THE ROLE OF VISION IN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

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ABSTRACT

The cornerstone of transformational leadership is vision. For our school leaders to act as more than middle managers, they have to foster a school community's vision - cultivate the school community's direction and purpose. This qualitative study uses semi-structured interviews with school leaders and following focus groups with their teachers to understand better how principals develop and instantiate their vision and how this vision is perceived to have manifested by the school community.

This study was designed to answer the questions of (1) do principals have a clearly defined personal vision for the schools they serve, and in what ways do they enact their vision?, (2) what professional and training experiences contribute to how a principal develops a vision for a school?, (3) what the relationship between the articulated vision and the culture of the school?

The four themes that emerged from this study were that (1) principals have guiding statements that serve the same purpose as a formal vision that gives them and their school communities direction for the work, (2) principals primarily invest their teams in a shared vision through a visioning process, (3) principals most cited avenue for vision development was through working with others, and (4) principals whose articulated vision most aligned with the culture of the school were successfully able to operationalize the vision.

The recommendations and implications for all stakeholders from this research are that (1) principals are trained taught how to develop guiding statements, (2) principals are taught how to invest others in a shared vision, (3) the importance of mentor matching and principal reflection in the principal training and development process, and (4) principals are taught how to operationalize their vision through ongoing coaching and support.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to all of the transformational school leaders striving to improve

the lives of children and the communities. Your vision will change the outcomes for generations.

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My dissertation is the result of the unconditional love and support of so many people. I have been extremely fortunate to have been mentored by Dr. Chris McGinley who not only has helped me shape and pen this work but has also inspired me to take on a greater level of responsibility in the field of education. I am also incredibly grateful for the support of Drs. Estrada and Laurence - you pushed my thinking and helped me craft a coherent body of research. I am a better student, writer, and thinker because of your support.

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Finally, to my daughter, Violet. I love you with all of my heart and while I am excited to be called doctor, the title I will always be most proud of being called is your dad.

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout my leadership journey, vision and leadership have been inextricably linked. From student culture to staff development to parent engagement, every decision I have made has been guided by a vision that I have forged, deconstructed, and rebuilt year after year. The vision continues to be refined in response to my education, training, experiences, and bonds formed with colleagues, families, and students. Every year this vision becomes more apparent and more urgent.

I started my career as a special education teacher with Teach for America in Kansas City. My vision was guided by social justice and closing the achievement gap. I then became an Assistant Principal with Mastery Charter Schools in Philadelphia. My vision grew to include high expectations and college graduation for students. I was trained by PhillyPLUS, an alternative principal preparation program, and engaged in turnaround work in North Philadelphia. I now saw the importance of educating the whole student. I had the privilege of serving as the Principal of Vare-Washington Elementary in South Philadelphia. When I was in the principalship, I led with a vision informed by my experience studying high performing charter schools, being mentored by traditional school district principals, and reading and researching all of the literature that I could about educational leadership. I learned that my role as the principal was not to shoehorn my school into my vision but that the school community's vision needed to be tailored to fit the school community and their specific needs. I embedded myself in my school community. I bought a house two blocks away from my school, opened the building up on weekends for my scholars, and rallied every community asset I could find to champion the cause of our neighborhood school. I developed my vision with and for my school

community. My vision strengthened, and I began to understand the importance of engaging the whole community and developing teacher leaders. I currently serve as the Director of School Performance for KIPP Columbus and am a leader of leaders. My job is now to guide others to develop their vision, to help school leaders gain the experience, support, and coaching they need to make their visions a reality.

Decades of research shows that school leaders are vital to student achievement (Dhuey & Smith, 2014; Fullan, 2002; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; Nettles & Herrington, 2007). School leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to student achievement (Leithwood et al.,2004; Louis et al., 2010.) There is little to no evidence that troubled schools can be turned around without decisive leadership (Leithwood et al., 2004). In a survey of over 40,000 public school teachers, working in an environment with supportive leadership was the most potent retention factor for teachers, even monetary rewards (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2010). In recent years, there has been a renewed emphasis placed around the role and the importance of the school leader as not just a middle manager, but as a transformational and visionary leader who invests and inspires others to champion the cause of the school community (Goleman, Kotter & Bennis, et al., 2000; Kantabutra, 2005; Jung, Chow, Wu, 2003; Mombourquette, 2017). James MacGregor Burns (1978) coined the term transformational leadership, which is the idea that the leader inspires others with such a transcendent mission or purpose that the followers themselves are transformed into leaders. A prerequisite component of being a transformational leader and instilling others with this tremendous sense of purpose is having a vision. While the importance of leading with vision has been heavily researched in the business world, much less research exists around the role of vision in education (Collins & Porras, 1991; Darbi, 2012; Fairhurst et al., 1997). The education rhetoric

around having a vision exists in every component of this work, from the evaluation and credentialing of principal preparation programs to the principal assessment itself; however, how principals develop their vision, how it is implemented, and how vision manifests is not well-researched.

To forge efficacious school leaders, we must understand how they develop and enact their vision for the schools they serve. A 2007 Wallace Foundation study interviewing urban principals found that the principals could be classified into two categories "transformers" or "copers." Transformers were characterized by strong leadership, gained respect from their staff and school community, and ultimately experienced more significant student achievement. The "copers" were continually struggling not to feel overwhelmed and placed external blame for low achievement on variables that they seemingly could not control. One of the key findings from the study can be summed up well as one interviewee in the study said, "[i] t's not just going in there and managing it all. It's 'Where can we take it?'… Vision for kids. Vision for staff. Vision for the school" (2007). For principals to be effective at their jobs, they must have training that supports them in developing and fostering vision. School leader managers and coaches need to understand the factors that support or inhibit principals' development and implementation of their vision. School systems must understand what drives principals to become "copers" and build principals into "transformers." Above all, principals themselves must understand what has helped other school leaders develop and enact their vision. In summary, I hope this research is used to help inform principal preparation programs, the work of school leader-managers, school systems' policies and practices, and the experiences of principals themselves.

