MINDFUL INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP: A STUDY TO DESCRIBE
AND COMPARE BELIEFS AND PRACTICES OF ELEMENTARY
AND SECONDARY PRINCIPALS

By

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To the Faculty of Washington State University:

The members of the Committee appointed to examine the dissertation of JOSHUA DARRELL MEEK find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

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Nearly thirty-five years ago I entered a kindergarten classroom for the very first time as a young learner full of a desire to learn. While this path has been long, and sometimes curvy, this is the pinnacle of that journey for me as a learner.

Without a doubt I never could have made it to this point without the love, support, understanding, and teamwork that my family has provided. To my wife Courtney, and my sons Hayden, Masen, and Camden – we did this together. This is as much about you as it is me. Weekends and summers away, missed baseball games and concerts, and a general distraction from being a husband and father are the prices that we have paid. While I cannot take those back or change what was lost, I can offer you the valuable gift of having dreams and working through anything to reach those dreams. My hope is that my own boys recognize the lesson modeled for their own life and career.

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Abstract

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The purposes of this study were to: a) describe the self-reported instructional practices
and beliefs of principals as related to mindfulness in their leadership for school improvement,
and b) analyze differences between secondary and elementary principals on mindful instructional
leadership practices and beliefs. The study purposes are grounded theoretically in two bodies of
research. The first was developed from the Association of Washington School Principals
(AWSP) Leadership Framework created to guide the principal evaluation process in Washington
State. The second is based in high reliability organization literature with particular attention
given to five cognitive process of mindfulness. A stratified random sample of 505 principals in
Washington State were invited to participate and 33% responded to the Principal Resilience for
Educator and Student Success (PRESS), as survey developed to measure instructional leadership.

A number of key aspects about the day-to-day kind of school operations and the ways
principals enact instructional leadership were found. Principal responses suggest high degree of
deference to expertise, commitment to resilience, and preoccupation with failure in their
instructional leadership with lower agreement and enactment of practices and beliefs associated
with sensitivity to operations and reluctance to simplify. These findings indicate that continued work is needed to assist principals with staying focused on what is happening in the classroom, working with teachers using data to improve classroom instruction, and addressing differences given context and individuals that make functioning with consistency problematic. Additionally, elementary principals reported significantly higher than secondary principals on five items with effect sizes ranging from moderate to small. The limitations and significance of these findings are discussed for facilitating instructional leadership using mindfulness and principles of high reliability theory. Principals will be better positioned to eliminate errors, seek after positive outcomes for students, and promote healthier school cultures through attention and use of these cognitive processes.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Since President Ronald Reagan’s National Commission on Excellence in Education released its 1983 study, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*, our country has fixated on the failure of American schools. Pundits and politicians encourage fear that if students have not acquired needed skills and abilities, the United States would lose its position as world leader. The repeated message to the American people has been that in order for our students to compete in a global society, they must possess a set of skills they currently lack. Further, critics of education have claimed that school personnel are blind to what is needed to transform schools. As a result, schools and school systems have become the target of legislation, reform efforts, and public demands that have imposed specific guidelines and mandates on them. The external pressure for improvement in schooling has resulted in structural changes in organization, increased focus on student learning, and development of interventions for teaching. School leaders, teachers, district leaders, and school boards have thus been grappling to respond by making required modifications as well as developing needed strategies to overcome the threat of failure. Principals have played a central role in this work of transforming schools. Each day, in schools across the United States, the men and women charged with leading this change have entered the school doors carrying external expectations for radical improvement.

The role of the school principal is complex. The principalship blends expectations of leadership, instructional philosophy, politics, and management. While each of these work areas comprises part of the role, none carry as much significance as instructional leadership. Over 35 years ago, Ronald Edmonds (1979) studied the work of school principals and provided a foundational finding that effective schools are those with leaders who focus on instruction. Since
this pioneering study, many others, including most notably Elmore (2000), Spillane et al. (2003), and Hallinger (2005), have examined the instructional leadership of principals and their influence on school reform. In each of these studies, the effectiveness of principals, at both elementary and secondary school levels, was found to be rooted in behaviors and actions defined as instructional leadership.

When first introduced in the professional literature, the concept of instructional leadership was received with some skepticism. Today, however, few would dismiss the importance of principals as key players in building level decisions or activities intended to improve teaching and learning. The general acceptance, even expectation, that principals are to engage in efforts designed to support teacher practice and foster their professional development, continues to develop as researchers study these processes to refine theory and resolve numerous questions or issues of practice that surface as problematic for school administrators. This dissertation is intended to contribute to ongoing inquiry and subsequent refinement of professional knowledge and skill. Chapter one continues with the background for the study, which provides the context and literature needed to understand and support the research questions and methods selected for this dissertation. The statement of problem, followed by the study’s purposes will then be offered. An overview of the methods that speak to study’s purposes is presented next. The last two sections of the chapter explain the proposed significance of the study that is followed by a chapter summary and outline of the dissertation.

**Background for the Study**

With the focus for school improvement centered on instruction, pressure has mounted for school administrators to shift their approach and accept responsibility for leading change efforts within their buildings. No longer are principals to focus solely on managing the practical and
business concerns of a school; instead, their work must focus on improving instruction. In order to conduct such work, principals must possess a different set of skills and attributes than those previously required for the position. Traditionally, principals have been administrators of buildings, primarily responsible for maintaining the budget, hiring and evaluating staff, disciplining students, and responding to parent and community concerns. In an earlier era, the school principal was a manager of school operations. As schools entered the 21st century, however, a shift of emphasis to performance standards and student achievement changed this expectation. Hallinger (2005) summarized the multiple facets of instructional leadership at which principals must now be adept, such as displaying the strong collaborative leadership required to turn schools around, building culture, achieving goals, focusing on student academic outcomes, leading rather than managing, and working directly with teachers for the improvement of classroom instruction.

Besides the changing definition of the work roles and responsibilities, critical debate concerning the instructional leadership of principals has surfaced in three areas, which are discussed below. First, several researchers point to problems in current efforts intended to improve instruction. The joint or collaborative enterprise involved in shared leadership and evaluation among school staff adds complexity to decision making. Second, distinct differences in schools have been noted and studied in educational research their influence on the principalship, particularly at the elementary and secondary school level. Finally, there has been a continued call for increased reliability in student outcomes and scholars of educational leadership have begun to explore literature on high reliability organizations (HROs) for guidance.
Shared Leadership and Evaluation

While the work of principals has continued to focus on instructional leadership, a growing body of work has examined the alternate topic of shared leadership. These studies have investigated approaches including use of teacher leaders and instructional coaches to improve instruction. Neumerski (2012) has contended that in American schools, even with these structures in place, the focus remains on principals as instructional leaders. She further criticizes the research base for its treatment of the work that separates knowledge into two bodies of work – one on what the principal should be doing to improve instruction another and another on what others should be doing. The optimal approach to be taken in schools has been problematic given the disconnect among these various strategies and a notable lack of consensus on where responsibility for instructional leadership lies.

The shift in principals’ responsibilities towards instructional leadership has been reflected in various standards and measures developed to help train administrators and evaluate their performance. In the early 1990s, many states combined their efforts to develop a set of professional standards. This work came at a time when little consensus or research supported the definition of instructional leadership. These professional norms, known as the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards, were updated and revised in 2008 and remain under revision as of this writing. The ISLLC standards have guided principal preparation in universities and professional development in schools. Evaluative tools have been developed based on the standards including Council of Chief State School Officers (2008), Marzano (2012), and California’s WestEd (2011).

Marzano’s framework was one of the models adopted by Washington State for new teacher and principal evaluation. The legislative action concerned with educator evaluation was
intended to improve the practice of teachers and principals in the state. Further, this framework assisted in better positioning Washington State’s Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction application for Race to the Top, when the program was initiated by the federal government. In addition to Marzano’s work, the Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP) offered a model to define the instructional leadership of principals, set forth in eight criteria. Known as the AWSP Leadership Framework (2014), these criteria were incorporated by the Washington State legislature into legislation on principal evaluation.

**Elementary and Secondary Principalships**

Perhaps one of the more curious aspects of both the AWSP framework and the ISLLC standards has been the way in which they handle or attend to variance in the work of principals. Significant differences have existed between elementary and secondary schools that reach far beyond the student age groups that they serve. Firestone, Herriott, and Wilson (1984) stated unequivocally, “Elementary, junior high, and senior high schools are different; this is one of the most apparent aspects of American education” (p.7). Several factors have contributed to the distinctions between elementary and secondary schools including school size, purpose, personnel and training, and organizational structure. The differences, which are discussed below, place unique instructional leadership challenges for principals in elementary schools as compared to those secondary buildings.

First, secondary schools have tended to enroll a large number of students as compared to their elementary counterparts. High schools that enroll several hundred students, if not thousands, are found to possess multiples layers of initiatives, goals, leadership, and focal points that are a reflection of their size. The large comprehensive high school found in cities across the nation did not just appear, but slowly evolved to address particular social and economic needs.
Cohen and Neufeld (1981) noted that expansion of secondary education resulted in a variety of purposes for high school level education, while elementary has had a simplification of goals. High schools bear the responsibility within one school to have preparedness programs designed to meet the needs of specific students: those going to college, joining the military, and entering the workforce. In contrast, Cohen and Neufeld argue, the elementary school’s primary purpose has lied in preparedness for middle school or junior high and basic skills. Such lack of variance in purpose can be best appreciated by the almost uniform push across the elementary grades for an instructional focus on improvement of student literacy. There is much less focus or agreement in high schools given the competing instructional demands and targets. Arguably, the PE teacher, music teacher, and culinary teacher in these schools have not as concerned about reading as the English teacher may be. Boyer (1983) best described these multiple purposes when he said high schools have “accumulated purposes like barnacles on a weathered ship” (p.57). Collectively these issues of difference create a “loosely coupled system” discussed by Weick (1976) where there is an absence of shared goals that guide action and the decentralization of power which allows for substantial teacher autonomy, especially with regard to instruction.

In addition to school size and purpose, the complexity of high schools has been increased by departmental structures and degree of teacher specialization (Firestone, Herriott, & Wilson, 1984). The professional training for certification as an elementary or secondary teacher has promoted differences in perspectives and needs. Teacher preparation programs has focused secondary teachers on content and specialization, with minimal pedagogical training. In contrast, elementary teacher candidates have been prepared for meeting the needs of the whole child and take coursework on teaching reading, writing, math, and science. Aside from the professional orientation, the personnel at each level have also vary greatly in demographics. While changes
over time have occurred, elementary schools continue to be staffed primarily by female teachers as compared to secondary schools that exhibit greater gender equity within their faculty. Gilligan (1979) studied the differences between men and women in the school setting and argued women have a greater disposition for empathy than men. Gilligan claimed, “As a result, women can assess problems of goal differences pragmatically in light of the specific situation while men press for consistency across situations. According to this line of reasoning, groups with a greater proportion of women should be more willing and able to work out compromises that promote goal consensus” (p. 442). Such difference has been seen as supporting the collaboration of teachers evident in elementary schools.

With the differences in school size between elementary and secondary schools the administrative staffing and organization has also differed. Larger schools usually have been staffed with a principal and a team of assistant principals. In contrast, elementary schools have tended to be staffed with a single administrator, who may be supported by an assistant principal. Further, Hage (1980) has argued that the concentration of specialists at the secondary level distracts from the centralization of leadership and shared focus. Secondary schools have been filled with content specialist, where administrators likely know less about what instructional approaches are effective and how to properly measure the quality of teacher work in their content specialization.

Furthermore, researchers find the instructional leadership responsibilities have tended to be tightly coupled with the principal—for both elementary or secondary schools. Assistant principals are often seen as not fully prepared or do not have job assignments that lend to strong instructional leadership. According to Reed and Himmler (1985) “secondary assistant principals as school administrators are charged with establishing and maintaining organizational stability”
and these supervisory duties have often centered on supporting, monitoring, and disciplining students. Even when the assistant principal has responsibilities inclusive of instructional leadership, the expectation and need for common goals and outcomes between the principal and assistant principal(s) has increased. The partnership between principal and assistant principal is possible, and the ideal, but not necessarily the norm. Blumberg and Greenfield’s (1986) felt that in order for improved instructional leadership to become the norm, principals would need help from others, including assistant principals, to improve on their own abilities, styles, and circumstances.

**High Reliability**

Lastly, while this focus on instructional leadership lies at the core of the principalship, the external expectation of outcomes has continued to grow. Federal legislation, community interest, and parental expectations place a high priority on student learning. Legislation requires that all students achieve identified benchmarks on assessments as well as graduating on time, and penalties are imposed if the school or school district fails to meet these standards. Local communities have expected that students within their local school systems will serve as the next generation of contributing citizens. Perhaps most importantly, parents have expected that the children they send to school will learn and grow. The combination of these external expectations has created a culture of high expectations for consistent reliability, or achieving comparable results in every case.

Outside education, this same high demand for reliability has been much examined through the lens of high reliability organizing. High reliability organizations (HROs) refers to a type of organizing that treats issues of reliability as crucial. Bellamy et al. (2005) state: “Although schools face demands for high reliability that are increasingly similar to those
confronting HROs, organizational differences cast doubt on whether the specific strategies used by HROs would have the same impact if they were transferred directly to schools” (p. 389). The authors offered a fail-safe school framework and “invite research and testing to see what strategies are most effective under different school conditions and what results actually obtain when each of the fail-safe functions is systematically addressed” (p. 406). While Bellamy et al. discussed a number of these strategies and included mindfulness among them, their examination of mindfulness – a key construct in HRO theory – is poorly developed, particularly in light of recent studies suggesting the topic merits greater attention. For example, recently Hyland (2013) argued, “There are direct and practical links between mindfulness strategies and educational practice at all levels…[including] improving focus and awareness, increasing responsiveness to students, [and] enhancing school climate” (p. 287-288).

Statement of the Problem

A review of the literature, presented in chapter two of this dissertation, will show that the concept of instructional leadership is a highly studied area of school leadership (Hallinger, 2005). After nearly four decades of continued interest and investigation of instructional leadership, however, little increase in student achievement has resulted. Whether student achievement is measured by the passing rates on standardized assessments or on-time graduation rates, significant need for improvement persists.

For example, according to the Nation’s Report Card (NAPE, 2015), long-term trend data show little to no improvement in students’ math and reading performance since 1971. In 1971 the average reading score on the NAPE for 17-year-olds was 285 on a 500 point scale; after 40 plus years of school reform, the 2012 average was just 287. Additionally, on the same measure, math performance has made just slight improvement from a national average of 300 in 1978 to
an average of 306 in 2012. An even more troubling statistic indicates that progress has essentially stopped for Black and Hispanic students since 1990, with 17-year-old students’ reading average scores remaining consistent for nearly 25 years (NAPE, 2015).

Additionally, while many high schools have made gains in increasing on-time graduation rates, many students still fail to graduate on time or drop out altogether, and student performance on accountability test remains unchanged, including an achievement gap. With the assumed expectation of all students reaching their goal of on-time graduation, this gap in achievement is problematic. The gap is especially significant for minority and students of poverty. Many large high schools have been labeled “dropout factories” in reference to the high number of dropouts. Between 1988 and 2008, the national average dropout rate decreased slightly from 12.9% to 8.0% (Digest of Education Statistics, 2010). But in this same time period, Black and Hispanic students have continued to drop out at a much higher rates than their White peers. By 2008, the national average for White students was 4.8%, compared to 9.9% for Black students and 18.3% for Hispanic students. These alarming statistics have painted a picture that contradicts the expectation of on-time graduation for all students and high reliability.

A key component of school reform to secure improvement in student outcomes has been the development of instructional leadership as a focus of work for school principals. Administrators have been expected to be instructional leaders; there are however, varying perceptions of effective instructional leaders and descriptions of what that means and how they are to accomplish these goals for improving teaching and learning. The result is a loose definition and implementation of instructional leadership skills and processes in the K-12 educational system. Neumerski (2013) stated the concern this way, “If we intend to understand how school leaders improve instruction, we must refocus instructional leadership research more
squarely on instruction itself” (p. 334). Her review of literature supports the need for further exploration of instructional practices and the tools that measure the practices and beliefs of practitioners.

In addition, the growing attention to mindfulness in education, particularly given its connection to organizational reliability, has been championed as relevant to school leadership by Hoy (2003) and Bellamy et al. (2005) among others. Hoy et al. (2006) assessed the relationship between trust and mindfulness from surveying 2600 teachers and concluded both contribute to a climate for success for students. Kearney, Kelsey, and Herrington (2013) analyzed data from 149 schools in Texas and found mindfulness of administrators explained one-third of a standard deviation unit change in student achievement \( (b = 0.343, p<0.01) \) after controlling for attendance, student socio-economic status, principal turnover, and school size. While the observed relationships and descriptive findings of these study are encouraging, they do not convey the kind of specificity on instructional practices noted in Neumerski’s (2013) review of literature and others who call for further study of the principalship as connected to increasing student performance (Mulford & Silins, 2003; Spillane, 2012).

Finally, literature on the principalship suggests differences in the leadership of elementary verses secondary schools as discussed in the background of the study (e.g., Blumberg & Greenfield, 1986). School size and purpose, organizational complexity, administrative structures, and faculty make-up name key variables that suggest a range of opportunities and choices for improving instruction between these two groups of principals. current development and evaluation practices, however, generally group all school principals in the same category needing to perform similar kinds of work and development. Better understanding is needed of ways to differentiate, assess, and guide application of instructional leadership by principals.
While studies have identified the differences between these school levels and managerial responsibilities and needs of principals, more investigation is needed to assist principals for how they are to achieve key metrics of school improvement embedded in educational accountability policies.

