzano et al., 2005; Robinson, 2011). Creating goals requires principals and teachers to have open and honest communication regarding the discrepancy between the current state of affairs and the allure of the future (Robinson, 2011). Goals must be developed based on the content and context of the individual school (Fullan & Kirtman, 2019). Creating specific and concrete goals allows the principal and the staff to monitor and continually focus on progress during the school year (Kirtman, 2014; Marzano et al., 2005; Robinson, 2011). Continually focusing on progress toward achieving the established goals requires principals to communicate progress to their staff frequently (Cotter, 1996; Leithwood et al., 2010; Marzano et al., 2005). Additionally, principals must develop straightforward ways to measure progress made toward completing the goals throughout the year (Kirtman, 2014). The ability to monitor, adjust, and communicate progress during the school year is critical to creating a collaborative learning environment (Fullan & Kirtman, 2019).

Communicating High Expectations

Part of developing a learning organization focused on building the capacity of the school includes creating high expectations for instructional practice and student achievement and communicating those expectations to staff (Kirtman, 2014; Leithwood et al., 2010; Marzano et al., 2005; Thacker et al., 2009). Establishing high expectations is essential in building teacher capacity (DuFour & Marzano, 2011). Leithwood et al. (2010) describe the principal's role in establishing a culture of high expectations as expanding the staff's capacity to envision what could be achieved in the future. Collectively creating high expectations also positively affects the staff's sense of accountability, responsibility, and motivation toward the established goals and

performance expectations (Elmore, 2004; Leithwood et al., 2010). DuFour and Marzano (2011) posit the idea that the foundational role of school is to ensure all students learn at high levels of learning as one of their “Three Big Ideas That Drive the PLC Process" (p. 22). The “trust cycle” (p. 23) developed by Fullan and Kirtman (2019) begins with communication and shared understanding. Leaders who do not take the time to do these two things will struggle to move forward according to Fullan and Kirtman (2019).

Some of the vehicles principals use to communicate high expectations to teachers, parents, and students are faculty meetings, conferences with groups and individuals, and written communication such as newsletters (Blase & Kirby, 2009). Effective principals “drop-in” (Blase & Kirby, 2009, p. 32) during common planning time, between classes in the hallway and the lunchroom, and use that time to repeat and clarify their expectations for staff and students.

Establishing Shared Norms and Values

School culture, as defined by Thacker et al. (2009), is based on an interconnected and deeply embedded pattern of human behavior dependent on the staff’s capacity for learning. The culture within an organization is deeply rooted in the established social norms and values (Kotter, 2012). In order to establish a culture of continuous improvement—one that is focused on building capacity—it is the principal’s role to identify the current norms and values of the school (Hallinger, 2011; Marzano et al., 2005; Thacker et al., 2009) and to begin work on establishing new shared norms and values (Kotter, 2012). The principal acts as the gatekeeper—monitoring, planning for, and modeling the introduction of new values within the school community (Hallinger, 2011; Hattie & Smith, 2021; Thacker et al., 2009). In order to anchor new behaviors within the current culture, the principal must provide evidence to support the introduction of new

behaviors; and research to support the impact new behaviors can have on improving performance (Kotter, 2012).

Moving staff towards the acceptance of new norms and values requires that principals understand the needs of their staff and provide forms of developmental support for their staff's professional growth (Drago-Severson, 2009; Leithwood et al., 2010). Principals support the development of shared norms and values by promoting and providing time for teacher collaboration (Blase & Kirby, 2009). Teacher collaboration assists in building teacher morale and "diffusing problems that could demoralize a faculty" (Blase & Kirby, 2009, p. 41). In addition, time for collaboration is grounded in a collective focus on student learning (DuFour & Marzano, 2011). Principals who encourage deprivation of practice and work to create an atmosphere of trust are also helping to develop shared norms and values within their school (Leithwood et al., 2010).

Collective Efficacy. One way in which principals build shared values and norms is through developing collective efficacy among the school staff (Hattie & Smith, 2021). Collective efficacy refers to "the perceptions of teachers in a school that the faculty as a whole can execute the courses of action necessary to have positive effects on students" (Goddard, 2001, p. 467). It is a shared belief that educators can make a positive difference in increasing student achievement (DeWitt, 2022). According to Hattie, collective efficacy is more than three times more indicative of student success than socio-economic status (Donohoo et al., 2018). Principals build collective efficacy by developing a shared language focused on student learning (Donohoo et al., 2018). It involves "modeling, planning, challenging each other's thinking, and having the ability to drop whatever status we may have based on our position and focus on raising the status of those sitting around the table" (DeWitt, 2022, p. 2). To accomplish this, principals need to create environments that are collaborative and have high trust so that teachers can learn together and develop common understandings (Donohoo et al., 2018). School leaders must also model empathy and social interaction so that potential disagreements do not undermine collaborative problem-solving (Donohoo et al., 2018). Creating a culture of collective teacher efficacy can positively impact the teachers' and students' beliefs and practices, ultimately leading to increases in teacher capacity and student achievement (DeWitt, 2022; Donohoo et al., 2018).

Providing Developmental Support

A leadership practice that is instrumental in building capacity is the principal's ability to recognize the needs of their staff and provide developmentally appropriate support for growth and learning (Drago-Severson, 2009; Leithwood et al., 2010; Marzano et al., 2005; Robinson, 2011). Whitaker (2012) asserts that "outstanding principals know that their primary role is to teach the teachers" (p. 41). The first step in supporting the learning process is to understand

where a person is in terms of their developmental capacity (Drago-Severson, 2009). Environments that both challenge and support the learning process—what Drago-Severson refers to as a "holding environment" (p. 56) —shape schools into places where both adults and children can grow and learn (Drago-Severson, 2009).

A good holding environment supports the teaching and learning process in three important ways (Drago-Severson, 2009; Kegan, 1982). First, the environment must "hold well" (Drago-Severson, 2009, p. 58), supporting and respecting who the person is, as well as their feelings and needs (Drago-Severson, 2009; Kegan, 1982; Leithwood et al., 2010). Second, a good holding environment will "let go" (Drago-Severson, 2009, p. 58) by providing "adaptive work" (Heifetz, 1994, p. 31) that challenges the individual to grow to new developmental levels of learning (Drago-Severson, 2009; Kegan, 1982). Last, the holding environment needs to "stick around" (Drago-Severson, 2009, p. 58) to provide a stable environment throughout the growth process (Drago-Severson, 2009; Kegan, 1982). This type of environment supports students' and staff's growth and learning process while providing a safe environment that encourages members to take risks and try new things (Drago-Severson, 2004, 2009; Kirtman, 2014).

Hiring and Retaining Teachers

The capacity of a school to meet shared goals requires principals to take a strategic approach when planning and allocating resources (Robinson, 2011). Principals must ensure that staffing, curricular decisions and resources, and professional development are all designed to promote and support the achievement of the school goal (Miles & Frank, 2008; Robinson, 2011). Principals focused on building teacher capacity reorganize their resources such as time, money, and staff, to align with the school's priorities (DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Miles & Frank, 2008; Robinson, 2011).

Hiring and retaining teachers who have the knowledge and expertise to support the continued development of the staff is critical for achieving the school's goals (Bryk et al., 2010; Fullan & Kirtman, 2019; Miles & Frank, 2008; Robinson, 2011; Whitaker; 2012). Simply replacing open positions is not good enough. Principals who employ a strategic approach hire staff that will connect to the vision and goals of the school (Miles & Frank, 2008). Whitaker (2012) describes a teacher opening as "a principal's single most precious commodity" (p. 50). Removing low-performing staff is equally important, as permitting gross incompetence in a few teachers can destroy the collective efforts being made by the rest of the staff (Bryk et al., 2010). A school is great when the people in the school are great (Whitaker, 2012).

Effective principals also employ strategies that help retain and promote growth and development in new and veteran staff (Miles & Frank, 2008). Providing mentors is one way in which principals can support teachers in their first year and beyond (Drago-Severson, 2009). Mentoring relationships can have the following benefits:

1) Enhances teacher performance and student learning by promoting collegial dialogue;
2) Provides professional development for new and veteran teachers;
3) Helps beginning teachers manage new challenges and develop teaching practices through reflective activities and professional conversations; and
4) Produces career-related and psychosocial benefits for mentors and mentees (Drago-Severson, 2009, p. 215).

In addition to mentoring, coaching is another strategy leaders use to promote a "high-performance and feedback-rich culture" (Crane, 2010, p. 32). Effective coaches are dedicated to improving teacher performance and assist the principal in providing specific and timely feedback

to teachers (Reeves, 2009). Coaching is successful when it is based on explicit goals and performance indicators that assist in building teacher capacity and improving student learning (Reeves, 2009).

Coordinating the Curriculum

In addition to hiring quality teaching staff, principals engaged in building the capacity of their staff also provide support to the oversight and implementation of the instructional program (Bryk et al., 2010; Marzano et al., 2005; Miles & Frank, 2008). Newmann et al. (2001a, p. 299) define instructional program coherence as "a set of interrelated programs for students and staff that are guided by a common framework for curriculum, instruction, assessment, and learning climate." Creating instructional coherence within and between grade levels benefits students and teachers by providing a common instructional framework, vocabulary, and assessments (Robinson, 2011). Greater curriculum alignment increases student achievement and supports teacher development and learning (Bryk et al., 2010; Newmann et al., 2001a; Robinson, 2011). Teacher participation in aligning curriculum provides a supportive and collaborative professional community where teachers learn together how to teach the information students need to learn (Bryk et al., 2010; Elmore, 2004; Newmann et al., 2001a; Robinson, 2011). The opportunity to work together on a common approach to instruction within and between grade levels also clarifies the shared values and expectations for student learning within the school community (Newmann et al., 2001a).

Promoting Teamwork and Collaboration

In schools with highly effective teaching, teachers interact regularly with their grade-level colleagues, the school staff, and the school administration (Printy & Marks, 2006).

Principals who encourage and provide time for teachers to work collaboratively in teams build individual and school capacity for growth and improvement (Drago-Severson, 2009; Fullan & Kirtman, 2019). According to Elmore (2004), teachers learn through collegial interaction around problems of practice and "isolation is the enemy of improvement" (p. 67). Leithwood et al. (2004) maintain that student achievement increases as schools and districts increase adult participation in collaborative teams. Working collaboratively in teams creates a culture dedicated to building the staff's capacity to meet the school's goals (DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Fullan & Kirtman, 2019). In her work with school principals, Drago-Severson (2009) identifies numerous benefits to support the development of collaborative teams, including:

1. Teaming helps adults build relationships.
2. Teaming decreases feelings of isolation.
3. Working in teams establishes open communication.
4. Teams promote understanding of others' thinking.
5. Teams promote learning from diverse perspectives.
6. Teams encourage the sharing of information and expertise.

In addition to the above-stated benefits, teaming also provides opportunities for teachers to adopt leadership roles, which also supports increasing teacher capacity (Drago-Severson, 2004, 2009; Robinson, 2011).

Encouraging Shared Leadership

Teachers' professional practice and sense of self-efficacy are strengthened when they are provided with opportunities to make decisions that affect them (Leithwood et al., 1997; Marzano, 2003; Wahlstrom & Seashore Louis, 2008). Drago-Severson (2009) ascertains that providing leadership opportunities is "a developmental practice that supports the growth of adults"

(p. 107). According to Printy and Marks (2006), the best results in schools occur when principals assist in the development of teacher leadership and when principals and teachers work together to make decisions around instructional matters. Shared leadership also assists in developing norms, standards for professional practice, and a coherent program with joint agreements on content and degree of challenge (Printy & Marks, 2006). By developing teacher leadership, principals create a safe environment where teachers learn from other teachers, stimulating growth and increasing student achievement (Drago-Severson, 2004, 2009; Leithwood et al., 1997). Effective principals promote shared leadership opportunities to increase the staff's capacity to meet the school's goals, creating a collaborative culture that increases student achievement (DuFour & Marzano, 2011).

Observation, Evaluation and Feedback

Another strategy effective principals use to build teacher capacity is ongoing observation, evaluation, and provision of feedback (Darling-Hammond, 2013; Robinson, 2011; Wagner et al., 2005). Effective principals frequently monitor and evaluate their staff's impact and provide the individual and group support necessary for teachers to improve (Hattie, 2012; Leithwood et al., 2010). Principals analyze instruction and its impact on student achievement and offer frequent feedback to assist teachers in improving their practice (Bryk et al., 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2013). Darling Hammond (2013) discusses the importance of creating a system focused on continuously improving teaching and learning. At the center of this system is the development of standards of practice for teaching and learning. Teachers develop goals and objectives to improve their own and student learning (Darling-Hammond, 2013; Levin, 2008). A key component of effective evaluation systems includes observing teaching and student learning in

action to assess whether teachers and students are meeting their learning goals (Darling-Hammond, 2013; Marzano et al., 2005).

While frequent observation and evaluation is essential for teachers, the feedback they receive is really important when it comes to improving their teaching and learning (Hattie, 2009; Hattie & Smith, 2021; Marzano et al., 2005). Hattie (2009) identifies feedback as one of the strongest influences on student achievement. “Feedback is a consequence of performance” (Hattie, 2009, p. 174) and is most potent when the feedback is from the student to the teacher. According to Darling-Hammond (2013), useful feedback must also provide teachers with opportunities to grow and learn. Productive feedback should be driven by three questions: “Where am I going?” ;“How am I going?”; and “Where to next?” (Hattie, 2009, p. 177; Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p. 86). Principals focused on creating a learning environment within their school encourage both teachers and students to keep constantly working on the answers to these questions; and adjusting their goals as necessary based on the feedback they receive from the answers to these questions (Darling-Hammond, 2013; Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

Organizing and Promoting Effective Professional Development

According to a study by Robinson et al. (Levin, 2008; Robinson, 2011, 2008), developing, promoting, and participating in professional development is the most influential way a principal can improve student achievement. Effective professional development is a “collective effort” (DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Elmore, 2002, p. 14; Fullan, 2014; Levin, 2008, p. 126; Robinson, 2011, p. 106) rather than an individual one, as schools are working toward building the collective capacity of the staff and improving the achievement of all students (Elmore, 2002; King & Newmann, 2000; Levin, 2008; Robinson, 2011). Effective organization of professional development designed to increase the capacity of the staff needs to be connected to the identified

learning needs of both the students and the teachers (Elmore, 2004; Leithwood et al., 2010; Marzano, 2003; Robinson, 2011). Professional development must also be grounded in evidence and promote discussions and collaboration around the connection between what is being taught and what students are learning (King & Newmann, 2000; Levin, 2008; Robinson, 2011). In addition, professional development must be focused on relevant content that is research-driven and proven to be successful with diverse learners (Elmore, 2002; Marzano, 2003; Robinson, 2011). Also of high importance in planning effective professional development is providing "multiple opportunities to learn" (Marzano, 2003; Robinson, 2011, p. 113; Timperley & Alton-Lee, 2008). Like the students they teach, teachers need time to apply what they have learned and discuss and develop their new knowledge and skills (King & Newmann, 2000; Marzano, 2003; Robinson, 2011).

Modeling the Learning Process

In addition to planning and promoting effective professional development, it is equally essential that principals also participate in and model the learning process within the school (Elmore, 2000; Fullan, 2014; 2023; Robinson, 2011; Timperley & Alton-Lee, 2008). "If learning, individual and collective, is the central responsibility of leaders, then they must be able to model the learning they expect of others" (Elmore, 2000, p. 21). By taking time out of their busy day and modeling the learning process, principals support the importance of professional development and establish a culture of learning within the school (Leithwood et al., 2010; Robinson, 2011). Fullan (2023) refers to the principal as the "lead learner" (p. 6), which means two things: "being a role-model for all others who come within your sphere and helping others to learn" (Fullan, 2023, p. 6). Principals who participate in the learning process also better understand the vocabulary and strategies that are part of the new learning experience, making

them well-versed in the instructional programs within their building (Robinson, 2011). Perhaps the most important reason for a principal to participate as a learner in professional development is to develop an understanding of the learning needs and support the teachers will need to apply their new knowledge successfully (Robinson, 2011).

Analyzing and Providing Support for Student Learning

A final approach principals use to support the building of teacher capacity is promoting the use and analysis of formative assessment data and student work samples to assess student performance and drive instruction (Levin, 2008; Miles & Frank, 2008; Wagner et al., 2005). Creating teams of teachers who meet on an ongoing basis and monitor and assess student learning allows teachers to rethink their lesson plans and teaching strategies and measure their impact (DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Hattie & Smith, 2021; Miles & Frank, 2008). The use of ongoing formative assessments not only increases student achievement (Black & Wiliam, 1998) but also assists the principal in improving the professional practice of their staff (Hattie & Smith, 2021; Miles & Frank, 2008). Through data analysis, teachers and principals can better understand the resources needed to support both teacher capacity and student learning (Levin, 2008; Miles & Frank, 2008). Principals use this information to provide additional resources and materials students may need to be successful; and to identify instructional areas in which teachers may need additional support to build capacity (Leithwood et al., 2010; Miles & Frank, 2008).

Robinson (2009) identifies a principal's ability to lead teacher learning and development as having the most significant impact on student achievement. As identified above, effective principals use a variety of approaches to build teacher capacity that supports the learning and development of their staff (Fullan, 2014). A principal's ability to determine the approaches to use

depends on the context, culture, and climate of the school they lead (Hallinger, 2011). The following section identifies school-level factors and conditions that impact a principal's ability to build teacher capacity.

Factors and Conditions That Support Building Teacher Capacity

Principals are faced with numerous and increasingly demanding conditions that impact the educational work occurring in schools today (DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Elmore, 2002). The standards and accountability movement, a primary cause of these demands, brings with it the responsibility of improving student achievement for all students (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Elmore, 2002; Fullan, 2023, 2014). Effective principals understand that a key improvement condition lies in improving teachers and teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2006; DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Elmore, 2002; Fullan, 2014; Whitaker, 2012). As detailed in the literature and research referenced within this chapter, there are many approaches principals use in order to build the capacity of their staff. The following two sections identify the factors and conditions, according to research, that occur in schools that either support or inhibit a principal's ability to build the capacity of their staff.

School Culture

School culture, as defined by Thacker, Bell, and Schargel (2009), is based on an interconnected and deeply embedded pattern of human behavior dependent on the staff's capacity for learning. In order to establish a culture of continuous improvement, it is the principal's role to identify the culture of the school and act as the gatekeeper by monitoring, planning for, and responding to the introduction of new values within the school community (Hallinger, 2011; Thacker et al., 2009). According to Kotter (2012), sustaining changes requires

new ideas and behaviors to become part of the system's shared norms and values. “Anchoring change” (Kotter, 2012, p. 14) means providing evidence to show how new behaviors and ideas increase performance while also modeling the change within their practice to promote buy-in (Kotter, 2012). Principals who do not consider the deep-seated and emotional attachments that prohibit people from making changes will most likely fail in their attempt to improve the culture of the school (Thacker et al., 2009). Principals must take the time to develop an understanding of the culture. Leaders who pretend to know more about the culture than the staff will ultimately lose the motivation of the staff (Fullan, 2023).

Developing Trust

Principals trying to create a culture of continuous improvement must first consider whether or not a critical ingredient—trust—is present within the current culture (Bryk et al., 2010; Handford & Leithwood, 2013; Robinson, 2011). As Robinson (2011) describes, trust involves developing relational skills that must be present throughout all of the approaches principals use to build the capacity of their staff. Trust, according to Handford and Leithwood (2013), is the “lubricant for most interactions within organizations” (p. 194) and a core component of effective leadership (Bryk et al., 2010; Handford & Leithwood, 2013; Robinson, 2011; Thacker et al., 2010). Bryk et al. (2010) further this concept, referring to trust as the “social glue” (p. 140) necessary for improvements to occur. Trust and school improvement develop together over time, fueling and supporting each other (Bryk et al., 2010). Without the development of relational trust, teachers and administrators will likely disagree on goals, and the ability to engage in change may be hindered (Handford & Leithwood, 2013).

Bryk et al. (2010) describe three important benefits of establishing relational trust within schools. First, teacher buy-in is stronger in buildings with solid relational trust. In addition,

establishing trust creates an inspiring environment that helps move staff forward and engages staff more readily in change initiatives. Finally, teachers are more deeply connected when relational trust is developed in schools, and goals are more readily accepted.

Communication

Researchers have identified leadership behaviors and actions as ways leaders engender trust (Handford & Leithwood, 2013; Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2012; Robinson, 2011). One essential part of establishing trust within the school community involves creating an environment where open and honest communication can occur (Robinson, 2011). Marzano (2005) identifies communication as the "glue" (p. 46) that brings together all of the other leadership skills and behaviors. Robinson (2011) highlights the importance of "interpersonal values" (p. 38) that assist in the facilitation of this type of communication.

The first value that needs to be in place for honest, open communication is the pursuit of what Robinson (2011) refers to as "valid information" (p. 38). As principals engage in conversations with staff, they must use high-grade information, seek feedback from others, and disclose the reasons behind their decisions (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Robinson, 2011). Respect is the second value that must be in place for open, honest communication (Handford & Leithwood, 2013; Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2012; Robinson, 2011; Wagner et al., 2005). Principals can display respect through their ability to listen to others and their acknowledgment of staff's critical contributions to improving the organization (Handford & Leithwood, 2013; Robinson, 2011). Without respect, principals cannot build relational trust among their staff (Robinson, 2011), which will impact the principal's ability to increase a school's capacity (Handford & Leithwood, 2013).