Research Questions

The goal of this research is to answer the questions of:

I. Do principals have a clearly defined personal vision for the schools they serve, and in what ways do they enact their vision?

II. What professional and training experiences contribute to how a principal develops a vision for a school?

III. What is the relationship between the articulated vision and the culture of the school?

The first question is intentionally broken into two parts. The first part is designed to identify if principals act as middle managers and are going about their jobs without a grander vision for the work. The second part of the first question is designed to understand how principals are bringing to life the articulated vision and if what they are saying is rhetoric or reality. The second question is built to understand what culmination of experiences supported the principal in developing their vision. This second question should be of particular interest to traditional and non-traditional principal preparation programs, principal mentors, principal supervisors, and other principals. The third and final question is meant to probe how others are seeing the principal's vision. Collaboration is a significant part of the principalship. Leading a team means bringing others on board with a unified vision, so it is necessary to understand how stakeholders experience the vision.

I pursued the answers to these questions by interviewing school leaders from Columbus, Ohio. School leaders from a wide variety of professional backgrounds in both district and charter settings were interviewed to determine if they are leading their schools with a vision and how they are articulating that vision as well as how they worked to develop their vision for their school communities. In addition, teachers from each respective school were interviewed along

with artifacts gathered from the schools to determine the extent to which the school leader's articulated vision has been brought to life in the school community.

This study is distinctive because it includes principals from charter and traditional public-school settings. While there are more studies, such as Bennis and Nanus', that attempt to characterize a school's vision statement or identify visionary or instructional leaders, the experiences that develop these visionary leaders are not well understood and the relationship between an articulated and executed school vision has not been well researched.

Background

This study examines school leaders working in urban environments. Urban environments were chosen for this study because of the unique nature of their work. Principals in urban environments are often under-resourced, charged with educating an impoverished and traumatized population and are typically working within large bureaucracies and therefore need to innovate more than principals in other settings (Khalifa, 2012; Portin, 2004; Wallace Foundation, 2007; West, Peck & Reitzug, 2019). By studying principals working under these extreme conditions, it is possible to understand how principals make their vision come to life or resort to merely acting as a middle manager.

The research took place in Columbus, Ohio, with the majority of participants coming from Columbus City Schools. Columbus City Schools serves approximately 50,050 students. 54% of students are Black, 11.8% are Hispanic, 22.7% are White, Non-Hispanic, 4% are Asian or Pacific Islander, .2% of students are American Indian, and 6.8% are multiracial. 100% of students are classified as economically disadvantaged, 16.6% are classified as English Language Learners, and 16.9% are classified as students with disabilities (Ohio Department of Education,

2018). Columbus City Schools currently has an "F" in overall achievement as rated by the Ohio

Department of Education (2018). If Columbus City Schools receives another overall rating of an

"F" for the 18-19 SY and the 19-20 SY, current state policy dictates that the state would take

over and have a state-appointed chief executive officer to oversee improvements to the district

(Bush, 2019). Context has a significant impact on how principals respond to their work.

The following chapter is divided into four major sections; the conceptualization of vision,

the visioning process, vision in context, and vision assimilation. Each section begins with a

broad overview of the history and research regarding vision as a concept within organizations

and then filters into how vision manifests in schools.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Defining Vision

Organizations have a wide variety of what several researchers refer to as "organizational statements" (Cady, Wheeler, DeWolf, & Brodke, 2011). Vision, especially in recent years, has become a very trendy, often overused, and misconstrued term in the literature with other organizational statements (Khalifa, 2011, Khalifa 2012; Kotter, Collins, Porras, Duck, Pascale, & Athos, 1998; Gurley, Peters, Collins, & Fifolt, 2015). A recent study found that over half of American organizations have some kind of vision, mission, or guiding statement (Cady, Wheeler, DeWolf, & Brodke, 2011). These organizational statements can include everything from purpose statements, strategy statements, core values statements, goal statements, principles statements, guiding statements, mission statements, and finally, vision statements. While there is no one officially accepted definition of any of these organizational statements, the collective literature around the subject begins to create a generally accepted understanding that differentiates these concepts. The Encyclopedia of Leadership (2004) defines a mission as what the company does, a strategy as to how the company goes about its mission, and an organizational philosophy as the organization's principles and values, but not necessarily what the organization's long-term goals are and vision as the ideal future that an organization and or leader seeks to achieve. It is also essential to distinguish between a vision statement and a vision.

A vision is an idealized future state. The vision statement is the codification and operationalization of an abstract vision (Wiek & Iwaniec, 2014). A leader may have a vision for their organization but may not necessarily have codified this vision into a vision statement. Conversely, an organization may have a vision, but the members may not have internalized and

instantiated that vision (Gurley, Peters, Collins, & Fifolt, 2015). Also, a leader may have a personal vision that is different from the organizational vision. For example, a school leader may inherit a school with a pre-existing vision statement that may differ from the school leader's values and vision for how they want to lead. This tension can cause the organization's vision to shift and evolve or for the leader to move out of the organization (Bolger & Nir, 2001). This is an important distinction because this research project specifically focuses not on whether a school has a vision statement but on whether the leader can articulate a personal vision, a mental image of what they want the school they lead to be. A leader's personal vision is essential for school leadership. A robust organizational vision typically starts with the leader, with the leader's personal vision often acting as the generative force behind organizational vision (Yoeli & Berkovich, 2010). Yoeli and Berkovich, two Israel-based researchers, interviewed several school leaders across Israel and found that a school's organizational vision often starts with a leader's personal vision that evolves from a leader's ethos and personal and professional experiences (2010). The concept of a vision, a vision statement, and its organizational significance has a storied history. The understanding of this concept continues to evolve.