**Study Purposes**

The purposes of this study were to describe and analyze the mindful instructional leadership of school principals. The study addressed two specific areas to better understand the actions and values of principals as they pertain to instructional leadership. First, the study described the self-reported instructional practices and beliefs of principals as related to mindfulness in their leadership for school improvement. At the root of this purpose is the goal of better understanding how the values and beliefs of these school principal is expressed through their day-to-day operations and leadership practices in the school setting. Second, the study analyzed differences between secondary and elementary principals in terms of their mindful instructional practices and beliefs. While school and structural differences exist between grade levels, instructional leadership can be better defined by understanding the differences that demarcate practices among principals these two roles.

**Study Methods**

This section begins the articulation of choices made and procedures followed in carrying out this study concerned with (a) describing the self-reported instructional practices and beliefs of principals as related to mindfulness in their leadership for school improvement, and (b) analyzing differences between secondary and elementary principals in terms of their mindful instructional practicess and beliefs. Chapter three provides the full discussion of the dissertation’s methodology.
Five graduate students (i.e., four other students and me) from Washington State University’s Educational Leadership Program collaborated on a project focused on conceptualizing and studying the ways mindfulness was part of, or relevant, to the instructional leadership of principals. As a member of the team, my background includes experience as a building administrator at the high school level for twelve years, six of which were as principal of a large comprehensive high school. The other researchers also had school administration experience at the elementary school level, a STEM school, and at the district office. The survey we developed was entitled *Principal Resilience for Education and Student Success (PRESS)*. The *PRESS* was designed as a self-reporting tool to measure an individual’s mindfulness as present or part of their instructional leadership. The survey was crafted for participants to answer a series of questions about their perception involving both critical beliefs and practices related to instructional leadership as defined by the Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP) Leadership Framework (Kipp et al., 2014) as well as the five mindful cognitive processes identified by Weick and Sutcliffe (2006) that have received significant attention in literature on high reliability organizing.

The *PRESS* featured a total of 20 items. The survey question design offered two categories of response options: the first asked for a frequency of occurrence reflecting their recent experience; the second asked for an indication of the degree to which the respondent agreed with a given statement, to be registered on a Likert scale. Likert (1932) is credited with developing the tool of measuring attitudes by asking survey participants to mark statements on a scale based on their level of agreement or disagreement. The final questions on the *PRESS* included biographical questions per standard survey protocol (Babbie, 1990). Specifically,
principals were also asked their gender, ethnic/racial identification, years at the school, and years in position.

Once the PRESS was developed and field tested, it was sent to a stratified random sample of 505 principals selected from across Washington State schools. The study employed a cross-sectional design, which as Creswell (2009) explains, offers an effective strategy for establishing the current reality. Qualtrics, an online platform, was used for administration of the study. Principals selected for the study were sent email invitations to participate. The research team modeled the collection procedure based on Dillman (1978), who outlined a recommended four-phase administration process consisting of the advance-notice, distribution of the survey after initial contact, a follow-up sent after the survey, and a final follow-up with those sent the initial survey.

McNamara (1994) stated that surveys “can be used effectively in educational reform efforts” (p. 139). Employing a survey methodology allowed the research team to gather information to analyze the nature of practices and beliefs concerned with mindful instructional leadership present in a statewide population of principals. A descriptive analysis of 20 items was performed to address the first research purpose and an independent samples t test was calculated to address the second purpose. Cohen’s d (1992) was used to determine the nature of the effect size. While the group of researchers worked collaboratively on the development and administration of the survey, each of the members analyzed the survey results for their dissertation. Therefore, this study used standard survey methods to gather and analyze data.

**Potential Significance**

This study undertook specific purposes aimed at understanding, describing, and analyzing the instructional leadership of current school principals for several reasons. As previously
discussed, prior research underscores the importance of instructional leadership. Yet few of these studies focus on the “how” of generating that leadership in the work of a school principal. This study’s significance emerged from its focus on and clarification of the beliefs and practices current principal practitioners hold and employ in seeking after improvement of student outcomes.

To begin, literature on the principalship is replete with commentary and findings about the complex and ambiguous nature of the position that arise out of or attend their efforts to support, guide, and evaluate teaching. Adding to the challenge for those who hold the position, is the rapidly evolving role and responsibility placed on building administrators given recent educational reform as well as a multitude of economic, social, and cultural changes that influence what goes on in schools. Indeed, the career path to the position that many principals followed is seen as inadequately preparing candidates. The traditional pathway to the principalship was to have accrued some experience as a classroom teacher, followed by additional training, and then advancement to the administration. While this approach has given principals an inside view of the dynamics of schools, a lack of pre-understanding of the full demands of the job jeopardizes principal education and training. Catano and Stronge (2007) contend, “Contemporary principals and headmasters find themselves juggling competing tasks on a day-to-day basis. This juggling act is the result of efforts to satisfy demands from both internal and external stakeholders of educational organizations” (p. 379). These competing forces of school management, safety and security, human resource oversight, community and parent relations, and, most significantly, instructional leadership have complicated the principalship to an extreme degree. As formal leaders of schools, most principals have had advanced training or educational backgrounds designed to prepare them for the role. Additionally, much professional development has been
provided to inform principals’ operational strategies. Tirozzi (2004) argues that these training programs and opportunities, “are not closely aligned with the instructional and real-world demands principals face” (p. 43). The study findings have contributed to efforts to better align and clarify these instructional leadership issues, filling the gaps left by previous studies. One of the significant features of this study is its ability to seek out alignment of principal practices, actions, and values in relation to instructional leadership.

While much work has been done around instructional leadership, increased insight into the way various elements of the principal’s work align contributes to the body of research that improves our understanding of instructional leadership.

Furthermore, consideration of the heightened expectations for reliability from schools and school structures suggests a clear connection with the work of high reliability organizations. This study examined the complex work of the instructional leader in terms of the principles of high reliability organizations, providing additional insight into their applicability across school systems – an area that has not been sufficiently studied.

Finally, developing an understanding of the differences in mindful practices between elementary and secondary principals offers significant implications for school district leaders and analysts of school practices. While, granted, significant differences exist in the structures of elementary versus secondary schools, increased understanding of the parallels and differences between principal practices in these two settings has long term applicability beyond this study.

Chapter Conclusion and Overview of Dissertation

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. This first chapter consists of this introductory discussion, including an overview of the problem and purpose of the study. Chapter two reviews the current literature and provides a synthesis of the literature base on high
reliability organizations, mindfulness, and instructional leadership. Chapter two also provides an explanation of how these frameworks were aligned for development of the PRESS items. Chapter three presents a detailed description of the research methods used in the study, including the development of the survey instrument. Chapter four will present the study findings. Finally, Chapter five will discuss the significance of these findings, their application to school systems, and rationales for additional study in this area.
CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Researchers note little change in student achievement despite many years of school reform including new standards for learning, revised evaluation systems, and increased accountability for public education (NAPE, 2015; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008). A major component of school reform has been the development of instructional leadership to focus the work of school principals. Efforts intended to shift the attention of building leaders to the classroom have generally been met with acceptance, yet ongoing analysis suggests clearer guidance and practical application are needed (Neumerski, 2012). Current approaches are lacking in too many cases, leaving school administrators, educational researchers, and policy makers in agreement about the merit of developing understanding on ways this work may be done differently. What is needed are robust strategies that can be employed to help educators achieve lasting and desired levels of improvement in student performance and growth.

The desire for change and need for action provided the impetus to explore and draw on theory from other disciplines and fields of study. A handful of educational researchers have noted a compelling body of literature based on high reliability organizations (HROs) and mindfulness (Stringfield, 1995 & 1998; Bellamy, Crawford, Marshall, & Coulter, 2005). These scholars call for study to determine how HRO theory and mindfulness can be appropriately applied to organizing schools. In this chapter, literature on HROs and mindfulness is reviewed. This review is the foundation for this study because the expectation for high reliability within schools and for students is not unlike that required of these fail-safe organizations. In addition to discussing key concepts offered in this literature, the section identifies the applicability of this theory to leading schools. The second section of the chapter examines research on instructional
leadership. An overview of this literature is framed or organized using elements advanced in the Leadership Framework developed by the Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP). Integrated into the discussion of key elements of instructional leadership, as set forth in the Leadership Framework, is HRO literature and observations on ways a mindful stance and practices may translate to instructional improvement efforts. Finally, the chapter concludes with an explanation of how the applied definition of the leadership framework, coupled with the HRO literature, provides a rationale for this study concerned with describing and analyzing mindful instructional leadership of school principals.

**High Reliability Organizations and Mindfulness**

In every school across our country, educational leaders face the challenge of supporting school structures and cultures aimed at effectively educating all students. Such work cannot succeed without intentional attitudes and behaviors on the part of the school leader. The push for reliability in student outcomes present in educational accountability mandates encouraged Stringfield (1995, 1998), Bellamy, Crawford, Marshall, and Coulter (2005), and Hoy (2003) among others to examine and assess the applicability to school settings of high reliability organizing research developed within other disciplines. HROs are defined by their unique ability to operate high-hazard technological systems in a nearly error-free manner (Roberts, 1990). While this work has focused primarily on organizations outside education, HROs provide a potential lens to examine how principals and other school administrators might function if success for all students was crucial to schools. A variety of research fields including hospitals, the airline industry, and power plants have the expectation for error free performance, meaning operations are performed correctly the first time, every time, because the consequences of failure are catastrophic (Rochlin, LaPorte, & Roberts, 1998; Vaughn, 1996; LaPorte & Consolni, 1991;
Roberts, 1993; Stringfield, Reynolds, & Schaffer, 2008; Marcus, 1995; Bourrier, 1996). The research around HROs identifies and aligns a series of attributes that are consistent across a wide variety of organizations that function under extremely high risk conditions yet “take a variety of extraordinary steps in pursuit of error free performance” (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 1999, p.84).

While these organizations are diverse in their work, similarities of approaches prevail. In contrast to non-HROs, these organizations are found to focus more on failure than success, and on reliability more than efficiency. The application of high reliability organizing to schools offers alternative approaches to overcome the high number of failing functions and operations currently evident within schools. Some of the constructs for establishing this high level of error free performance may appear somewhat foreign to those familiar with the norms of formal school structures and thus difficult to apply.

An element of disconnect for school leaders is the gap between organizational structures and the processes, actions, attitudes, and beliefs which exist in their leadership. Weick (1999) contends what makes HROs unique and possible is a diverse set of interrelated cognitive processes. Weick and Sutcliffe (2007) outline five key cognitive processes that constitute the foundations of mindfulness leading to high reliability: preoccupation with failure, reluctance to simplify, sensitivity to operations, commitment to resilience, and deference to expertise. Each of these five cognitive processes has been thoroughly studied and provides a base for a growing body of research on ways other organizations can adopt or use these principles and strategies. Westrum (1992) studied how organizations seek information, incorporate new ideas, and address failure. Others studies have focused on cognitive processes of members within an organization in a variety of ways (Kilmoski & Mohammed, 1994; Hutchins, 1990; Klien, 1989). However, there
is continued opportunity for study on how these processes produce the error free operation that exists within high reliability organizations.

Starting in the late 1980s, Harvard psychology professor Ellen Langer began to examine the nature and applications of these same processes. In her book *Mindfulness* (1989), Langer established that a mindful person develops the ability to create new categories, maintains an openness to new information, carries an awareness of more than one perspective, pays attention to the process rather than the results, and places their trust in intuition. This mindfulness therefore is a “rich awareness of discriminatory detail and capacity for action” (Weick, 1999, p. 37). After Langer initially paved the way for this perspective, many others added to her conceptual work. This concept of mindfulness may furnish a bridge between the conceptual framework of high reliability organizations and school structures. Hoy (2002) made significant connections between mindfulness and education, specifically exploring the difference between mindfulness and mindlessness in school routines and procedures. Hoy has argued that mindlessness grows out of repetition, and that individuals too often get used to doing things the same way so that responses become routine, automatic, and secure (p. 95). As an alternative, Hoy further investigated how the cognitive process of preoccupation with failure leads to increased reliability. He wrote, “Mindful leaders and organizations avoid preoccupation with their successes, in part, because success breeds contentment and sometimes arrogance, which ultimately leads to vulnerability. Instead, mindful organizations pay attention to small mistakes and seek to eliminate them” (p. 97). The following section establishes an understanding of how these principles interrelate and how they may be applied to a school structure and principal practice.
**Preoccupation with Failure**

High reliability organizations are presented in literature as having adopted a number of intriguing rules for operating by. First among these is the focus by members on the small failures that arise as part of daily work within the organization. These failures are not viewed as threatening to collapse the system, but rather as a way to learn and enhance the effectiveness of the organization. Cannon (2001) acknowledged that “significant learning can come from uncovering a small failure to communicate in a work relationship, and such seemingly small failures can lead, ultimately, to highly preventable major failures” (p. 162-163). This preoccupation with failure empowers members of the organization to identify these small failures without fear of criticism by supervisors. The identification of small failures is noteworthy for also being a cause for celebration, particularly when a major catastrophe is caught early in its developing phase. Research shows repeatedly that there is a high relationship between major and minor failures (Cannon, 2001). In application to school structures, many indicators of failure may be prevalent such as: dropout rates, truancy rates, failed courses, low student engagement, lack of parental involvement, or high teacher turnover. These examples are all manifestations of large failures. Application of mindful leadership practices would focus on the smaller failures and seek immediate remedy prior to the major failure.

Studies have also looked at what prevents organizations or members within organizations from functioning with this mindset of failure-as-a-learning-opportunity. In the medical field, Edmondson’s study (1996) found that failure to ask for help or challenge the practice or decisions of a colleague was a major source of consequential drug errors in hospitals. Inherent in an effective culture is a shared understanding of how to address these issues and have a common approach for processing information. In traditional school structures, the norm of the classroom
teacher as the content expert tends to discourage educators from seeking help. Structural practices, such as Professional Learning Communities (DuFour, 2006) that have recently become popular, suggest strides are being made to address this gap. However, Cannon (2001) indicates that for learning to occur from failure, they have to be identified, discussed, and analyzed.

Along with the norm of honoring the discovery of failure, individuals must also possess a set of skills including ways for handling conflict and disagreement productively (Cannon, 2001). Ego is a major impediment to conflict resolution and psychological research has established that people regularly, if largely unconsciously, engage in activities that enable them to maintain or enhance their positive self-concept and self-esteem (Baumeister, 1993). Schools are staffed with individuals focused on their self-fulfillment. Equally important is the skill set and attributes of the organization’s leaders at facilitating changes in cultural norms. Argyris (1982) and Ryan and Oesterich (1991) acknowledge that the skills of the organization’s leaders have a profound influence on the way the members experience failure. Principals charged with this preoccupation with failure must have a skill set for embodying these attributes.

**Reluctance to Simplify**

In addition to preoccupation with failure, HROs exhibit norms and practices that reduce the tendency to generalize problems and concerns. This mindful cognitive process is known as the reluctance to simplify. Weick and Sutchliffe (2001) explain that HROs make fewer assumptions and take deliberate steps to create a complete picture. HROs also identify when simplification has occurred in the system and take aggressive steps to prevent it in future cases (Miller, 1993). This tactic prevents organizations from looking for quick answers to complex issues and forces a deeper analysis toward the root cause of the issues presented. Turner (1976) states that the major issue evident in simplifying centers on the degree to which the diagnosis of
the present and likely future situation is accurate enough to enable the organizational goals to be achieved without encountering unexpected difficulties. The central concern, therefore, lies in discovering which aspects of the current set of problems facing an organization are prudent to ignore and which should be attended to, and how an acceptable level of safety can be established as a criterion in carrying out this exercise (p. 379). Too often traditional organizations, by contrast, look only at results or outcomes without understanding what occurred. HROs differ in that they want to uncover more about what they do not know (Pearson & Mitroff, 1992).

Applied to a school setting, this approach means the school leader is charged with the need to look beyond what the indicators disclose, especially in regard to student achievement data. Hoy, Gage, and Tarter (2006) indicate that wise school leaders consider all viewpoints and increase dialog that is necessary to diagnose complex problems. When a school-based issue of student achievement arises, common practice is to quickly implement a new initiative or program for addressing the problem, with little effort devoted to understanding the root of the issue. Bierly and Spender (1995) call for leaders to develop skepticism when evaluating issues. In this examination, Schulman (1993) calls for a diversity of perspectives and approaches he refers to as “conceptual slack” wherein a “divergence in analytical perspectives [exists] among members of an organization over theories, models, or causal assumptions pertaining to its technology or production processes” (p. 364). This multiplicity of vantage points for skepticism or conceptual slack poses a hurdle for traditional organizations, especially schools, where challenging the norm may run counter to the collaborative culture that is currently honored.

**Sensitivity to Operations**

The primary purpose of schools is focused on student learning and teaching. In organizations outside of education, their operations may include reliable air travel, complex
medical procedures, or nationwide security. While it is arguable that the technology involved in learning is not as clearly delineated as other fields, there is value in recognizing HROs remain focused on their primary operation despite similar challenges with their technology. How learning occurs, in what conditions, and to what degree of success is complex. Swuste (2008) notes the inherent difficulty of handling information in ill-structured or constantly changing situations. Years of educational reform efforts have perhaps made the knowledge and skills involved in teaching more difficult to appreciate given the seemingly unending list of changes to how teachers are to go about their core responsibilities to positively influence student learning.