Collaboration

Improving student achievement is the collective work of schools and requires all members of the school community to focus on increasing capacity (DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Fullan, 2014; Fullan & Kirtman, 2019). Effective principals who create teams recognize the benefits collaborative work have on the school's capacity. Principals who build opportunities for collaboration into the school schedule are building respectful relationships between colleagues and breaking down the barriers of isolation (Strong & Xu, 2021). To be effective, collaborative time needs to be focused and there needs to be accountability and collective ownership (Reeves, 2009; Stronge & Xu, 2021). Research supports that schools with a culture of collaboration have positive outcomes in student achievement and teacher growth and development (Stronge & Xu, 2021).

Celebrating Success

A final factor that can significantly support a principal's ability to build capacity is to create a "results-oriented culture" (Schmoker, 2006, p. 146). A culture that celebrates and rewards success motivates and engages staff in the improvement process (Kotter, 2012; Levin, 2008; Schmoker, 2006). Kotter (2012) highlights six benefits for leaders who create "short-term wins" (p. 127).

1. Provides evidence that sacrifices are worth it.
2. Rewards change agents with a pat on the back.
3. Helps fine-tune vision and strategies.
4. Undermines cynics and self-serving resisters.
5. Keeps bosses on board.
6. Builds momentum and creates supporters.

Levin (2008) suggests that by rewarding a teacher's commitment and success, a principal helps build the morale of the staff. Schmoker (2006) describes the use of praise and celebration as a way to elicit buy-in and overcome resistance from staff. Celebrating positive changes reinforces positive behavior changes necessary to foster improvement (Jackson, 2021). Celebrations do not need to be large scale events, but celebrating the small changes increases the buy-in and motivation and commitment of the staff leading to increases in teacher capacity (Jackson, 2021).

Factors and Conditions That Inhibit Building Teacher Capacity

Lack of Communication

Lack of communication can also undermine the success of the shared vision and goals (Kotter, 2012). As Kotter (2012) described, communication occurs through words and behavior. Levin (2008) points out the importance of frequently repeating the vision and goals. In addition to continuously directing staff back to the vision and goals, principals must also reflect the commitment to the vision and goals in their day-to-day behavior. "Nothing undermines change more than behavior by important individuals that is inconsistent with verbal communication" (Kotter, 2012, p. 10). Principals must also ensure that they have communicated clearly and effectively and that staff understand the expectations for student and staff performance (Kirtman, 2014; Leithwood et al., 2010; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Levin, 2008).

Lack of Time

A critical factor that can hinder a principal's ability to build the capacity of their staff is the allocation of time (Darling-Hammond, 1999; DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Miles & Frank, 2008; Reeves, 2009). Principals cannot expect teachers to collaborate and develop as a team

without providing the time (DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Reeves, 2009). Allocating appropriate resources such as time is also one of the three features identified by Newmann et al. (2001a) in an "instructionally coherent program" (p. 17). Miles and Frank (2008) distinguish the use of time spent on collaboration to improve practice as one of their four principles of high-performing schools. Miles and Frank (2008) and DuFour and Marzano (2011) identify common planning time as an effective strategy to promote collaboration and teacher development.

DuFour and Marzano (2011) also point out that teachers play a role in the principal's endeavor to secure time. In their work *Leaders of Learning* (2011), DuFour and Marzano identify common resistance teachers have to using time. First, teachers often do not want to relinquish their individual planning time for collaborative planning (DuFour & Marzano, 2011). Secondly, teachers and teacher unions request compensation due to the additional time spent on the work of improvement (DuFour & Marzano, 2011). Finally, teachers believe that to provide time for teachers to work together, districts should shut down schools so that teachers may use the time during contractual hours (DuFour & Marzano, 2011). These are common problems principals must consider when providing time for teachers to collaborate (DuFour & Marzano, 2011).

State and Federal Reform Initiatives

Top-down initiatives such as the standards and accountability initiatives are placing great strain on schools and principals and greatly hinder a principal's ability to build capacity (Elmore, 2002; Fullan 2014, 2023). Fullan (2014) describes these efforts as "exceedingly weak strategies for driving reform" (p. 24). Robinson (2011) also reports the negative aspects of these reform efforts, referring to them as "punitive and demoralizing" (p. 2). The challenges associated with these reform efforts are difficult to sustain, and the impact on most classrooms and teachers is

minimal (Elmore, 2004; Fullan, 2014). According to Elmore (2000), schools are being asked to implement reforms without the skills necessary for success, and the penalties for failure are high for everyone. Fullan (2014) goes further, charging reform efforts with "fundamentally weakening the effectiveness of the profession" (p. 24) and commenting that they have led to a "de-professionalization" (p. 25) of the teaching profession. These mandates result in "principals run ragged" (Fullan; 2023, p. 155). Principals are required to lead the implementation of disjointed and detached initiatives that they do not fully understand (Fullan, 2014).

Ineffective Collaboration

One reason for the failure of collaborative teams is that not all teachers are eager to participate in collaborative teams (Reeves, 2009). As both Elmore (2000) and Schmoker (2006) state, "Isolation is the enemy of improvement" (DuFour et al., 2005, p. 141; Elmore, 2000, p. 20). Reeves (2009) points out the difference between teachers being congenial (promoting a pleasant working situation) and conversations that are collegial (involve honest talk, are consequential in nature and involve risk-taking and trust). The real work of collaboration is challenging and takes time (Reeves, 2009).

Drago-Severson (2009) also highlights common issues with collaboration, which she refers to as "air-time imbalance, talkative leaders, and insufficient protocols" (p. 73). For collaboration to be successful and support a principal's effort to build capacity, it must be structured and grounded in practice. Teachers must meet regularly, and goals and objectives must guide the direction of the work. Influential school leaders continually monitor and assess the progress of their teams (DuFour et al., 2005; Elmore, 2000; Hattie & Smith, 2021; Schmoker, 2006). Without a clear alignment of the work to goals and objectives and a focus on student work, conversations during collaborative time focus on broad and general teaching practices

without the needed substance to assist in actual changes in teacher capacity (DuFour et al., 2005; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Little et al., 2003; Marzano, 2003; Schmoker, 2006).

Isolation and De-Privatization of Practice

Historically, teaching has been isolating (Elmore, 2000; Schmoker, 2006; Wagner, 2004; Wagner et al., 2005). Elmore (2000) describes the environment of isolation, commonly found in schools, as a result of the system of "loose-coupling" (p. 5). The educational decisions that drive the day-to-day instruction within the classroom, the "technical core" (Elmore, 2000, p. 5) of education, are left up to the discretion of the teachers within the individual classrooms (Elmore, 2000). The administration's role in this system is to buffer the work of the classroom teachers from outside distractions and interference. Autonomy and job security are, in fact, reasons why many teachers chose the profession (Wagner, 2004). Schools, as stated by Wagner (2004), are designed to protect the "status quo" (p. 40). The atmosphere of isolation found in schools is one of the reasons why efforts to build capacity and introduce exceptional professional practices only impact a few classrooms and are difficult to sustain (Elmore, 2000; Schmoker, 2006).

Building the capacity of the staff requires breaking down the walls of the classroom and making classrooms public and open to observation and discussion by colleagues (Bryk et al., 2010). Opening up the doors of the classroom and allowing colleagues to observe and discuss their observations with one another can be viewed by some professionals as an "affront to professionalism" (Schmoker, 2006, p. 29) and is difficult for many educators (Wagner et al., 2005). Leithwood and Harris (2010) describe the de-privatization process as one of the most powerful ways to improve while also increasing feelings of vulnerability within the staff. This feeling of vulnerability will subside in schools with high levels of trust, but in schools without trust, teachers feel threatened by the process (Leithwood et al., 2010). The culture of isolation

and resistance to opening the classroom are all factors that hinder a principal's ability to increase staff capacity (Elmore, 2000; Marshall, 2003; Schmoker, 2006; Wagner, 2004).

Lack of Teacher and Principal Knowledge

Another factor that significantly influences a principal's ability to build capacity is the lack of knowledge by both principals and teachers (Elmore, 2002; Robinson, 2011). Building teacher capacity means principals need to be directly involved in efforts to improve teaching and student learning (Robinson, 2011). Principals must have knowledge of pedagogy, content knowledge and must understand how students learn, to build capacity (Robinson, 2011). Drago-Severson (2009) also states that principals should be knowledgeable in theories of adult learning in order to build capacity.

In addition to their knowledge, principals must also consider whether or not teachers have the necessary knowledge and skills to reach their goals (Elmore, 2002; Robinson, 2011). Accountability, as Elmore (2002) explains, is a "reciprocal process" (p. 5). Principals are responsible for ensuring that they set goals and objectives and that teachers have the necessary skills to meet those goals. Conversely, teachers are obligated to increase their performance due to a principal's investment in their individual capacity (Elmore, 2002). Principals who fail to provide appropriate support for the development of teachers' knowledge and skills will be unsuccessful in their efforts to increase capacity (Leithwood et al., 2010; Robinson, 2011).

Celebrating Success Too Early

A final factor that can inhibit a principal's ability to build capacity is celebrating a victory that has not yet been achieved. Both Schmoker (2006) and Levin (2008) caution against too much praise, suggesting that praise should only be given for successes that bring a school closer

to their goals. Praise must be earned and could be damaging when given to individuals who are unworthy of the praise (Levin, 2008). In addition, Kotter (2012) warns of the allure of "declaring victory too soon" (p.13). Declaring success before the goals have been met prevents implemented changes from becoming embedded into the culture. As a result, changes made are unsustainable (Kotter, 2012). Celebrating successes can be a crucial support in building the capacity of the staff as long as the celebrated successes are legitimate and well-deserved (Kotter, 2012; Levin, 2008; Schmoker, 2006).

Effective principals evaluate the strategies they use to build teacher capacity (Blase & Kirby, 2009) and consider factors and conditions that may impact their goals (Leithwood et al., 1994). Leithwood, Begley, and Cousins (1994) suggest that effective principals are reflective and refine their processes and strategies over time. Effective principals are also proactive in problem-solving to address conditions that may hinder progress and try hard to consider these factors when engaged in activities focused on building capacity (Leithwood et al., 1994).

Summary

The inception of the principal began in the late 1800s with the role of principal teacher (Rousmaniere, 2013). Although the day-to-day managerial responsibilities may look similar to the head teacher's initial responsibilities, principals today face ever-mounting expectations driven by high-stakes standards and accountability movements unlike anything faced by their 19th-century counterparts (Rousmaniere, 2013). Changes in demographics, family structure, socioeconomic status, policy, and reform have made the principal's job difficult for one individual to accomplish alone (Cuban, 1988; Fullan, 2023; Rousmaniere, 2013).

The learning leader of the 21st century is focused on creating a learning environment within the school by incorporating the strategies inherent in transformational leadership,

instructional leadership, and shared leadership (Hallinger, 2011). In order to build the capacity of the staff and address the factors and conditions discussed above, principals must know the curriculum, content, and pedagogy (Robinson, 2011). They must also know how students and adults learn (Robinson, 2011); and understand the school climate and culture and the impact the culture has on the learning environment (Hallinger, 2011). Fulfilling the role of building teachers' capacity requires the principal's practice to be driven by the knowledge of how to improve teaching and learning (Robinson, 2011), while also modeling the learning process through their words, actions, and behaviors (Fullan, 2023). As Robinson (2009) points out, improving learning in our schools means “we must put the education back into educational leadership” (p. 155).

Identifying the extent to which elementary principals consider the capacity building of teachers to be a leadership priority, as well as the factors and conditions that support or inhibit a principal’s efforts to increase capacity, may serve to provide insight into the support necessary for current and future elementary principals to be successful in this continually changing landscape. This study can potentially provide administrators and educational reform leaders with important information that is required to support principals in building teacher capacity effectively.

CHAPTER THREE: Method

This chapter includes a detailed description of the study's design and how it was conducted. It describes and provides a rationale for the research method used to answer the question, “What are the perceptions of elementary principals regarding their role in building teacher capacity?” The following three questions were used to guide the research:

1. To what extent do elementary school principals consider the capacity of teachers to be a leadership responsibility?
2. In what ways do elementary principals report they build teacher capacity?
3. What are the factors and conditions that occur within the school day that elementary principals identify as supporting or inhibiting their efforts to increase teacher capacity?

The role of the researcher, the selection of participants, the procedures used for selection, the survey participants, the interview participants, the instruments used to collect the data, and data collection and storage will all be discussed in this chapter. In addition, details regarding methods for data collection and analysis and protecting the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants will be explained. Finally, this chapter will include the coding procedures and the study's limitations and delimitations.

Overview of Research Design

This study follows a mixed methods design—it is a quantitative study with some qualitative aspects. Using a sequential explanatory mixed methods approach allowed me to gain deeper insight into the research problem than would have been the case if I had exclusively used only quantitative or qualitative methods (Creswell, 2022). Creswell (2022) noted the benefits of

mixed methods by stating, “Quantitative research does not adequately investigate personal stories and meanings or deeply probe the perspectives of individuals. Qualitative research does not enable us to generalize from a small group of people to a large population” (p.32). Using an explanatory sequential mixed methods design assisted in further explaining, through qualitative data analysis, results collected from a quantitative study (Creswell, 2011; Ivankova et al., 2006). This method allowed me to collect the personal thoughts and lived experiences of elementary principals to provide additional insight into the quantitative data collected regarding each principal’s thoughts on teacher capacity development.

This study was conducted in two phases. The first phase was the quantitative phase, which consisted of a self-developed web-based survey administered using Google Forms. In this phase of the study, I gathered quantitative data to explore elementary principals' perceptions regarding their role in building teacher capacity (Subedi, 2016). The second phase consisted of collecting qualitative data through follow-up interviews with select participants. This data was collected to further explain the connections and themes in the quantitative data (Subedi, 2016). As Grissom et al. (2021) point out, the research on the principal's leadership role currently has many limitations and variabilities that impact the ability to generalize this information. More research is needed to guide principal leadership policy and practice (Grissom et al., 2021). This study was designed to assist in developing this body of research to provide insight into principals' perceptions regarding their role in building teacher capacity.

Role of the Researcher

My experience of being raised in a household full of educators has without doubt shaped my views on the role of the principal. It is also important to acknowledge the impact of my privilege growing up in a middle-class, well-educated family. My father was an elementary and

middle school principal, which allowed my mother to stay home for most of my childhood before deciding to return to work as a first-grade teacher. My family was able to provide all that I needed and more. Although we did not have excessive wealth, we lived comfortably, and it was assumed that I would go on to college and pursue a career as an educator.

In college, I was surrounded primarily by Caucasian females who were also working on their degrees to become teachers. I completed both my undergraduate and graduate degrees at the same school. I began to work in the same city that I grew up in, where both of my parents worked. At this point, my father had taken the position of Superintendent of Schools. I knew all the elementary principals in the district, and as I advanced in my career, I continued to work with these school leaders in varying capacities.

My current role as the Assistant Superintendent, where I supervise and provide professional development to elementary principals, as well as my previous experiences, provide me with a deeper level of knowledge regarding the perceptions of the elementary principals within the district. I have worked with principals who have struggled to improve student performance and with principals who have made significant progress in student achievement. I have had the opportunity to see first-hand how impactful a principal can be on their teaching staff and students.

As Creswell (2013) points out, whether we are cognizant of it or not, we all bring biases, past experiences, and personal beliefs to the research that can impact the study. These beliefs and assumptions steer our questions and are referred to by Creswell et al. (2011) as a “worldview”. They further explain a worldview, stating, “mixed methods researchers bring to their inquiry a worldview composed of beliefs and assumptions about knowledge that informs their study” (Creswell et al., 2011, p.38). The lens through which I view the world and, ultimately, my study

is the theory of social constructivism, i.e., that learning occurs through interaction with others. People create meaning through experiences and social interactions (Creswell et al., 2011; Raskin, 2002). There is no one single reality (Merriam, 2009). Realities are socially constructed based on the individual's perspective and environmental context (Merriam, 2009; Raskin, 2002). Constructivist researchers seek to understand the experience and perspective of the participants through their research (Merriam, 2009). As defined by Lincoln and Guba, construction is “a way of making sense of something” (2013, p. 29).

Through this study, the individual realities of the elementary principals were collected using a web-based survey and follow-up interviews with select principals whose answers to the survey represented varying realities based on their thoughts and experiences and who, as a result of their experiences, could best help elucidate the phenomenon being researched (Creswell, 2022). Using a constructivist worldview, I collected the knowledge and perspectives of differing and similar viewpoints, which enabled me to develop general insight into elementary principals' perceptions.

Delimitations and Limitations

This study was delimited to establish a group of participants who could provide relevant information based on their experiences as elementary school principals, which assisted in answering the guiding research questions. Each participant in this study is an elementary school principal in Massachusetts in the United States. Middle school and high school principals were consciously excluded from this study. Therefore, this research may have limitations in generalizing the findings to principals outside of the elementary school. Charter and private school principals were also excluded from this study, which may also limit the generalizability of the findings.

This study was also limited to only the perspective of principals in elementary schools. It did not seek the input of teachers, parents, or district administrators regarding their effectiveness in building teacher capacity. Only seeking one perspective, that of the principals themselves, limits the ability to compare the responses of multiple groups and make inferences regarding the different viewpoints concerning their roles. Limitations as a result of only studying elementary principals may also include the inability to measure the effectiveness of capacity-building strategies on the teaching staff in the building.

Another limitation that may impact this study is my role as an Assistant Superintendent in Massachusetts. Participants' knowledge of my role could have impacted their responses both in the survey and follow-up interviews and hindered them from fully disclosing information. Finally, this study was limited by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the role of elementary school principals. The pandemic's lasting effects have changed the daily life of school administrators—an impact mentioned by many of the interview participants.

Setting and Participants

This study focused on public school elementary principals currently working in Massachusetts. The sampling method used for the survey was non-probability convenience sampling. Elementary principals were selected due to my familiarity with elementary student achievement and growth. In addition, elementary principals represent the group of individuals I am most interested in studying due to my previous experience as an elementary-level educator (Creswell, 2012). Furthermore, contact information for this group of principals was easily accessible and available.

Elementary principals, as defined in this study, included principals who work in schools with the following grade levels: (a) pre-kindergarten or kindergarten through grade six; (b) pre-

kindergarten or kindergarten through grade five; (d) pre-kindergarten or kindergarten through grade four; (e) pre-kindergarten or kindergarten through grade three; (f) pre-kindergarten or kindergarten through grade two. Elementary principals working in Massachusetts charter schools were not included in this study.

The selection of elementary principals in Massachusetts for the survey portion of the research created a sample frame of 775 individuals (Fowler, 2014). In order to reduce the potential sampling error, a large population was selected (Creswell, 2012). The study aimed for participation by a minimum of thirty percent of Massachusetts's 775 elementary principals, or 233 principals. Recruiting a large number of participants reduces the potential for sampling error and provides a more reflective sample of elementary principals (Creswell, 2015, 2022).

The choice to confine the study to elementary principals in Massachusetts, and not include other states or principals of other grade levels, may have limitations including the ability to generalize information from the study to principals as a larger group (Creswell, 2012). Information gleaned from the survey participants was used to provide insight into the perceptions of the sample group in order to establish relevant thoughts, themes, and patterns that may exist among elementary principals.

Email addresses were collected from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) school profile pages. In some instances, for example when the name of the current principal did not match the email listed on the school profile page, the email addresses were verified on the individual school website. In general, the email contact information provided by the DESE website was reliable and produced a thorough list (Creswell, 2012). The elementary principals identified above were then sent an invitation to participate in the survey, which included an informed consent (Appendix A) and a survey link (Appendix B).

The survey was administered over six weeks (Creswell, 2015), beginning on February 21, 2023, and ending on March 31, 2023. In order to capture a high response rate, thorough follow-up procedures were followed (Creswell, 2015). Participants were emailed an introductory email with informed consent, contact information, and a survey link (Appendix A, Appendix B). The initial email produced a response rate of 33 responses. A second follow-up email was sent to the email list on March 6, 2023. The second email increased the response rate to 61 responses. A third and final follow-up email was sent on March 29, 2023. As a result of the final email, the response rate increased to 79 responses. This created a response rate of approximately ten percent.

Although I did not reach the goal of 233 responses, the data collected reflects the Massachusetts elementary principal population as a whole (Creswell, 2015). A wave analysis of the responses was conducted in intervals of every two weeks to check for response bias (Creswell, 2015). Responses were analyzed to monitor for response bias, and no significant difference was found in the responses from week one to the last week of the survey (Creswell, 2015).

Survey Participants

A total of 79 participants completed the initial survey. Of the respondents who completed the survey, 60.8% identified as females, and 39.2% identified as males. Over half of the participants were in the 45-55 age range. 13.9% have been elementary principals for over 16 years, 32.9% for 10-15 years, 15.2% for 6-9 years, 26.6% for 2-5 years, and 11.4% were in their first year of being an elementary principal. Figures 2 to 4 show a breakdown of the survey respondents by age, gender and years of experience.