Evolution of the Vision Statement

A strong organizational vision is one of the keys to a long-lasting and successful organization. Peter Drucker, widely considered to be the father of modern management theory, wrote, "[c]ommon vision, common understanding, and unity of direction and effort of the entire organization require a definition of "what our business is and what it should be" (Drucker, 1986, p. 58). Drucker wrote profoundly about the importance of vision. He addresses the nuance of clarity and every part of an organization understanding its unique role while also internalizing the grander whole: "[o]perating management—the blind man feeling the elephant's belly and

thinking himself up against a landslide—tends to see things functionally. Each level needs its particular vision; it could not do its job without it" (Drucker, 1986, p.298). John Pearce expanded upon the work of Drucker. Publishing one of the most referenced works on mission statements for the period, *The Company Mission as a Strategic Goal,* naming the mission statement as defining the fundamental and unique purpose that sets a business apart from another (1982). While there was not much research around the efficacy of vision statements, Pearce was one of the first to try to build out criteria for a mission and vision statement and further study the importance of a vision statement to an organization's success. After an extensive review of mission statements, Pearce developed the following criteria to determine what constitutes an effective mission statement:

1. The specification of target customers and markets.

2. The identification of principal products/services.

3. The specification of geographic domain.

4. The identification of core technologies.

5. The expression of commitment to survival, growth, and profitability.

6. The specification of key elements in the company philosophy.

7. The identification of the company self-concept.

8. The identification of the firm's desired public (1987).

The idea of having an inspirational vision was taken one step further by Bennis and Nanus. In their book, *Leaders: Strategies for Taking Charge,* the leader's role in generating and carrying out the vision of the organizations was placed at the top of the list of most important attributes of a leader (1985). They believed that the key to a successful organization was a leader

who lived out the organization's vision and that the vision for the organization should be unique and attention-grabbing - not just outline what the organization does, but what makes it stand-out. They argued that the leader's vision must be clear and actionable: "[w]hen the organization has a clear sense of its purpose, direction, and desired future state and when this image is widely shared, individuals can find their own roles both in the organization and in the larger society" (p. 3).

In 2002, James Collins and Jerry Porras published their seminal work, *Built to Last,* outlining the vision as the cornerstone of a successful organization. The work of Collins and Porras attempts to break down the distinction between mission and vision as well as to discreetly define what sets an outstanding vision apart from a standard one that I was able to locate in the literature. Expanding upon their predecessors' work, Collins and Porras examined hundreds of highly successful organizations to determine what about their visions made them unique. They distilled an exemplary vision into two components; core ideology and envisioned future. Core ideology subsists of the company's core values and its core purpose, which drive an organization forward even as the product and consumer may change or evolve. Collins and Porras describe core values as being able to exist hundreds of years into an organization's evolution. The same mindset holds for an organization's core purpose, which should never be fully realized so that it can be something that the company is always striving to reach. For example, Collins and Porras give an example from the Walt Disney company. Their cores values are (1) no cynicism (2) nurturing and promulgation of "wholesome American values" (3) creativity, dreams, and imagination (4) fanatical attention to consistency and detail (5) preservation and control of the Disney magic, with their core reason for being simply "to make people happy". After an organization has defined its core values and core purpose (although it does not have to be a

stepwise process), the organization should begin to build its statement for an envisioned future. This imagined future entails a big hairy audacious goal (BHAG) and a vivid description. Here they give the example of Henry Ford stating, "I will build a car for the great multitude" and "when I am through everyone will be able to afford one [a car] and the horse will have disappeared from the highway…"(as cited in Collins & Porras, 1991). While Collins and Porras attempted to distill a vision statement into concrete building blocks, there is still much contention in the literature regarding what constitutes a vision statement. Sufi and Lyons examined the quality of vision statements for 200 brands in the hospitality industry and outline how there is still no agreed-upon understanding of what a vision statement should contain. Many organizations include strategies, products, and many other variables (2003). Brockett conducted a case study on a school's experience developing a mission, vision, and core values. He concluded that because there are so many competing definitions of mission and vision statements and that the meaning of the two becomes intertwined depending on who you are reading that a more encompassing phrase like *guiding statement* is necessary when talking about the underlying purpose an organization seeks to fulfill (2014). With the increased popularity of vision and mission statements, there has been growth in the diversity of these statements' defining characteristics. The length of vision and mission statements, the content of these statements, and the other philosophies and core values an organization expresses can make it difficult to discern an organization's purpose (Batez & Bart, 1996). However, an underlying characteristic of *vision* is that it imagines what an organization could be, not just for the leader but to unite the direction of the organization as a whole. Tichy and Devanna establish that vision is a conceptual roadmap or blueprint for the state of the organization in the future (Tichy and Devanna, 1986). Vision also demonstrates a sense of collective identity for the organization and its followers (Coger, 2004).

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Vision supports individuals at all levels of an organization to feel connected and align their actions and decisions to their overall work (2004). For this research, I draw upon the work of Baum, Locke, & Kirkpatrick. When conducting their research, they were less concerned with the formal definition of vision and more concerned with how the leaders they were interviewing defined vision (n.d.) Their rationale for being less concerned with a formal definition of vision was that it is the leader's vision as they saw it that guides their choices and actions. Therefore, if an organizational leader supplied what would be academically defined as a mission statement or a guiding philosophy when asked about their vision, the distinction was inconsequential because that was the "vision" that drove their work.

There is a multitude of definitions of vision, mission, and guiding philosophies. The way these ideas manifest vary by industry, organization, and leader. However, there are a few characteristics of vision that always remain the same. First, a vision is future-oriented and speaks to an idealized picture of what the organization could become. Second, vision serves the same purpose: to unite the organization's collective work towards a unified goal and drive organizational decision-making.

The Effect of Vision on Organizational Outcomes

The body of research on the effectiveness of vision within an organization is mixed and depends on the context and methodology in which the researcher(s) understand the meaning of the organizational vision. Some researchers take organizational vision as simply what an organization says it does on paper and examine the quality of a *vision statement*. In contrast, others look at *vision* more holistically and explore how the vision lives and manifests within an organization. Much of the research reviews very discrete parts of a vision statement such as word count, how many times specific words or phrases are mentioned, and attempt to state whether

these organizations have a compelling vision statement against a predefined set of criteria (Alawneh, 2015; Bart, 1998; Castro & Lohmann, 2014; Yozgat & Karataş, 2011).