Likewise, routine habits, which constitute a common trap for many organizations, emerge in schools and detract from schools’ efficiency. Hoy (2002) argued, “Individuals and organizations are easily seduced by routine ways of doing things that worked at one time. There is much dependence on the use of standard categories and automatic responses to events; indeed habit itself can become mindless” (p. 375). While establishing these habits of practice may have been perceived as a valuable benefit from experience, Hoy warns about the limitations of always approaching problems and issues from the same perspective. Langer and Moldoveanu (2000) share this example to illustrate the value of a mindful approach:

We anticipate that increased mindfulness will be shown to decrease accidents as well, particularly when new technology is introduced. For example, when many of us learned to drive, we were told to pump the brakes slowly while trying to stop on a slippery surface. With the advent of anti lock brakes, however, the more appropriate response is to firmly press the brakes down and hold them there. Thus, accidents that could be prevented in the past by our learned behavior can now be caused by the same behavior.
This is an example of mindlessness that can easily occur in everyday life as well as the workplace. (p. 3)

Far removed from education as this example may seem, professionals in the field of education often continue to approach problems the same way despite changing social situations, and in essence continue to pump the brakes despite the obsolescence of these time-worn methods. This frequent review and updating is essential in reliability-seeking organizations because the pace, frequency, and scale of change they face quickly render information inaccurate, obsolete, or unavailable (Vogus & Welbourne, 2003).

Hoy (2002) digs further into this concept in connection with the sensitivity to operations. Within his review of HRO literature that analyzed the applicability of key principles to school leadership, he noted:

Mindful organizations detect problems, make continuous adjustments, and prevent them from enlarging. They are unremitting in their scan for problems and never so removed from the day-to-day operations that they have difficulty understanding what is happening and why. Thus it is especially important for school leaders to stay close to teaching and learning in the classroom. (p. 98)

Hoy makes strong assertions and recommendations for school structures, and specifically to educational leaders, though his work also underscores the danger of simplifying interpretations due to the likeliness of overlooking the subtleties that distinguish businesses from schools (p. 97).

**Commitment to Resilience**

A key construct in literature on mindfulness is how an organization or individual responds when failure occurs. High reliability organizations plan and organize very purposefully given the understanding that failure is a process that results in catastrophe. They seek to avoid
failure, but it still occurs. How these organizations respond during such events is what marks this idea of resilience. Resiliency is a concept that recognizes various ways HROs prepare personnel for inevitable surprises, develop general knowledge for ways to handle problems, and create alternative command structures over resources to act quickly to signs that a negative event is about to happen or has occurred (Wildavsky, 1988, p. 221). Vogus & Welbourne (2003) stress that these organizations develop the capacity to both absorb and harness change as their ability to quickly sense and respond to their extremely dynamic environments. Responding to subtle signs of danger determines their ability to remain viable. Throughout the high reliability organization literature there is a reoccurring theme that efforts to secure reliability is at the core of these organizations. Prior research has noted, however, that reliability comes at the expense of efficiency (Schulman, 2002; Creed, Stout, & Roberts, 1993).

In schools, there are plenty of errors. It is not a question of if an error will occur, but a question of when. The commitment to resilience, is about being “mindful about errors that have already occurred and to correct them before they worsen and cause more serious harm” (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2005, p. 68). When the unexpected happens, the organization rebounds with persistence, resilience, and expertise (Hoy, Gage, & Tarter, 2006). Weick and Sutcliffe (2005) outline three components of resilience: (1) the ability to absorb and preserve functioning despite the presence of adversity, (2) an ability to recover or bounce back from events, and (3) an ability to learn and grow from previous episodes of resilient action. A commitment to resilience requires continuous learning and a willingness to question what is happening. HROs structure flexibility into their operations so that rapidly changing conditions can be addressed with a more timely and effective response (Roberts, Yu, & Van Stralen, 2004).
Deference to Expertise

High reliability organizations defer to expertise, regardless of existing hierarchical structures that guide the majority of organizational decisions. Expertise is recognized and tapped in HROs regardless of an individual's place in the hierarchy and tends to guide the majority of organizational decisions. HRO literature suggests it is this willingness to value flexibility over rank that enhances organizational resilience.

Traditional school structures, while fluid, impose a fairly consistent hierarchy. Principals are seen as the leader, with teachers beneath administrators. Paraeducators are below teachers. However, given that the organization’s primary purpose is learning and that the place where learning occurs is in the classroom under the direction of the classroom teacher, teachers’ expertise should be recognized. Deference to expertise aligns with the current working definition of instructional leadership, which is not exerted by principals, but viewed as an effort that they share with teachers. In its most progressive forms, instructional leadership is cast as coaching, reflection, collegial investigation, study teams, explorations into uncertain matters, and problem solving (Glanz & Neville, 1997).

In high reliability organizations, teamwork is employed to cope with complex issues. Van Fenema (2005) has suggested that this type of collaborative elasticity is what allows team members to interact effectively and adapt well while under extreme pressure. Bierly, Gallagher, and Spender (2008) have also suggested that this type of interdependence allows for little or no slack between the different parts of a complex system. Laboratory work conducted by Nemeth and Kwan (1985) found that exposure to persistent minority views led to increases in divergent and original thought. In school structures, grade level teams, academic departments, and even schools within a school serve similarly as sources for minority views of issues that may be
traditionally overlooked. Effective organizations utilizing deference to expertise must strategically empower their multiple contributors to function at high levels without impeding progress.

However, a danger in this high interdependence among parts or departments is worthy of warning. If any part within the system fails at their purpose, then based on this interdependence, failure will likely occur within the entire system. Weick (2001) stated that, “When events get outside normal operational boundaries, knowledgeable people quickly self-organize into ad hoc networks to provide expert problem solving. These networks have no formal status and dissolve as soon as a crisis is over” (p. 71).

**Summary**

School leaders face the challenge of supporting school structures and cultures aimed at reaching all students. The expectation for similarly high levels of reliability has been studied in other disciplines and established a strong literature base for high reliability organizations for which the consequences of failure are catastrophic. These high reliability organizations rely on strengths more complex than just organizational structures or structural changes; rather, their success requires the cognitive processes of the organization’s members remain intentionally mindful. In a school setting, this individual mindfulness generates the ability to pay attention to details and may lead to actions that create the desired outcome of high reliability for all students. As previously established, this mindfulness is outlined in the five cognitive processes: preoccupation with failure, reluctance to simplify, sensitivity to operations, commitment to resilience, and deference to expertise. The following section connects the previously discussed constructs of high reliability organizations and mindfulness with current literature on
instructional leadership. The linkage between these literature bases is presented as each element of current instructional leadership standards is reviewed.

**Leadership Framework**

As early as 1992, the Association of Washington School Principals recognized that a new definition of principal leadership was being called for in light of changing standards emerging from research on effective schools literature. The outcome of efforts to reconceptualize the work of principals in the State is presented or outlined in the AWSP Leadership Framework (2014). This document’s goal was to identify the standards and provide resources and support needed to help with principal growth and development. In 2010, the Washington State Legislature approved a major overhaul to principal and teacher evaluation systems in the State of Washington. Part of that overhaul also called for a revision of State criteria for principal evaluation. As a result of this legislation, the AWSP Leadership Framework was updated and adopted as a framework for instructional leadership.

The AWSP Leadership Framework encompasses a combination of the national Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISSLC) Standards and findings from an assortment of research literature. As authors of the framework explain, “Only high quality research sources were selected, generally published in a reputable publication or peer-reviewed scholarly journal” (2013, p. 4). In reviewing and analyzing these research studies and resources, those assembling the AWSP Leadership Framework drew from many research authors and studies, including Sergiovanni (2000), Dufour and Eaker (1998), Hoy (2010), Darling-Hammond (2000), and Senge (2000). The framework they produced provides an overview and wide scale approach to understanding and informing instructional leadership in accordance with research-based literature. Aligned with the eight subcategories of State's evaluation criteria and providing a road
map for instructional leadership, the AWSP Leadership Framework includes the following eight criteria, which are here re-sequence and numbered in the order in which they will be discussed below:

1. *Creating a school culture that promotes the ongoing improvement of learning and teaching for students and staff* - An effective leader advocates, nurtures, and sustains a school culture and instructional program that promote student learning and staff professional growth.

2. *Monitoring, assisting, and evaluating effective instruction and assessment practices* - An effective leader monitors teaching and uses the evaluation process and other strategies to support teachers’ efforts to strengthen their teaching and learning in classrooms. Student growth data must be a substantial factor utilizing the OSPI approved student growth rubrics.

3. *Assisting instructional staff with alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment with state and local district learning goals* - An effective leader assumes responsibility to assist staff with the alignment of their teaching and classroom assessments with the state’s learning goals and the school district’s curriculum.

4. *Partnering with the school community to promote student learning* - An effective leader engages families and the community in ways that increase the success of students.

5. *Demonstrating commitment to closing the achievement gap* - Effective leaders who have a commitment to closing identified gaps in achievement between groups of students, monitor subgroup data and develop and encourage strategies to eliminate those gaps. Student growth data must be a substantial factor utilizing the OSPI approved student growth rubrics.
6. **Leading the development, implementation and evaluation of a data-driven plan for increasing student achievement, including the use of multiple student data elements** - Effective leaders rely on data to promote improvement through school improvement plans in all aspects of the school and across all of the eight principal evaluation criteria. Student growth data must be a substantial factor utilizing the OSPI approved student growth rubrics.

7. **Providing for school safety** - An effective leader teams with the school’s community to develop routines and expectations that create a physically and emotionally safe learning environment.

8. **Managing both staff and fiscal resources to support student achievement and legal responsibilities** - An effective leader manages human and fiscal resources in ways that enhance the likelihood that students will thrive and succeed in achieving the school’s goals for them. (*AWSP Leadership Framework, 2014*)

Six of these eight components of the AWSP Leadership Framework are examined below in order to highlight though applicable literature how the key constructs of mindfulness described in the first section of this chapter coincide with elements of the framework. While this section is focused on instructional leadership, a braiding of the instructional leadership literature and high reliability and mindfulness literature is offered as a way of illustrating the overlap between these diverse literature bases. The purpose of this braiding and overlap is the linkages between mindfulness and instructional leadership, which offers practical applications for reaching the high reliability currently lacking in school structures. While mindfulness instructional leadership literature may be lacking, clear connections and reasons for connecting the two fields exist. Note, however, that for the purpose of this study and literature review, the
elements of providing for school safety and managing staff and fiscal resources do not directly pertain to instructional leadership are thus not included.

**Creating a School Culture**

The first component of The AWSP Leadership Framework (2013) refers to the establishment of an effective school culture. Although the entire school community participates in and contributes to its shared culture, the principal must set the tone. As Knapp, Copland, and Talbert (2003) explain:

Leaders ask what is essential, what needs to be done and how can we get it done. An effective leader maintains visibility and transparency and creates a culture that fosters mutual accountability; it becomes the responsibility of all staff to make sure that all students are successful. An effective leader advocates, nurtures, and sustains a school culture and instructional program that promotes student learning and staff professional growth. (p. 12)

A school’s culture is a complex social phenomenon and thus not easily defined. School culture expert Anthony Muhammad (2009) defined it as “the set of norms, values and beliefs, rituals and ceremonies, symbols and stories that make up the ‘persona’ of the school” (p.12). In the most simple terms, the school’s culture reflects the manner and spirit in which all matters are perceived and addressed. A school’s culture drives the decisions, priorities, and – possibly most importantly – belief systems about teaching and learning. In traditional schools, the focus is often derailed to issues far removed from effective teaching and learning. When the adults within the school setting lack a common focus, alternative or less significant focal points such as rivalries or competing interests may upstage the school’s true focus of maximizing student learning. Muhammad (2009) further explains,
Transforming a toxic school culture marked by significant staff division into a healthy one does not happen by luck. Skillful leadership and a focus on key areas of school operation are critical to this process. A focus on learning, institutionalized celebration, and new teacher development are great places for school leaders to begin the quest for improved school culture. (p.115)

An effective instructional leader is one who articulates this common direction and inspires others to develop a shared sense of purpose. Gabriel (2009) further explains,

Whatever the context, the point is the same: if a group wants to move forward, it needs to develop an understood, agreed-on purpose. With a couple of word substitutions, you could ask those … questions of any leadership team or department in your school. If the team has a healthy culture, its members would likely give similar answers. (p.24).

School principals must affirm student learning as the primary focus of the school. Not only should student learning be at the forefront of the school’s purpose and mission, but the conviction that all students can learn is critical for this work as well. At the secondary level, principals are working with students in the later stages of their K-12 learning experience. The fruit of a learning-oriented focus and belief system is often presented through the benchmarks of students graduating on time and at a high rate. While such statistics may present measures of the system’s success, behind the scenes they also reflect the culture of the school. Are all students expected to graduate? Who is responsible for helping students who fall off the graduation track? These questions lie at the core of a school’s culture.

Charged with the responsibility of ensuring successful for all, leaders of effective school cultures must focus on avoiding failure just as much as do leaders of mindful high reliability organizations. In this context, preoccupation with failure does not denote that organizational
members live in constant fear of failure or of making mistakes. Instead, it means that they are constructively focused on looking for and identifying “weak signals” (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007), which may indicate the presence of a larger problem or issue. Recognizing and identifying weak signals and the potential problems they point to enables employees to utilize existing structures to work toward resolution of these issues, thus preventing long-term failure. Weick and Sutcliffe (2001) describe this preoccupation with failure as “treating any lapse as a symptom that something is wrong with the system, something that could have severe consequences if separate small errors happen to coincide at one awful moment” (p. 10). Stringfield and Reynolds (2008) explained that “small failures in key systems are monitored closely, because they can cascade into major problems” (p. 412). Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (1999) aid our understanding of the workings of reliability by considering the opposite: “It is mindlessness coupled with thoughtless actions that makes it difficult to cope with a continuous open-ended stream of surprises and non-routine events” (p. 86).

In addition to the focus on failure, a strong instructional leader must also be able to address the issues of teaching and learning in the school through conversations with the staff members and adults. Charlotte Danielson recognizes the importance of these crucial conversations: “Professional conversation is unparalleled in its potential for stimulating in-depth reflection and deep learning on the part of the teachers” (2009, p.45).

A major focus in the development of a culture of learning is learning accomplished by the school’s faculty and staff. While school leaders cannot possibly establish themselves as a curricula expert in all educational disciplines, they can work on leading teachers and establishing a culture of continuous learning. One argument supporting these continued conversations about teaching and learning points out that all members of an organization achieve better results if they
are clear on what is expected from them. Sometimes these conversations are a school leader's way of reaffirming the direction or expectations for an individual or a group of individuals. Mike Schmoker (2011) emphasizes that these conversations foster and maintain clarity. Schmoker’s argument affirms that such clarity precedes competence.

Even with clarity and a culture that values constructive conversations, any system which is dependent on the work of humans, such as an education system, will face setbacks. How the organization and culture respond to these setbacks is critical to working them through. Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld (1999, p.100) characterize resilience as being “not only about bouncing back from errors but also coping with surprises in the moment. Thus, to be resilient means to use the change that is absorbed.” Hoy (2002) also describes resiliency as follows: “Mindful organizations and leaders do not let failure paralyze; instead, they detect, contain, and rebound from mistakes” (p. 92).

Thus, within a high reliability culture, mindfulness and resilience – which reacts to and learns from unforeseen problems with a watchful yet open mind – are inextricably linked.

**Monitoring Effective Instructional Practices**

Another focus in instructional leadership is the monitoring of effective instructional practice. Effective leaders comprehend and demonstrate commitment to the design and implementation of the instructional program, as demonstrated by visiting classrooms regularly and prioritizing effective teaching as they work with teachers on instructional issues (DuFour & Marzano, 2009; Downey, 2004; and David, 2007). Such leaders consistently support colleagues’ efforts to strengthen teaching and learning in classrooms and work tirelessly to support staff in doing their best work (Chappuis, Chappuis, & Stiggins, 2009; Smylie, 2001; and Korthagen,
2001). This primary function of the instructional leader foregrounds the conviction that primary purpose of a school is learning.

Optimizing classroom instruction is the primary function of instructional leadership (Blase & Blase, 2007; McEwan, 2002; and Whitaker, 1997). Traditional school roles locate instruction and learning within the classroom, situating the classroom teacher at the forefront of the learning. However, instructional leadership is responsible for maximizing the quality of that instruction. In this capacity, instructional leaders may examine current methods and facilitate growth in teachers’ practices, strategies, techniques, and reflection. How to accomplish this is where the complexity arises.

One approach to improving instruction is to monitor what happens in a classroom (Hallinger, 2003; Marks & Printy, 2003; and Blase & Blase, 2007). Beyond the traditional requirements of evaluation, classroom observation provides a leader with valuable insight into the skill of the classroom teacher and trends in student performance across the school. Another common practice for monitoring instruction is the classroom walkthrough (DuFour & Marzano, 2009; Downey, 2004; and David, 2007). Traditional observation cycles make use of planned observation windows – visits of which the teacher is aware in advance and for which s/he can prepare. By contrast, the classroom walkthrough allows for informal and impromptu observations of the classroom in action, providing useful data about what actually happens there. Despite their brevity, walkthroughs provide rich information for the school’s instructional leader. Lemons (2009) explains,

If the principal wants to get a general sense of how a teacher performs and then have a substantive follow-up conversation about a particular teaching movement, five minutes
provides plenty of time. True, it’s a mere sliver of a teacher’s day. But five minutes in a classroom is a long time. (p. 32)

While these classroom walkthroughs furnish important information to the instructional leader, they can also help to break down any variances of formal observation scores as well. Robert Marzano explains, “Many schools routinely use brief, unannounced walk-throughs during which observers observe in teachers’ classrooms for three to five minutes. Observers can collect information to resolve any uncertainties in teacher scores. For example, if a teacher's self-rating is higher than an observer's rating, ratings from walk-throughs might reconcile the differences” (2012, p. 82). As indicated, the classroom walkthrough practice not only informs school leaders but can supply a useful tool in the formal evaluation process as well.