Figure 2

Participant Age

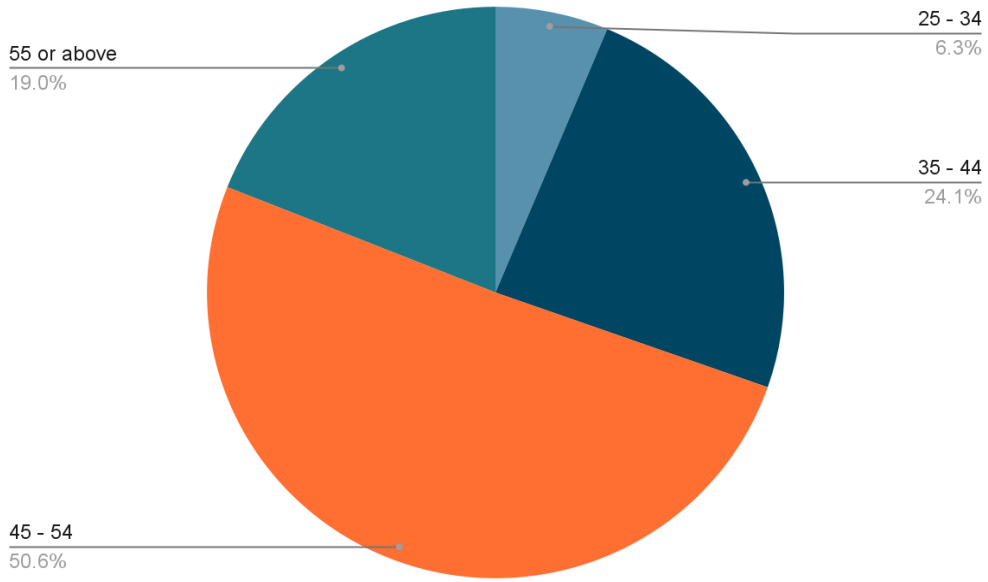


Figure 3

Participant Gender

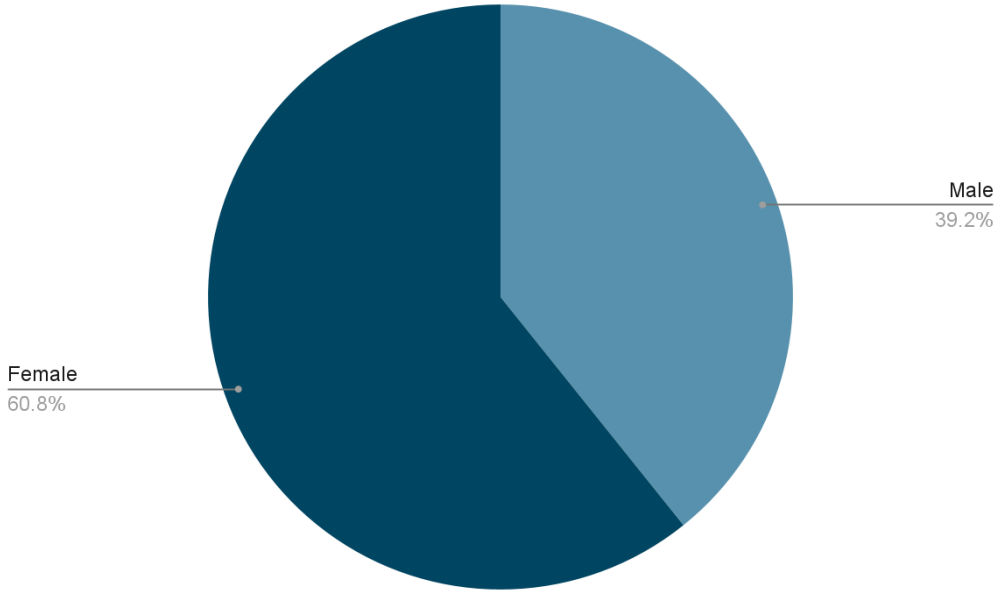
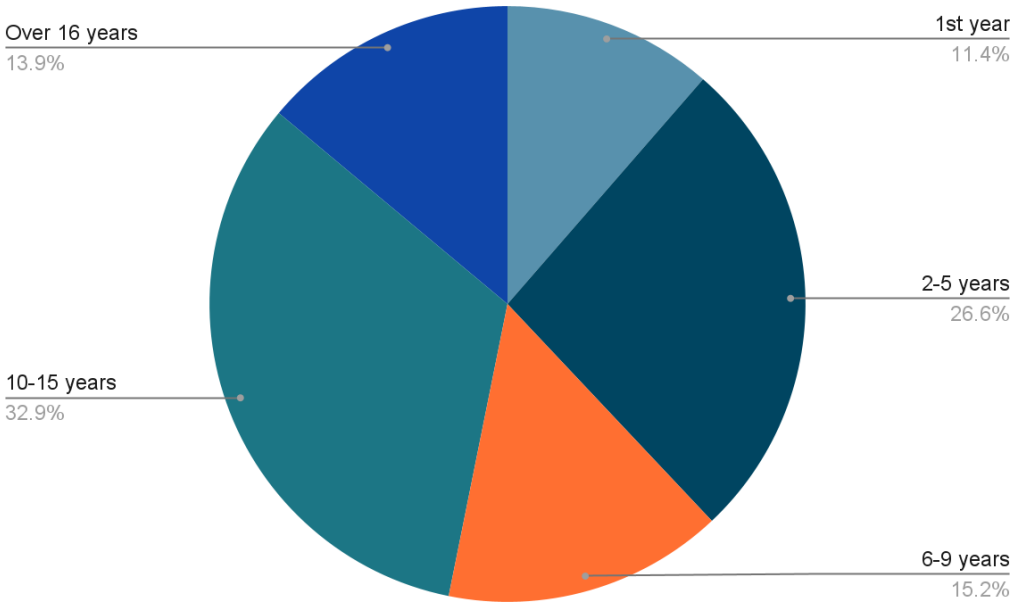


Figure 4

Years of Experience



Note. Years of experience as an elementary school principal

Interview Participants

As part of the survey, survey participants were asked to volunteer for a one-hour interview. Survey participants indicated consent by provided their names and contact information. A total of 34 survey respondents volunteered to participate in a follow-up interview. To narrow this number down, maximal variation sampling was used. Narrowing down the number of participants allowed me to provide an in-depth picture of the elementary principalship (Creswell, 2015). As Creswell (2015) notes, one goal of qualitative research is to share the complexity of the information given by the participants. The researcher's ability to provide this information decreases with the addition of new participants (Creswell, 2015). The chosen

participants represented principals with varying years of experience as elementary principals. Individual emails were sent to twelve respondents who had volunteered. This email yielded a total of nine follow-up interviews. Interviews were held over four weeks, beginning in early April and ending in early May 2023. All of the interviews were scheduled based on the participants' schedules. Table 1 provides demographic information of the interview participants.

Table 1

Interview Participant Information

Name	Gender	Years as Principal	Previous Role
1	Female	3	Elementary Teacher
2	Male	13	Elementary Teacher
3	Female	2	Elementary Teacher
4	Male	1	Elementary Teacher
5	Male	15	Middle School Guidance
6	Male	3	High School Teacher
7	Female	14	Preschool Teacher
8	Female	7	Literacy Specialist
9	Male	6	Middle School Teacher

Note. [a]Previous role = Role in education prior to elementary school administration.

Development of Survey Instruments

Survey

A cross-sectional survey was created in the spring of 2022. The survey was developed to explore the perspective, beliefs, and practices of elementary principals in terms of building teacher capacity (Creswell, 2012). The survey was submitted and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and was directed by the following questions, which were aligned to the research questions:

1. What are the top ten priorities from the list of principal responsibilities listed below that principals spend the majority of their time on in a given week?
2. What principal responsibilities identified in the research would they desire to spend more time on if they could?
3. Why are principals unable to spend time on these identified areas; what is getting in the way?

Included in the survey were twenty questions, with the first eleven focused on collecting demographic information using a nominal scale with questions including an “other” option to add other relevant information related to previous administrative training. Two core questions were based on a five-point Likert scale and reflected administrative and capacity-building priorities identified by analyzing the corresponding literature. A total of three open-ended questions, one multi-select question, and three interval scale questions, were also included in the survey (Appendix B).

Before the survey's administration, a pilot test was conducted with five former elementary school principals. The pilot respondents were asked to complete the questionnaire as if they were part of the research (Fowler, 2014). Once they had completed the survey, they were then asked to respond to the following five questions (Fowler, 2014):

1. Do you feel the length of the survey was appropriate?
2. Did you feel that any of the questions were unclear or confusing?
3. Did the order of the questions make sense?
4. Did you feel any of the questions were repetitive?
5. Were there any parts of the survey you felt should be changed or adjusted?

As a result of the feedback received, the rating scales were clarified, as this was a common point of feedback from three of the five respondents. The pilot respondents felt all other questions and directions were straightforward, the order of the questions was appropriate, and the questions were not repetitive.

Interview

After receiving consent from the survey respondents to participate in a follow-up interview, I scheduled a mutually agreeable time to conduct an interview using Google Meet. I sent a link via email to each interview participant. An interview protocol (Appendix C) was developed and followed to provide structure and allow me to take notes while conducting the interview. In line with interview protocol, the study was introduced, and participants were informed that the study was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time. In addition, before beginning the interview, I asked for permission to record the interview; and reviewed the steps that would be taken to ensure confidentiality. A total of 11 open-ended questions were asked in the interview. The first question was designed to serve as an "icebreaker" (Creswell, 2015, p. 225). It helped me relax the participants and start the conversation (Creswell, 2015). Questions two and three were designed to provide background information on the participants' participation in professional development activities for their growth and learning. The eight remaining questions were designed to solicit information to inform the three research questions. Each question was developed to provide as much insight as possible into all three questions; therefore, there was an overlap in the connection to the guiding questions, as shown in Table 2.

All interviews were recorded using Google Meet, and a transcript was created using the web-based platform. Transcripts were reviewed within the same week as the interview to assess for accuracy. In addition, I took notes using the interview protocol. The transcription and the video were then saved in a secure Google Drive and downloaded to a password-protected folder on a password-protected computer. The interview protocols were downloaded into a hard copy and saved in a locked filing cabinet folder. Table 2 organizes the interview questions in relation to the guiding research question.

Table 2

Correlation of Research Questions to Interview Questions

Research Question	Interview Question
Icebreaker (not a research question) and background information	• Can you provide some information about your job history and experience? • What professional development activities have you participated in to support your learning and growth as an elementary school principal? • When did this PD experience take place?
To what extent do elementary principals consider the capacity of teachers to be a principal leadership responsibility?	• What do you consider to be the top priorities in your role as an elementary school principal? • Are you able to focus on those priorities as much as you would like? • Can you share your understanding of the definition of teacher capacity? • Can you describe a typical day in your role as principal and the job responsibilities you focus on during the day? • Can you describe what you feel is the principal's role in building teacher capacity? • What are your vision and goals for your individual school? • Do you have teacher buy-in and a shared commitment to this vision and goals?

In what ways do elementary principals report they build teacher capacity?	• What professional development opportunities have you provided for your staff? • How often and how much time do you spend on these activities in a typical year? • Has the time spent with staff on professional development been impacted by the pandemic? • If so, what would a pre-pandemic year look like in terms of professional development? • Can you describe your leadership style?
What are the factors and conditions that occur within the school day that elementary principals identify as supporting or inhibiting their efforts to increase teacher capacity?	• What are the barriers that get in the way of focusing on your priorities? • Can you describe a typical day in your role as principal and the job responsibilities you focus on during the day? • In a given week how much time do you typically spend in teacher's classrooms? • What does your time in the classroom look like?

Data Collection Procedures

Data was collected and recorded in two phases using an explanatory sequential design. The quantitative data was collected in the first phase, which consisted of a survey questionnaire (Appendix B). Most of the survey was quantitative, with a few qualitative questions incorporated into the design. The questionnaire was then followed by individual interviews. The interview participants were self-selected as volunteers for a follow-up interview as a part of the original survey.

Quantitative data was initially collected through the survey using Google Forms and was designed to assess the importance of building teacher capacity for elementary principals, the strategies principals use to build teacher capacity, the frequency with which they employ these strategies, and the factors and conditions within the school day that may support or hinder their efforts. The survey data was then downloaded onto a Google spreadsheet. In addition, individual responses were printed in hard copy and stored in a locked filing cabinet. Each response was given a numeric identification from 1 to 79 on the spreadsheet, and the individual printed responses. This information was then entered into SPSS using the numeric identification for statistical analysis.

The qualitative data was gathered primarily through the follow-up interviews. It was used to further refine and extend the results from the quantitative data collection (Creswell, 2015). The interview protocol and the transcript were each given a numeric code from 1 to 9. The transcript was downloaded into Microsoft Word, reviewed for accuracy, and stored in a password-protected folder on the computer. The transcript was

then uploaded into Dedoose for coding and analysis. The responses from the open-ended questions on the survey were also uploaded into Dedoose for coding and analysis.

Data Analysis

Survey data was collected using Google Forms and analyzed through a combination of Google Forms, Google Spreadsheets, and SPSS (a software package used for the analysis of statistical data). Individual survey responses were given a numeric identification number from 1 to 79 and were entered into SPSS using this identification number. Prior to entering the response data into SPSS, the data was cleaned using a Google Spreadsheet, and a codebook was created (Creswell, 2015).

To clean the data, it was downloaded into a Google Spreadsheet and was visually inspected for responses that fell outside of the response ranges. Upon inspection, there were no responses that fell outside of the response range for each question. The spreadsheet was also reviewed for missing data. A total of seven participants left some individual questions blank. The questions that were left blank were completely random and did not indicate any specific pattern. Regression substitution was used to replace the missing data. Although missing data was substituted, the responses should not alter the statistical findings. Creswell (2015) asserts that substituting up to fifteen percent should not change the overall statistical findings of the study. Eleven percent of the survey data was substituted using regression substitution.

Each question was entered into SPSS as a variable. The variables were given unique headers within SPSS. Question responses were given a numeric value to analyze descriptive statistics, frequency of responses and inferential statistics. Questions on the

survey that included a response of "Other" were also given a numeric value within SPSS. In addition to a numeric value, participant responses that were entered under "Other" were entered into SPSS using a string variable, initially coded manually to identify the first round of codes, and then uploaded to the coding software Dedoose to analyze participant responses further. Open-ended response questions were also entered into SPSS using a string variable and coded manually, then uploaded into Dedoose for further coding and analysis.

Coding

Saldana (2021) identifies the first cycle of coding in research as "analysis—taking things apart" and the "second cycle coding is synthesis—putting things together into new assemblages of meaning" (p. 6). According to Creswell (2013), coding assists the researcher in making meaning out of the collected data. Created codes are examined for "overlap and redundancy" (Creswell, 2015, p. 243) and then condensed together to create themes (Creswell, 2013, 2015; Merriam, 2009; Saldana, 2021). The process of coding both the interview transcripts and the open-ended survey question responses began with a manual coding process to develop an understanding of each transcript as a whole (Creswell, 2015; Merriam, 2009) prior to the information being uploaded into Dedoose. Merriam (2009) refers to this as "open coding" (p. 178), where the researcher is open to multiple codes or categories within the research data.

During the initial analysis, text segments were coded through a hybrid approach of deductive and inductive coding strategies (Merriam, 2009; Saldana, 2021). Using the participants' words or 'in vivo' coding (Creswell, 2015; Saldana, 2021) and a set of 'a

priori’ codes developed based on common effective leadership practices and strategies derived from the research allowed me to create a rich code set developed to capture the depth of the data collected.

In vivo coding takes words from the participants' responses within the transcript and uses them as codes or labels to describe the datum (Creswell, 2013, 2015; Saldana, 2021). Using this coding method assisted me in capturing the participants' lived experiences and helped me to make meaning of their words, thoughts and experiences (Saldana, 2021). The a priori codes included recurring leadership practices and strategies effective principals employ, according to research, in order to build teacher capacity. The codes included the following: provide support for student learning; develop a shared vision; anchor vision in the development of goals; communicate high expectations; coordinate the curriculum; encourage shared leadership; establish shared norms and values; hire and retain high-quality teachers; model the learning process; provide high-quality professional development; promote teamwork and collaboration; provide developmental support; and provide high-quality feedback (Bryk et al., 2010; Fullan, 2014, 2023; Grissom et al., 2021; Marzano et al., 2005; Reeves, 2009; Thacker et al., 2009; Whittaker, 2020). Although the interview transcripts and open-ended question responses were coded using the a priori codes, the use of in vivo coding allowed me to be open to additional emergent codes found within the research (Creswell, 2013).

After coding the data, a codebook of all the code words used within the data was created to keep accurate records of the emergent codes and their descriptions (Creswell, 2015; Saldana, 2021). Individual codes were then analyzed for redundancies and grouped based on similarities and connection to the guiding research questions (Creswell, 2015).

Additionally, this allowed me to classify and reclassify codes into major categories and subcategories (Saldana, 2021). Merriam (2009) refers to the grouping or categorizing of individual codes as “analytic coding” (p.180). Analytic coding moves from individual codes to “interpretation and reflection on meaning” (Richards, 2005, p. 94). Through the categorization and recategorization of codes, themes were developed based on the frequency with which participants discussed something, the uniqueness of the code or category, responses that were expected based on the research, and themes that had the most significant amount of supportive evidence (Creswell, 2015; Merriam, 2009). Although the initial creation of codes was done manually, Dedoose was used to assist me in organizing, managing, and storing the collected data (Saldana, 2021). Chapter 4 provides a detailed synthesis of the collected data, including the survey and interview data and the connection to the guiding research questions.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Participation in a research study requires a high level of trust from the participants as they are asked to disclose personal thoughts, feelings, and experiences to the researcher (Creswell, 2015). Merriam (2009) stresses the importance of having confidence in how the study was conducted and the trustworthiness of the results. The following measures were taken to ensure the research's validity and reliability.

Credibility

Determining the interval validity or credibility of a research study is described by Merriam (2009) as the process of assessing whether the researcher is measuring what they

think they are measuring and whether or not the research findings capture reality. Throughout the research process, several steps were taken to ensure the study's credibility.

Data was collected from multiple participants to allow for the comparison of responses. Triangulation, or using multiple data sources (Creswell, 2015; Merriam, 2009), was employed to verify the credibility of the participant responses. Nine elementary school principals were interviewed with varying experience levels and different perspectives on their role as elementary principals. The codes and themes developed from the research were developed by comparing the responses from several individuals. In addition, the majority of participants' responses were aligned with the current research on the competing roles of the elementary principal and the effective strategies principals use to build teacher capacity.

Participants were also informed of the voluntary nature of participation and their ability to withdraw from the collected data. An informed consent email (Appendix A) was sent to all participants before they participated in any part of the research. Interview participants voluntarily agreed to participate and were again informed verbally before the interview that they could withdraw at any time. Participants were also informed of the purpose of the study and the data collection procedures employed to protect their confidentiality (Appendix C). The study's results and findings were reviewed throughout the research project with a dissertation committee consisting of a senior advisor and two additional members who provided feedback.

The “reflexivity” (Merriam, 2009, p. 219), or position of the researcher, was continually considered during the data collection and analysis. To limit my bias as a

researcher, I continually acknowledged my prior assumptions, experiences, and worldviews and the impact that these could have on my analysis and interpretation of the findings (Merriam, 2009).

Reliability

Reliability refers to the ability of the study to be replicated with similar results (Merriam, 2009) and make the results generalizable to a larger population (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Merriam, 2009). According to Guba and Lincoln (1981), the more critical question is whether the results make sense and are dependable and consistent. To provide the best likelihood for dependability, a detailed description of the methodology, data collection, and analysis has been provided. Future researchers could replicate this study with fidelity based on the information detailed within the study.

There are several acknowledged limitations regarding the ability to generalize and transfer the results of this study to a larger population. The sample size is relatively small and only representative of the perspectives of elementary principals. Notwithstanding the small sample size, using maximum variation sampling in selecting follow-up interview participants does, according to Merriam, enhance the transferability of the research results (2009). The participants represented principals with a varying number of years' experience as elementary principals, maximizing the ability to generalize the results (Merriam, 2009).

Summary

This chapter provided detailed information on the methodology used for this research—a sequential explanatory mixed methods approach. The setting and the

procedure for selecting the participants was also discussed in depth within this chapter. Descriptions were provided for the development of the instruments used and pilot procedures, as well as the limitations and delimitations of the study. Data collection and analysis procedures and credibility and reliability were also outlined in detail. The findings of the research study will be presented in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER FOUR: Results

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions and behaviors of elementary school principals relating to their role in building teacher capacity. The study employed an explanatory sequential mixed methods design, and included aspects of both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The study occurred in two phases. The first was a self-developed web-based survey to gather quantitative data. The second phase consisted of follow-up interviews with a select number of participants to further explore the experiences of elementary principals through qualitative data collection.

Results, relevant findings, and themes gleaned from the data collected are presented in this chapter and are organized and analyzed according to the three (3) guiding questions for this research:

1. To what extent do elementary principals consider the capacity of teachers to be a principal leadership responsibility?
2. In what ways do elementary principals report they build teacher capacity?
3. What factors and conditions occur within the school day that elementary principals identify as supporting or inhibiting their efforts to increase teacher capacity?