A smaller subset of research attempts to connect a vision statement's quality to its impact on organizational outcomes. Research in the hospitality and tourism industry found that while there was a statistically significant correlation between the quality of mission statements and employee retention, there was no significant correlation with the net profit margin or the return on equity (Sufi and Lyons, 2003). No correlation was found between mission statement quality and performance in the banking industry (Alawneh, 2015). A strong statistically significant correlation was found between quality of vision statement and organizational performance in U.S. hospitals (Gulati, Mikhail, Morgan, & Sittig, 2016; G., W. R. P., & King., 2016). A strong positive relationship was found between non-profit organizations' organizational performance and strong mission statements (Macedo, Pinho, & Silva, 2016).

The research on the impact of vision statements in education is even more limited. Stemler and Bebell introduced a coding rubric specifically for school mission and vision statements (1999). In their review of 267 educational institutions, ten major themes emerged in school vision/mission statements: cognitive/academic achievement, social development, citizenship/vocational development, physical development, attitude/values/emotional development, school environment, spiritual community, local community, global community, and faculty, and staff. Later studies by Stemler and Bebell tested this rubric and the coding system's interrater reliability for school vision statements (2004). However, little work has been done outside determining the quality of vision/mission statements, and student achievement. Stemler, Bebell, and Sonnabend found a slight positive correlation between high student achievement and schools with civic engagement and low student achievement and vocational

development (2010). Kustigian conducted a study of Massachusetts schools using the rubric and coding scheme developed by Stemler and Bebell and correlated the theme of civic engagement to higher-performing schools. The vocational development theme was associated with schools performing at the bottom of student achievement (2014). A study with a similar methodology examined Blue Ribbon schools and the lowest-performing schools in Texas to see if there were any distinguishing characteristics in the school's vision/mission statements with a small but statistically significant relationship between aspects of a vision statement and student achievement (Perfetto, 2010). These studies are similar because they attempt to measure organizational outcomes through what is written on paper. However, what is reported as an organization's vision does not always manifest in how an organization functions.

A large part of how a vision manifests depends on how it is communicated and modeled by the leader. A substantial body of literature speaks to the importance of a leader generating outcomes for their organization and the importance of a leader having a vision. There is substantially less research that attempts to tie the effects of a leader having, communicating, and modeling their vision to organizational outcomes. Early in the literature, these leaders are often referred to as "charismatic" leaders and later as "visionary" leaders. Visionary leaders invest their followers in becoming committed to the leader's mission/vision and to even make significant personal sacrifices for the cause of the leader's mission/vision (Shamir, House & Arthur, 2016). In a review of more than twenty studies, research has shown that charismatic leaders can increase their employees' performance and improve overall organizational outcomes (2016). While the mechanism by which these visionary leaders invest their followers in their mission/vision is highly debated, the research does highlight that it is even more critical that a leader has a compelling vision is even more important than the personality trait of having

charisma alone (Kirkpatrick and Locke, 1996). In a comprehensive longitudinal study of 183 entrepreneur/CEO and employee pairs, the effects of having a strong vision and how the leader communicated it was examined along seven different dimensions (1) brevity, (2) clarity, (3) abstractness, (4) challenge, (5) future orientation, (6) stability and (7) desirability or ability to inspire (Baum, Locke, & Kirkpatrick, n.d.). In this study, they found that there was a high correlation between how explicit the content of the leader's vision statement was (the articulated vision) and how well they were able to communicate the vision to their employees and organizations as a whole to the overall improvement in organizational outcomes (n.d.). For this research, I will use the term 'visionary leader' to mean someone who has a clear vision and is capable of expressing that vision in a compelling way (Khatri & Lee, 2001). The content of a vision and how the leader communicates it is crucial to how an organization functions and has been shown to improve organizational outcomes. With this in mind, it is necessary to examine the extent to which we are placing the importance of having a vision for schools and how we are training and developing school leaders to create, communicate, model, and implement their vision.

<p style="text-align:center">Vision in Schools</p>

As cited in *The School Mission Statement* by Stemler and Bebell, "[a] number of research inquiries in the area of school effectiveness have consistently shown that commitment to a shared mission is one of the leading factors differentiating more effective schools from less effective schools" (2012). However, as has already been stated, what is written down is not what makes a school's mission, but how the vision comes alive through the organizational team's leadership and shared commitment. After reviewing hundreds of studies, Teddlie & Reynolds identified creating a shared vision as one of the most impactful practices a school leader can do to improve

outcomes for their school community (2000). In another comprehensive review of literature conducted by Leithwood and colleagues, setting the direction for a school was listed as the most critical thing a principal can do to improve student achievement (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). Although there is a great deal of theoretical research that speaks to the importance of vision in schools, minimal empirical research ties vision to student achievement. Building upon the previously mentioned study conducted by Baum, Locke, and Kirkpatrick (1998), Sooksan Kantabura proposes using their methodology to examine the impact of visionary leadership on student achievement (2005). Kantabura presents two hypotheses to test for future research:

> "(1) Vision attributes of brevity, clarity, abstractness, challenge, future orientation, stability, and desirability or ability to inspire are directly associated with enhanced student and teacher satisfaction, student achievement, and school efficiency taking into account the intervening variables of Principal, Teacher, and Organizational Factors [and]
>
> (2) Vision content of student and teacher satisfaction and efficiency imageries are directly associated with enhanced student and teacher satisfaction, student achievement, and school efficiency, taking into account the intervening variables of Principal, Teacher, and Organizational Factors" (p. 130-132).