The use of classroom walkthroughs as a way of monitoring effective instructional practices anchors the leader closely to the work of the classroom teacher. In a similar way, the mindfulness literature places a heavy emphasis on sensitivity to operations. The primary operational purpose of schools is student learning and teaching. Hoy et al. (2006) maintain that such sensitivity is characterized by maintaining focus on the core function of the organization or, as Weick and Sutcliffe (2007) assert, paying attention to the front line where the real work gets done. Relationships and continuous conversations prove essential in handling risks that have not been anticipated (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007). Trust and respect between supervisors and employees are essential attributes found in an HRO where sensitivity to operations becomes part of the culture. To be sensitive to operations means to monitor and correct errors of foresight. All stakeholders in the organization must be continuously apprised of the events as they occur. Similarly, in the school setting, administrators must nurture ongoing interactions with those closest to the students, meaning teachers and counselors, in order to be aware of what is
happening on the front lines. Additionally, administrators need to be accessible for help when difficult situations develop, as it is often through such pivotal moments that the tenor of instructional leadership relative to the classroom is established.

Never before has our country seen such a focus on improving teacher and principal evaluation systems as a quality control measure aimed at the improving classroom learning. States across the country are redesigning teacher evaluation systems with hopes of improving student performance. The premise of this belief is that, with better evaluation systems, the school principal can better identify and address ineffective teachers. Aside from the political and union issues embedded in the argument of teacher evaluation, such feedback is critical for the development of all employees. Locally in the state of Washington, school districts have had to adopt instructional frameworks from esteemed experts in education such as Robert Marzano and Charlotte Danielson. These frameworks provide definitions of what effective instruction looks like. Both Marzano and Danielson’s frameworks specify robust definitions of effective instruction and possess many similarities. While each of these frameworks provides valuable resources to define teaching, the real value links the framework with the instructional practices of the teachers as a means of offering meaningful feedback.

However, the greatest value of such frameworks comes in useful feedback to the classroom teacher for analysis and reflection on ways to improve his or her instructional practice. For example, both frameworks provide lengthy rationale for the use of daily instructional objectives. These objectives are intended to provide a roadmap for student learning for a given day. Most classroom teachers would acknowledge the validity of using of classroom objectives, especially since use of objectives is not a new approach coined by either Marzano or Danielson. However, framing evaluation criteria via these tools allows the instructional leader and principal
a unique opportunity to engage in meaningful feedback and discussion with the teacher about, for instance, their individual use of classroom objectives. How were the objectives presented? Were they presented in a student friendly format? Could the objectives be measured through formative or summative assessment? These value-rich discussions lay the groundwork of shared methodologies and measures needed for improvement of instruction.

Alignment of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment with State and Local Goals

Another critical component of instructional leadership is the alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment with state and local district learning goals. Professional Learning Communities (PLC) have been established as a common approach for conducting this work within the school context. The focus of PLCs, which are comprised of teachers, administrators, and other staff collaborating on a common interest, is to help the school stay true to the focus of the organization’s core function: student learning. Frequent meetings and intentional conversations about the core of the business (i.e., learning) transpire in PLCs, where the experts working closest to the core carry the responsibility, autonomy, and authority to respond to students’ unique needs. DuFour (2006) contends that a PLC focused on the right issues can ensure greater consistency and guarantee a viable curriculum for all students. DuFour offers critical questions on which PLCs must stay focused:

• What do we want students to learn?
• How will we know if the students have learned it?
• How will we respond when a student experiences difficulty in learning?
• How will we enrich and extend the learning for those who are proficient?

The collaborative process of all stakeholders working to improve the learning culture of a school is critical. School change expert Michael Fullan has recognized that one of the key secrets
to change is meaningful interaction and shared purpose as an organization's employees work together (2011). This connection goes far beyond mere daily interactions; rather, the organization's members come together with a collective purpose and value in working together. The ideals of collaborative cultures are widely adopted in schools across the world through the use of PLCs. While each school’s definition and implementation of the PLC varies, a common awareness of the purpose these communities are serving permeates these collaborative groups. DuFour defines PLCs as “collaborative teams whose members work interdependently to achieve common goals for which members are mutually accountable. These common goals are directly linked to the purpose of learning for all” (2010, p.11).

Embedded in this belief system is a conviction that the power of a small group of professionals working together is far stronger than the power of one teacher working in isolation. As schools have worked at restructuring their time to allow for the meeting and progress of PLCs, many have faced challenges as members lack the knowledge of how to work collaboratively. Therefore, an important role for the instructional leader continues to be assisting adults in working together. When collaborative cultures are highly functional, the ideal of shared leadership can be accomplished. Establishing a culture of learning and collaboration is the foundational step for instructional leaders; however, merely establishing this culture is not sufficient. Once the culture has been established, the actions of the adults in the school can begin to shift to activities focused on learning.

While data about the effectiveness of PLCs in practice yields mixed results, their value aligns with the consistent focus on the operation of teaching and learning (Schmoker, 2004; Roy & Hord, 2007; Dooner, Mandzuk, & Clifton, 2008; Louis & Marks, 1998). Teachers or school officials may share some frustrations at the limitations of the PLC process and structure. Their
presence should never minimize or replace the responsibility of the school’s principal to keep the focus on the improvement of learning. In their empirical research, a vast majority of researchers (Hollins, McIntyre, DeBose, Hollins, & Towner, 2004; Huggins, Scheurich, & Morgan, 2011; Scribner, Cockrell, Cockrell, & Valentine, 1999) acknowledge the importance of principal instructional leadership to guide and foster the success of PLCs in a school setting. In an ideal setting, these PLCs are modeling the mindful concept of staying focused on small errors to prevent much larger ones. Hoy (2002) articulates the role of school leaders in keeping the organization – as well as PLCs – mindfully focused:

> Mindful organizations signal a constant concern for the unexpected. … [They] detect problems, make continuous adjustments, and prevent them from enlarging. They are unremitting in their scan for problems and never so removed from the day-to-day operations that they have difficulty understanding what is happening and why. Thus it is especially important for school leaders to stay close to teaching and learning in the classroom. (p. 98)

**Partnering with the School Community**

In their study, Weiss, Lopez, and Stark (2011) examined the role of the family in traditional school structures. They point out that,

> Under current law, family engagement is too often focused on a checklist of activities rather than on driving results, funding isn’t always targeted to the most effective practices, and family engagement is treated as a discrete activity rather than as an integrated strategy that should have a place across multiple programs. (p.1)
Built on the belief that children learn everywhere, not just in schools, this facet of the role of the school leader includes finding meaningful ways to foster student learning beyond the confines of the school campus.

The effective and skilled school leader must find ways to connect with the family and community beyond the traditional approaches. The concepts of family and community connection have been widely studied, offering a variety of tenets by which to approach the school’s connection with community and families. A series of studies have been completed to examine how a sense of welcome is created for parents and community members in schools (Auerbach, 2007; Barajas & Ronnkvist, 2007; Caspe & Lopez, 2006; McGrath, 2007; Phillipson & Phillipson, 2007). Related studies examining the issues of trust and connection between the school and family include Baker, Denessen, and Brus-Laven (2007) and McGrath (2007).

However, some of the most relevant previous studies in relation to this current study are those focusing on the roles that parents are given within school structures. These roles are often founded on an assumption that the school staff of teachers, principals, counselors, etc. are to be viewed as experts while the parents are relegated to non-expert status (Lightfoot, 2004). Often these approaches disregard the expertise of parents and impact of home culture and habits (Baker, Kessler-Sklar, Piotrkowski, & Parker, 1999). Failure to value parental and community involvement proves to be problematic for the school principal; as a result, a call for change from traditional approaches presents. Studies such as McDermott and Rothenberg (2000) stress the need alternative ways of connecting and communicating with parents.

As discussed in previous reviews of literature, school structures include varying experts and stakeholders within the organization. No one person within the organizational structure of a school is the source of all information or knowledge. Mindful HROs adopt a similar principle in
their deference to expertise. The process of deferring to expertise involves acknowledging people within the organization who possess the greatest expertise and placing decision-making authority on them, regardless of their position or title within the organization. As Weick and Sutcliffe (2001) elaborate:

The decision structure is hierarchical in the sense that important choices must be made by important decision makers, and important decision makers can participate in many choices. But the distinctive twist in HROs is that the designation of who is the ‘important’ decision maker keeps changing depending on the decision maker’s specialty. (p.74)

Hoy (2002) adds to this body of work by recognizing the application of this approach within the school setting. Hoy warns against some of the rigid administrative structures that may dominate a school or school district and stresses the importance of a fluid decision making process that delegates authority based on experience rather than just status or title. Most often this fluidity of structure and role may be considered among the school staff. One such example is the empowerment of teacher leaders. However, much of the literature calls for school leaders to generate alternative methods of valuing and connecting with parents and community in order to benefit from the informal expertise of this same group.

Closing the Achievement Gap

Effective instructional leaders know how to identify achievement gaps and lead systems to reduce them. Such principals identify the barriers to student achievement, demonstrate a high level of commitment to reducing the gap, and constantly monitor progress toward doing so. A school culture that values the collection of student data and multiple measures of student progress in order to monitor growth must be intentionally cultivated.
This focus on gathering data to serve the primary focus is similarly addressed in HROs. HROs usually exist in highly complex environments where reliability is crucial. “Knowing that the world they face is complex, unstable, unknowable, and unpredictable, HROs position themselves to see as much as possible” (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001, p. 11). In such complex environments, attempting to approach multifaceted problems with simple answers proves virtually impossible. Organizations focusing on their successes will often become complacent and settle for further simplification (Miller, 1993). Such simplifications can ultimately lead to decreased awareness of the unfolding of complex events and incidence of unanticipated changes. In his well-used book Good to Great, Collins (2005) warns that organizations and individuals who think of themselves as superior are usually those that end up stumbling worst when issues arise. Mediocrity can develop from the complacency that emerges in the wake of success and over-confidence.

People within organizations may be adept at finding patterns, but this approach frequently translates to categorizing what we observe in terms of what we already know, creating “blind spots” amid preconceived notions where believing is seeing (Weick, 2001). Hoy, Gage, and Tarter (2006) argue that schools need to simplify less and “see” more. Schools are complex and dynamic organizations in which teachers and administrators need to broaden their perspectives and be willing to seek below the surface and beyond what they believe to be familiar and apparent. Diagnostic and progress monitoring gauges must be implemented in order to look beyond a given symptom and identify unexpected root causes. “Mindful organizations and their leaders are also reluctant to accept simplifications because of the need to understand the subtleties of the situation. A basic goal of mindfulness is to simplify less and see more” (Hoy 2002, p. 97). This intentional focus on mindfulness develops an organization’s ability to best
prepare for the unexpected. In a school setting, much about the work is unexpected, but simplification is often used to explain away the unexpected. In following the principles of mindfulness and the HRO framework, this tendency toward simplification could be minimized.

Weick and Sutcliffe (2007) also contend that when administrators ignore an issue for a longer period of time, the issue then becomes less predictable and less likely to be addressed within the system. Detecting symptoms of failure as early as possible increases the possibility of preventing such failure. In schools, maintaining and using powerful databases (Reynolds & Stringfield, 2004) is critical to early detection of problems affecting students. Use of formative and summative assessments, collaborative analysis of student work, and teacher referrals (Bellamy, 2005) can also help with detecting threats that lead to failure. Embracing failure means that we are willing to attend to “weak signals” that may be symptoms of larger problems. By attending to the weak signals, one becomes more clear on which strategies to implement, and which practices and policies best preclude failures.

Data Driven Planning

The instructional leader also has the responsibility to lead an inquiry process within the school which collects and scrutinizes data for the purpose of continued school improvement. Each school must develop and pursue a plan for improvement. These plans usually include the elements of improving reading, writing, and math performance along with some element of district directed goals.

The formation of this plan starts with an analysis of data – a phase some instructional leaders refer to as ‘definition of the current reality.’ This dissection of information and data in preparation for the school improvement planning process is not done by the principal in
isolation. This key activity should be performed in a collaborative format, sometimes by “data teams” established by the principal:

A data team expands the control of data beyond a handful of administrators and allows a group of staff members to develop and model data analysis skills. Some of the key functions of a data team include working with staff members to focus data use on a set of essential questions, identifying data that should be disseminated to different groups in the school, developing a schedule for data dissemination and analysis, helping staff members analyze and interpret data, engaging staff members in setting targets for improvement, supplying individual teachers with data, and responding to data request from staff members. (Lachat, 2006, p. 19)

The use of data teams allows for a shared leadership among those responsible for data in the school. No longer does the principal play the role of primary distributor of data, while teachers are the receivers of data. Instead, the data team carries the responsibility of providing and analyzing that data for all stakeholders in the school. Data teams are best designed to feature widespread representation of school staff. This shift in responsibility also renders all teachers and classroom-based staff more conversant with the data that impacts their instructional planning.

The analysis and application of data in schools has become an overwhelming task for the school principal to navigate. At one time a perception predominated that the school leaders did not have enough data available to them to engage in analysis and planning; as a result, schools and school districts started to gather data for practically everything. Today’s school leader faces an often overwhelming inundation of data from many different sources – data about academic progress, standardized test scores, graduation rates, college success rates, attendance, substance abuse, perception data, and more.
The challenge is to sort through this mass of data and utilize elements most beneficial for improved teaching and learning. Looking at the right data is one of the critical components for instructional leadership. Holcomb (2012) warns, “The bad news is that schools sometimes use the wrong data in the wrong ways while neglecting other vital and useful information. The danger is a tendency to generate data for the sake of having more data, without creating the context in which those data will become useful information” (p. 5). Experience and an understanding of Holcomb’s position can help the instructional leader recognize that a key to data use is being able to select the data sources best suited to telling the full story of the question being asked.

Data rich environments sometimes encourage the dangerous strategy of selecting data that tell the leader what they want to hear. For example, if a school’s principal is trying to advocate for additional resources to continue funding for her high school’s reading intervention program, she may persuasively share data about the success of the students within the program, painting a picture of drastic improvement. Likely this data will indicate a starting reading level, the amount of progress made, and some sort of grade level equivalencies of the students’ reading ability. While this data may suggest a compelling rationale for continued funding of the reading intervention, it may not tell the full story of the student learning. What other interventions have been contributing to this student growth? Is there transference of skill to other academic areas, or is the increase in reading ability perceived only within the context of the program? What is the natural development (outside the program) of reading skills for students in this age group? Isolating the analysis of the data to a few perspectives often leaves some key understandings missing. This school may make a false claim and inefficient investment in continuing funding. To avoid this pitfall, data must be examined through several different lenses and from multiple
perspectives. Some instructional leaders use the concept of “triangulating” the data, meaning looking at an issue from three different data points. This approach helps to minimize the risk of falsely attributing improvement based on limited or misleading data.

As suggested by the use of the data team, instructional leaders can utilize data not only to inform school-wide efforts, but to assist classroom teacher as well. Thousands of examples of data are presented to teachers each week, yet many miss the opportunity to understand what that data tells them. In our generation of high accountability, an unnatural reliance develops on performance data from state and nationwide assessments as indicators of our instructional success. However, the rich classroom environment is filled with formative data right at the teacher’s fingertips. Some of these data elements include how students respond, perform, demonstrate, or exhibit their mastery of the learning targets. A skilled teacher recognizes these indicators as early signals of success or challenges. The instructional leader can help facilitate adult learning for classroom teachers by identifying these examples and drawing out professional growth opportunities.

A critical component of the PLC process includes analysis of classroom-based data to inform instruction. Teams of teachers working interdependently analyze their student data on formative assessments to better navigate next steps in their instruction. The most powerful data is not harbored in the summative data yielded by standardized assessments, but instead can be gathered by teachers from formative assessment alongside their collaborative team. Even with a collaborative team, the principal must serve as the instructional leader who develops these protocols and expectations in order to aid with the growth and development of instruction.

HROs pay attention to weak signals, also called near-miss events. Reason (1990) discusses the importance of near-miss reporting and the necessity of incorporating it as part of
the organizational culture. In schools, a team approach to reviewing data maintained in the databases would foster and support such a failure-alert culture. Hoy (2002) adds to the reason for this preoccupation with failure: “Mindful leaders and organizations avoid preoccupation with their successes, in part, because success breeds contentment and sometimes arrogance, which ultimately leads to vulnerability. Instead, mindful organizations pay attention to small mistakes and seek to eliminate them” (p. 97). This preoccupation with failure leads to the organizational mindfulness.

**Summary**

The Association of Washington School Principals’ Leadership Framework (2014) provides an operational definition of instructional leadership. While this framework was developed to identify new state standards and provide resources and support for principal growth and development, it also brings clarity to the components of instructional leadership within the state of Washington. The previous sections braided together the concepts of instructional leadership presented through the AWSP Leadership Framework (2014) with related constructs of mindfulness. This braiding of concepts was done to illustrate practical applications for reaching the high reliability lacking in existing school structures.