Demographic Information

Seventy-nine elementary principals with varying degrees of experience completed the web-based survey. Just over 60% of the respondents identified as females, with the rest identifying as males. The survey participants were also asked to participate in a voluntary follow-up interview. Nine (9) people selected by me participated in follow-up interviews using

maximum variation sampling. The participants who were selected represented principals with varying levels of experience.

The first 11 questions of the survey (Appendix B) were used to gather background information relating to the participant's previous educational roles, administrative training before becoming a principal, and information on professional development or administrative training since becoming an elementary principal. The first three questions of the interview protocol (Appendix C) were also designed to gather background information and serve as an icebreaker to develop a comfortable rapport with the interview participant.

Data Collected for Guiding Research Question #1

To what extent do elementary principals consider the capacity of teachers to be a principal leadership priority?

Guiding Research Question #1 evaluated the extent to which teacher capacity is considered a leadership priority for elementary principals. Question 12 spoke specifically to Guiding Question #1 and asked principals to rate items they believe to be weekly priorities in their roles as elementary school principals. Participants rated each priority using a 5-point Likert scale based on the time spent on an activity during an average week. Participants rated items one through five, 1 being the most significant amount of time during a given week and 5 being the activity you spend the least amount of time on during a given week. Figure 5 shows the list of items principals were asked to rate in question 12.

Figure 5

Principals' Weekly Priorities (Question 12)

- Scheduling (including school schedule, parent meetings, teacher meetings, etc.)
- Paperwork responsibilities (including but not limited to work orders, newsletters, weeklies, communication to staff and students, supply orders, the paperwork associated with before and after school activities, budget, and implementing State or district-mandated initiatives)
- Specific duties: Recess, Cafeteria, Bus arrival and departure, hallway monitoring, etc.
- Building maintenance (inside and out, includes technology issues and solving non-instructional issues.
- Parent Involvement
- Student discipline
- Hiring and Retaining Staff (including personnel issues, providing coaching and mentoring to new and veteran staff, use of observation, evaluation, and feedback)
- Curriculum and Assessment (including coordinating and assessing the curriculum, analyzing student data, and coordinating the curriculum)
- Modeling Lessons
- Leadership Activities (including developing a shared vision and anchoring the vision through the development of goals, communicating high expectations, encouraging shared leadership, and establishing shared norms and values)
- Organizing and promoting effective professional development (including modeling and participating in the learning process)
- Meeting with grade level and vertical teams (promoting teamwork and collaboration)

Question 13 was multi-select and asked elementary principals to select from a list of 12 principal responsibilities the activities they would desire to spend more time on in a given week if they could. Principals identified the items they would like to spend more time on from the list in Figure 6 below.

Figure 6

Activities Principals Would Like to Spend More Time On (Question 13)

- Scheduling (including school schedule, parent meetings, teacher meetings, etc.)
- Paperwork responsibilities (including but not limited to work orders, newsletters, weeklies, communication to staff and students, supply orders, the paperwork associated with before and after school activities, budget, implementing State or district-mandated initiatives)
- Specific duties: Recess, Cafeteria, Bus arrival and departure, hallway monitoring, etc.
- Building maintenance (inside and out, including technology issues, solving non-instructional issues
- Parent Involvement
- Student discipline
- Hiring and Retaining Staff (including personnel issues, Providing coaching and mentoring to new and veteran staff, Use of observation, evaluation, and feedback)
- Curriculum and Assessment (including coordinating and assessing the curriculum, analyzing student data, and coordinating the curriculum)
- Modeling Lessons
- Leadership activities (including developing a shared vision and anchoring the vision through the development of goals, communicating high expectations, encouraging shared leadership, and establishing shared norms and values)
- Organizing and promoting effective professional development (including modeling and participating in the learning process
- Meeting with grade level and vertical teams (promoting teamwork and collaboration)

Note. Principals selected items they would like to focus on more during the week.

Question 14 was open-ended and asked principals to define teacher capacity:

14. How would you define the term teacher capacity?

Questions 15 through 17 were developed using an interval scale and asked participants to share their thoughts on the extent to which it is the teacher, principal, or district's role to increase teacher capacity. Participants rated their responses using: to a great extent, to some extent, and not at all.

15. To what extent do you believe that it is the principal's role to increase teacher capacity?

16. To what extent do you believe it is the teacher's role to increase teacher capacity?

17. To what extent do you believe it is the district's (Superintendent, curriculum personnel, directors, coordinators) role to increase teacher capacity?

In addition to the survey questions listed above, interview participants provided qualitative data responses for Guiding Research Question #1. Interview questions provided insight into more than one Guiding Research Question; therefore, there is some overlap within the Guiding Research Questions. Interview participants responded to the following questions regarding their thoughts on the extent to which elementary principals view the capacity of teachers to be a leadership priority:

1. What do you consider to be the top priorities in your role as an elementary school principal?
2. Can you focus on those priorities as much as you would like?
3. Can you describe a typical day in your role as principal and the job responsibilities you focus on during the day?
4. Can you share your understanding of the definition of teacher capacity?

5. Can you describe what you feel is the principal's role in building teacher capacity?
6. What are your vision and goals for your school?
7. Do you have teacher buy-in and a shared commitment to this vision and goals?

Guiding Research Question #1 Data Analysis

To understand what elementary principals view as priorities, they rated activities based on how much time they spend on a task in a typical week. Table 3 displays the results from question 12. The activity principals identified spending the largest amount of time on during the week was student discipline. 21.5% of the respondents identified this as the item they spend the most time on, and 35. 5% identified student discipline as something they spend a moderate amount of time on each week. Modeling lessons was also rated by 21.5% of the respondents as an activity they spend a large amount of time on each week. However, 35.4% of the respondents identified modeling lessons as the activity they spend the least time addressing each week. Notably, capacity building activities like professional development (6.3%), curriculum and assessment (5.1%) and hiring and retaining staff (3.8%) were not identified by respondents as activities that they spend a large amount of time on each week. In general, the majority of the priorities on the list were rated by principals as an item that they spend some time on during the school week.

Table 3

Weekly Priorities for Elementary Principals

Priority	1	2	3	4	5
Scheduling	12.7	24.1	31.6	20.3	11.4
Paperwork responsibilities	15.2	25.3	32.9	20.3	6.3
Specific duties	11.4	25.3	34.2	19.0	10.1
Building maintenance	10.1	19.0	29.1	26.6	15.2
Parent involvement	13.9	30.4	34.2	17.7	3.8
Student discipline	21.5	35.4	19.0	17.7	6.3
Hiring and Retaining Staff	3.8	35.4	32.9	22.8	5.1
Curriculum and assessment	5.1	30.4	41.8	19.0	3.8
Modeling lessons	21.5	8.9	10.1	24.1	35.4
Leadership activities	10.1	24.1	38.0	24.1	3.8
Professional development	6.3	32.9	31.6	20.3	8.9
Meeting with grade level and vertical teams	10.1	36.7	30.4	19.0	3.8

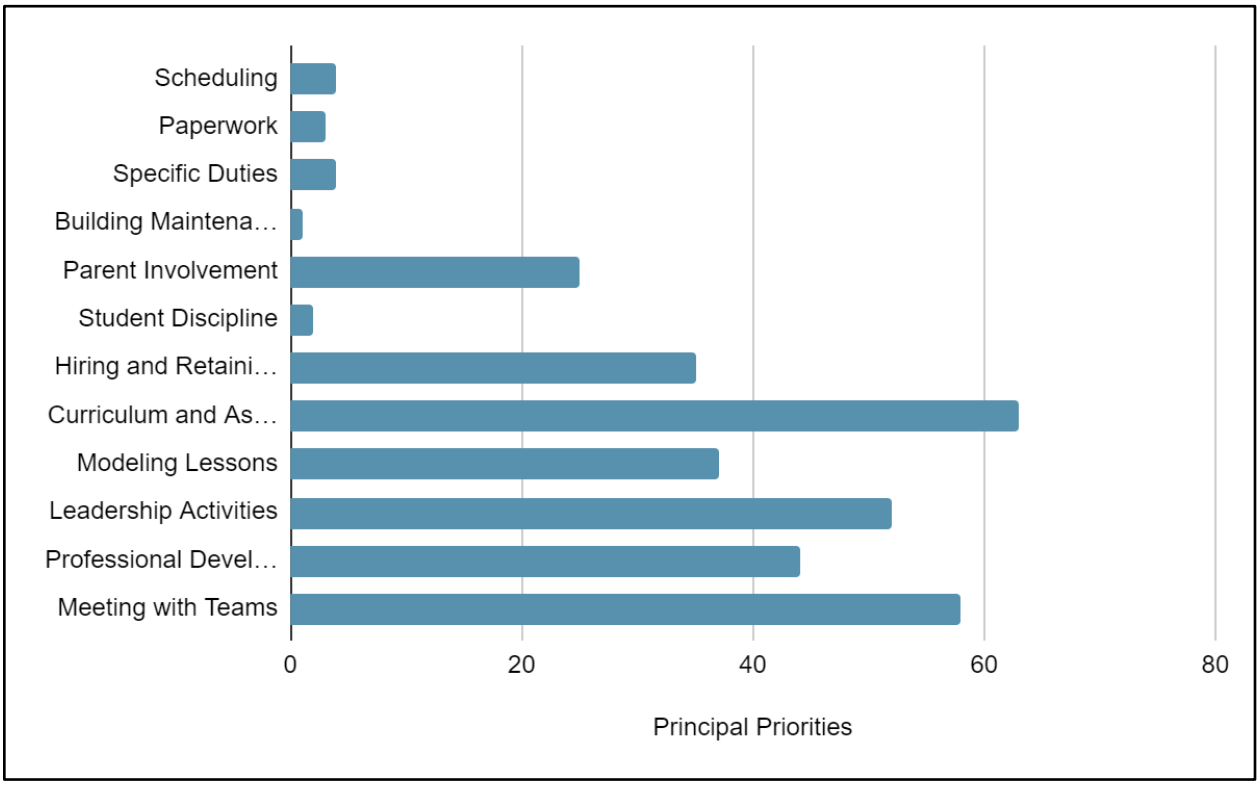
Note. % of responses, 1= largest time, 2= moderate time, 3= some time, 4= little time, 5= least time

To further assess the respondents' priorities, question 13 asked principals to select items from a list of activities they would prioritize if they had more time. Respondents could choose more than one item from the list of activities. There was a significant difference in the number of principals who selected scheduling, paperwork, specific duties, building maintenance, and student discipline versus those who selected parent involvement, hiring and retaining staff, curriculum and assessment, modeling lessons, leadership activities, professional development, and meeting with grade level and vertical teams.

As shown in Figure 7, fewer than five respondents selected scheduling, paperwork, specific duties, building maintenance, and student discipline, with building maintenance chosen by two principals and student discipline only selected by one respondent. Conversely, 63 of the 79 participants surveyed identified curriculum and assessment as a priority they would like more time to address. Professional development, leadership activities, and meetings with vertical and grade-level teams were selected by 44, 52, and 58 participants, respectively. Parent involvement, hiring and training staff, and modeling lessons were chosen by 25, 35, and 37 of the responding principals.

Figure 7

Principals' Assessment of Priorities



Note. Raw number frequency of selection of priority activities by principals.

Question 14 was open-ended and asked principals to define the term teacher capacity. The responses were coded into recurring themes and fell within three categories: 1) instructional effectiveness; 2) continuous learning, growth, and reflection; and 3) empowerment.

Instructional effectiveness

The respondents described instructional effectiveness as the knowledge and skills necessary for the individual teacher to effectively teach students, ensuring that all students meet the learning objectives regardless of the student's background. Instructional effectiveness includes data-driven decision-making that maximizes student outcomes (Stronge & Xu, 2021). In addition to having strong content knowledge and using research-based developmentally appropriate practices, principals also defined this as having knowledge of strategies to address

students' social and emotional needs and the ability to engage students in the learning process. One respondent shared, "In these current times, teachers are required to be curriculum specialists, trauma sensitive counselors, and behavior specialists." Respondents described the requirement for the teacher to be flexible and adapt instruction as necessary to a wide range of academic, pedagogical, behavioral, and social-emotional needs.

Continuous learning, growth, and reflection

The second category found within the principal's definitions of teacher capacity was the ability of the teacher to learn, grow, and reflect continuously (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2018). According to the respondents, teacher capacity is closely tied to the ability to reflect on one's teaching practice, with one respondent describing teacher capacity as "planning methods of professional growth." It requires a commitment to ongoing professional development and staying informed of best practices. Respondents also described the ability of the teacher to take responsibility for the learning and growth that occurs within the classroom. Principals described learning and development as occurring within the classroom and beyond and indicated it should involve collaborating with other teachers to share responsibilities and learn from each other (Drago-Severson & Blum DeStefano, 2018).

Empowerment

Teacher empowerment was the last category described by the participants as a component of teacher capacity. Respondents described this as empowering teachers to understand their impact on the school community, students, and families. "The power and influence of a teacher and his/her leadership; teachers' efficacy in delivering and understanding curriculum and students' needs" was described by one respondent. Principals reported confidence, self-efficacy, and teacher agency as essential aspects of teacher capacity. Teacher capacity includes teachers

who can step outside their comfort zone, take risks, and take responsibility and initiative for their learning and development (Gabriel, 2005; Murphy, 2005). Respondents also had capacity building for leadership and viewed teacher capacity as the "promise of shared and distributed leadership with their teachers."

Questions 15 through 17 asked survey participants to provide their perspective on the extent to which it is the principal's, teacher's, or district's responsibility to build teacher capacity. Tables 4 through 6 display the data collected from questions 15 through 17. Principals largely believe their responsibility is to increase teacher capacity (84.8%). Principals also believe the teacher is responsible for increasing their capacity (81.0%), and to a lesser extent, the district is also responsible for increasing teacher capacity (69.6%)

Table 4

Principal's Role in Increasing Teacher Capacity

Principal's Role	N	%
To a great extent	67	84.8
To some extent	12	15.5
Not at all	0	0

Note. N= number of participants, %= percentage of responses.

Table 5

Teacher's Role in Increasing Teacher Capacity

Teacher's Role	N	%
To a great extent	64	81.0
To some extent	15	19.0
Not at all	0	0

Note. N= number of participants, %= percentage of responses.

Table 6

District's Role in Increasing Teacher Capacity

District's Role	N	%
To a great extent	55	69.6
To some extent	23	29.1
Not at all	1	1.3

Note. N= number of participants, %= percentage of responses.

Interview participants answered questions regarding the items they consider leadership priorities. Participants identified what they believe to be priorities as elementary school principals and whether they can focus on them during the school day. Additionally, participants described a typical day in their school and the tasks they focus on during the day. The interviewer also asked participants to share their understanding of the definition of teacher capacity and describe their role in building teacher capacity. Participants expressed their shared vision and goals for their school and the level of teacher buy-in and support.

Question One asked principal participants to share their top leadership priorities. The responses were similar across participants and fell within the scope of building a positive and supportive school climate and culture. Five of the nine interview participants identified safety as a top priority. Providing support for teachers and making sure teachers have what they need was also recognized as a priority by five of the interview participants. Many interviewees also mentioned the engagement of families and students, building relationships, and developing a positive and supportive school community. Participant 3 was the sole participant to identify instructional leadership as a priority. Participant 6 mentioned hiring as a leadership priority.

Participants also unanimously agreed they cannot focus on these priorities as much as they would like to during the school day.

Participants described a typical day in their role as principal and the job responsibilities they focus on during the day. All nine interview participants provided very consistent responses. All participants described starting their day with some form of traffic duty, standing outside, welcoming students and families, and handling parent or student concerns as they arose. All participants described the importance of being visible and accessible to students, families, and staff during the transition into school and throughout the day. Once transitioned into school, the participants identified a variety of activities that may then take place. These activities included classroom walk-throughs, meetings with central administration, classroom teachers or teacher teams, formal or informal observations, dealing with student discipline issues, following up on parent concerns, and providing substitute coverage.

Additionally, all participants mentioned moving from the morning into lunch and recess duty. After completing lunch duty, the principals again listed the same activities from the morning that may occur in the afternoon, followed by traffic duty for dismissal. The participants identified the time after dismissal as a time when they can complete tasks such as responding to emails, making parent phone calls, supervising after-school activities, completing written assignments such as newsletters, or following up with teachers who need assistance. A consistent theme mentioned by the participants was the impact the shortage of substitute teachers has had on their role, and they identified this as something that often becomes the priority. Interview participants also acknowledged that a student disciplinary issue can take a significant amount of time to resolve and can become the day's priority.

Interview participants shared their understanding of the definition of teacher capacity. Participants' descriptions of teacher capacity corroborated the definitions provided in the open-ended survey question. The responses aligned to and further expanded upon instructional effectiveness, continuous learning, growth and reflection, and empowerment.

Participant 1 described teacher capacity as a “vertical understanding of student learning. Teachers must understand the developmental progression of learning from early childhood through the higher grades.” In the category of instructional effectiveness, Participant 1 again stressed the importance of teachers having a vertical understanding of student learning, as well as strong content knowledge.

Participant 4 added empathy for students, an awareness of the diverse backgrounds and experiences the students bring to the classroom, and knowledge of how students learn as part of instructional effectiveness. Participant 4 shared, “For me, the other piece is empathy. Our students come to us from lots of different backgrounds; some have lots of support from home, and others don’t, and they have different needs. I think part of a teacher’s capacity is the ability to address those needs.”

Respondents also reinforced the importance of continuous learning, growth, and reflection. Participant 1 highlighted the importance of teachers being able to “pivot and make informed decisions in real-time.” Participant 2 felt that teacher capacity included recognizing the need to change and adapt based on changes in student needs. Participant 2 also described a willingness to take risks and work to continuously refine teaching practices to better meet the needs of the students.

Many interview participants mentioned promoting ownership and investment by empowering staff members to take ownership of their professional growth and development in

alignment with the empowerment category**.** Participant 2 defined teacher capacity as "the ability to teach, but it also gives teachers the opportunity to have an impact on the school." Participants 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, and 9 all mentioned teacher capacity as including a leadership component. The participants also described this as teachers having an opportunity to impact both in and out of the classroom. Principals used phrases such as "shared responsibility, collaboration, and collective success" to define this category of teacher capacity.

Interview participants shared their views on building teacher capacity, and unanimously indicated their belief that their role was to connect teachers with appropriate support. Participants described their role as the "bridge that connects teachers to the needed support," not necessarily the person providing it directly. Support, as defined by the participants, fell into two categories: feedback and resources.

Feedback

An essential component of support identified by the elementary principal interview participants was feedback. Participants described feedback in different ways. Feedback as a part of educator evaluation was mentioned consistently by the participants. Participant 3 also described feedback as needing to be "concrete" and Participant 1 as something that should be "very specific." At the same time, Participant 7 used the term "warm feedback" to describe the feedback they provided to their educators. Participants also shared the importance of providing real-time and positive feedback to support building teacher capacity.

Resources

Access to resources, as described by the participants, fell into four sub-categories: people, materials, professional development, and time.

People

People could include mentors, coaches, behavior support individuals, other teachers, experts in the field, district personnel, and the ability to share best practices with colleagues (Jackson, 2021). Participant 6 said "one of the most critical things I do in building capacity is to select a mentor for a new teacher." Participant 9 described the principal's role as finding the people who are equipped and can offer pedagogical practices to help improve capacity. Participant 4 shared that consultants are a valuable resource when implementing new programs. Additionally, participants described connecting teachers with people as a way to support and provide opportunities to "share best practices, collaborate, and observe other teachers."

Materials

All of the interview participants referenced providing materials as part of their role in building teacher capacity. Participant 4 indicated that part of building capacity is ensuring teachers have the materials to do their work. Participant 3 shared that it is part of the job to "find research that excites them and has them look at things differently." Multiple participants shared that it was their role to find materials such as books, curriculum materials, podcasts, research articles, and videos for teachers because they do not have the time to do this themselves. Participant 2 described this as "removing any obstacles" that may hinder accessing the necessary materials to move their practice forward.

Professional Development

Another role principals play in building teacher capacity, according to the interview respondents, is to connect teachers to high-quality professional development. Many participants mentioned professional development focused on implementing new programs; and professional development centered on social-emotional learning and behavior management. Participants 1, 3,

and 7 felt educators developing and delivering professional development was essential for principals to build teacher capacity. Participant 8 described professional development as "intentionally creating agendas that give teachers time to share and highlight best practices." As described by the participants, professional development included teachers becoming the school's "experts" in different areas and "teaching other teachers."

Time

According to the interview participants, the number one role of an elementary school principal in building teacher capacity is to provide teachers with time. 100% of the principals mentioned the importance of coverage for common planning time. Additionally, multiple principals said the development of the master schedule and the importance of good planning is part of the principal's role in building teacher capacity. Participant 8 referred to this as "real intentional planning of the schedules to support teachers and give them time to work together." Participant 1 also stressed the importance of "efficiently using teachers' time," and Participant 5 explained the importance of "protecting teachers' time," especially in light of the shortage of substitutes. Other examples mentioned relating to the role of the principal were providing time for grade level and vertical meetings, time to collaborate with other teachers, time for teachers to plan, and time for teachers to work with consultants.