Similarly, Hallinger and Heck also acknowledge again, while there is theoretical research to support the importance of "visionary leadership", there is limited empirical research to support this claim (2001). So, while we know that a leader having a clear vision and executing on that vision is exceptionally critical for student achievement, this is an area where a lot more research is required to understand how this process occurs. With this in mind, it is important to consider how we are training school leaders to develop and implement their vision for schools.

The Visioning Process

Numerous triggers initiate the desire or need for an organization's vision. In general, the need or desire for a vision is triggered by tension within the organization or tension between the organization and its current environment (O'Connell, Hickerson, & Pillutla, 2011). The three most prominent causes of an organization needing to develop or refine an existing vision can be summarized as either a period of founding, disruption, or purposeful planning of the future (2011). Schools and school systems follow similar, if not parallel, patterns as many organizations do when revisiting/creating a vision. The research around vision in schools is often made most apparent when the literature discusses the work of turnaround principals (disruption), founding schools (founding), and or refining school or school system systems (planning for the future) (Meyers & Hitt, 2017; Vandenberghe, 1994). Essentially the visioning process is sparked when there is either a founding or start-up of an organization, leadership change, or a need to change organizational performance (O'Connell, Hickerson, & Pillutla, 2011). While understanding the triggers that precipitate the development of a vision is crucial, it is also essential to understand the process by which visions within organizations are developed.

Visions provide direction and motivation to action for human behavior (Wiek & Iwaniec, 2014). Visioning is the process by which organizations or individuals create their visions (2014). Those involved in the visioning process vary by organizational need and methodology. After a review of the literature, O'Connell, Hickerson, and Pilluta identified four ways in which a vision the visioning process begins: (1) leader creates a vision and communicates the vision to his/her followers, (2) a leader with a group of other leaders within an organization creates a vision and communicates the vision to the organization, (3) visions are co-created by leaders and followers with the leader and followers developing a shared vision through an iterative process and finally

(4) a group as a whole comes together to create a vision without a distinct leader (2011). The first two methods of developing vision are "cascading visions," and in these models it is the responsibility of the leader of the organization to develop, foster, communicate and assimilate others towards a unifying vision (Hooijberg, 2007). In the book *Being There Even When You Are Not : Leading Through Strategy, Structures, and Systems* by Hooijberg, the author outlines this process into three distinct steps, (1) the leaders set the stage, (2) leaders cascade the vision, and (3) leaders assess the impact of the cascading process. In the first step, the leader assesses the organization's needs and assets and begins to craft a compelling and realistic vision for his/her followers. Next, the leader engages in transformational leadership and begins ensuring that the vision is carried throughout all parts of the organization and resonates deeply with his/her followers. Finally, the leader flows from a transformational leader to a transactional leader and back to a transformational leader. He/she spot checks to ensure that the organization is moving towards agreed-upon milestones (2007). The other two approaches to creating vision are more collaborative and much less leader-centric. In the more collaborative and mutual approaches to building a vision, the leader's responsibility is to act as a facilitator and help the participants create a unified vision through a sense-making process (Weick, 1995). In either the leader-centric model of vision creation or the mutual methods of vision creation, the process is iterative, and the vision of the organization is continuously refined.

There are numerous mechanisms and protocols by which the practical visioning process may occur. John Robinson was one of the first individuals to develop a distinct methodology for creating a vision known as backcasting. Originally designed to analyze and create policy, this methodology has sparked numerous iterations and is still very popular today in the use of crafting visions and visions statements. Unlike forecasting, backcasting involves imagining an

idealized future and then moving stepwise backward in time to understand the mechanisms by which that idealized future could feasibly be attained over time (Robinson, 1982). Future workshops developed by Jungk, Robert, Müllert, Norbert is another way that the visioning process can occur (1987). In a future workshop, an emphasis is placed on visualization and creating a physical depiction of the idealized future. A group then critiques each participant's idealized future and reviews it for feasibility. Afterward, the group settles on an ideal vision and begins to backward map the first steps towards reaching this idealized future (1987). A more recent model of visioning developed by the *Future Search Network* is a five-day workshop. In this model, a wide variety of stakeholders engage in a collective process of understanding the organization as it operates in the present, what idealized futures would look like, and work to find common ground regarding what the ideal vision is and what it would take to achieve this vision (Future Search Network, n.d.).

How are School Leaders Trained to Develop and Implement Vision

Having a vision is critical to an organization's success. A vision needs to exist beyond what is on paper. For a vision to be successful, it needs to be shared by the team and modeled by the school leader. The exact mechanism by which school leaders enact their vision is still largely unknown and under-researched. As cited in *The Making of the Principal,* Jack Jennings, president of the Center on Educational Policy in Washington, D.C., put it: "Leadership only succeeds if the leader brings other people along into the same vision, and they are all able to work together and trust one another" (p. 4). Knowing how critically important visions and the execution of visions are to an organization's success, we must look at how we are training school leaders on how to develop and deliver their vision for their school communities. In 2008, The Education Development Center, Inc. developed a quality measures tool to help guide the

structure of pre-service training for principals. The first criteria that this tool uses to evaluate programs is "vision for learning," a course topic requirement in which "90% of graduates demonstrate proficiency in implementing a strategic vision for school-wide equity and excellence that is grounded in a fundamental belief that all students can learn" (King, 2013, p. 19). Not only is the emphasis on developing visionary leaders a hallmark of a quality principal preparation program, but now many accrediting bodies are requiring vision as a prerequisite component of educating school leaders. In 2018, the National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) issued revised standards for principal preparation programs. These standards review principal preparation programs for accreditation through the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), an international accreditation body for principal preparation programs (2018). In their recently revised standards, the first standard for review is "Mission, Vision and Improvement," which they break down into two components:

Component 1.1 Program completers understand and demonstrate the capacity to collaboratively design, communicate, and evaluate a district mission and vision that respects a core set of values and priorities that include data use, technology, values, equity, diversity, digital citizenship, and community.

Component 1.2: Program completers understand and demonstrate the capacity to

lead district strategic planning and continuous improvement processes that engage diverse stakeholders in data collection, diagnosis, design, implementation, and evaluation (p. 10).