**Chapter Conclusion**

Due to its importance and complexity as well as the nationwide push for school reform, instructional leadership is an area widely studied. Sheppard (1996) provided a synthesis of existing studies that support the hypothesis of a strong link between effective instructional leadership and effective work on the part of classroom teachers. Leading schools effectively encompasses a wide array of roles, each of them complex in itself. According to Sheppard and others, the effective instructional leader of today is expected to frame and communicate school
goals, supervise and evaluate classroom instruction, coordinate the curriculum, monitor student progress, protect instructional time, maintain high visibility, provide incentives for teachers, support professional development, and provide incentives for learning.

This chapter has examined efforts of the Association of Washington School Principals to develop tools and evaluation frameworks to assist in defining the day-to-day application of instructional leadership skills in the school. From the inception of the AWSP framework in the early 1990s to 2010 when the state legislature dictated a significant overhaul, these elements for instructional leadership stand at the forefront of support, training, and development of the school principal. This review of literature also connects the tenets of instructional leadership with those of high reliability organizations and mindfulness. While a limited range of studies have examined the connection between HROs and schools, a clear link between the operational challenges faced by both types of organization and effective strategies for meeting them has been established.

This connection between instructional leadership and high reliability organizations highlights a series of theoretical underpinnings that can provide school principals with alternative ways to address the continued flat lining of academic achievement in the US. Hoy (2003) cautions that reliance on the routine process of approaching tasks and operations as they have always been approached results in principals and teachers falling victim to automatic and often ineffective responses to problems. In light of this issue, continued study of the connections between high reliability organizations, the tool of mindfulness, and instructional leadership will advance the literature base and its application for school principals. An increased understanding of how to improve instructional leadership contributes a much-needed addition to the literature.
base. Based on this literature review, this quantitative research study to measure current principal mindfulness practices in instructional leadership is warranted.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The requirement within educational accountability policy and lack of growth in student outcomes has simulated researchers to focus attention on developing understanding of instructional leadership (e.g., Crum & Sherman, 2008). Differences in schools related to size, purpose, structure, faculty and student demographics among other variables, have been perceived as influencing the perceptions and behaviors of educators (e.g., Firestone et al., 1984). Previous studies have also begun to explore the relevance of mindfulness and reliability for educator practice including efforts to improve teaching and learning (e.g., Hyland, 2013). This quantitative study builds on previous research by placing emphasis not only on principals’ beliefs and values, but on their accustomed practices for working with their teachers to increase student outcomes as measured by a survey instrument known as the Principal Resilience for Educator and Student Success (PRESS). The purposes of this study were (a) to describe the self-reported instructional practices and beliefs of principals as related to mindfulness in their leadership for school improvement, and (b) to analyze differences between secondary and elementary principals in terms of their mindful instructional practices and beliefs.

The study purposes are grounded theoretically in two bodies of research. The first was developed from the Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP) Leadership Framework (Kipp et al., 2014), a framework created to guide the principal evaluation process in Washington State. The second is based in HRO literature with particular attention given to the application of mindfulness practices to the work of educational leaders (Hoy et al., 2006).
This chapter presents the methods followed in conducting this quantitative study. The ensuing material is divided into six sections. The first section will explain the sampling procedures used; the second section explores the instrumentation and the development of the survey tool; the third section will outline the procedures for data collection; the fourth section will explore the data management procedures used as well as descriptions of the descriptive and inferential analysis; the fifth section will examine the ethical issues embedded; and the sixth section will discuss the limitations and delimitations of the study. The chapter will close with a concluding summary.

Sampling

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) School Report Card database for 2014 was used to create the sampling frame for this study. According to OSPI reports, Washington State contains 2097 regular public schools (i.e., not alternative, juvenile detention center, hospital, credit recovery, GED, etc.). Based on the variable “grade span,” schools were sorted to create three groups or strata. The first stratum, given the attribute “elementary,” enrolled students from Pre-Kindergarten to grade 6 or some arrangement of these grade levels. The second stratum, given the attribute “intermediate,” included schools that enrolled students in grades 6 through 8 as well as the “comprehensive campuses” (e.g., grades 1-12 or grades PK-8). The third stratum of schools, termed “secondary,” included schools with enrollment of students in grades 9 through 12 or some configuration of these grades. The number of schools in each stratum was calculated and the following percentages generated using the total number of schools: 58% percent of the schools were elementary, 26% were intermediate, and 16% were secondary. These calculated percentages were then used in determine the number of schools to create a proportionally stratified random sample.
Since the number of schools in the sampling frame was 2097, McNamara’s (1994) formula for determining sample size was used. A margin of error of 5% and a confidence level of 99% was used to calculate the number of subjects needed. Specifically, a sample of 505 schools was identified, which was then divided using the proportion of schools for each stratum discussed above. The result of these calculations resulted in 293 elementary, 131 intermediate, and 81 secondary schools needed to create a representative sample of regular public schools in the state. For the purpose of this study, the 293 elementary schools will be referred to as those in the elementary study group, and the combination of the 131 intermediate and 81 secondary schools will be referred to as the secondary study group.

Instrumentation

In the spring of 2014, the collaborative team of researchers previously discussed in chapter one, started to work on identifying and later developing a survey that could be used to examine instructional leadership and mindfulness of principals. The M-Scale, which had been created by Hoy et al. (2004) was examined as it is a questionnaire that measures the collective mindfulness for an entire school. The team determined, however, that items on the M-Scale did not tie directly or clearly to instructional leadership given its language that addressed general operational and managerial issues. Since members of the team shared interest in studying mindfulness in the instructional leadership of principals, the decision was made to create a tool that would allow practitioners to self-report relevant practices and beliefs.

The survey that was developed included items that were aligned to five cognitive processes of mindfulness presented in literature on high reliability organizations (HROs) with the criteria and definition of instructional leadership as provided by the AWSP Leadership Framework (2014). Based on the alignment map developed, a large bank of questions was
developed, each of which aimed to measuring principals’ perceptions of instructional leadership practices. The research team evaluated the quality and effectiveness of each draft question and narrowed the bank of questions to a select set. Careful attention was paid to balance the number of questions aligned with each of the instructional leadership elements enumerated in the AWSP Framework (2014) as well as in the HRO and mindfulness literature. An overview of this alignment is presented below in Table 1. Rodriguez (2015) offers a description of the development of the PRESS including a review of literature that supported each item. One of the intentions in creating the tool using an integrated framework was to provide school leaders with a simple but meaningful tool to assess and reflect upon their instructional leadership.

In August 2014, the researchers conducted an initial field study by distributing the survey tools to approximately 65 school administrators. The purpose of this field study was to test the survey items and obtain feedback from participants regarding the efficacy of the wording, layout, clarity, and instructions. Team members reviewed the results from this field test to identify and reduce potential biases that would jeopardize score reliability and validity. Based on the feedback provided by field test participants, researchers revised and improved the tools. The final survey tool was then uploaded into Qualtrics and the biographical items added to the end per standard survey protocol (Babbie, 1990). Specifically, principals were also asked their gender, ethnic/racial identification, years at the school, and years in position.

Table 1

**PRESS Mapped to Mindfulness and AWSP Frameworks**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRESS</th>
<th>Mindful</th>
<th>AWSP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compliance is a big part of my job</td>
<td>Simplify</td>
<td>Curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRESS</td>
<td>Mindful</td>
<td>AWSP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help my teachers use data to improve their teaching</td>
<td>Operations</td>
<td>Curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Express empathy for a teacher who is having a difficult day</td>
<td>Failure</td>
<td>Curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School's achievement data reflects what students have learned</td>
<td>Failure</td>
<td>Gap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wonder what needs to be done to improve student performance</td>
<td>Simplify</td>
<td>Gap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give directives to teachers or students who have repeatedly messed up</td>
<td>Operations</td>
<td>Gap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treat similar student infractions in a consistent way</td>
<td>Simplify</td>
<td>Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When teachers react defensively to criticism, I ignore their reactions</td>
<td>Expertise</td>
<td>Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raise concerns about student learning with staff</td>
<td>Failure</td>
<td>Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tire of dealing with the same problem teachers or students</td>
<td>Resilience</td>
<td>Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents are dismissive of school's responsibility for all students</td>
<td>Simplify</td>
<td>Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When a student insults me, I stop so he or she can calm down</td>
<td>Resilience</td>
<td>Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask a lot of questions when I meet with parents of students</td>
<td>Expertise</td>
<td>Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First impressions in classroom are frequently wrong</td>
<td>Failure</td>
<td>Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead data driven dialogues with teachers to keep conversation on track</td>
<td>Operations</td>
<td>Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look signals when talking with students about how they are feeling</td>
<td>Resilience</td>
<td>Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I dwell on what I could have done better when teachers don’t improve</td>
<td>Failure</td>
<td>Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solicit from staff solutions to instructional problems</td>
<td>Expertise</td>
<td>Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel tension before meeting that involves conflict with staff</td>
<td>Resilience</td>
<td>Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know what needs to be done to improve the performance of students</td>
<td>Simplify</td>
<td>Instruction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The complete instrument sent to principals featured a total of 20 items (see Appendix A Sample PRESS Survey). The survey question design offered two categories of response options:
the first asked for a frequency of occurrence reflecting a recent experience; the second asked for an indication of the degree to which the respondent agreed with a given statement, to be registered on a Likert scale. Likert (1932) is credited with developing the tool of measuring attitudes by asking survey participants to mark statements on a scale based on their level of agreement or disagreement. Items 1-10 related to behavior and were scored on a four-point Likert scale. Possible responses on this scale included (1) rarely, (2) sometimes, (3) often, and (4) very often. Items 11-20 related to beliefs and were scored on a five-point Likert scale including (1) strongly disagree, (2) somewhat disagree, (3) neither agree nor disagree (4) agree somewhat, and (5) strongly agree.

Data Collection Procedures

Once the PRESS was uploaded to Qualtrics, a random sample of 505 principals was drawn using the proportions discussed earlier in sampling section. The 505 principals selected were responsible for 293 elementary schools, 131 intermediate schools, and 81 high schools. The research team utilized online resources to identify updated principal names for each selected school, as well as to obtain principal e-mail addresses for survey distribution. The research team modeled the collection procedure based on Dillman (1978), who outlines a recommended four-phase administration process consisting of the advance-notice, distribution of the survey after initial contact, a follow-up sent after the survey, and a final follow-up with those sent the initial survey. Study participants were first contacted with an informational email notifying them of their selection for the study, fully outlining the purpose of the study, and included a link to the PRESS (see Appendix B Emailed Survey Letter). The first letter provided a clear statement their participation was voluntary. The email also assured them that while the results of the study would be released, their identity would remain confidential. In subsequent weeks, emails were
sent to participants thanking them of their involvement and reminding those who had not responded to be do so. The last invitation included notification of the survey deadline that ended the data collection phase of the study.

Completion by each study participant was monitored to ensure that the sample size met the requirements of the population. The use of Qualtrics allowed for immediate access to data and survey results. To protect the confidentiality of the survey participants, each school was issued a unique identification number, with the corresponding school remaining unknown to the research team.

School data from the School Report Card website provided by the Office of Superintendent of Instruction (OSPI) were downloaded. The data from principal respondents and their school’s data from OSPI were merged into a single file for analysis. The school level data included student demographic data, teacher demographic data, and some summative state level assessment results.

Data Management and Analysis

Since a stratified random sample was used, the data were first analyzed to ensure that the respondents provided a valid representation for the sample. Since not all selected participants responded, a variety of factors were evaluated to assess threats to the generalizability of the study results. Specifically, variables examined included total student enrollment, minority enrollment, and percentage of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch between schools of respondents and non-respondents.

Data management included replacing missing scores with the appropriate measure of central tendency on PRESS items as occasionally a respondent did not answer all of the questions. Researchers replaced each absent value with the median score for that survey item. In
addition, the survey was intentionally designed to reduce bias by including eight negatively scored items. Examples of this include negatively phrased items such as “Tire of dealing with the same problem teachers or students” which were indicative of behavior or beliefs that do not demonstrate mindful instructional leadership. To equate the values for each item for analysis, these items were then reverse coded so that all high values represented alignment with mindful instructional leadership.

**Descriptive Analysis**

Descriptive analysis was the first of several levels of analysis conducted using data from the PRESS. These measures of central tendency allowed the research team to identify and look for the following measures: means, medians, and modes, as well as describing the variability of the survey responses. One purpose of this study was to capture the self-reported instructional practices and beliefs of current principals as related to mindfulness in their leadership for school improvement. To analyze for this purpose, the mean, median, and standard deviation for each of the PRESS items and school variables were separately calculated.

While the self-reported scores on the items provide information about the specific beliefs and practices of principals, they are difficult to assess the overall pattern on each of the cognitive processes for respondents. Factor scores were generated for each of the five cognitive processes to examine how the responding principals reported their practices and beliefs. These values were calculated in a way to offset the difference of scale and quantity of questions for comparison. As previously demonstrated the ten questions that examined practices were reported on a four point ordinal scale, whereas the questions that examined beliefs were reported on a five point ordinal scale. To equate these two values those practice based questions were assigned an adjustment factor of 5.0, and those beliefs based questions were assigned an adjustment factor of 4.0. Each
cognitive process was also measured using a varying number of individual questions. To offset the number of questions the mean value of each individual questions were combined and a mean value for the entire cognitive process was calculated. Finally, the reverse worded questions had their values reversed and the mean scores were recalculated. This was done so that high mean values represent mindful instructional leadership and the low mean values describe the opposite. Using these calculations a formula was generated for creating a score for each cognitive process. The formula that was used is as follows. This sample formula demonstrates how the deference to expertise cognitive process score was calculated: Composite Score = \( Mean [ ((M \text{ of } Q_1) \text{ (Adjustment Factor }}) + ((M \text{ of } Q_2) \text{ (Adjustment Factor }}) + ((M \text{ of } Q_3) \text{ (Adjustment Factor}}) \].

**Inferential Analysis**

In alignment with the second purpose of this study the differences were analyzed between secondary and elementary principals in terms of their mindful instructional practices and beliefs. While school and structural differences exist between grade levels, instructional leadership can be better defined by understanding the differences that demarcate practices among principals these two grade levels. As noted previously, for the purpose of this particular study, the information provided by principals from the schools with Pre-Kindergarten to grade 6 was used to represent elementary schools and principals of intermediate and secondary schools were those included in the secondary group. To examine these differences a *Mann-Whitney U* test was used. The *Mann-Whitney U* is an appropriate test to use as a way of comparing two independent samples.

**Ethics**

Participation in this study was voluntary and followed all guidelines of Washington State University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) since the research involved human subjects.
Roberts (2010) offers a framework for ensuring that human rights protection that was used in this study. Careful consideration was given to ensure that each of these conditions was met. Once the schools were selected, the principals were contacted via email (see Appendix B Emailed Survey Letter) with a letter communicating the goals of the study, outlining what participants could expect, and clarifying their role in the study. The communication also contained an assurance that participants’ identities would be protected and remain confidential. Since this study was based on the AWSP Leadership Framework and since ethical considerations affect how a principal’s work is perceived or interpreted, a careful consideration in the study design was to maintain protection of the participants so that their responses would have no impact on either their employment or the evaluation of their professional performance. Perceptions of this issue are complicated by the fact that the leadership framework on which the survey tool was based was the same framework by which most principals are evaluated. The confidentiality clauses promised that the researchers would remain unaware of what school or what principal was responding a specific way. This precaution eliminated potential risks for the respondents.

Communication sent to the study participants also ensured that disclosure of the results would be delivered to all participants. The purpose of this disclosure was to serve as feedback to refine the instructional leadership skills of the participants. In alignment with the purpose of the study, communication of this information would encourage continued growth of the study participants.

As stated above, one intent of this study was to arrive at findings that would be generalizable across schools and school districts. McNamara’s (1994) formula for determining sample size was used. This was a critical ethical issue so that the findings of this study would not only be considered legitimate in the field, but also would not miscommunicate the importance of
mindful instructional leadership. Overlooking this consideration would have left a lot of the findings to chance. Since the findings are a direct reflection of a professional’s practice, this consideration was key in the design and development of both the survey tool an in the plan for communicating the study findings and outcomes.

**Limitations and Delimitations**

This study was intended to offer generalizability beyond the sample selected and beyond the school principals that participated in the study. To attempt to reach this level of generalizability, careful attention was paid to the quality of analysis and sampling considerations. However, despite the solid study design, some limitations and delimitations remain.

One delimitation is the fact that the survey was conducted on a relatively small statewide scale. The demands of conducting a nationwide survey fell outside the scope of this research project and the work of this collaborative team. As a result, the generalizability of the findings to other principals in other states may be limited, especially at the secondary level, given that these schools tend to be smaller in size in Washington State than other states. The teachers in the State are also unlike those in many states. Washington school districts tend to have strong teacher unions that exert influence on teacher contracts that may potentially impact the ways principals engage in instructional leadership.

Another limitation of this study is that each participant in the study was self-reporting their instructional leadership practices and perceptions of their own practices. The nature of this self-reporting allows participants to indicate either a positive or negative bias toward their own work. In the design of the survey instrument, careful consideration was given to devoting multiple questions or responses to measuring any one element of instructional leadership in an effort to dilute bias. However, a limitation of this study remains the use of self-reported data.
Kelley, Clark, Brown, and Sitzia (2003) further caution that survey studies often produce a lack of detail about the survey topic, since responses are limited to the design of the survey. As a result, the findings from this study should remain focused on the general, descriptive purpose of the study and not be misconstrued to establish definitive answers about instructional leadership, principal evaluation, or educational policy.