Interview participants shared their vision and goals for their schools. Seven respondents shared a vision and goals of creating a positive, inclusive school culture where community members feel valued and heard. Interestingly, Participant 6 was the only participant to mention the school improvement plan. Participant 6 shared that the school has English language arts, math, and social-emotional goals and said, "It's about doing the most good for the most kids."

Participant 5's vision focused on recovery from the pandemic and narrowing the achievement gap.

All the principals interviewed felt most of the staff had buy-in and a shared commitment to the vision and goals. Five interview participants felt the entire staff was committed to the vision and goals. Participant 9 described this commitment as a "roll-up-your-sleeves mentality." Four of the interview participants felt that most of the staff had buy-in but acknowledged that there are small pockets of people who may be frustrated or resistant to the vision and goals of the school.

Finding #1

Although not identified by principals directly as a top priority, they believe increasing teacher capacity is a part of their role and an essential component of creating a positive school culture and climate.

The elementary school principals who participated in the survey and follow-up interviews acknowledged their role in building teacher capacity. 84.8% of survey respondents felt it is a part of the principal's role to increase teacher capacity "to a great extent", and 15.5% "to some extent". Notably, none of the principals felt that building capacity was not part of their role. Principals also supported the idea that building capacity is also the role of the individual teacher and, to some extent, the district.

During the follow-up interviews, principals shared their top priorities. The top priorities described developing a positive and supportive school climate and culture. In creating a strong school climate and culture, principals identified supporting and empowering teachers as a crucial aspect of the school culture and a part of their top priorities. Participant 8 shared this sentiment in the description of their top priorities:

> My top priorities are making sure teachers have what they need to provide for the students every day because I think when the teachers have what they need and feel good with what they have, they are going to give their best to the students.

Participant 1 described their priorities: "First priority is to make my staff's life easier. So my job is to support them and also to just build the culture of the building such that it is positive, encouraging, and supportive." Participant 4 also identified supporting the staff as their top priority: "I guess my priority would be ensuring that the teachers have the support that they need whether that is resources in the form of materials, or time that they need to plan lessons." Supporting teachers was a priority for more than half of the interview participants and was a common theme within the data collected.

Participant responses in the survey and during the interview process showed that principals cannot work on their priorities as much as they would like. Most survey participants indicated they would like to spend more time on curriculum and assessment, meeting with grade level and vertical teams, and participating in leadership activities such as developing a shared vision and encouraging shared leadership. Surveyed principals described student discipline, paperwork, and parent involvement as getting in the way of the principal's ability to focus on their priorities. In both the open-ended survey responses and the interviews, participants expressed concerns regarding substitute coverage, student behavior, and mental health and indicated these as significant problems that had increased since the pandemic, making it challenging to focus on other priorities.

Finding #2

Principals have a consistent understanding of the definition of teacher capacity.

Principals consistently defined teacher capacity as including the following areas: instructional effectiveness, continuous learning, growth and reflection, and empowerment. A teacher's knowledge and skills were a key component of teacher capacity. Principals stressed the importance of teachers having strong content knowledge and being able to address all of the learning needs of their students. Additionally, principals felt teacher capacity involved having a vertical understanding of where students have come from and where they are going.

Principals also believe that part of teacher capacity is being a reflective practitioner who takes the initiative for their growth and development. Respondents described a teacher's ability to "adapt instruction and make real-time decisions using data to support student learning." Principals also described this as the ability of the teacher to take responsibility for student learning in their classroom.

The last component of the definition of teacher capacity principals discussed was empowerment. According to participants, part of teacher capacity is the teacher's "self-efficacy and agency to make decisions inside and outside the classroom." Participants also connected this to providing teachers with shared and distributed leadership opportunities.

Finding #3

Principals believe their primary role in building teacher capacity is supporting teachers.

Principals consistently described their role in increasing teacher capacity as supporting teachers. Responses fell within four categories of support: people; materials; professional development; and time. Principals believe their role in building teacher capacity is to connect teachers to resources within one of these categories. In addition, principals felt they were also

responsible for finding resources and support because teachers do not have the time to do this themselves. “I feel like part of my job is finding podcasts and research that excites the teachers and has them look at things in a different way. Teachers do not always have the time to do that, so that is a big piece for me in building teacher capacity.”

Connecting teachers to experts in different areas, selecting a mentor, and bringing in consultants were some ways principals connected teachers to people. Principals also felt their role was to locate and provide materials so that teachers had what they needed to do their jobs. Finding, creating, or providing high-quality professional development to teachers was another part of the role of the principals in building teacher capacity. The category that was referenced the most by the participants was time. Giving teachers time to meet together for common planning time, developing a master schedule that provides ample time for teachers, and protecting teachers' time by providing coverage were all critical components of the role of the principal and how principals report they provide support to teachers in order to increase teacher capacity.

Data Collected for Guiding Research Question # 2

In what ways do elementary principals report they build teacher capacity?

Guiding Research Question # 2 seeks to understand how elementary principals report that they build teacher capacity. Question 18 of the questionnaire asked participants to select items from a list of strategies that effective principals use to build capacity (based on research) and rate them using a Likert scale in terms of importance, one being very important and five being not important. Figure 8 identifies the strategies listed in Question 18.

Figure 8

Priorities in Building Teacher Capacity (Question 18)

- Coordinating and assessing the curriculum
- Analyzing student data (formative, benchmark, and summative data)
- Meeting with grade-level teams
- Meeting with vertical teams
- Observing model lessons
- Participating in learning walk-throughs
- Implementing State or district-mandated initiatives
- Participating in the development of a shared vision and anchoring the vision through the development of goals
- Participating in coaching and mentoring new and veteran staff
- Participating in teamwork and collaboration
- Participating in shared leadership
- Use of observation, evaluation, and feedback
- Modeling and participating in the learning process
- Participating in professional development

Principals who participated in the follow-up interviews answered questions designed to assess how elementary principals report that they build teacher capacity.

1. What professional development opportunities have you provided for your staff?
2. How often and how much time do you spend on these activities in a typical year?
3. Has the time spent with staff on professional development been impacted by the pandemic?
4. If so, what would a pre-pandemic year look like in terms of professional development?
5. Can you describe your leadership style?

Guiding Research Question #2 Data Analysis

Survey participants rated research-based strategies in terms of their importance in building teacher capacity. Table 7 displays the results according to the responses. Priorities that were considered by the participants to be very important were participating in teamwork and collaboration (41%); analyzing student data, including formative and summative evaluation data (39.2%); meeting with grade-level teams (33.3%); and modeling and participating in the learning process (32.5%). Implementing state or district mandates, however, was only rated as very important by 9% of the respondents.

Table 7

Participants' Priorities in Building Teacher Capacity (Question 18)

Priority	1	2	3	4	5
Coordinating the curriculum	22.4	31.6	15.8	17.1	13.2
Analyzing student data	39.2	24.1	5.1	10.1	21.5
Meeting with grade level teams	33.3	21.8	16.7	15.4	12.8
Meeting with vertical teams	15.6	31.2	26.0	18.2	9.1
Observing model lessons	24.4	33.3	15.4	19.2	7.7
Participating in learning walk-throughs	24.7	31.2	26.0	6.5	11.7
Implementing State or district mandates	9.0	29.5	37.2	16.7	7.7
Shared vision and goals	25.6	23.1	24.4	17.9	9.0
Coaching and mentoring	26.0	33.8	15.6	18.2	6.5
Teamwork and collaboration	41.0	17.9	10.3	14.1	16.7
Participating in shared leadership	25.7	29.7	16.2	16.2	12.2
Use of observation, evaluation, and feedback	22.1	24.7	27.3	18.2	7.8
Modeling and participating in the learning process	32.5	16.9	24.7	19.5	6.5
Participating in professional development	23.4	32.5	18.2	15.6	10.4

Note: % of responses, 1= very important, 2= important, 3= somewhat important, 4= not very important, 5= not important

Professional Development

To better understand how elementary principals report they build teacher capacity, interview participants shared the types of professional development they offered their staff and how much time they typically spend on professional development. The interview participants reported that they provide professional development to their teaching staff throughout the year. Although there was some variation in the types of professional development principals offered their staff, the types of professional development primarily fell into the following categories: curriculum-based, state and district mandates, and teacher-led professional development.

Curriculum-based professional development

Five of the nine interview participants described their professional development as focused on implementing new curriculum materials. According to the participants, meeting with consultants or district-provided professional development could consist of teachers working together collaboratively to unpack the new resources. Participant 2 shared that professional development time primarily focused on "troubleshooting issues" from the new core programs they were implementing. Participant 2 further described professional development as a time to "collect questions and work together to troubleshoot and reflect on the implementation." Participant 4 described their role in professional development as providing support so that teachers have time to review the materials and ask each other questions. Participant 1 also identified "vetting and piloting programs" as an essential aspect of professional development time.

State and district mandates

Providing professional development aligned to State and district mandates was another area described by multiple participants. Four of the nine interview participants named

professional development focused on the “special education process, civil rights, bullying, discipline, health and wellness, MCAS, and educator evaluation.” Participant 5 described professional development as “riddled with mandates” and more of a “buffet style.” Principals also listed professional development focused on social-emotional learning. Respondents identified implementing professional development in terms of district-wide programs and practices, particularly concerning student discipline, behavior, and mental health.

Teacher-led professional development

Participant 7 discussed creating “pockets of experts” within the building so teachers can teach each other. Participant 6 described professional development to include “teachers planning and deciding on professional development agendas and topics.” Additionally, principals also mentioned providing opportunities to visit each other’s classrooms to observe and share best practices as common types of professional development.

The amount of time principals spent on professional development also varied. Participants reported spending up to three hours a month on professional development. All respondents described professional development time as shared between the school principal and the district. Multiple principals mentioned this as “contractual time.” According to participants, principals provide other informal times during the month, such as common planning time, professional learning communities, and grade-level and vertical team meetings.

In terms of whether the COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on professional development, 100% of the interview participants felt the pandemic had impacted professional development. All participants shared the pandemic's effect on the staff's attitude. Six of the nine participants described teachers as “tired” and needing to be more “efficient in using their time.” Participant 5 described the professional development as “stale” or “not impactful.” Participant 2

reported the staff as “shattered” due to the pandemic, and that staff's attendance had not yet recovered. Participant 3 felt the attitude of staff has changed to, “What can help me immediately? If it is not, I am going to tune it out.” Participant 6 explained that we must be mindful of how much we ask of teachers and determine how much to push “without pushing them over.” Participant 7 described teachers as not being fully invested in professional development, and Participant 9 said, “The pandemic made all of us question if we are in the right profession.”

Regarding the impact of the pandemic on curriculum-focused professional development, Participant 1 shared that the teachers now have to catch up on curriculum and assessment items because “curriculum development was put to the side during the pandemic.” Participants 3 and 4 reported that teachers do not want to focus on curriculum items during professional development. “Teachers want topics on social-emotional learning, behavior management, and trauma-related practices.”

When asked about the differences in professional development between the pre-pandemic year and now, interview participants reported a noticeable difference; with a stronger focus on pedagogy, assessment, and curriculum pre-pandemic. Post pandemic, the focus has shifted to the health requirements to bring students back to school and the social and emotional impact of the pandemic. Some principals did, however, report that professional development was slowly returning to pre-pandemic topics.

When asked to describe their leadership style, as a way of assessing how principals build teacher capacity, interview participants’ responses were fairly consistent. There were some common themes:

1. **Support and accessibility**. Seven of the nine principals described their leadership style as being an "open door policy." They make themselves available to staff and are responsive to their needs. Additionally, they described themselves as "hands-on" or "full participatory." They view themselves and their role primarily as providing guidance, resources, and assistance whenever needed. Two of the participants described their leadership style as "servant leadership," prioritizing the needs of the teachers and students above their own.
2. **Building relationships and a foundation of trust with staff**. Four of the nine principals interviewed identified building relationships as a critical component of their leadership style. Participant 7 felt it was important to "let teachers know that I trust them and respect them professionally." Participant 8's leadership style involves "giving teachers what they need. I am not afraid to do anything, whatever is needed, be someone's para if needed, jump in and help in the nurse's office, whatever I need to do." Although not explicitly mentioned by the remaining five principals, all responses indicated the importance of connections and trust with their staff as a central aspect of their leadership style.
3. **Collaborative leadership through shared commitments**. Five of the nine principals described this as a leadership theme. Participants emphasized the importance of teamwork and collaboration, viewing themselves as a member of the team rather than the leader. Participants described their leadership style as empowering teachers to take initiative, make decisions, take risks, and take ownership of their work. Participant 2 described their leadership style as "full participatory. I do not like to see it as a triangle. I like to see it as a circle. I have opinions, but I don't always give them because I like to see people come to their opinions on their own sometimes." Participant 5 also shared this

view, describing their leadership style as “it's never me, it's we.” Participant 5 added, “I want to empower and challenge people to think outside the box and be creative.”

4. **Creating a positive and supportive culture of high expectations.** Participants reported having high expectations for both their staff and students. The interview participants articulated open and honest feedback and clear communication. Participants reported that building a strong relationship with the teachers made difficult conversations and feedback more successful. Participants also want their staff to feel comfortable expressing their thoughts, concerns, or ideas. Participant 6 described their leadership style as follows:

> I truly believe in servant leadership. I work for teachers, teaching is an incredibly difficult job, and I make it a point never to forget that of all the jobs I’ve had, my first year of teaching I was the most exhausted I’ve ever been, and that includes being a new principal.

Finding #4

Elementary principals report they build teacher capacity by creating a collaborative culture of high expectations that supports and empowers teachers.

Through the survey responses and follow-up interviews, elementary principals reported a variety of strategies as necessary for building teacher capacity. Essential strategies identified by principals for building teacher capacity included:

- Teamwork and collaboration
- Analyzing student data
- Meeting with grade-level teams
- Modeling and participating in the learning process

During the follow-up interviews, participants developed this theme further with their leadership style descriptions. Evident among the responses was the importance of creating a strong climate and culture. According to their responses, the principal's primary role in increasing teacher capacity is to build a culture of support and accessibility that includes developing trusting relationships and collaborative leadership.

Through the principal's leadership, this collaborative culture creates an atmosphere where teachers make decisions, take risks, and own their work. Principals felt their role in creating this culture was to be visible to staff, have an "open-door policy," and have a relationship with teachers where they felt comfortable discussing questions and concerns. Principals consistently reported that it was important that staff view them as a support, and at least two principals described themselves as "servant leaders." Principals also said the ability to deliver feedback and have open and honest communication with teachers was enhanced when there was a good relationship between the principal and the teacher. Participant 3 described the importance of feedback as follows:

> I think to me it is as simple as walkthroughs and being in the classroom, and I think if you're in the classroom all the time, there's more weight to what you are saying and seeing because they know if you are seeing patterns and that feedback is crucial.

Finding #5

Principals are rethinking the delivery methods and types of professional development due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Participants reported that the attitude of staff towards professional development has changed since the COVID-19 pandemic. Professional development topics before the pandemic

focused on curriculum and pedagogy. Since the pandemic, participants report that teachers want professional development focused on behavioral support and social-emotional learning. Participants shared that when topics are irrelevant or not important to teachers, they will "tune them out." Participants acknowledged that they have to be more aware of their teacher's time and the need to use the time they have as effectively as possible.

Participants viewed teacher-developed and led professional development as a positive way to deliver professional development. Creating teacher experts who then teach each other was cited as a way to promote teacher leadership and buy-in towards professional development. Principals also viewed less formal models of professional development as beneficial. Participant 9 felt that professional development that involves getting teachers in a room together for an hour during the school day "allows you to go deeper with your staff." Teachers visiting each other's classrooms and meeting to plan or conduct observations were types of professional development principals felt were effective.

Data Collected for Guiding Research Question #3

What factors and conditions occur within the school day that elementary principals identify as supporting or inhibiting their efforts to increase teacher capacity?

Principals answered two open-ended survey questions regarding the factors and conditions that support or inhibit their efforts to increase teacher capacity.

19. What do you believe are factors that support increasing teacher capacity?

20. What do you believe are factors that hinder increasing teacher capacity?

Interview questions aligned to guiding question 3 focused on understanding the factors that support or hinder a principal's efforts to build teacher capacity. As mentioned in the analysis

of Guiding Question One, interview questions solicit answers to multiple guiding questions; therefore, there is an overlap in the questions aligned to the guiding questions.

1. What are the barriers that get in the way of focusing on your priorities?
2. Can you describe a typical day in your role as principal and the job responsibilities you focus on during the day?
3. How much time do you typically spend in the teacher's classroom in a given week?
4. What does your time in the classroom look like?

Guiding Research Question #3 Data Analysis

Survey participants completed an open-ended question that asked them to identify the factors they believed supported their efforts to increase teacher capacity. Responses fell within six broad categories.

1. **Time.** This was a consistent theme among the responses as a factor that supports increasing teacher capacity. Participants identified time for educators to collaborate, time to plan, time for professional development, and time to receive curriculum support.
2. **A supportive environment.** This was another factor identified by the participants as essential for building teacher capacity. Principals described providing a supportive environment as giving teachers what they need to be successful, developing supportive relationships with the principals, and having a trusting relationship with the administration.
3. **Collaboration.** This was also a positive factor identified by participants. Principals described collaborative learning among the faculty, professional collaboration, teachers observing each other's practice, and collaborative planning.

4. **Professional development.** Participants identified professional development as a supportive factor in building teacher capacity. Principals' responses in this category included modeling lessons, coaching, and providing valuable, relevant and high-quality professional development. In addition, they stressed the need for more opportunities for individualized professional development.
5. **Feedback.** This was another supportive factor identified by principals in building teacher capacity. Principals described this as talking with educators about areas of focus for improvement, providing ongoing feedback, and opportunities to reflect and foster growth.
6. **Developing a shared vision among stakeholders.** This was the final category identified by principals as a supportive factor in building teacher capacity. Principals described a shared vision with common goals, clearly articulating priorities, fostering shared decision-making, and a comprehensive and cohesive vision connected to school-wide goals.

Question 20 was an open-ended question that asked principals to identify the things that hinder the principal's ability to build teacher capacity. The responses from participants fell into five categories.

1. **Lack of time.** This was by far the most common response from participants. Participants described this as teachers having too much on their plates, principals and teachers needing to focus more on students' behavior and parent concerns, and needing more time for meetings, collaborating, and planning. Principals also mentioned the requirements within teacher contracts limited time.
2. **A lack of administrative support.** This was considered by participants to be a barrier. Only one of the nine principals interviewed had a full-time assistant principal in their

school. Principals are pulled in many directions on any given day, and there is no one else to share the burden of attending to student discipline and parent concerns. Participant 5 reported that being a principal relates to more than just academics. Principals are arranging flu shot clinics and teeth cleanings while simultaneously dealing with the other aspects of their role. Participant 6 articulated this concern well: “Principals are being asked to do more than ever, and we have added counselors and social workers, and yes, an effective principal is all of those things. You can’t be in all places at all times.”

3. **Teachers' poor mindsets.** This was raised as another hindering factor. Principals described this as occurring when teachers and administration do not trust each other. Principals also described this as happening when teachers listen to struggling staff with a negative attitude. Respondents also attributed this to low morale as a result of teachers being exhausted.
4. **Poor leadership**. Principals identified lack of strong leadership as a hindering factor. Lack of vision, poor planning, lack of a strong school culture, inconsistent expectations, and top-down leadership were all hindrances cited by the responding principals.
5. **State and district mandates unrelated to capacity building**. Principals view Mandates from the Department of Education as adding to the exhaustion of teachers and taking away the desire for teachers to grow.

Interview participants described the barriers preventing them from focusing on their priorities. Similar to the survey responses, interview participants described the barriers as centering around a **lack of time** and the **mindset of the staff.**

Interview participants identified student discipline and behavior issues as requiring a large amount of time and being a significant barrier to their ability to focus on their priorities.

As reported by the principals, other items that need a substantial amount of time are dealing with parent issues and concerns, building maintenance issues, troubleshooting technology problems like resetting passwords, district-level meetings, and state and district mandates.

Participants also viewed the mindset of staff as a barrier to focusing on their priorities. Participants described staff as “on edge,” “tired,” and “ hypersensitive.” Two of the respondents mentioned labor unrest as having an impact on staff mindset. “People are more resistant to change” and “staff view teaching as being an eight to two job now” were mentioned as barriers by Participants 5 and 2.

The interview participants' descriptions of the tasks they focus on in a typical day, as outlined within the data analysis for guiding question one, were as follows:

1. Morning arrival/traffic duty;
2. Classroom walk-throughs, meetings with central administration, teachers, or teacher teams, formal or informal observations, dealing with student discipline issues, following up on parent concerns, and providing substitute coverage; etc.
3. Lunch and recess duty;
4. Classroom walk-throughs, meetings with central administration, teachers, or teacher teams, formal or informal observations, dealing with student discipline issues, following up on parent concerns, and providing substitute coverage;
5. Dismissal/traffic duty;
6. After-school activities include sending emails, making parent phone calls, supervising after-school activities, completing written tasks such as newsletters, or following up with teachers who need assistance.