While vision development is clearly important from a program evaluation standpoint and is typically required by accrediting bodies, these programs' experience and execution are often

different in actuality. In a comprehensive review of 31 principal preparation programs from across the country, only 6% of principal preparation coursework focuses on leadership theory, leadership versus management and leading with vision. In contrast, almost 30% of coursework focused on building technical knowledge in areas such as law, finance, and research skills (Hess & Kelly, 2007). This study left the researchers asking if principal preparation programs were adequately preparing principals for the work of educational leadership: "This system risks graduating new principals unprepared to exercise new freedoms or responsibilities—resulting in micromanagement, poor decisions, or the misuse of accountability instruments. Meaningful reform of principal-preparation programs must ensure that the content of these programs it is well suited for the challenges confronting principals in a new era of schooling" (p. 23).

Another study from the University of Alabama at Birmingham studied students in either an educational master's, educational specialist, or doctoral program leadership preparation programs. Eighty students responded to a survey asking them to recall their school or educational organization's vision statement and how this vision affected their day to day work. The study found that very few (only 23%) of school leaders surveyed reported that the vision impacted their day-to-day work. Several school leaders demonstrated that they could not accurately recall the vision that drove their organization (Gurley, Peters, Collins, & Fifolt, 2015).

Vision in Context

Leaders do not create, articulate, or instantiate their visions in a vacuum (Berson, Shamir, Avolio,& Popper, 2001). Organizational function, historical, geographical, financial, size, and numerous other factors play into how a vision is created, articulated and brought to life (2001). The more tumultuous the environment, the more difficult it can be to convey a consistent vision and even more challenging to instantiate that vision: "vision points to a preferred but distant

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future, but turbulence can make the vision seem even more distant by unpredictably changing the environment" (O'Connell, Hickerson, Pillutla, 2011, p. 108). The field of education is always shifting, and the principal's work is continually evolving, making the ability and challenges of vision creation and implementation unique.

Principals' Ability to Implement Vision in Schools

As organizations increase in scale and the need for bureaucratic measures increases, school leaders are pushed to act as middle managers. While senior and cabinet-level directors in large districts are typically responsible for creating and implementing district-wide practices and direction setting, it is the school leader's job to navigate the demands of those above them as well as the needs of their direct reports and their immediate stakeholders. School leaders are often put in positions where they have to act as passive or active recipients of the leader above them and their vision (Fitzgerald, 2009). The intensity of the international emphasis on education reforms and high accountability has often pushed school leaders to experience what one researcher described as the "tyranny of bureaucracy that leaves little time for leadership" (Fitzgerald, 2009, p. 63). Leithwood and Prestine tell how district-level administrators play a crucial role in acting as the gatekeepers to national policy interpretation and implementation in schools (2002). Leithwood and Prestine say that district-level administrators need to act as buffers for their direct reports from counterproductive policies and initiatives in favor of putting the needs of their schools and families first (2002). In *The School as a Democratic Workplace: The Political Dimension of Dewey's Democracy and Education,* the author describes how many of the current education reforms as counterproductive to Dewey's vision of schools as a democratic workplace. The author says how international education policy reform initiatives are currently pushing teachers and school leaders towards managerialism instead of autonomy

(2018). In the previously mentioned Wallace Study pertaining to "copers" and "transformers," both groups or principals felt the pressures of the red tape and ever-changing political landscape of working in a large bureaucracy. One of the participants identified in the study as a "coper" references all of the rules and struggles of coaching out poor performing teachers: "[t]he time it takes to evaluate and document a bad teacher is unbelievable... Following the legal process, the due process... Three years is nothing, and then you still aren't guaranteed to get them out because of the strong union. It's very time-consuming." "Transformers," however, were typically able to find a way to work within or around the red tape (2018).

Implementing Vision in Urban Schools

Leading and implementing a vision in urban schools comes with its own set of challenges. In schools with a high population of students with low socioeconomic status, there are lower attendance rates, lower literacy levels, higher violent incidents, crime and drug-related offenses, and overall lower student achievement (Harris, 2010). Urban schools' situation is made even more challenging by governmental policies that have been shown to be counterproductive to supporting urban schools (2010). Fullan outlines how the ever-shifting political landscape focused on reforming urban schools through high stakes accountability measures has done more harm than good:

> "an incentive system that cannot appeal to the higher performing parts of the workforce is doomed to failure. The system insufficiently tapped into teachers' personal sense of responsibility for performance. As a result, school improvement for the majority was mainly externally induced and directed, prodded by administrators, instructional specialist, external consultants, staff developers, and so on whose activities were

moderately fueled by a common desire among teacher to be rid of stigma and scrutiny"

(as cited in Fullan, 2005).

Fullan also speaks to the importance of central office/upper-level administration in hindering or supporting urban principals. Principals look to central office administrators to help lift some of the red-tape and take the administrative task off their hands that do not directly pertain to their work. The majority of principals interviewed cited upper-level administration as a key factor in whether they would remain in their position or not for years to come (2005).

Urban school leaders are working in a unique environment and therefore need to lead differently. In a recent study, Muhammad Khalifa (2012) examined the re-emergence of pre-desegregated school practices practiced by Black principals prior to *Brown v. Board* (1954). In his research, he found that prior to *Brown v. Board,* Black principals in charge of segregated schools led with a foundation of trust from the communities they served because they were embedded in the context they serve. There was an interconnected relationship and co-dependency between the school and the families the school served. The families relied upon the school for its academic vision, and the school needed the parents for financial support. The principals of these segregated schools were well respected by the Black community and acted as a bridge to the White community. The author highlights that modern-day urban leaders can learn from the practices of the *pre-Brown v. Board* principals. He argues that school leaders in urban schools must understand the community's historical and cultural relationships and embed themselves in the community as an activist. The author states, "[...]urban principals must move beyond their school walls in order to gain an understanding of the unique social and cultural conditions of their neighborhood and communities" (Khalifa, 2012, p.429). The author is essentially establishing that building a thriving urban school cannot be done in isolation. To gain

the trust of the community, urban principals cannot be passive in their approach to fostering relationships: "it is by principals going into communities and bringing community members into the school, placing the community issues at the center of school-community partnership goals, and advocating for community-based goals" (p.461). The work of developing a vision in urban schools, in particular, should not be done in isolation but should be developed in conjunction with the school community that the school serves.