Immediately following the start of the survey data collection, a tragic school shooting occurred in a school district in Washington, and specifically at a high school. While the school directly involved may or may not have been a participant in the study, other school districts were impacted by a distressed atmosphere and increased focus on school safety. In the weeks that followed the school shooting, many school administrators were too focused on reviewing and implementing additional safety procedures to devote time to participation in this study. As a result, initial participation from secondary principals in the study was limited. When additional requests were made for participation outside the initial time frame, additional principals were available to participate. Regardless, the impact of this tragedy imposed a limitation on the study.

Another limitation involved principal contact information was gathered by researching each school’s website. Most of the school principal identifications could be gathered from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) in Washington. However, gathering contact information proved more challenging. Many school district websites were found to be either incomplete, lacking staff contact information, or listing outdated information. The unreliable nature of the online information forced the researchers to find other ways of gathering the data for the school. Even so, incomplete aspects of school contact information for the principal comprised another limitation.
This study was conducted with schools and school leaders within the state of Washington during the 2014-2015 school year. Additionally, the study was carefully aligned with the leadership framework developed by the AWSP. While this framework carries applicability beyond the state of Washington, a delimitation of this study was that it focused exclusively on schools and leadership within a single state. For generalizability beyond the State of Washington, a similar study would need to be completed with the inclusion of more states.

In designing of the sample group for this study, the research team purposefully did not include or designate categories for specialty schools or private schools. Since this study partially focuses on the secondary school principal, a delimitation of the study is the lack of inclusion of these specialty schools. In Washington State, specialty schools include alternative schools, Skill Centers, STEM schools, schools of the arts, and other specialized, content-focused schools. The size, organization, leadership structure, and focus of schools vary greatly across the State of Washington. Additionally, private schools were excluded from the study. For the purpose of understanding the instructional leadership practices of the school principal, only public, state-funded schools were included.

**Chapter Conclusion**

Careful methodological consideration was given to design a study aimed at appropriately answering and addressing the research questions presented in chapter one. The collaborative nature of this study, the intentional study design, the cross sectional survey design, and the specific data analysis procedures utilized all contributed to the generalizability of study findings for instructional leadership in the State of Washington. The next chapter will discuss the results of this study.
CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Instructional leadership has been a widely studied topic for over four decades. In virtually every reform effort, the call to improve teacher practices and student outcomes points out the importance and need for instructional leadership. The complex role of the school principal today requires a set of skills reaching far beyond management of the school and school facility (Edmonds, 1979; Elmore, 2000; Hallinger, 2005; Spillane et al., 2003). Professional standards for educational leadership fully embrace the role of principals as instructional leaders. Principals are trained to develop their knowledge and skill needed to support teacher growth, socialized to embrace norms and beliefs associated with improvements in student achievement, and evaluated based on their performance as instructional leaders. This dissertation was focused on describing and analyzing the mindful instructional leadership skills and attitudes of elementary and secondary principals. To accomplish this task a survey, Principal Resilience for Education and Student Success (PRESS) was developed and administered to a sample of current school principals in the state of Washington. This study had two purposes. First, the study described the self-reported instructional behaviors and beliefs of principals as related to mindfulness in their leadership for school improvement. Better understanding is needed about principal involvement and acceptance of instructional leadership as part of their daily work life. Second, the study analyzed differences between secondary and elementary principals in terms of their instructional leadership. While school and structural differences exist between grade levels (Firestone, Herriott, & Wilson, 1984; Cohen & Neufield, 1981; Boyer, 1983; Hage, 1980; Reed & Himmler, 1985; Blumberg & Greenfield, 1986), instructional leadership may be better defined by appreciating differences that demarcate practices between principals in these two levels.
This chapter will present the statistical analysis and a detailed discussion of the data provided through the statewide administration of the PRESS. Questions presented in the PRESS measured the self reported beliefs and practices of elementary and secondary principals in Washington State. The chapter is organized into several subsections. The chapter begins with a descriptive analysis of the responding principals and the schools where they serve as lead administrator. This section describes the responding principals and their schools utilizing information provided from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the demographic information from those who participated in the survey. The next section provides a detailed analysis of the twenty items that form the PRESS. This section discusses measures of central tendency including means, medians, and standard deviations. This section also offers a composite view of the scores that report the braided practices and beliefs within mindfulness and instructional leadership. The third section provides an inferential analysis that examines the differences that exist between elementary and secondary principals on the PRESS items. This analysis is completed using a Mann-Whitney U test to evaluate the differences in ordinal variables as well as the calculated effect size for those differences for which significance was observed. The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings.

**Descriptive Analysis of Responding Principals and their Schools**

According to the OSPI database in 2014, the State of Washington included 1,201 schools identified as regular elementary schools, 545 identified as intermediate schools (middle schools and junior highs), and 335 identified as high schools. Using a random stratification process previously discussed in chapter three, the sample was developed. This sample group included 293 elementary schools, 131 intermediate schools, and 81 high school schools. For the purpose of this study, the 293 elementary schools will be referred to as those in the elementary study
group, and the combination of the 131 intermediate and 81 secondary schools will be referred to as the secondary study group. A total of 168 principals or 33% responded to the request to participate in the PRESS study. Table 2 provides a breakdown of the respondents to the survey. The table indicates that 78 elementary principals responded representing 46.4% of the respondents, and 90 secondary principals responded representing 53.6% of the respondents.

Table 2

School Grade Levels of Responding Principals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>46.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School/Junior High</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>30.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>23.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, the principals were asked to provide their demographic information as well as indicate their level of education and length of time in the profession. These questions sought to provide better understanding of the composition of the group. Respondents were asked to identify their race, gender, the number of years in their current principal position, the number of total years of principal experience, and the highest educational degree they have obtained. Table 3 shows the frequency and percentages of the respondents on these demographic variables of ethnicity/race and gender. These percentages are similar to those provided by OSPI (2015) in its personnel reports.
Table 3

Demographics of Responding Principals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>93.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic Origin</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaskan Native</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>40.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>59.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The responding principals also indicated their leadership experience in two different ways. The respondents were first asked about their years of experience in their current principal position. The average principal reported being in their current position for a $M = 6.2$ ($SD = 5.4$). The responses were grouped into those with 0-3 years experience representing 41.1% of the principals, 4-7 years experience representing 28.5% of the principals, 8-12 years representing 17.1% of the principals, and 13 or more years representing 13.3% of the principals. As a follow up question, the respondents were asked to disclose their total years of principal experience. The total years of principal experience was observed as $M = 9.6$, $SD = 6.0$. Seventeen percent of the respondents had 0-3 years of total experience, 24.8% of the principals have 4-7 years experience, 23.6% of the principals have between 8-12 years experience, and 33.9% of the principals have 13 or more years experience. This experience data also indicates that many principals have more years experience than they have in their current job, indicating that the respondents have
additional principal experience prior to their current position. This is a noteworthy finding when considering the training and background of the principals.

Principals were also asked about their level of education or highest degree completed. This data indicated the expected outcome, as principal certification in Washington requires a Masters Degree. The respondents indicated that 97.5% had obtained a Masters Degree and 2.5% had obtained a Doctorate Degree.

Information provided from the 2013 OSPI Report Card Database was downloaded to assess the student demographic information for each respondent's school and for the sample. In this analysis, school population was reviewed to better understand the size of the school ($M = 606$, $Mdn = 477$, $SD = 424$). Schools were grouped as small schools representing 19.6% of the schools, medium schools representing 61.9% of the schools, large schools representing 11.9% of the schools, and very large schools representing 6.5% of the schools. Statewide schools in Washington, on average, are smaller than this responding population represents ($M = 486$, $Mdn = 450$, $SD = 385$). Table 6 provides a detailed breakdown of the frequency of this school size data.

Table 4

| School Size of Responding Principals |
|---|---|---|
| Variable | Frequency | Percent |
| Small Schools ($< 300$ students) | 33 | 19.6 |
| Medium Schools ($301 - 900$ students) | 104 | 61.9 |
| Large Schools ($901 - 1500$ students) | 20 | 11.9 |
| Very Large Schools ($\geq 1500$ students) | 11 | 6.5 |

Other information about the schools involved in this study were considered including student demographics, student participation in special programs, and teacher data. Each of these
variables were reported in the 2013 OSPI Report Card Database. These variables include: race/ethnic breakdown of students, percentage of students served by free and reduced lunch, migrant enrollment, bilingual enrollment, the number of students per classroom, average teaching experience of the school staff, and the percentage of the staff that have a Masters Degree. Table 5 shows the measures of central tendency for the data including the mean, median, and standard deviation.

Table 5

_School Demographics of Responding Principals (n=168)_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>Mdn</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% Free or Reduced Lunch</td>
<td>49.4</td>
<td>49.2</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% American Indian/Alaskan Native</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Asian</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Pacific Islander</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>.2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Black</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Hispanic</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% White</td>
<td>62.8</td>
<td>64.6</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Migrant</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>.1</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Transitional Bilingual</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Special Education</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students Per Classroom</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Years of Teaching Experience</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Teachers with at least a Masters Degree</td>
<td>74.0</td>
<td>74.0</td>
<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Free and reduced lunch enrollment in the responding schools had a mean percentage of 49.4% \( (SD = 23.1) \). While the distribution of free and reduced lunch was a normal distribution,
there are some additional statistics that should be carefully considered when evaluating the composition of the responding schools. Nineteen percent (n = 32) of the schools had free and reduced lunch rates in excess of 70%. Schools in Washington are considered a school of poverty when their free and reduced lunch percentage hits this 70% mark.

Just as with the principals, most of the students in the schools were classified as White. Specifically, the median school in the study had a study body that was 64% White. The next largest student demographic group was Hispanic where the median school has a student population that was just 13% Hispanic. The positive skewed distribution was representative of the high number of schools (n = 113) that have below the mean enrollment of Hispanic students. At the same time there were 5 schools in the sample whose principals responded that have Hispanic student populations exceeding 75%.

Mean percentage of enrolled students who are migrant was 2.6%. Careful review of this data provides an interesting look at the composition of the schools in this study. Seventy-nine schools of the respondents reported serving 0 migrant students. This high number of schools absent of migrant students accounts for the low median value of just .1% of migrant students. In a similar reflection, the mean percentage of transitional bilingual students was 8.6%. Within this data set, 17 of the schools reported serving 0 bilingual students. These 17 schools represent 10.1% of the total responding population.

The percentage of students served by special education was also analyzed for understanding of the responding schools. As reported in Table 5, the mean of the responding population was 13.0% which was very similar to the statewide percentage being 13.4%. It should also be noted that when looking at the schools above the 75th percentile, these percentages have a range of 15.6% to 31.9% students served by special education. The 42 schools above the 75th
percentile demonstrate schools with much higher variance than in the lowest three quartiles. These three quartiles have a much smaller range of just 4.2\% to 15.5\%.

In examining the class size and teacher experience and training, an increased understanding was provided concerning the instructional background of the staff in the school where the responding principals lead. The mean number of students per teacher in the responding schools was 18 ($SD = 3.4$) and the average years of teaching experience in these schools was 12.2 years ($SD = 2.6$). The mean percentage of teachers with a Masters Degree was 74.0\% ($Mdn = 74.0$, $SD = 18.5\%$) for the 168 schools. Teachers in the state of Washington are only required to have a Bachelor’s Degree for teacher certification; however, the high number of staff with formal degrees beyond the requirements indicates teaching staffs that have sought out additional training and education. The statewide average was just 67.5\% of teachers having a Masters Degree. This responding population was higher than the state average.

**Descriptive Analysis of PRESS**

Through the administration of the PRESS, the mindful beliefs and practices of school principals were measured. Chapter three previously discussed in detail the development of the PRESS instrument, including the development of the twenty questions relating to the mindful beliefs and practices of principals in instructional leadership. When a score was missing for any item, it was replaced with the median score for that item so the data set was complete.

Respondents were asked to respond to 10 items for the statement, “Please select the frequency of occurrence that best reflects your recent experience at your school.” The answers had a Likert type scale ranging from rarely (1) to very often (4). Principals were also asked to respond to 10 items in a second set of questions focused on principal beliefs. Respondents were asked to respond to the statement, “Please indicate the degree to which you agree with each
statement. Select the response that reflects your recent experience.” The questions had a Likert type scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5); therefore, responses with a high median score represented mindful instructional leadership beliefs. It is important to point out that some items were reverse worded questions so the low median scores displayed actually represent mindful instructional leadership beliefs in those areas. For each question there was also a link to the AWSP Framework for instructional leadership. These tables were organized by each mindful cognitive process and ranked by the mean of each question.

There were five questions that assessed principal preoccupation with failure. This mindful cognitive process was measured through questions focused both on beliefs and practices. Table 6 provides a detailed look at the measures of central tendency including mean, median, and standard deviation. Principals self-reported highest use of this cognitive process was demonstrated in the belief that “School’s achievement data reflects what students have learned.” On this question, 64% of the respondents agree or strongly agree with this belief. This mindful belief demonstrates a commitment to closing the achievement gap that was outlined in the AWSP Leadership Framework. This mindful cognitive process also gives insight into the impressions principals have about their teachers and classroom instruction. The survey question that demonstrated the beliefs of this cognitive process asked respondents to self report their beliefs in regards to the statement “First impressions in classroom are frequently wrong.” On this question 75.6% (n = 127) of the respondents strongly disagree or disagree with this belief. This would indicate that these principals rely heavily on what they see or observe in early impressions of teachers. Current evaluation practices of principals in Washington have been a recent reform effort. Many principals have participated in considerable professional development to address issues of classroom practice. In fact, the current evaluation process under Washington State’s
Teacher-Principal Evaluation Program (TPEP) demands principals make data-based decisions about the effectiveness of a teacher in as little as 60 minutes of observation per year. Despite recent training efforts, concern should be drawn to practices that rely heavily on limited observation or contact with the classroom.

Table 6

*Preoccupation with Failure*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRESS Survey Item</th>
<th>AWSP Framework</th>
<th>max</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>Mdn</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School's achievement data reflects what students have learned</td>
<td>Closing the Gap</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I dwell on what I could have done better when teachers don’t improve</td>
<td>Improving Instruction</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Express empathy for a teacher who is having a difficult day</td>
<td>Aligning Curriculum</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raise concerns about student learning with staff</td>
<td>Create a Culture</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First impressions in classroom are frequently wrong</td>
<td>Planning with Data</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>.66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second cognitive process examined through the PRESS was reluctance to simplify. This cognitive process was measured through five questions, mainly focused on belief statements and is reported in Table 7. This cognitive process utilized reverse coded questions for four of the five questions. In reviewing Table 7, it should be noted that the four questions that were reverse
coded all had the highest mean values, indicating a high level of mindlessness, and a low mean value on the one question that is not reverse coded. The survey question that asked respondents to rate their practice related to the statement “Treat similar student infractions in a consistent way” not only has a mean response of 4.3, but also represents that 94.0% (n = 158) of the principals report the belief that they agree or strongly agree with this statement. Only 5 respondents disagreed with this statement. Principals report a high belief in consistency in reference to the treatment of student situations. This practice lacks any uniqueness or understanding of the innate differences that exist among students and their actions and behaviors. This approach utilizes a one-size fits all approach to student discipline. Another question, “Know what needs to be done to improve the performance of students” has 87.5% self reported agreement in the belief that they either agree or strongly agree. On this question only 2 respondents disagreed with the statement. Troubling about this practice is that long-term trend data show, little to no improvement in students’ math and reading performance since 1971 (NAPE, 2015). So this self-reported belief leads to asking the question, “Why if principals know what to do to improve student achievement, then why have they not done it?” Weick and Sutcliffe (2001) explain that HROs make fewer assumptions and take deliberate steps to create a complete picture. These self reported beliefs fall short of the creation of the complete picture discussed by Weick and Sutcliffe. When the question was asked “Wonder what needs to be done to improve student performance”, 54.8% (n = 72) of the respondents claim that they rarely or sometimes do this. Over half of the responding principals indicate that they are not in need of wondering what needs to be done, as they posses the answers to solve the issue of low student performance.
Table 7
Reluctance to Simplify

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRESS Survey Item</th>
<th>AWSP Framework</th>
<th>max</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>Mdn</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treat similar student infractions in a consistent way</td>
<td>Create a Culture</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know what needs to be done to improve the performance</td>
<td>Improving Instruction</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliance is a big part of my job</td>
<td>Aligning Curriculum</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents are dismissive of school's responsibility for</td>
<td>Partners with</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>all students</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wonder what needs to be done to improve student</td>
<td>Closing the Gap</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>performance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

^a Reverse coded question

Within the cognitive process of sensitivity to operations, three questions were presented as part of PRESS. These questions utilized just one reverse coded question. The data for this cognitive process is reported in Table 8. The question that had the highest ranking response “Help my teachers use their student data to improve their teaching” demonstrates that 75.6% (n = 127) of the respondents report doing this often or very often. Within the same practices the question “Lead data driven dialogues with teachers to keep the conversation on track” indicates that 73.8% (n = 124) of the principals report they do this often or very often. The lowest rated question is a reverse coded question; however, the distribution of the responses still provides a troubling trend. On the question “Give directives to teachers or students who have repeatedly messed up” only 9 principals report that they rarely give these directives. Additionally, the
majority of the respondents 55.4% (n = 93) report that they give directives often or very often. The use of directives is not a mindful practice. Perhaps the meaning of a directive leads to some ambiguity of this practice. Principals are encouraged to engage in crucial conversations aimed at improving instructional practice, unknown is if some of the responding principals viewed those conversations as directives. With the primary purpose of schools focused on student learning and teaching, this low reported sensitivity to the operations of schools is troublesome at best. Hoy (2002) cautioned that it is essential for school leaders to stay close to teaching and learning in the classroom.