Principals explained how much time they typically spend in the classroom each day and how that time is spent. This was so I could better understand the barriers and supports that may impact a principal's ability to increase teacher capacity. The amount of time spent in classrooms varied quite considerably. Three of the principals reported spending one to two hours per day in classrooms, while three other principals reported that the time spent in classrooms fluctuated depending on the time of year and the daily needs of the building. For instance, Participant 2 indicated that in the fall, a significant amount of time is spent in Kindergarten classrooms, but in April through May, the majority of their time is spent organizing and administering the MCAS assessments. The last third of the interviewed principals reported spending anywhere from five to ten hours per week in the classroom.

The descriptions given by principals of the reasons for time spent in the classroom were consistent and focused on the following areas:

1. Substituting or covering classrooms. This was mentioned by four of the nine principals as one of the primary reasons they spend time in the classrooms.
2. Supporting behavioral concerns. This was also identified as a common reason for time spent in the classroom.
3. Conducting formal and informal observations and providing feedback. Five interview participants reported this as how their time in the classroom is spent.
4. Connecting with students and staff. Seven interview participants indicated this. Being visible, greeting students, giving birthday shout-outs, and developing an understanding of what is happening in the classrooms were common responses.

Finding #6

Elementary principals identify: creating a collaborative and supportive environment; developing a shared vision; providing teachers with time to collaborate and plan instruction, providing high-quality feedback, and providing high-quality professional development as key factors in helping them to increase teacher capacity.

Survey and interview participants identified a supportive, collaborative environment as a positive factor in increasing teacher capacity. Principals indicated that they want teachers to view them as supportive and to feel comfortable sharing their concerns and questions with them. Principals also identified a trusting relationship between the principal and the teacher as a positive support. Principals mentioned multiple times throughout the interview process the importance of being visible to the staff in the building. Being outside for arrival and dismissal, visiting teachers' classrooms through daily walk-throughs, or being in the classroom to support a teacher with a struggling student are supportive factors, according to the principals.

Principals also create a supportive environment by providing time and resources to their staff. Time was consistently mentioned in the interviews and the survey responses as a key supporting factor in building teacher capacity. Principals provide time for teachers to collaborate and plan, visit other teachers' classrooms, and observe model lessons. Providing time for teachers to analyze student data, participate in curriculum work, and allowing teachers the time to teach were all considered supportive factors. Principals also reported providing time by developing a master schedule that protects teachers' time and gives them adequate time to plan—arranging for coverage or covering themselves to preserve this time when there are staffing shortages in the building were cited as supportive factors.

In addition to teachers collaborating, principals identified shared decision-making and the development of a shared vision as supportive factors in building teacher capacity. “You just want to build a shared experience and shared responsibility, and then that is the culture; it’s not me saying this is how it needs to be done.” Collaboratively developing a clear and concise vision that is a blueprint for the school and that both the principal and the teachers share responsibility for was reported by participants as a support to increasing teacher capacity. Included within this area were teachers having a voice in the decision-making and ownership of their roles within the classroom and the school.

Participants also reported providing high-quality feedback as another supportive factor in building teacher capacity. Principals connected the ability to provide ongoing quality feedback to a supportive environment and their relationship with their staff. By establishing a supportive environment where principals are visible, and teachers have trust and know the principal is there as a support, they can deliver constructive feedback to foster reflection and growth. Participant 5 highlighted this type of support and feedback, “I want teachers to take chances, and I’ll support them, but I also expect that if I have to give feedback, they would be open to listening.”

High-quality professional development was another supportive factor identified by the study participants. Instructional coaching and modeling, teacher-developed and led professional development, and more individualized professional development structured around relevant topics were models of effective professional development that principals viewed as a support for increasing teacher capacity. Participant 5 described the impact model lessons can have as a form of professional development, “some people resist change a little bit, but if you put them in front of other teachers that have had success and all of a sudden they love it and are diving in.”

Participant 5 shared a specific example of teachers observing other teachers' classrooms within their building and across the district as an effective way of increasing teacher capacity. The example given by Participant 5 was that the school was in the process of implementing a new core English Language Arts curriculum and the teachers were struggling with the implementation. Participant 5 arranged for teachers to observe other teachers at a different school within the district who were finding success with the program. Participant 5 identified this model of professional development as highly effective as it increased the teachers' instructional capacity and their ability to successfully implement the new core curriculum.

Finding #7

Elementary principals identified the following factors and conditions as hindering their ability to increase teacher capacity: Lack of time, teachers having a negative mindset, poor leadership, and State and district mandates.

In the survey and throughout the interviews principals identified time constraints as a hindrance in building teacher capacity. Principals described occurrences throughout the school day that consistently detract and take time away from their ability to focus on other priorities. Student discipline issues and parent concerns are the two that, according to participants, require a significant amount of time. Principals having to substitute due to staffing shortages was another consistent item that took time away from the principals. Other identified factors which take time away from capacity building were building maintenance issues, responding to emails, technology issues, and things such as recess and lunch duty.

The mindset of teachers, mainly since the COVID-19 pandemic, was another factor principals identified as a barrier to building teacher capacity. Principals described teachers as exhausted, more resistant, and having a negative attitude. Principals reported labor unrest, teacher unions, and contract issues as bringing down the morale of the staff and having a negative impact. In addition to a closed or fixed mindset, principals alluded to a lack of trust between the teachers and the administration, leading to negativity among the staff. Principals reported that low morale of even just a few staff can impact teacher capacity.

Principals also acknowledged that poor leadership from the principal or the district can also hinder increasing teacher capacity. Ineffective planning, professional development that is irrelevant, and a lack of a shared vision, were identified by participants as contributing factors to an inability to increase teacher capacity.

Principals reported that State and district mandates were also significant hindrances to increasing teacher capacity. Principals explained that teachers are continuously asked to assume responsibilities outside of capacity building through top-down mandates resulting in competing priorities. These mandates take time away from other priorities, often leading to professional development that is not effective and can lead to negativity and frustration among the staff.

Summary

Chapter Four has described the data collected from the research study and the connection to the guiding research questions. I analyzed data regarding the frequency of responses, significance to the respondents, and consistency between the survey results and interview transcripts. The themes that emerged from the data analysis aligned with the priorities principals view as crucial in increasing teacher capacity—the themes center around the importance of having a strong climate and culture for elementary principals. Key factors included creating a supportive environment for staff, developing relationships based on trust between teachers and administration, empowering teachers as collaborators and decision-makers, and having a shared vision and goals. The qualitative data collected corroborated and provided further insight into the quantitative data collected from the survey. I collected, analyzed, and organized the findings around seven themes that informed the three guiding questions of the research study: Research Question One: To what extent do elementary principals consider the capacity of teachers to be a principal leadership priority? Research Question Two: In what ways do elementary principals report they build teacher capacity? Research Question Three: What factors and conditions occur within the school day that elementary principals identify as supporting or inhibiting their efforts to increase teacher capacity?

The purpose of this study was to further research the perceptions and behaviors of elementary principals regarding their role in building teacher capacity. Specifically, this study sought to understand how principals report they build teacher capacity, the factors that support their efforts, and the barriers that may impede their efforts to increase capacity. Principals view their primary role in building teacher capacity as centered on supporting teachers. Creating a positive and supportive school climate and culture where teachers have what they need to do their job was viewed by the principals as the top priority and the primary way they reported they assisted in building teacher capacity. Factors that principals consider as support are relationships between the principal and the teacher, providing time and opportunities for teachers to collaborate, having a shared vision, and providing high-quality feedback and professional development. Principals also reported a series of factors that create barriers to their ability to increase teacher capacity, including lack of time, teachers having a negative mindset, poor leadership, and State and district mandates. Chapter Five will further discuss the implications of the findings, study limitations, and implications for future research.

The findings identified in Chapter Four are as follows:

Finding #1: *Although not identified by principals directly as a top priority, they believe increasing teacher capacity is a part of their role and an essential component of creating a positive school culture and climate.*

Finding #2: *Principals have a consistent understanding of the definition of teacher capacity.*

Finding #3: *Principals believe their primary role in building teacher capacity is to provide support for teachers.*

Finding #4: *Principals report they build teacher capacity by creating a collaborative culture of high expectations that supports and empowers teachers.*

Finding #5: *Principals are rethinking the delivery methods and types of professional development due to the COVID-19 pandemic.*

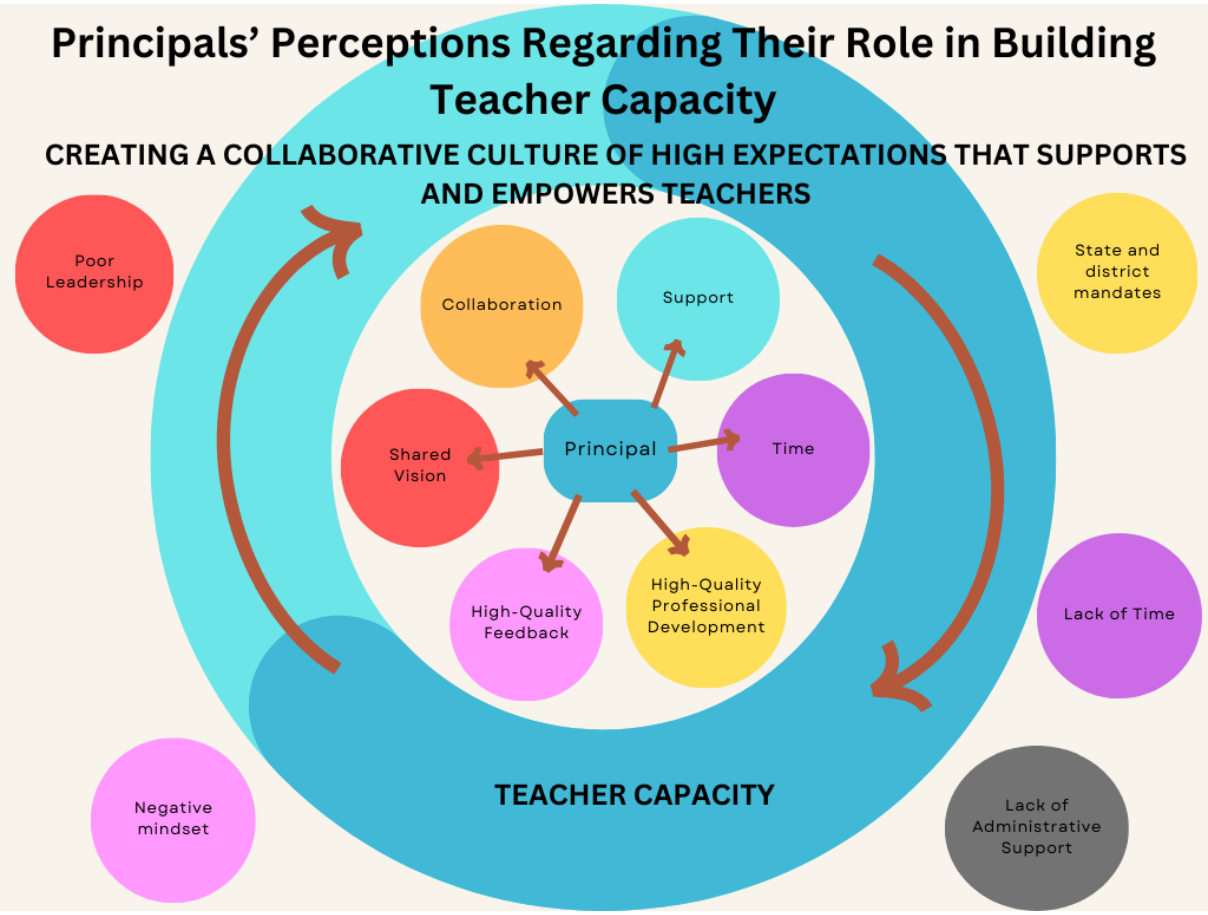
Finding #6: *Elementary principals identify: creating a collaborative and supportive environment; developing a shared vision; providing teachers with time to collaborate and plan instruction, providing high-quality feedback, and providing high-quality professional development as key factors in helping them to increase teacher capacity.*

Finding #7: *Principals identify the following factors and conditions as hindering their ability to increase teacher capacity: Lack of time, teachers having a negative mindset, poor leadership, and State and district mandates.*

Figure 9 is a graphic representation of these findings.

Figure 9

Graphic Representation of the Study's Findings



Note. This graphic representation of the study's findings was created by the researcher using the online graphic design tool, Canva.

CHAPTER FIVE: Summary, Discussion, Future Research, Recommendations and Final Reflections

This chapter will provide a summary of this research study concerning elementary principals' perceptions of their role in building teacher capacity, including a summary of the first four chapters. It will restate the research problem identified in Chapter One, the purpose of the study, and the guiding research questions. Also included in this chapter is a summary of the literature described in Chapter Two and an overview of the methodology and procedures from Chapter Three used to conduct the study. This chapter will also review the data collected and the findings presented in Chapter Four. Finally, Chapter Five will describe the implications of the findings for elementary principals in building teacher capacity and future research. The chapter is organized into the following sections: Study Summary, Discussion, Recommendations and Final Reflections.

Study Summary

The role of the principal is complex and demanding. Not only is the principal charged with filling the role of a middle manager, handling the day-to-day issues and concerns that arise both inside the classroom and in the outside world—while simultaneously implementing mandates and initiatives imposed by the State, federal, and local districts—the principal is also the person who is responsible for the success or failure of their school (Elmore, 2000; Fullan, 2014; Rousmaniere, 2013). According to a longitudinal analysis completed by The Wallace Foundation synthesizing six studies designed to track a principal's impact over time, investing in improving the principal's performance is the most efficient and effective way for a school district to improve student achievement (Grissom et al., 2021). While investing in an effective teacher

will have a positive impact on the students in that individual teacher's class, investing in an effective principal will have a positive impact on the school as a whole. Effective principals make it much more likely that students will have great teachers teaching them (Grissom et al., 2021).

Increasing staff capacity is one primary way principals can increase student achievement. Grissom et al. (2021) describe the effect of a principal on student achievement as "coming largely through their efforts to recruit, develop, support and retain a talented teaching staff and create conditions for them to deliver strong instruction" (p. 40). Despite this research, principals nationwide continue to struggle to manage all of the role's responsibilities and successfully build teacher capacity.

The current accountability system is one hindering factor. According to Fullan (2014), the accountability system is focused on ineffective measures, places an additional burden on the principal, and restricts the principal's influence on their staff.

The purpose of this study, as described in Chapter One, was to further research the perceptions and behaviors of elementary principals regarding their role in building teacher capacity. The study was developed and informed by three guiding research questions. These research questions assisted me in developing an understanding of elementary principals' perceptions regarding their role in building teacher capacity and how principals report they build teacher capacity. Additionally, I sought to better understand the factors and conditions that support an elementary principal's ability to build teacher capacity and barriers that may impede a principal's ability to do so. The following three research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent do elementary principals consider the capacity of teachers to be a principal leadership responsibility?

2. In what ways do elementary principals report they build teacher capacity?

3. What factors and conditions occur within the school day that elementary principals identify as supporting or inhibiting their efforts to increase teacher capacity?

Chapter Two included a literature review, beginning with a brief historical review of the changes in the principalship's responsibilities and the accumulation of competing priorities over time (Rousmaniere, 2013; Spillane & Lowenhaupt, 2019). Literature reviewed included the educational reform movements, including the standards-based accountability movement, the impact these reforms have had on education, and the role of the principal. The analyzed literature also included strategies effective principals use to build teacher capacity and factors and conditions that support or inhibit a principal's ability to build capacity. Strategies included within the literature (Bryk et al., 2010; Fullan, 2014, 2023; Grissom et al., 2021; Marzano et al., 2005; Reeves, 2009; Spillane & Lowenhaupt, 2019; Thacker et al., 2009; Whittaker, 2020) include:

1. Analyze and provide support for student learning
2. Anchor the vision in the development of goals
3. Communicate high expectations
4. Coordinate the curriculum
5. Develop a shared vision
6. Encourage shared leadership
7. Establish shared norms and values
8. Hire and retain high-quality teachers
9. Model the learning process
10. Organize and promote high-quality professional development

11. Promote teamwork and collaboration
12. Provide developmental support
13. Provide high-quality feedback

Chapter Three included details of the sequential explanatory mixed methods approach used to conduct the study. The study occurred in two phases. The first phase consisted of the collection of quantitative data through the use of a self-developed web-based questionnaire. A total of 79 elementary principals completed the questionnaire. 60.8% of the respondents identified as female, and 39.2% as male. The respondents varied in years of experience as an elementary principal, with the majority falling in the 2-5 years (30%) and 10-15 years (37.1%) categories.

The second phase collected qualitative data through voluntary follow-up interviews with a select number of survey respondents. Interview participants were selected using maximal variation sampling. The participants represented varying years of experience as an elementary principal. These follow-up interviews provided further insights into the respondents' experiences, thoughts, and perceptions.

Chapter Four organized, analyzed, and presented the quantitative and qualitative research data into the three Guiding Research Questions. Seven findings were identified based on the data analysis. They determined the extent to which elementary principals perceive increasing teacher capacity as a leadership priority, how principals report they build teacher capacity, and the factors and conditions that support or hinder a principal's ability to build teacher capacity. The findings identified are as follows:

Finding #1: *Although not identified by principals directly as a top priority, they believe increasing teacher capacity is a part of their role and an essential component of creating a positive school culture and climate.*

Finding #2: *Principals have a consistent understanding of the definition of teacher capacity.*

Finding #3: *Principals believe their primary role in building teacher capacity is to provide support for teachers.*

Finding #4: *Principals report building teacher capacity by creating a collaborative culture of high expectations that supports and empowers teachers.*

Finding #5: *Principals are rethinking delivery methods and types of professional development due to the COVID-19 pandemic.*

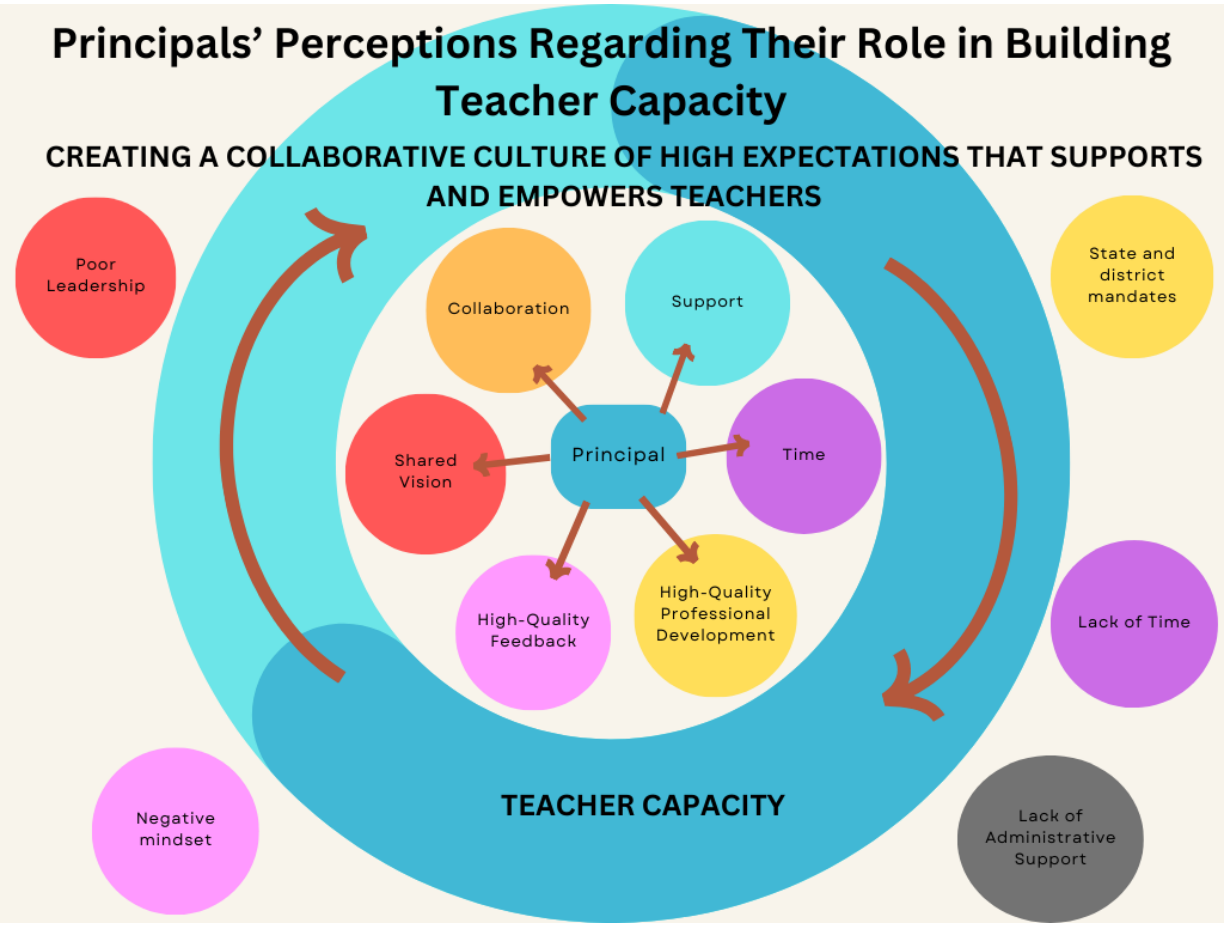
Finding #6: *Elementary principals identify: creating a collaborative and supportive environment; developing a shared vision; providing teachers with time to collaborate and plan instruction, providing high-quality feedback, and providing high-quality professional development as key factors in helping them to increase teacher capacity.*

Finding #7: *Principals identify the following factors and conditions hindering their ability to increase teacher capacity: lack of time, teachers having a negative mindset, poor leadership, and State and district mandates.*

Figure 9 provides a graphic representation of the findings presented in Chapter Four.