The Competing Responsibilities of the Principalship

In Marzano's *School Leadership that Works,* he and his team reviewed sixty-nine studies in a meta-analysis to identify school leaders' twenty-one responsibilities (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). These twenty-one responsibilities are as follows: (1) affirmation, (2) change agent, (3) contingent rewards, (4) communication, (5) culture, (6) discipline, (7) flexibility, (8) focus, (9) idea/beliefs, (10) input, (11) intellectual stimulation, (12) involvement in curriculum instruction and assessment, (13) knowledge of curriculum instruction and assessment, (14) monitoring/evaluating, (15) optimizer, (16) order, (17) outreach, (18) relationships, (19) resources, (20) situational awareness, and (21) visibility. In the same work, Marzano and colleagues, building off research from Cotten, outline the various modalities by which the conception of school leadership continues to evolve and the multiple forms school leadership can take: transformational leadership, transactional leadership, total quality management, servant leadership, situational leadership, and instructional leadership (Cotten, 2003; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). With all of the various responsibilities of a school leader and the wide variety of ways school leaders can choose to lead their schools, it is easy to see why the modern principal's role is complex and can often feel overwhelming for school leaders. In a review of forty years of school leadership research, Hallinger and Murphy examine the more recent

emphasis on school leaders acting as instructional leaders. This entails added responsibilities such as curriculum and instructional expertise, while also not relenting on other traditional duties held by the principal (2013). In their review, they acknowledge the importance of principals as instructional leaders to student achievement but also identify barriers to principals achieving this leadership style. First, principals are constrained by the time to lead.

> "The principals workday consist of a continuous stream of brief, fragmented, problem-oriented interactions and most of which are initiated by the others [...] the principal finds it difficult to maintain a focus on key instructional leadership tasks in the face of an unrelenting series of requests, crises, and meetings initiated by others" (p. 10).

The second constraint is the principal's ability to know and act on instruction, curriculum, and assessment. Hallinger and Murphy note that frequently districts separate curriculum and instruction into disparate fields that the principal is supposed to enforce as a middle manager but has very little autonomy to change instructional methodology or practice. In addition, principals may be hesitant to act as instructional leaders because they have limited content or pedagogical knowledge. Principals that work in high needs schools have a compounded problem. The authors note that principals in urban environments may have both the skill and the will but maybe 'running on empty' because of their school community's multiplied needs. The researchers recommend three strategies to help principals navigate the challenges of being both a manager and instructional leader: clarify personal vision and supporting habits, articulate a collective instructional leadership role, and enable others to act. The authors note, "[t]his clarifies why the literature so often exhorts leaders to articulate a clear personal vision. The leader's vision becomes a filter for assessing the importance of tasks" (p.14). One trend that emerges from the research is that context matters. There is no one right way to lead a school. School leaders must

balance acting as both instructional and transformational leaders (Marks & Printy, 2003). A Wallace Foundation research study examined the fit between leadership styles and school types in five elementary schools, seven high schools, and two K-12 schools in Washington, Ohio, Illinois, and Wisconsin that were a mix of charter, private, public, and magnet schools (Portin, 2004). The researchers interviewed principals, their teams and spent time observing the school leader's daily interactions and their day to day routines. The researchers categorized the principal's work into seven domains: instructional leadership, cultural leadership, managerial leadership, human resources leadership, strategic leadership, external development leadership, and micro-political (buffering internal interest while maximizing resources) leadership. The amount of energy spent on each of these functions varied from school to school and the emphasis placed on each component varied considerably by the context of the school leaders' work. As mentioned in previously cited research, the authors found that in many traditional public schools, the school leader could not exert much authority over curriculum and instruction due to district mandates or constraints of a collective bargaining agreement. The author's note, "principals in the most-constrained environments generally had trouble ascending beyond middle management functions. They spent much of their time complying with and implementing directives …" (p.17). Regardless of the context within which they work, the researchers conclude that principals must be 'master diagnosticians' who are attuned to the school communities' needs and set direction and deliver what the school needs (2004).

Vision Assimilation

How the leader acts, creates, and communicates the vision and the leader's relationship to the organization's members determines the degree to which the vision of an organization will be assimilated by the members of the organization (Berson, Shamir, Avolio, & Popper, 2001;

Jackson, Meyer, & Wang, 2013; Mayfield, Mayfield, & Sharbrough, 2015). Understanding how a principal communicates their vision and their relationship to teachers is essential to understanding how vision manifests and cascades in schools. The degree to which the vision is meaningful is only as strong as the followers of the vision's willingness to receive it. In examining the relationship between the leader's articulation of a vision and the perceived strength of that vision, researchers have found that a vision must be manageable for it to be adopted by followers: "Simply articulating an ambitious vision may not energize followers to higher levels of effort and performance. If a vision is not grounded in some level of practicality, followers may view it as unrealistic or wishful thinking" (Berson, Shamir, Avolio, & Popper, 2001, p. 67). In addition to the vision being tangible, the leader must properly communicate the vision for it to be assimilated by the followers. A study conducted by Mayfield, Mayfield, and Williams examined using motivational language theory (MLT) to better understand how CEOs use language to communicate an organization's vision (2014). Motivational Language Theory uses language to convey a shared organizational vision internally and externally for an organization. Their study proposed that the top leader uses empathetic language, modeling, social exchange processes, and training for management to enhance leader communication of the strategic vision (2014).