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRESS Survey Item</th>
<th>AWSP Framework</th>
<th>max</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>Mdn</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Help my teachers use student data to improve their teaching</td>
<td>Aligning Curriculum</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead data driven dialogues with teachers to keep conversations on track</td>
<td>Planning with Data</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give directives to teachers or students who have repeatedly messed up a</td>
<td>Closing the Gap</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Reverse coded question

The fourth mindful cognitive process that was examined through PRESS was the principal’s commitment to resilience. Four questions, two of which were reverse coded, were used for this measure. “When a student insults me, I stop so he or she can calm down” had the highest mean value of 3.8 where 121 of the respondents reported that they agree or strongly
agree. The question “Look for little signals when talking to students about how they are feeling” had a mean value of 3.6 where 94.6% of the respondents reported that they do this often or very often. To add to the look at resilience in principal practices, the two lowest ranking questions were also those linked to commitment to resilience in a reverse scored question. The question “Tire of dealing with the same problem” revealed 73.2% (n = 123) of the principals rated this practice as rarely or sometimes. Additionally, the question “Feel tension before meeting that involves conflict with staff” garnered 70.8% of the principals with rarely or sometimes. The connection and agreement between these four unique and diverse view of resiliency questions offer promise to the mindful instructional leadership practices of principals around resilience.

With the learning needs and challenges today’s schools are faced with this commitment to resilience provided promise with this study. Helpful to overcoming the unexpected happens when the organization rebounds with persistence, resilience, and expertise (Hoy, Gage, & Tarter, 2006).

The final mindful cognitive process measured was deference to expertise. This process is examined through three questions, one of which was reverse coded. The question “Ask a lot of questions when I meet with parents of students” describes that 79.2% (n = 133) of the principals agree or strongly agree to that belief and has the highest mean of 3.8. A reverse coded question, “When teachers react defensively to criticism, I ignore their reactions” demonstrates agreement with the previous question. The respondents indicated that 93.5% (n = 157) of them are either disagree or strongly disagree with this belief. Another reported strength within the mindful cognitive process measured of deference to expertise was demonstrated in the question, “Solicit from staff solutions to instructional problems”. This question had no respondents that answered rarely, while 154 answered that they do this often or very often. The recognition of the value of
this teamwork and shared responsibility is well supported in the literature (Fenema, 2005; Bierly, Gallagher, & Spender, 2008; Nemeth & Kwan, 1985). The findings offer much hope considering the instructional and real-world demands principals face (Tirozzi, 2004).

Table 9

Commitment to Resilience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRESS Survey Item</th>
<th>AWSP Framework</th>
<th>max</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>Mdn</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When a student insults me, I stop so he or she can calm down</td>
<td>Partners with Community</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look for little signals when talking to students about how they are feeling</td>
<td>Improving Instruction</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tire of dealing with the same problem&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Creating a Culture</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel tension before meeting that involves conflict with staff&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Improving Instruction</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> Reverse coded question

Table 10

Deference to Expertise

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRESS Survey Item</th>
<th>AWSP Framework</th>
<th>max</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>Mdn</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ask a lot of questions when I meet with parents of students</td>
<td>Partners with Community</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>.606</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solicit from staff solutions to instructional problems</td>
<td>Improving Instruction</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>.620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When teachers react defensively, I ignore their reactions&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Creating a Culture</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>.746</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> Reverse coded question
While the data in Tables 6 through 10 gave insight into the individual question responses, they were difficult to assess the overall pattern on each of the cognitive processes for respondents. Factor scores were generated for each of the five cognitive processes to examine how the responding principals reported their practices and beliefs. Table 11 explains the cognitive process of preoccupation with failure and reluctance to simplify as addressed in five different questions, commitment to resilience was addressed in four questions, and deference to expertise and sensitivity to operations each included three questions. Table 11 illustrates that the cognitive process of preoccupation with failure and reluctance to simplify were addressed in five different questions, commitment to resilience was addressed in four questions, and deference to expertise and sensitivity to operations each included three questions.

Table 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th># of Questions</th>
<th>Composite Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deference to Expertise</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment to Resilience</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preoccupation with Failure</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity to Operations</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reluctance to Simplify</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The values represented in Table 11 show differences among the self-reported use of the cognitive processes. These cognitive processes are easily grouped into three categories representing high, medium, and low self reported use within principal instructional leadership. The high use category was limited to the cognitive process of deference to expertise. With a
calculated composite score of 17.4 this process had individual question mean scores all in the *often/very often* in the practice questions, and the *agree/strongly agree* for the beliefs questions (after taking into account reverse coding). The next tier of process would include commitment to resilience and preoccupation with failure. Both of these cognitive processes have calculated composite scores of 16.1 and 15.4 respectfully. The individual mean scores of these questions were closer to mid level responses, or presenting a mixed response where some individual questions have high responses and others low, resulting in a mid level mean. The final tier represents the lowest used cognitive processes. There is a difference in calculated composite scores between these two cognitive processes and the high and medium processes. The process of sensitivity to operations has a calculated score of 13.7 while reluctance to simplify has a calculated score of just 11.0. As evident by Table 11 these calculated scores are below the other cognitive processes. The significance of these findings will be further discussed in chapter five.

This section offered a detailed summary of the data self reported through the PRESS. This descriptive analysis began by examining the demographic, leadership experience, and education of the responding principals. The next part of this section examined the demographic data of each school they represent. The final section examined the responses to specific questions within the PRESS and looked at a variety of measures of central tendency. This examination was completed by grouping of like questions that fell within the same mindful cognitive process, for the purpose of describing the beliefs and practices of responding principals.

**Inferential Analysis of Responding Principals and Schools**

The second purpose of this study was to analyze the differences between secondary and elementary principals in terms of their mindful instructional practices and beliefs. While school and structural differences exist between grade levels, instructional leadership can be better
defined by understanding the differences that demarcate practices among principals at these two
grade levels. The differences that exist between elementary and secondary schools has been
studied for several decades. Firestone, Herriott, and Wilson (1984), Cohen and Neufield (1981),
Boyer (1983), Hage (1980), Reed and Himmler (1985), and Blumberg and Greenfield (1986) are
some who have studied the differences that exist in structure and instructional leadership. This
study aims at adding to that literature base to specifically examine how the leadership practices
and beliefs are evident in the instructional leadership approaches of the principal.

To examine these differences a Mann-Whitney $U$ test was used. The Mann-Whitney $U$ is
an appropriate test to use as a way of comparing two independent samples. In this case the
independent samples were the elementary principals ($n=78$) and secondary principals ($n=90$).
Huck (2012) offers that the Mann-Whitney $U$ is a powerful tool for evaluating two independent
groups that differ. The Mann-Whitney $U$ groups all respondents together into a large population,
in this case total principal respondents ($n=168$). Then the participants responses were ranked to
establish their position within the entire group. Once ranked, the two independent groups were
separated back to their groups, elementary and secondary, and the sum of the ranks was
calculated. If two groups were similar their sum of ranks are assumed to be similar (p.443). This
ranking and sum values are placed into a formula and a $U$ value is reported. Lower $U$ values
represent the increased difference that exists between the two groups. An important
consideration was the necessity to calculate the effect size for those observations that reach
significance. Additionally the Mann-Whitney $U$ reduces the likeliness of a Type II research error
where a false negative is a risk. In this case the null hypothesis is that no differences exist
between elementary and secondary principals in their use of mindful instructional leadership
practices and beliefs.
Table 12 provides the Mann-Whitney U test results for each of the PRESS items. In Table 12 not only are the U values provided, but Z scores, and the significance of these observation.

For those observations where significance was observed, \( r \) was calculated as an effect size. The table is sorted in order of those questions with the highest Z scores. Mann-Whitney U test effect size is categorized as a small, medium, or large size effect. Small effect sizes are acknowledged when the \( r \) value reaches .1, medium effect size is reached when the \( r \) value reaches .3, and large effect size is acknowledged with the \( r \) value reaches .5.

Table 12

**PRESS Questions Mann-Whitney U**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRESS Survey Item</th>
<th>( U )</th>
<th>( Z )</th>
<th>( p )</th>
<th>( r )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Help my teachers use their student data to improve their teaching</td>
<td>2571</td>
<td>-3.2</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look for little signals when talking to students about how they are feeling</td>
<td>2864</td>
<td>-2.4</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Express empathy for a teacher who is having a difficult day</td>
<td>2873</td>
<td>-2.2</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treat similar student infractions in a consistent way</td>
<td>2912</td>
<td>-2.1</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tire of dealing with the same problem</td>
<td>2911</td>
<td>-2.0</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents are dismissive of school's responsibility for all students</td>
<td>2978</td>
<td>-1.8</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel tension before meeting that involves conflict with staff</td>
<td>3101</td>
<td>-1.3</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First impressions in classroom are frequently wrong</td>
<td>3199</td>
<td>-1.1</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When a student insults me, I stop so he or she can calm down</td>
<td>3246</td>
<td>-.94</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When teachers react defensively to criticism, I ignore their reactions</td>
<td>3258</td>
<td>-.93</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wonder what needs to be done to improve student performance</td>
<td>3244</td>
<td>-.89</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raise concerns about student learning with staff</td>
<td>3291</td>
<td>-.78</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead data driven dialogues with teachers</td>
<td>3350</td>
<td>-.57</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Based on the findings from the Mann-Whitney U, we see differences on five of the questions and infer that the two populations probably differ with respect to their averages. To better understand the observed differences, each of the five questions can be examined to review responses and measures of central tendency for the two groups. Five of the individual questions met the criteria of the Mann-Whitney U test to demonstrate difference in the means and have met the requirements to demonstrate significance. The first question, “Help my teachers use their student data to improve their teaching” has the highest effect and the largest difference in means. With a $r$ of .25 this question demonstrates a difference nearing a medium effect. Elementary principals reported practices of higher mindfulness with a mean of 3.2 where secondary principals had a mean of 2.8. In two other questions the same level of higher means for the elementary principals was noted. The question “Look for little signals when talking to students about how they are feeling” had an elementary mean of 3.7 and a secondary mean of 3.5. These two questions showed a small effect size with an $r$ of .19 and .17 respectfully, demonstrating a small difference. The final two questions offered an interesting observation for consideration in the differences that exist between elementary and secondary principals. Both of these two
questions showed higher means for the secondary group. “Treat similar student infractions in a consistent way” has a secondary mean of 4.4 and an elementary mean of 4.2, with a small effect size ($r = .17$). “Tire of dealing with the same problem” has a secondary mean of 2.3 and an elementary mean of 2.0, with a small effect size ($r = .16$). It is worth noting however, that both of these questions were reverse coded questions, meaning a higher mean indicates the opposite of mindful instructional leadership. All five of the identified questions meeting the criteria for significant differences reported more mindful instructional leadership skills from elementary principals. These differences offered continued exploration of not only the beliefs and practices between elementary and secondary principals but also the growth needs for principals. Previous studies done focused on these differences (Boyer, 1983; Firestone, Herriott, & Wilson, 1984; Gilligan, 1979) are enhanced by this study. Table 12 below identifies the mean averages and standard deviation of these two groups: elementary and secondary.

Table 13

**PRESS Questions Differences in Means**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRESS Survey Item</th>
<th>Elementary (n = 78)</th>
<th>Secondary (n = 90)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Help my teachers use their student data to improve their teaching</td>
<td>3.2 .66</td>
<td>2.8 .88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look for little signals when talking to students about how they are feeling</td>
<td>3.7 .55</td>
<td>3.5 .62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Express empathy for a teacher who is having a difficult day</td>
<td>3.5 .57</td>
<td>3.2 .71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treat similar student infractions in a consistent way a</td>
<td>4.2 .59</td>
<td>4.4 .75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tire of dealing with the same problem a</td>
<td>2.0 .74</td>
<td>2.3 .86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Reverse coded question
As an additional comparison between the elementary and secondary principal groups, it is worth noting that the mindful cognitive processes that are aligned with these five questions cover four different cognitive processes including; sensitivity to operations, commitment to resilience, preoccupation with failure, and reluctance to simplify. While the sensitivity to operations Mann-Whitney U test offered the most significant difference and effect size, the cognitive process of commitment to resilience found differences in two different questions. The findings offered valuable insight into the differences that do exist between elementary and secondary principals as applied to their mindful instructional leadership practices.

**Chapter Conclusion**

This chapter provided the statistical analysis and a detailed discussion of the data gathered through the statewide administration of the *PRESS*. Questions presented on the *PRESS* measured the self-reported beliefs and practices of elementary and secondary principals in Washington State. The chapter began with a descriptive analysis of the responding principals and the schools where they serve. Although 33% of the 505 principals randomly selected responded, the examination of the demographic information suggests these respondents and their schools reflected the characteristics of the population from which they were drawn.

The chapter also provided a detailed analysis of principal responses to the twenty items collected through the *PRESS*. Additionally, an inferential analysis examined the differences between elementary and secondary principals on these items. This analysis was completed using a Mann-Whitney U as the variables were ordinal level and were not normally distributed.

As discussed in previous chapters, this dissertation focused on the conceptual frameworks of mindfulness and instructional leadership. This study, along with the *PRESS* instrument, braided the concepts with the goal of furthering understanding of instructional leadership.
practices and beliefs. For the purpose of this study instructional leadership was defined utilizing the Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP) Framework (2014). Six specific areas of the framework were used for this study including: aligning curriculum, closing the gap, improving instruction, partners with community, creating a culture, and planning with data. The second conceptual framework focused on mindfulness as examined and studied through high reliability organizations. Literature provides five cognitive processes for mindfulness: commitment to resilience, preoccupation with failure, deference to expertise, reluctance to simplify, and sensitivity to operations. These two frameworks were braided together to study the concept of mindful instructional leadership.

From this data analysis several key findings are reported. The findings are focused within the beliefs and actions, as well as the differences that exist. One key finding is the self-reported alignment of practices that offer promise to the mindful instructional leadership practice of commitment to resilience. Several different PRESS items agreed with this alignment among the total sample. Today’s students face challenges in their learning and life that require this commitment to resilience on the part of educators. Schools led by principals that utilize this practice on a regular basis is promising. Also discovered in the principal practices is an area of concern worth noting. The data indicates a consistent low practice aligned with the cognitive processes of sensitivity to operations. With the primary purpose of schools being focused on student learning and teaching, this low reported sensitivity to the operations of schools is troublesome. The key finding warrants additional study.

The second section of descriptive analysis focused on the self-reported beliefs of study participants. This section also offered a key finding. Through this analysis it was discovered that beliefs are not representative of mindful instructional leadership within the cognitive process of
reluctance to simplify. Multiple question responses indicate this alignment of simplifying results and focusing more on consistency rather than individuality of complex situations, especially student differences. This increased understanding of that belief offers valuable insight for continued principal growth and development.

The final key finding is addressed when assessing the differences that exist between elementary and secondary principals. The Mann-Whitney U test evaluated those differences, and indicates that a difference does exist. The most significant of those differences falls within the cognitive process of sensitivity to operations. The difference is specifically aligned with the instructional leadership practice of aligning curriculum. Just as the descriptive analysis challenge this practice and belief, the calling is amplified when statistically significant differences also exist between elementary and secondary principals. Additionally, the cognitive process of commitment to resilience found differences in two different questions. The key finding is that mindful instructional leadership differences do exist between elementary and secondary principals. Specifically, elementary principals demonstrate higher mindful instructional leadership practices and beliefs than their secondary colleagues. Additional study of these differences is warranted for long term growth of mindful instructional leadership of principals.
CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

After nearly four decades of continued interest and investigation of instructional leadership aimed at improved student learning, little increase in student achievement has resulted in the average American school. Longitudinal trend data showed little to no improvement in students’ math and reading performance since 1971 (NAPE, 2015). Whether student achievement is measured by the passing rates on standardized assessments or on-time graduation rates, significant need for improvement persists. While many high schools have made gains in increasing on-time graduation rates, many students still fail to graduate on time or drop out altogether (Digest of Education Statistics, 2010). The statistics for minority and students of poverty indicates even higher rates of dropping out. A key component of school reform centered on securing improvement in student outcomes, and development of instructional leadership has become a focus of work for school principals. Administrators are now expected to be instructional leaders; there are, however, varying perceptions of effective instructional leaders as well as descriptions of what that means. These perceptions of effective leadership also carry over into how principals are to accomplish these goals for improving teaching and learning. The result is a loose definition and implementation of instructional leadership skills and processes in the K-12 educational system. This study was designed to gain a better understanding of ways to differentiate, assess, and guide application of instructional leadership by principals with an increased mindfulness. In other words, this dissertation explored how principals reported being mindful by their responses to questions about their interactions with their teachers, students, and parents on issues that were relevant to instruction and achievement. Since the mindfulness framework employed in development of the questions drew on high reliability organizing
literature, these findings also suggest the degree to which the five cognitive processes that contribute to fail-safe schools were reported in principal responses about their instructional leadership. Finally, the dissertation examined differences between elementary and secondary principals concerning their practices and beliefs regarding their school improvement efforts. This chapter provides the conclusion for the dissertation. The first section provides an overview of the findings related to instructional leadership practices and beliefs as examined through the lens of mindfulness. The second section shifts attention slightly to discuss findings on the differences in mindful instructional leadership between elementary and secondary principals. The third section discusses the study’s implications, including applications for practice and recommendations for further research. The final section of the chapter presents the study’s significance.