Figure 9

Graphic Representation of the Study's Findings



Note. This graphic representation of the study's findings was created by the researcher using the online graphic design tool, Canva.

This study sought to understand the perceptions and behaviors of elementary school principals regarding their role in increasing teacher capacity, how principals report that they build teacher capacity, and the factors and conditions during the school day that support or hinder a principal's ability to build teacher capacity.

The following section takes a deeper look into the findings of this study and the connection to research on effective strategies and leadership practices that principals use to increase teacher capacity.

Discussion

Through the guiding research questions, this study sought to understand the extent to which principals view increasing teacher capacity as a leadership priority. Chapter Four identified seven findings from the study that align with the three Guiding Research Questions. The findings presented in Chapter Four align with the literature review presented in Chapter Two. This section is organized according to the research questions and will discuss the findings and their implications.

Guiding Research Question #1

To what extent do elementary principals consider the capacity of teachers to be a principal leadership priority?

Finding #1

Although not identified by principals directly as a top priority, they believe increasing teacher capacity is a part of their role and an essential component of creating a positive school culture and climate.

Finding #2

Principals have a consistent understanding of the definition of teacher capacity.

Finding #3

Principals believe their primary role in building teacher capacity is supporting teachers.

Since its introduction in the late 1800s, the role of principal has changed dramatically. State and Federal education reform efforts, changes in leadership theory, and changes in the

expectations and responsibilities of the principal have made the role of principal extremely challenging. Most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this as principals are expected to do more than ever, including bringing student achievement, social-emotional well-being, and behavior back to pre-pandemic levels.

Effective principals know that hiring, retaining, and developing strong teachers is one of the best ways to increase student learning outcomes (Grissom et al., 2021; Whitaker, 2012). Student outcomes are more likely to improve in a school with an effective principal because the work of the principal with the teachers makes it more likely that students will have good teachers teaching them (Grissom et al., 2021). Balancing the daily demands of the role with the priority of increasing teacher capacity is a challenge. Principals across the country continue to struggle to manage the compounding expectations of the principal role (Fullan, 2023).

Whittaker (2012) shared two ways principals can improve their schools: hire better teachers; or work to improve their current teachers (p. 5). Teachers' capacity within their schools must be a priority for principals in order to improve student outcomes. Finding #1 from the study supports the literature which shows that principals believe that building teacher capacity is part of their role and essential to creating a positive school culture and climate.

In particular, Findings #1, #2, and #3 support and enhance the conclusions drawn from the research study commissioned by the Wallace Foundation in February of 2021, which synthesized two decades of research on how principals affect students and schools. According to Grissom et al. (2021), for school leaders to be successful, they require skills and expertise in the areas of “instruction, people, and the organization” (p. xv). These skills manifest in four behaviors displayed by successful principals (Grissom et al., 2021, p. xv):

- Engaging in instructionally focused interactions with teachers

- Building a productive school climate
- Facilitating productive collaboration and professional learning communities
- Managing personnel and resources strategically

Findings #1, #2, and #3 provide insight into guiding research question #1; although not explicitly stated by principals when asked to identify their priorities, principals included providing support for teachers as a critical component and aspect of creating a positive school culture. Study participants recognized that if a positive culture of support and trust does not exist between the principal and the teacher, teachers will be less likely to be effective at their jobs. Participants expressed an understanding that they are the gatekeepers and the person responsible for the climate and culture in their school (Fullan, 2023; Grissom et al., 2021; Jackson, 2021). Part of the culture is creating a feeling of safety, building relationships with staff, developing teacher leaders, and empowering teachers to make decisions and own their impact on student learning (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2018).

Principals build a strong culture and climate when they develop an understanding of the values, needs, priorities and personalities of the teaching staff (Grissom et al., 2021). Effective principals build culture by guarding and protecting the needs and values of the school from external influences and competing priorities (Reeves & Eaker, 2019). Fostering trust is another important aspect of building a strong culture and climate. Principals establish trust by following through on the things they say they are going to do, giving teachers the space and freedom to take risks and try new approaches, being visible, open and respectful towards their teachers and fostering collaboration and collective efficacy (Grissom et al., 2021; Reeves & Eaker, 2019).

In Finding #2, principals provided definitions of teacher capacity aligned with the research (Grissom et al., 2021; Hattie, 2009; Whitaker, 2012). Principals displayed an

understanding of what is required to increase teacher capacity and their role in this. Study participants identified three categories of teacher capacity: instructional effectiveness; continuous learning, growth and reflection; and empowerment. Principals defined instructional effectiveness as having the knowledge and skills necessary to teach all students regardless of the student's background. The principals described continuous learning, growth and reflection as the ability to reflect on one's practice, use feedback to improve, and be willing to adapt when things are not working. Empowerment was identified by the principals as empowering teachers to understand their impact on the school community. Principals included teacher confidence, self-efficacy, and agency as essential components of teacher empowerment.

The definition of teacher capacity provided in Finding #2 connects and supports Finding #3. Finding #3 identifies the principal's role in building teacher capacity is to provide teachers with appropriate support. Principals identified support as falling into two categories: feedback and resources. Principals build capacity by providing clear, concrete feedback in real-time to support building capacity. Feedback given by principals should be designed to provide insight into a teacher's practice, encourage reflection, and motivate teachers to improve (Jackson, 2021). The category of resources includes four subcategories: 1. access to people—such as mentors, coaches, and other experts in the field of education; 2. materials—including books, curriculum materials and research; 3. high-quality professional development—relevant to the needs of the staff; and 4. time—including opportunities to meet and collaborate with other staff, all of which are identified in the research as supports and approaches principals use to increase teacher capacity (Drago-Severson, 2009; Grissom et al., 2021; Hattie, 2009; Whittaker, 2012).

Implications for School Leaders. Principal participants identified their priority as building a positive school climate and culture. As reported in Findings #2 and #3, part of

building this culture is understanding what is needed to increase teacher capacity, supporting the teachers' needs, and ensuring they have what they need to do their jobs (Jackson, 2021). Principals viewed their role in building teacher capacity, as identified in Findings #1 and #3, as supporting teachers in an environment built on mutual trust and respect. The overarching implication for elementary principals is that they are responsible for creating an environment that makes increasing teacher capacity possible.

Principals should therefore focus on building the social capital of the school (Stronge & Xu, 2021). Relationship building should be a priority for the elementary school principal and is necessary for improvement and capacity building (Fullan, 2023; Seashore Louis & Murphy, 2017; Stronge & Xu, 2021). Principal participants reported that they build relationships by supporting the day-to-day lives and needs of the teachers. Principals in the study described the need to be visible within the school and the classroom and the need to be hands-on and responsive, particularly when a teacher might be working with a struggling student. Principals build trust and relationships by communicating clearly and ensuring teachers know what is happening in the building (Stronge & Xu, 2021). Participants also mentioned the importance of handling issues or concerns so teachers can focus on teaching. The data collected in this study reinforces the small ways in which principals provide support each day and show teachers that they are a priority, which in turn creates trust and buy-in, making capacity building possible.

Guiding Research Question #2:

In what ways do elementary principals report they build teacher capacity?

Finding #4

Elementary principals report that they build teacher capacity by creating a collaborative culture of high expectations that supports and empowers teachers.

Finding #5

Principals are rethinking the delivery methods and types of professional development due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Finding #4 informs Guiding Question Two and describes that principals report building teacher capacity by creating a collaborative culture of high expectations that supports and empowers teachers. Effective principals understand the culture within their school and work to create an atmosphere that promotes teacher leadership and collaboration (Sebastian et al., 2016; Thaker et al., 2009). Principals create this culture by being visible, accessible, and responsive to the needs of the teachers. Developing a trusting relationship with their staff is essential to moving teachers forward (Covey, 2022; Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2018; Reeves & Eaker, 2019). Teachers will only take risks or leadership roles if the principals create an environment where teachers trust they are safe and valued (Grissom et al., 2021). Collaboration is also a vital element of a strong school culture (Grissom et al., 2021). Study participants wanted their teachers to view them as part of the team, not as top-down leaders. Research supports that working collaboratively in teams creates a culture that builds the staff's capacity to meet the school's goals (DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Fullan & Kirtman, 2019).

According to the data collected, participants reported building a positive school culture in the following ways:

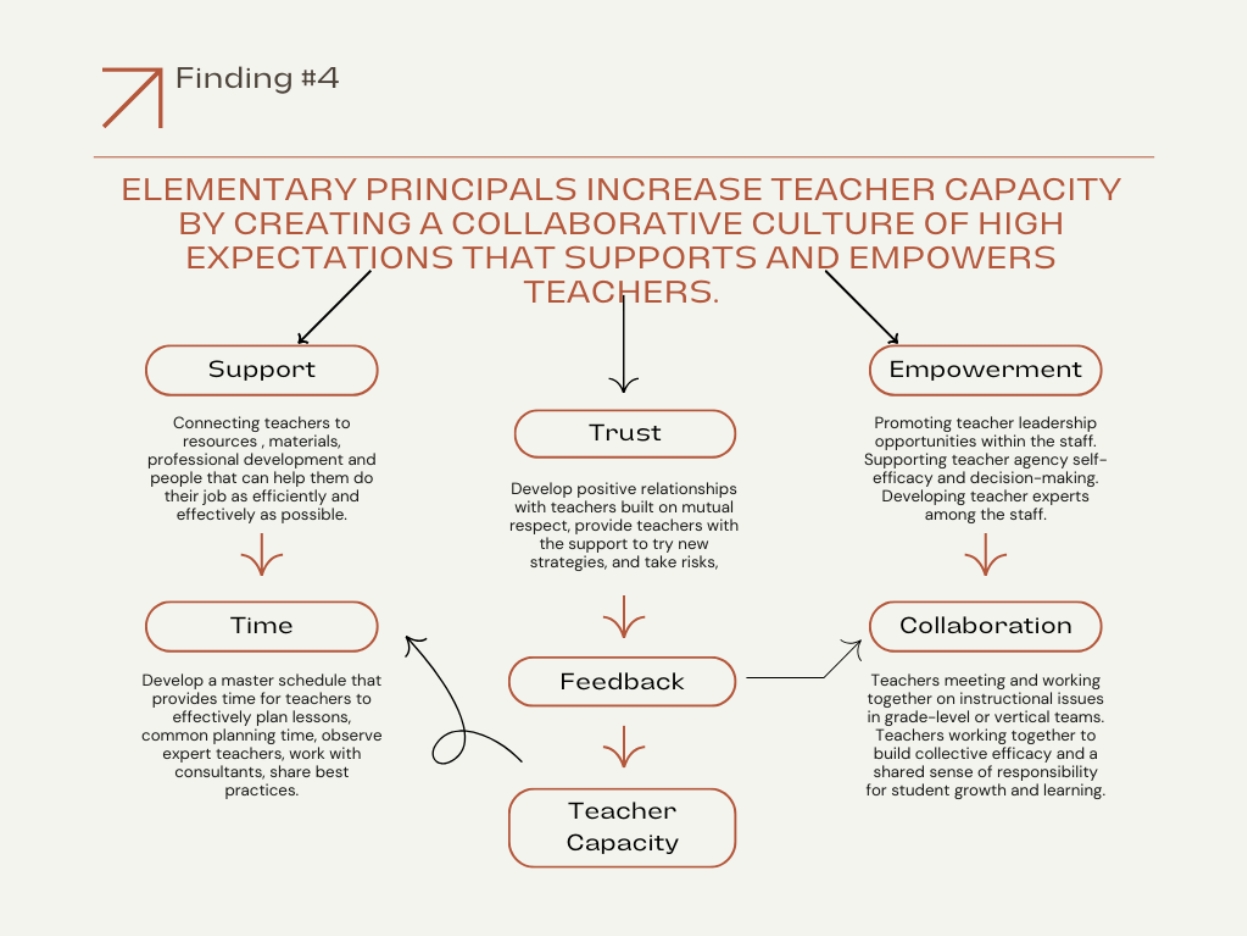
1. Providing support for teachers;
2. Developing relationships built on trust;
3. Empowering teachers to be decision-makers and fostering shared leadership;
4. Creating time for teachers to work on their practice;
5. Providing opportunities for collaboration;

6. Providing high-quality feedback.

Figure 11 provides a graphic representation of Finding #4.

Figure 10

Graphic Representation of Finding #4



Note. This graphic representation of Finding #4 was created by the researcher using the online graphic design tool, Canva.

As indicated by Finding #4, principals report increasing teacher capacity by creating a culture of support and collaboration. The research data described above (explained in connection to Finding #3 and reinforced in Finding #4) supports that principals feel it is their role to provide teachers with the support they need to do their jobs effectively. Support includes connecting teachers to curriculum resources, materials, and professional development. Principals also

increase teacher capacity by connecting teachers with other teachers, experts in the field, mentors, and coaches.

Trust between the principal and the staff is necessary to create a positive and supportive climate and culture (Grissom et al., 2021; Reeves & Eaker, 2019). Developing positive relationships built on mutual trust is the foundation of a culture that values and empowers teachers (Grissom et al., 2021). Research supports that teachers are more likely to be engaged and have buy-in and a commitment to improving when the culture is built on trust (Grissom et al., 2021; Robinson, 2011).

Finding #4 also highlights the importance of teacher empowerment. Developing teacher leaders can assist the principal in creating a distributed or shared leadership model (Spillane & Lowenhaupt, 2019). Participants reported that they do not want their teachers to view them as top-down leaders. They want to be considered part of the team. For principals to be effective and accomplish the many tasks that are a part of their role, principals must delegate some responsibility and decision-making authority to others (Spillane & Lowenhaupt, 2019). Giving teachers decision-making power over instructional issues supports teacher agency and reinforces a culture of trust between the principal and the teacher (Drago-Severson, 2004, 2009; Leithwood et al., 1997). Collective efficacy occurs when teachers are empowered to make decisions, and their voices are valued and heard (DeWitt, 2022).

Principals shared their thoughts on professional development as a capacity-building strategy in Finding #5. According to participants, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a negative impact on the way teachers view professional development. Principals reported that prior to the pandemic, professional development was more focused on curriculum and pedagogy. As a result

of the pandemic, teachers are looking for professional development focused on social, emotional, and behavioral topics. Study participants reported that since the pandemic teachers are more inclined to tune out professional development that is not of interest to them. Principals do not view the current professional development model as a largely effective way to build teacher capacity; instead, principals are rethinking how they deliver professional development to make it more effective and relevant to teachers' needs.

In alignment with the research (Murphy, 2005), study participants shared that a more effective professional development model is teacher-developed and led professional development. Developing teacher leaders who are experts in their content area promotes leadership and buy-in among the staff. Teachers observing each other's classrooms and collaborative planning were other forms of professional development principals viewed as effective models that support capacity building. This Finding (#5) reflects the research regarding the positive effect on the capacity of the staff when teachers no longer work in isolation and are collaboratively engaged in curriculum and instruction (Stronge & Xu, 2021).

Implications for School Leaders. This study supports the idea that principals primarily build teacher capacity by developing a culture of collaboration that supports and empowers teachers. In order to create a positive culture of collaboration within their schools', principals need to understand the current climate and culture including the values, beliefs and priorities that exist among the staff (Grissom et al., 2021). Principals also need to protect the culture and values of the school from negative influences that may undermine or derail the commitment of the staff (Reeves & Eaker, 2019). A strong climate and culture cannot exist unless the principal establishes trust with their teachers. Trust is established when the principal follows through on the things they say they are going to do and when they show their staff respect and provide

opportunities for teacher autonomy. To create a culture of collaboration principals also need to be visible, open and respectful to their teachers and provide for opportunities to collaborate and build collective commitments.

Principals can support increasing teacher capacity by ensuring teachers have what they need to do their job well (Jackson, 2021). In addition to curriculum resources and materials, principals should create opportunities for teachers to work together collaboratively in teams (Schmoker, 2006). Study participants identified common planning time as a way to promote collaboration and facilitate capacity building among the staff.

The study's findings also support the need for elementary school principals to promote and develop shared leadership and decision-making. Empowering teachers by giving them ownership over instructional decisions and valuing them as experts in their content area helps engage them in improvement efforts (Spillane & Lowenhaupt, 2019; Stronge & Xu, 2021). Principals also identified this as an effective model of professional development. Creating opportunities for teachers to observe each other, particularly when implementing new curriculum initiatives, is how principals can engage teachers and develop curriculum coherence across classrooms. Teacher-developed and led professional development is more engaging for the staff and another way for principals to promote teacher leadership and improve teaching and learning in the school (Gabriel, 2005; Murphy, 2005).

Guiding Research Question #3

Finding #6

Elementary principals identify: creating a collaborative and supportive environment; developing a shared vision; providing teachers with time to collaborate and plan instruction, providing

high-quality feedback, and providing high-quality professional development as key factors in helping them to increase teacher capacity.

Finding #7

Elementary school principals identify the following factors and conditions as hindering their ability to increase teacher capacity: lack of time, teachers having a negative mindset, poor leadership, and State and district mandates.

The literature presented in Chapter Two outlines the types of support and strategies effective principals use to build teacher capacity. Finding #6 corroborates this research, informs guiding question #3, and identifies the factors and conditions that support a principal's ability to increase teacher capacity. Strategies that principals identified as supportive in building teacher capacity were creating a collaborative and supportive environment, developing a shared vision, providing teachers with time, high-quality feedback, and high-quality professional development.

Finding #6 again highlights the importance principals place on creating a collaborative and supportive environment for their staff. In line with the research by Fullan and Kirtman (2019) and Kotter (2012), principals in this study recognize the importance of working collaboratively with their staff to create a shared vision. A shared vision provides a roadmap for the direction of the school, creates buy-in and motivation, and helps create a sense of shared responsibility so that all staff members are working towards improvement (Jackson, 2021).

Principals identified providing teachers with time as a key supporting factor in increasing teacher capacity (DuFour & Marzano, 2011). Principals felt it was important to create an environment where the teacher's time is valued and used effectively. Time for teachers to collaborate and plan, visit each other’s classrooms, and observe model lessons were strategies identified by principals as ways to support increasing teacher capacity (Whitaker, 2012). As

mentioned, principals see common planning time as a valuable tool for supporting teacher capacity.

Research from the literature review also indicated that high-quality feedback is a supportive factor in increasing teacher capacity (Grissom et al., 2021; Jackson, 2021; Stronge & Xu, 2021). Feedback is more effective when principals and teachers have a trusting relationship that values open and honest communication (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2018). To be effective, feedback needs to be authentic, real-time, and meaningful. Participants reported that challenging conversations were more effective when there was a relationship and culture of providing constructive feedback to staff.

Providing high-quality professional development was another supportive factor aligned with the research identified by the study. As stated above, Finding #5 identified the impact of the pandemic on professional development (*Principals are rethinking the delivery methods and types of professional development due to the COVID-19 pandemic).* Principals promoted professional development focused on instructional coaching and modeling, and teacher-developed and led professional development as examples of high-quality professional development. Effective professional development needs to be relevant to the needs of the individual and the collective staff. It should be grounded in evidence-based practices, and should promote collaboration and discussion (King & Newmann, 2000; Levin, 2008; Robinson, 2011). Principals recognized that teachers are more inclined to be unengaged in professional development due to the pandemic if it does not meet their needs and interests. When professional development is relevant and based on the needs and interests of the staff, it is more engaging and effective in building teacher capacity.

Finding #7 confirmed the research on the identified barriers within the school that limit a principal's ability to increase professional development. Lack of time is a critical factor that can hinder a principal's ability to increase the capacity of their staff (Darling-Hammond, 1999; DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Miles & Frank, 2008; Reeves, 2009). Principals recognize the importance of providing opportunities to meet collaboratively with their staff and creating common planning time as a highly effective way to improve practice. Student behavior concerns, parent meetings, and the need to substitute for absent teachers all take time away from the principal's day, making it difficult for the principal to find the time during the day to engage in these types of capacity-building strategies.

The research findings align with DuFour and Marzano (2011), who identified teachers and teachers' unions as restricting a principal's ability to have time with their staff. Some teachers are unwilling to participate in activities outside their contractual hours without compensation, and even with compensation, many teachers view the role of a teacher as an eight-to-two job. Principals must maximize their time during the contractual day to build their staff's capacity.

Elementary principals fill the jobs of multiple people throughout the day. They can only accomplish so much with the current lack of administrative support (DuFour & Marzano, 2011). They are typically the only administrator in the school and are required to deal with discipline, parent concerns, coverage issues, school maintenance and IT issues, as well as other items that might take priority during the school day. For principals to build the capacity of their staff, they must develop the leadership skills of their teachers (Fullan, 2023). Principals cannot do it all alone. Creating opportunities for teachers to be involved in the decision-making and taking a more collective and collaborative approach to leadership will enable the principal to accomplish

more during the school day while also building the capacity of their staff (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2018; Spillane & Lowenhaupt, 2019).