Before proceeding to the review of findings, it is worth noting a number of characteristics about the study respondents and their schools. Thirty-three percent of the 505 randomly selected principals responded to the PRESS. Of these 168 principals, 78 were elementary principals and 90 were secondary principals. Examination of the data suggested the principals who responded reflected the general characteristics of principals from across the State of Washington. Forty-one percent of respondents were female and 59.1% were male. The majority of principals identified as White, with only 6.3% of respondents selecting the other racial and ethnic classifications. The average school size for these 168 schools was 606 students with a standard deviation of 424, which was larger than the state average of 486 students. Within these schools there was an average free and reduced lunch rate of 49.4%, and an average non-White student population of 36.2%. Within the schools the average percentage of teachers with at least a Masters Degree was 74.0% with a standard deviation of 18.5. The research findings presented in this study are therefore generalizable to principals in regular public schools within the state.
Mindful Instructional Leadership

In many schools across our country, school leaders face the challenge of supporting school structures and cultures aimed at effectively educating all students. Such work cannot succeed without intentional attitudes and behaviors on the part of the school leader. The push for reliability in student outcomes present in educational accountability mandates encouraged Stringfield (1995, 1998), Bellamy et al., (2005) and Hoy (2003) among others to examine and assess the applicability to school settings high reliability organizing research developed within other disciplines. HROs are defined by their unique ability to operate high-hazard technological systems in a nearly error-free manner (Roberts, 1990). In organizations that operate with this mindset, members of the organization have operated with a unique set of beliefs and practices to reach this high reliability through mindfulness. Langer (1990) established that a mindful person developed the ability to create new categories, maintained an openness to new information, carried an awareness of more than one perspective, paid attention to the process rather than the results, and places their trust in intuition. This mindfulness therefore was a “rich awareness of discriminatory detail and capacity for action” (Weick, 1999, p. 37). Weick and Sutcliffe (2007) outlined five key cognitive processes that constituted the foundations of mindfulness leading to high reliability: preoccupation with failure, reluctance to simplify, sensitivity to operations, commitment to resilience, and deference to expertise.

Hoy (2002, 2003, 2006) and others have provided a foundation to connect the five cognitive processes of mindfulness within educational leadership. While discussion has been broad, it includes language and attention to how principals as instructional leaders can improve their effectiveness and ultimately the performance of their school’s staff and students. This same concern is deeply embedded in the shift of principals’ responsibilities towards instructional
leadership as reflected in various standards and measures developed for training administrators and evaluating their performance. In 2010, the Washington State Legislature approved a major overhaul to principal and teacher evaluation systems in the State of Washington. As a result of this legislation, the AWSP Leadership Framework was updated from earlier versions and adopted as a framework for instructional leadership. The AWSP Framework offered a model to define the instructional leadership of principals set forth in eight criteria. Those assembling the AWSP Leadership Framework drew from many research authors and studies, including Sergiovanni (2000), Dufour and Eaker (1998), Hoy (2010), Darling-Hammond (2000), and Senge (2000). The framework they produced provided an overview and wide scale approach to understanding and informing instructional leadership in accordance with research-based literature.

The PRESS instrument braided concepts from high reliability organizing with the AWSP framework for the goal of furthering understanding of instructional leadership. The examination of the factor scales for each cognitive process assessed by the PRESS revealed a number of key aspects about the day-to-day kind of school operations and the ways principals enact instructional leadership. First, self-reported deference to expertise was the highest among the five cognitive processes. The composite factor score for this cognitive process was 17.4. This cognitive process was addressed in three questions. In these prompts principals reported asking parents and students numerous questions when meeting with them, soliciting solutions to instructional problems from staff, and not ignoring teacher’s reactions when they became defensive. Barely, Gallagher, and Spender (2008) have also suggested that this type of interdependence allowed for little or no slack between the different parts of a complex system which is related to improvement when responding to problems.
Today’s students face challenges in their learning and life that require educators to be resilient. The average principal self-reported high levels of beliefs and practices related to commitment to resilience. The composite factor score for this cognitive process was 16.1. Four of the PRESS questions attended to commitment to resilience, and all four scores indicated alignment of the use of this process. Principals reported that they either strongly agreed or agreed that they look for signals when talking to students about how they are feeling, and that when a student insults them, they stop so he or she can calm down. The two reverse coded questions also show an average response of high use of this cognitive process, tiring of dealing with the same problem. The development of this capacity in educators and principals provided promise for the students of today’s schools. A commitment to resilience required continuous learning and a willingness to question what is happening. Organizations that structure flexibility into their operations so that rapidly changing conditions can be addressed with a timelier and effective response (Roberts, Yu, & Van Stralen, 2004) reach that high reliability.

The idea that the American school is failing is not a new concept, and as a result, school administrators across the state of Washington are focused on failure. The cognitive process of preoccupation with failure was addressed through five questions in the PRESS. The composite factor score for this cognitive process was 15.4. Within this cognitive process, principal’s showed agreement or use of practices such as; school's achievement data reflects what students have learned, dwelling on what they could have done better when teachers do not improve, expressing empathy for a teacher who is having a difficult day, and raising concerns about student learning with staff. One specific question showed a low use of this cognitive process demonstrating mindlessness. Principal’s reported low agreement with the belief that first impressions in a classroom are frequently wrong, demonstrating the belief that first impressions
are accurate. Cannon (2001) acknowledged that “significant learning can come from uncovering a small failure to communicate in a work relationship, and such seemingly small failures can lead, ultimately, to highly preventable major failures” (p. 162-163).

Conversely, two factor scores evidenced reduced levels of mindfulness. First, the data indicated a consistent low practice aligned with the cognitive processes of sensitivity to operations. With the primary focus of schools being student learning and teaching, this low reported sensitivity to the operations of schools was troublesome. The composite factor score for this cognitive process was just 13.7. This cognitive process was evaluated through three questions. Most notable within this process is the reported low use of data to inform instruction. Two questions indicated low use of data, as principals reported sporadic use and belief in helping teachers using data to improve their teaching and leading data driven discussions with teachers to keep on track. The moderate use of giving teacher directives when they make repeated mistakes, also evidenced diminished mindfulness in instructional leadership. Hoy (2002) asserted that it is especially important for school leaders to stay close to teaching and learning in the classroom (p. 98). This finding indicated that continued work needs to be done to assist principals with staying focused on what is happening in the classroom and working directly with teachers for the improvement of classroom instruction (Hallinger, 2005).

The final factor score, that also indicated lower levels of mindfulness, included the cognitive process of simplifying results and focusing more on consistency rather than individuality of complex situations, especially when confronted with student differences. The cognitive process of reluctance to simplify had a composite factor score of just 11.0. This reluctance to simplify was addressed in five unique questions that evaluate this process through a variety of school aspects. Unique to this cognitive process was that four of the five questions
were reverse coded questions, all demonstrating high mean scores or mindlessness. Principals reported treating similar student infractions in a consistent way, knowing what needs to be done to improve the performance of students, viewing large parts of the job as compliance, and viewing parents response as dismissive. Principals are often expected to act with consistency especially on matters of discipline, instructional directions, and hiring procedures that are fair and clearly understood. However, this consistency is not in alignment with mindfulness. Mindfulness addresses the differences that exist in situations, especially those differences in people, which make functioning with consistency problematic. Weick and Sutchliffe (2001) explained that organizations that seek high reliability made fewer assumptions and took deliberate steps to create a complete picture. In working with students and staff, the complete picture requires thinking beyond generalizing problems and responses to problems.

**Differences in Mindfulness on Instructional Leadership**

While school and structural differences exist between grade levels, instructional leadership can be better defined by understanding the differences that demarcate practices among principals these two roles. Several factors have been identified as contributing to the need to examine distinctions in the ways principals of high schools and those of elementary schools engage in instructionally oriented interactions with their teachers, students, and parents. The differences in size, purpose, personnel and training, and organizational structure suggested unique instructional leadership challenges for principals in elementary schools as compared to those secondary buildings. The leadership differences have previously been studied (Firestone, Herriott, & Wilson, 1984; Cohen & Neufield, 1981; Boyer, 1983; Hage, 1980; Reed & Himmler, 1985; Blumberg & Greenfield, 1986); yet, perhaps one of the more curious aspects of both the AWSP framework has been the way in which principals handle or attend to variance in the work
of principals. The study explored the alternative ways elementary and secondary schools reported carrying out their instructional leadership responsibilities.

On five PRESS items, statistical significance was achieved in terms of differences between secondary and elementary principals. The largest effect size was achieved on the item that reflected the cognitive process of sensitivity to operations. The question “Help my teachers use their student data to improve their teaching” had a moderate effect size of .25 on the Mann-Whitney U test. This statistical significance is demonstrated by elementary principals having a mean score of 3.2 (SD = .66) and secondary principals having a mean score of 2.8 (SD = .88).

The other four statistically significant results observed have a small effect size. Two of the four questions reside within the cognitive process of commitment to resilience. Elementary principals reported a significantly higher use of “Look for little signals when talking to students about how they are feeling” than their secondary colleagues. Elementary principals had a mean of 3.7 (SD = .55), whereas secondary principals had a mean of 3.5 (SD = .62). On “Tire of dealing with the same problem” elementary principals had a mean of 2.0 (SD = .74) and secondary principals possessed a mean of 2.3 (SD = .86). This question was reverse coded so the lower mean was an indication of mindful instructional leadership.

For the cognitive process of reluctance to simplify, secondary principals have a mean of 4.4 (SD = .75) on the question, “Treat similar student infractions in a consistent way” whereas elementary principals had a mean of 4.2 (SD = .59). This cognitive process again indicated a higher use of mindful instructional leadership practices from elementary principals.

The final item that a statistically significant result was observed falls within the cognitive process of preoccupation with failure. The question, “Express empathy for a teacher who is having a difficult day” had a mean among elementary principals of 3.5 (SD = .57) while for
secondary principals the average was 3.2 ($SD = .71$). These findings revealed specific and
meaningful differences in the mindful instructional leadership of elementary and secondary
principals. Specifically elementary principals demonstrated higher mindful instructional
leadership practices and beliefs than their secondary colleagues.

**Limitations and Implications for Further Research**

Careful consideration was given to the design of the study’s methodology. Despite the
care given to the design, there were delimitations for the findings from this study. This study
only invited principals that are currently leading elementary and secondary schools within the
State of Washington. By design alternative schools, juvenile detention centers, hospital schools,
credit recovery centers, GED programs, etc. were not included, and as such, there administrators
were not asked to participate. Thus the results of this study should only be viewed as
generalizable to the regular public schools at the elementary and secondary level within the state.
Further research is needed to broaden the application and understanding of mindful instructional
leadership to other states nationwide. Additionally, principals schools including charter schools,
private schools, and other alternative school structures should be invited and studied.

One of the limitations of this study was the 33% response rate of principals invited to
participate. Future research in this area may find a better approach to soliciting study
participation. For this study, information was gathered utilizing school district websites and
directories.

The study employed a survey, and as such, its findings relied on self-reported data.
Further investigation is needed using a 360 approach that would verify or reduce the possibility
of response bias in the analysis. The PRESS included several reverse coded items to reduce this
possibility of respondent selection due to social desirability.
A major theoretical underpinning within this study was the inclusion of the current AWSP Leadership Framework (2014) which also currently serves as the evaluation model for principals within Washington State. In consideration of future policies and potential evaluation reform efforts, additional studies should be considered. Consideration should be given to using the PRESS as part of professional development and training programs to assess participant growth. The study findings beg for further investigation on instructional leadership for secondary principals. The practices and beliefs identified in the development of the tool were intended to reflect those that were applicable to both elementary and secondary schools, yet the results suggest a need to examine these matters further, particularly since principals are being evaluated on their instructional leadership.

**Significance of the Study**

The study’s findings are significance practically, theoretically, and substantively. The practical significance of this dissertation pertains to its potential for informing the continued development of instructional leadership, through the use of mindfulness. In the State of Washington, there is much support for principals geared toward development and growth. There are several organizations that provide professional development and training needs of principal practitioners. The findings indicate differences in the needs for skills and knowledge development in instructionally-related support between elementary and secondary principals, and these should be attended to in future programs aimed at strengthening principal instructional leadership. The findings from this study can aid in guiding principals in self-reflection as the study advances a mindful approach to instructional leadership. The study provides concrete ways and interactions principals and school leaders can approach or incorporate into their practice of instructional leadership the cognitive processes of preoccupation with failure, reluctance to
simplify, sensitivity to operations, commitment to resilience, and deference to expertise.

The theoretical significance of the study pertained to key findings that support efforts to understand the application of high reliability organizations and mindfulness to school structures, organizations, and systems. Stringfield (1995, 1998), Bellamy et al., (2005), and Hoy (2003) have examined and assessed the applicability of high reliability organizing research to school settings. There was controversy between these scholars in the degree to which the concepts and models of HROs translate to educational organization. This study added to this discussion. The braiding of the mindfulness cognitive processes with the current AWSP Leadership Framework (2014) linked theoretical underpinnings with current day practice. The success of this integration reflected the salience of mindfulness for principals engaging in instructional leadership.

Substantive significance emerges from the influence on principals that attention to or utilization of these cognitive processes for their instructional leadership provides. In providing ways to strengthen the instructional leadership using mindfulness and principles of high reliability theory, principals will be better positioned to eliminate errors and seek positive outcomes for students. Through the use of these cognitive processes, principal’s job satisfaction and feeling of effectiveness will increase. Effective organizations will promote healthier cultures, job satisfaction of teachers and staff, and ultimately lead to commitment and investment in the organization’s principles and vision.
References


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Appendix A
Sample PRESS Survey

Frequency

Instructions: Below is a brief collection of statements about principal instructional leadership practices and beliefs. Please select the frequency of occurrence that best reflects your recent experience at $\{m://School\}$:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Very Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I solicit from staff solutions to instructional problems.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I raise concerns about student learning with staff.</td>
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<td>I express empathy for a teacher who is having a difficult day.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I look for little signals when talking with students about how they are feeling.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I give directives to teachers or students who have repeatedly messed up.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I tire of dealing with the same problem teachers or students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I lead data driven dialogues with teachers to keep the conversation on track.</td>
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<td>I feel heightened tension before going into a meeting that involves a conflict with staff.</td>
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<td>I wonder what needs to be done to improve student performance.</td>
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<td>I help my teachers use their student data to improve their teaching.</td>
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</table>

Agree

Using the Likert scale on the top row, please indicate the degree to which you agree with each statement. Select the response that reflects your recent experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I treat similar student infractions in a consistent way.</td>
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<tr>
<td>My school's student achievement data</td>
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</table>
Appendix A cont.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>accurately represents what our students have learned.</td>
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<td>Compliance is a big part of my job.</td>
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<td>Parents of my students who have gotten into trouble are dismissive of the school's responsibility to look after the welfare of all students.</td>
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<td>When things are not going well in improving a teacher's performance, I tend to dwell on what I could have done better.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I ask a lot of questions when I meet with parents of students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>My first impressions of what's happening in a classroom are frequently wrong.</td>
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<td>When a student insults me, I stop the conversation so he or she can calm down.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I know what needs to be done to improve the performance of students in my school.</td>
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<tr>
<td>When teachers react defensively to criticism, I ignore their reactions.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Demographics**

Please provide the following demographic information:

Your gender:
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male

Your ethnic/racial identity:
- ☐ White
- ☐ Black
- ☐ Hispanic origin
- ☐ Asian or Pacific Islander
- ☐ American Indian or Alaskan Native
- ☐ Multiracial

Number of years in principalship:
Appendix A cont.

Number of years at current school:

Highest degree earned:

- Masters
- Doctorate

I would like to receive a summary of the study findings:

- Yes
- No

Thank you, $m://FirstName$ $m://LastName$ for taking these few minutes to answer our questions. Your participation is appreciated.
Dear ${m://FirstName} ${m://LastName},

One of the top priorities for principals in K-12 education today is developing effective teachers who demonstrate high-quality instruction. We are serious about this priority – and we need your help to guide our efforts. We are inviting you to participate in a study on instructional leadership in Washington’s schools. The Principal Resilience for Educator and Student Success (PRESS) survey will take less than 10 minutes of your time, which we know as school leaders ourselves, is valuable.

The survey asks for your opinions on a range of topics, such as student motivation and staff collaboration. We will use the results of the survey to help identify current instructional leadership practices in our schools, as well as opportunities for improvements that might make our schools even better at meeting the needs of our students.

**PRESS is available now and can be accessed by following the link:**
${l://SurveyLink?d=Take the PRESS}

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:
${l://SurveyURL}

We will share with you our summary of findings from principals across the state. The survey administration, data analysis, and report preparation will be overseen by Washington State University. WSU routinely works with confidential data and will respect and protect your identity. Results will only be reported in summary form – in no case will it be possible to determine an individual’s identity or responses.

In addition, all respondents will be entered into a drawing for a $25 gift card. Further, we can provide those who respond with aggregated results from a companion teacher survey administered to some of your school’s teachers. Your participation is completely voluntary, but we hope you take the time to share your opinions. For results to be meaningful and useful, everyone needs to participate and give their honest and thoughtful answers.

If you have any questions about the survey, please feel free to contact Gordon Gates, resilientschools@comcast.net. Thank you in advance for sharing your opinions.
Appendix B cont:

with us. We look forward to analyzing and sharing the results on your continuous efforts to improve education within our state.

Sincerely,

Joshua Meek, Principal, Moses Lake School District
Kevin Peterson, Principal, Mead Public Schools
Jenny Rodriquez, Principal, Delta High School
Ken Russell, Assistant Superintendent, Mead Public Schools
Gary Spencer, Doctoral Student, Washington State University
Gordon Gates, Professor, Washington State University

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