Principals' reported negative attitudes and mindsets of the teaching staff can hinder their ability to increase capacity. Low morale and a lack of trust between teachers and principals can impact a school's overall culture and increase the staff's resistance to the principals' capacity-building efforts (Grissom et al., 2021). For teachers to buy into the overall vision and goals of the school, principals need to develop solid relational trust (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2018). Trust between the principal and the teachers creates a culture and atmosphere that inspires and helps move the staff forward. Building trust between teachers and the principal helps build collective efficacy among the staff, positively affecting both the staff and the students (Hattie & Smith, 2021).

Study participants shared top-down mandates from the State and district as a barrier that frustrates teachers and principals, wastes valuable time, and can hurt staff attitudes. Research supports that focusing on mandates can lead to the disengagement of the teachers and a lack of buy-in (Fullan, 2023). Principals reported that teachers are continuously required to take on more responsibilities and tasks viewed as ineffective or irrelevant, with no additional support to accomplish these tasks. Principals invested in building teacher capacity must change the focus to the school community's needs (Whitaker, 2012). Principals must provide a purpose built on shared commitments, and assist in motivating the teachers to move forward (Fullan, 2023).

Participants reported a lack of principal leadership skills as being a hindering factor in increasing teacher capacity. Research shows that principals who create a positive school culture, empower teachers, and foster trust positively affect teachers and student outcomes (DuFour &

Marzano, 2011; Grissom et al., 2021). Principals who discount teachers, lack vision and planning, and are unsupportive of teachers' needs are more likely to have high teacher turnover and a negative impact on the school community (Blasé & Blasé, 2006). Successful principals understand the importance of creating and maintaining a positive school culture and recognize their role as critical in supporting effective teaching and learning through capacity building (Grissom et al., 2021).

Implications for School Leaders. The results of the study reinforce the important role the principal has to play in creating a collaborative and supportive environment designed to increase teacher capacity (Whitaker, 2012). To create this environment, principals need to build a positive school climate and culture that provides teachers with the support they need to do their jobs well (Jackson, 2021) and provide teachers with time to collaborate (DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Grissom et al., 2021). Principals should work to foster a shared leadership model, empowering teachers to take on leadership roles, shared decision-making, and shared responsibility (Murphy, 2005; Spillane & Lowenhaupt, 2019). Shared decision-making is an effective practice that can assist elementary school principals in navigating some of the capacity-building barriers while simultaneously empowering teachers to take ownership of instructional decisions and fostering a sense of buy-in (Spillane & Lowenhaupt, 2019).

Offering opportunities for meaningful collaboration increases teacher capacity individually and collectively and supports teachers in sharing thoughts, ideas, and perspectives. Creating a culture of collaboration, principals will build an environment where teachers learn from one another (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefanco, 2018; Reeves & Eaker, 2019). For collaboration to be successful, principals need to monitor the learning and capacity-building of the teachers (Reeves & Eaker, 2019). Research supports that well-planned, organized,

supported, and monitored collaboration by the principal will improve teachers' capacity and ultimately increase student achievement (Reeves & Eaker, 2019).

Developing a shared vision that is clear should include having high expectations to achieve this vision. Commitment and buy-in from staff relating to this shared vision is an important factor in building teacher capacity, as identified in the research (Stronge & Xu, 2021) and within this study. Elementary school principals also build capacity by providing teachers with time. Principals in the study continually mentioned the importance of protecting teachers' time and creating time for teachers to collaborate, plan, visit each other's classrooms, and observe as effective ways to build teacher capacity. High-quality feedback and professional development are also effective strategies identified in the study to assist principals in increasing teacher capacity and are aligned to the research (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2018; King & Newmann, 2000; Levin, 2008; Robinson, 2011).

Future Research

The study's findings reinforce the elementary school principal's crucial role in building their staff's capacity. The study's overarching theme highlights the importance of developing and managing a positive and supportive school culture and climate in building teacher capacity. A positive and supportive school culture supports the growth and development of the staff. Participants in the study reported how they build teacher capacity in their staff and the factors and conditions that support or hinder their efforts to build capacity.

It should be noted that this study only collected data from the principal's point of view and did not include the teacher's perspective. Research comparing the principals' and teachers' perspectives on building teacher capacity would further inform the research on capacity building.

Principals and teachers may have differing opinions on the effectiveness of strategies identified in the study used to build teacher capacity. In addition, future research on the district's role in building teacher capacity would also add helpful information to this topic.

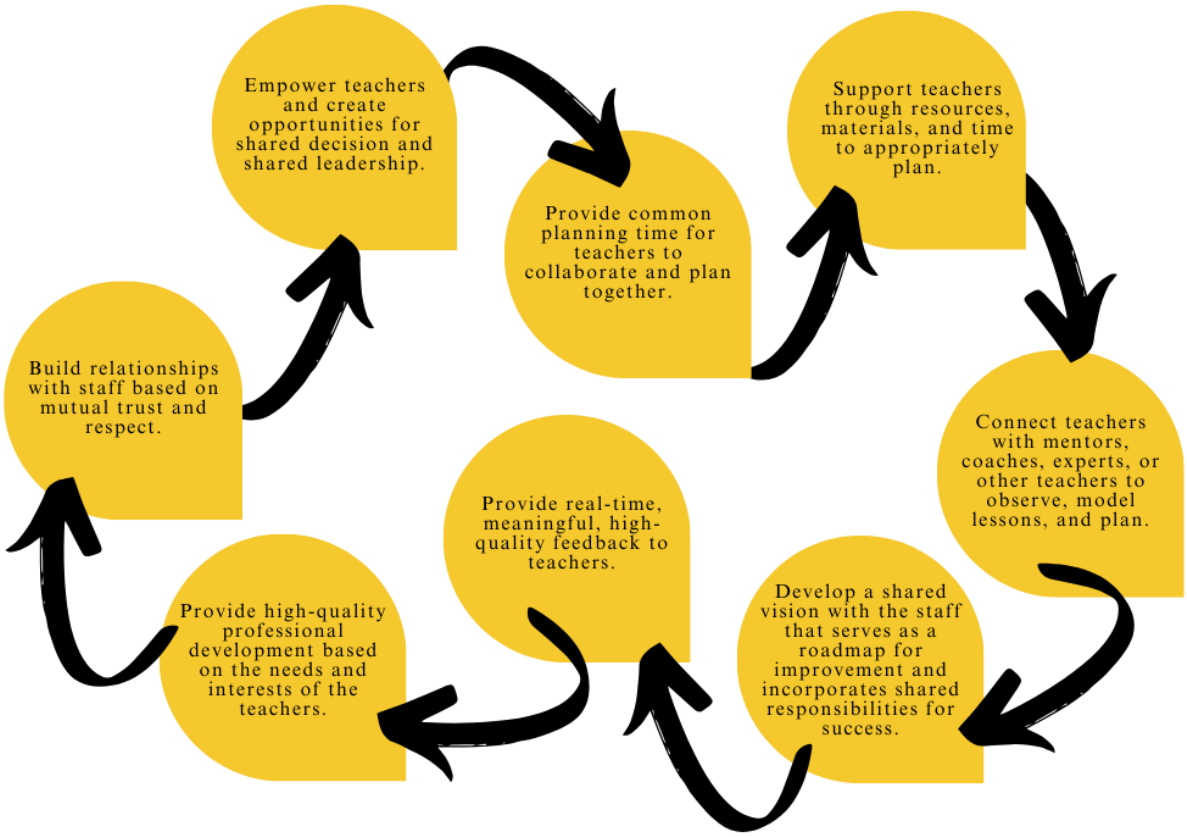
Research on capacity-building strategies for the principal is also needed. The principal's job is highly demanding, and they are ultimately responsible for the success or failure of their school. Research supports the large impact principals can have on the quality of instruction in their schools (Grissom et al., 2021). A primary responsibility of the principal is to create the conditions necessary to facilitate increases in staff capacity. To do this, principals must have developed leadership and managerial skills as well as be knowledgeable about curriculum pedagogy and instruction. District and state leaders expect principals to accomplish all of this with very little feedback, support, or professional development to build their capacity. Further research is needed on the school district's role in building principal capacity and effective capacity-building supports and strategies for the elementary school principal.

Recommendations for Elementary School Principals

As a result of this study, recommendations have been developed to inform and guide principals in their efforts to increase teacher capacity. These recommendations (Figure 12) are based on the study's findings and the literature regarding the strategies and approaches effective principals use to build teacher capacity.

Figure 11

Recommendations for Elementary School Principals to Build Teacher Capacity



Note. This graphic representation of the recommendations based on the study's findings was created by the researcher using the online graphic design tool, Canva.

Final Reflections

This study was initiated due to my work with elementary school principals and my interest in understanding how I, as a district leader, can better support principals, teachers, and students. As an educator and a leader, I passionately believe that all students deserve and are entitled to a high-quality education. I have spent countless hours researching, reading, and

writing about how principals increase the capacity of their teachers. This study has enriched my own leadership practices and has provided me with a deeper understanding of the complexities of the elementary principalship and the importance of supporting the principals as they work to build teacher capacity. The findings of this research study and the literature reviewed highlight the crucial role the climate and culture of a school play in building teacher capacity.

One of the pieces of research I found to be the most impactful is the research commissioned by the Wallace Foundation in 2021, which indicates the large influence an effective principal can have on student achievement. Principals are instrumental in the success or failure of a school, and their impact, positive or negative, is felt in every classroom. Principals set the course and direction for the school, and their leadership determines the quality of the environment. Principals who establish high levels of trust with their staff and have staff that feel valued and supported are more likely to have educators who are engaged and committed to the vision and goals of the school (Fullan; 2023; Jackson, 2021).

Society and the educational authorities' demands on the principal are continuously growing. Elementary school principals are typically the sole administrators in their schools and, as a result, are responsible for all aspects of their school and the school day. During the interviews conducted for this study, it was clear that principals view their primary role as supporting the teachers in their school building. Their job is to make the lives of their teachers easier. Parents, district, and state leaders want principals to ensure student outcomes are improving, which means improving the teaching. To accomplish this, it is crucial that we consider ways to support elementary school principals.

Principals need support to grow and develop their leadership skills. They need time to collaborate and participate in professional learning and need to be provided with high-quality feedback to improve their practice. If we want exceptional teachers in our buildings, and we expect the principals to have the skills necessary to hire, develop, and retain master teachers, it is imperative that we work to support and develop exceptional principals. As Grissom et al. (2021, p. 40), so aptly explained, "if a school district could invest in improving the performance of just one adult in a school building, investing in the principal is likely the most effective way to affect student achievement."

Elementary principals have a profound impact on shaping the quality of instruction and experiences that occur within their school. After years of asking elementary principals to balance the ever-increasing expectations and demands of the principalship, it is time that district, state, and federal education leaders recognize the crucial role elementary principals play in increasing teacher capacity and student achievement. As leaders shaping the future of our youngest learners, it is time to empower and invest in providing elementary principals with the resources, support, and professional development they need to do their job and do it well.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Informed Consent

Dear Elementary Principal,

I am a doctoral student at Lesley University, and I am trying to identify the extent to which building teacher capacity is a priority for elementary principals and what are the obstacles that may prevent them from focusing on building teacher capacity.

I invite you to participate in this survey. Your feedback will assist me in gathering important information on the current perceptions of Elementary Principals regarding their role in building teacher capacity. This survey contains questions regarding your background in education, your current daily priorities, areas you would like to spend more time on if you could, and factors that may inhibit your ability to spend time on these areas. Please note that you may discontinue your participation at any time. A short follow-up interview may also be conducted should you choose to consent. Please indicate your interest in participating in an interview at the conclusion of the survey. Participation in a follow-up interview is not required in order to complete the survey and is completely voluntary.

In addition:

- You are free to choose not to participate in the research and to discontinue your participation in the research at any time without facing negative consequences.
- Identifying details will be kept confidential by the researcher. Data collected will be protected; your identity will not be revealed by the researcher.

- Data will be submitted anonymously to the committee responsible for reading the chapters of this dissertation and subsequently to Lesley University's Graduate School of Education. Only the researcher will have access to the data collected.
- Any and all of your questions will be answered at any time, and you are free to consult with anyone (i.e., friend, family) about your decision to participate in the research and/or to discontinue your participation.
- Participation in this research poses no risk to you.
- Participation in the survey should take no more than 20 minutes. Follow-up interviews will be 30 minutes in length.

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact Erin Perkins at eperkins@lesely.edu or 617-984-8743. My faculty supervisor is Dr. Gail Simpson Cahill of the Graduate School of Education and can be contacted at gcahill@lesley.edu or 617-349-8799. There is a Standing Committee for Human Subjects in Research at Lesley University to which complaints or problems concerning any research project may, and should, be reported if they arise. Contact the Committee Chairpersons at irb@lesley.edu

Thank you for your kind consideration. By clicking the link below you agree to participate in this survey.

Erin Perkins

Ph.D. Candidate, Lesley University

Appendix B: Participant Survey

Please identify the following background information by selecting the appropriate box.

1. Please identify your age range.
   25–34
   35-44
   45-54
   55 or above

2. To which gender identity do you most identify?
   Male
   Female
   Transgender Female
   Transgender Male
   Gender Variant/Non-Conforming
   Not listed
   Prefer not to answer

3. How long have you been serving in the role of principal?
   This is my first year
   2-5 years
   6-9 years
   10 – 15 years
   over 16 years

4. How long have you been working as a principal in your current school?
   This is my first year
   2-5 years
   6-9 years
   10 – 15 years
   over 16 years

5. Please identify the grade levels of your school?
   Preschool - grade 5
   Preschool - grade 2
   Kindergarten – grade 5
   Kindergarten – grade 4
   Other (please identify)_____

6. Prior to becoming a principal did you hold another role within a school setting?
   Yes
   No

7. If yes, please identify the role that best describes your previous position.
   Check all that apply.
   Assistant Principal
   Classroom Teacher
   Guidance Counselor/ School Adjustment Counselor
   Literacy support/intervention
   Special Education Teacher
   EL Teacher
   Instructional coach
   Physical Education Teacher
   Music Teacher
   Art Teacher
   Media Teacher
   Other (please identify)_____

8. Prior to becoming a principal did you participate in administrative training?
   Yes
   No
9. If yes, please select the type of administrative training you participated in? (Check all that apply)
   Administrative certification program
   Courses/workshops
   Graduate degree or higher in administration
   National Institute for School Leadership
   Completion of a 500 hour practicum under the supervision of a licensed principal
   I did not participate in formal administrative training
   Other_____

10. During your time as principal have you received administrative training?
    Yes (please identify)
    No

    If yes to #10, please describe any administrative training you have received?

11. If yes, please identify who provided the administrative training you participated in? Check all that apply.
    The district in which I currently work

The Department of Education
A grant funded opportunity
I sought out training
Other_____

Question 12

From the list below, please identify the top items you consider to be weekly priorities in your role as principal? (Priorities in this context are items that are the focus of the majority of your time on a given week). Please rate the items from 1 to 5. 1 being the item that you spend the largest amount of time on during the week and 5 being the item that you spend the least amount of time on during the week.

Please rate the following items 1 through 5, 1 being the item that you spend the largest amount of time on during the week and 5 being the item that you spend the least amount of time on during the week.	
Scheduling (including school schedule, parent meetings, teacher meetings, etc.)	1 2 3 4 5
Paperwork responsibilities (including but not limited to work orders, newsletters, weeklies, communication to staff and/or students, supply orders, paperwork associated with before and after school activities, budget, implementing State or district mandated initiatives)	1 2 3 4 5
Specific duties: Recess, Cafeteria, Bus arrival and departure, hallway monitoring, etc.	1 2 3 4 5

Building maintenance (inside and out, includes technology issues, solving non-instructional issues.	1	2	3	4	5
Parent Involvement	1	2	3	4	5
Student discipline	1	2	3	4	5
Hiring and Retaining Staff (including personnel issues, Providing coaching and mentoring to new and veteran staff, Use of observation, evaluation and feedback)	1	2	3	4	5
Curriculum and Assessment (including coordinating and assessing the curriculum, analyzing student data, coordinating the curriculum)	1	2	3	4	5
Modeling Lessons	1	2	3	4	5
Leadership activities (including developing a shared vision and anchoring the vision through the development of goals, communicating high expectations, encouraging shared leadership, establishing shared norms and values)	1	2	3	4	5

Organizing and promoting effective professional development (including modeling and participating in the learning process	1	2	3	4	5
Meeting with grade level and vertical teams (promoting teamwork and collaboration)	1	2	3	4	5

13. Which of the principal responsibilities listed below would you desire to spend more time on if you could? (Please identify all items you would like to focus on by selecting the box next to the item)

Please identify all items you would like to focus on by selecting the box next to the item	
Scheduling (including school schedule, parent meetings, teacher meetings, etc.)	
Paperwork responsibilities (including but not limited to work orders, newsletters, weeklies, communication to staff and/or students, supply orders, paperwork associated with before and after school activities, budget, implementing State or district mandated initiatives)	
Specific duties: Recess, Cafeteria, Bus arrival and departure, hallway monitoring, etc.	

Building maintenance (inside and out, includes technology issues, solving non-instructional issues	
Parent Involvement	
Student discipline	
Hiring and Retaining Staff (including personnel issues, Providing coaching and mentoring to new and veteran staff, Use of observation, evaluation and feedback)	
Curriculum and Assessment (including coordinating and assessing the curriculum, analyzing student data, coordinating the curriculum)	
Modeling Lessons	
Leadership activities (including developing a shared vision and anchoring the vision through the development of goals, communicating high expectations, encouraging shared leadership, establishing shared norms and values)	

Organizing and promoting effective professional development (including modeling and participating in the learning process	
Meeting with grade level and vertical teams (promoting teamwork and collaboration)	

If you identified items that were not identified in your top 10 weekly priorities please describe the reasons you are not able to spend the time you would like on these additional areas? Please use the box below to write your response.

14. How would you define the term teacher capacity?

15. To what extent do you believe it is the principal's role to increase teacher capacity?
    To a great extent
    To some extent
    Not at all

16. To what extent do you believe it is the teacher's role to increase teacher capacity?
    To a great extent
    To some extent
    Not at all

17. To what extent do you believe it is the district's (Superintendent, curriculum personnel, directors, coordinators) role to increase teacher capacity?
    To a great extent
    To some extent
    Not at all

18. Please select the items from the list below that you believe are priorities in building teacher capacity? Please rate the items from 1 – 5, 1 being very important to 5 not important.

Please rate the following items 1 through 5, 1 being very important and 5 not important in building teacher capacity.

Coordinating and assessing the curriculum	1	2	3	4	5
Analyzing student data (formative, benchmark and summative data)	1	2	3	4	5
Meeting with grade level teams	1	2	3	4	5
Meeting with vertical teams	1	2	3	4	5
Observing model lessons	1	2	3	4	5
Participating in learning walk-throughs	1	2	3	4	5
Implementing State or district mandated initiatives	1	2	3	4	5
Participating in the development of a shared vision and anchoring the vision through the development of goals	1	2	3	4	5

Participating in coaching and mentoring to new and veteran staff	1	2	3	4	5
Participating in teamwork and collaboration	1	2	3	4	5
Participating in shared leadership	1	2	3	4	5
Use of observation, evaluation and feedback	1	2	3	4	5
Modeling and participating in the learning process	1	2	3	4	5
Participating in professional development	1	2	3	4	5

19. What do you believe are factors that support increasing teacher capacity?

20. What do you believe are factors that hinder increasing teacher capacity?

If you are willing to give your consent to participate in a one-hour interview, please provide your name and contact information in the space below. All information will remain confidential and you can discontinue your participation at any time.

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

Study: *The Perceptions of Elementary Principals Regarding Their Role in Building Teacher Capacity*

Time of Interview:
Date:
Interviewer:
Interviewee:

Purpose of the Study: As a doctoral student at Lesley University my study is focused on identifying the extent to which building teacher capacity is a priority for elementary principals and what are the obstacles that may prevent principals from focusing on building teacher capacity.

The data collected includes the survey responses and follow-up interviews with participants who volunteered to be interviewed. Data will be secured in a secure Google folder on a password-protected computer. All names will be replaced with numbers, and hard copies will be secured in a locked file cabinet. Participation in the study and interview is voluntary; you can withdraw anytime. Do you have any questions or concerns?

Do you give permission for me to record this interview?

Questions

1. Can you provide some information about your job history and experience?

2. What professional development activities have you participated in to support your learning and growth as an elementary school principal?

    - When did this PD experience take place?

3. What do you consider to be the top priorities in your role as an elementary school principal?
    - Are you able to focus on those priorities as much as you would like?

4. Can you share your understanding of the definition of teacher capacity?

5. Can you describe a typical day in your role as principals and the job responsibilities you focus on during the day?

6. Can you describe what you feel is the principal's role in building teacher capacity?

7. What are your vision and goals for your individual school?
    - Do you have teacher buy-in and a shared commitment to this vision and goals?

8. What professional development opportunities have you provided for your staff?
    - How often and how much time do you spend on these activities in a typical year?
    - Has the time spent with staff on professional development been impacted by the pandemic?
    - If so, what would a pre pandemic year look like in terms of professional development?
9. Can you describe your leadership style?
10. In a given week how much time do you typically spend in teacher's classrooms?
    - What does your time in the classroom look like?
11. What are the barriers that get in the way of focusing on your priorities?