Principal and Teacher Relationship

To bring a cohesive vision to life, principals need to collaborate and gain their teachers' trust. Several researchers have highlighted the importance of the principal-teacher relationship and how it impacts everything from teacher retention, job satisfaction, morale, parent perception of the school community, and ultimately student achievement (Bolger, 2001; Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001; Price, 2011; Tschannen, 2001). A longitudinal

study of 400 Chicago elementary schools showed the necessity of trust to build a thriving school community (2003). In this study, Bryk and Schneider found that effective principals build personal relationships with their teachers by actively listening to their concerns, acknowledging others' vulnerabilities, protecting their teachers from seemingly arbitrary policies or practices, and even removing ineffective staff members. They found that effective principals "...couple these behaviors with a compelling school vision and behavior that clearly seeks to advance the vision. This consistency between words and actions affirms their personal integrity" (2003). Another study found a strong correlation between transformational leadership and a teacher's job satisfaction when examining teachers' job satisfaction based on their principals' leadership styles (Bolger, 2001). Collaboration between principals and teachers over time builds trust and has the potential to transform schools (Tschannen, 2001). One of the most important things a principal can do to build trust between themselves and their teachers is to ensure clear organizational direction and expectations (Price, 2011). Price also concludes that principals with more autonomy to create their vision and goals for their school have the opportunity to form better relationships with their staff (2011).

Conclusion

An integral part of an effective vision is a shared understanding and collective investment from all organization members. Leaders need to establish trust and model the values of the school to build this shared investment. In addition, the vision for the school needs to be built in collaboration with the school community to create a shared understanding of organizational direction.

We know that transformational visionary leaders are a prerequisite to creating schools that provide the best education possible for students. An overwhelming body of research

supports the idea that leading with vision is necessary to create change and build successful

organizations. However, little is known about determining whether a principal has a vision for

leading schools and how that vision was developed. We also need to understand better how

principals navigate the challenge of implementing their vision in an era of test-driven

accountability and bureaucracy.

CHAPTER 3

Research Design and Methods

Introduction

Leading with and investing others in a shared vision is central to the work of the principalship. By better understanding how principals currently develop, foster, and share the vision for their school communities, it is possible to better train and support principals to engender their visions for the schools that they lead.

This study interviewed principals and their school teams from Columbus, Ohio. Semi-structured interviews using a multiple case study analysis approach as the primary data collection methodology and procedure when interviewing school leaders. Focus groups were also conducted with teachers to understand how the leader's personal vision manifested.

The primary research questions that this project seeks to answer are:

I. Do principals have a clearly defined personal vision for the schools they serve, and in what ways do they enact their vision?

II. What professional and training experiences contribute to how a principal develops a vision for a school?

III. What is the relationship between the articulated vision and the culture of the school?

Definition of Terms

Artifact

The term *artifact* refers to any object or material created by the school community offered by the school leader that reflects the school's vision. A sample, but not all-inclusive, list is included in Appendix E.

Peer Debriefing

To ensure the coding schema's accuracy and validity, the researcher engaged in frequent peer debriefing in which the researcher had colleagues review the transcripts while maintaining participant confidentiality and examined whether they see the same patterns and themes emerge from anonymized notes (Barbour, 2014).

Semi-Structured Interviews

A semi-structured interview was used to allow for a more natural conversation with the school leaders (Mertens, 2014). While the questions were prepared in advance, if an item of interest arose through discussion relevant to the research, space was given to delve into this area further.

Focus Groups

Focus groups were used when interviewing teachers. Focus groups refer to a group of between six to eight people who engage in a discussion facilitated by a moderator around a specific issue or set of issues. This group aimed not to reach a consensus around the questions being asked but to better understand the topics discussed (Hennink, 2013).

Design

Participants

Over 150 emails and phone calls were placed to garner participants for this study. However, due to the nature of the COVID-19 pandemic and schools being forced into closure with several school systems discouraging or closing the ability to research, only nine school leaders ultimately completed participation. Two charter school principals and seven district principals from Columbus were able to participate. One focus group of teachers from each school was interviewed for nine interviews and nine focus groups. All of the school leaders who were interviewed worked in urban environments with predominantly minority student populations from low-income backgrounds. The schools were mixed in academic performance. Also, specific demographic and background information was collected from each principal. The information included years of experience as an administrator, years of experience as a teacher, gender, age, race, principal training preparation program, and any other relevant trainings or experiences that they have undergone that might have influenced their vision creation process (e.g., fellowships, internships, fields of study, alternative careers held, familial experiences, etc.). Principals were asked for a list of teachers available for the focus group regarding their perception of the school leader's enactment of the school vision. Principals were not told which teachers from the list provided are selected to be a part of the focus group to help protect the teacher participation process's confidentiality.

Data Collection

Data was collected using three mechanisms: school leader interviews, teacher focus groups, and artifact collection. First, school leaders took part in semi-structured interviews. Next,

leaders were asked to provide a list of teachers who would be available to participate in a focus group. Finally, each school leader was asked to provide artifacts, including the parent/family handbook, school website, sample parent/family communication, family/school calendar.

Interviews

A semi-structured interview was used to allow for a more natural conversation with the participants (Mertens, 2014). While the questions were prepared in advance, if an item of interest came up through conversation relevant to the research, space was further delved into this area. The interview process's semi-structured nature also allowed the interviewer to follow their natural curiosity and show openness to ideas, understandings, or additional questions that the researcher may not have previously planned for pertaining to the research (Klenke, 2016). Interviews were recorded to ensure that all data was accurately captured and more natural flow to the conversation. As Mertens notes, the researcher turned over control to the participants and informed them of their right not to be recorded at any time during the interview or listen to the recording back before they are made part of the official record (2014). The teacher focus groups were also semi-structured and followed a similar form, assessing how the teacher interprets and sees the school's vision. Most of the interviews were conducted either over the phone or over videoconferencing.

The interview process began by informing the participant of the study's purpose and the researcher's history and interest in the subject matter, and their confidentiality rights. Establishing rapport and building trust with the participant through self-disclosure and establishing safety and privacy is a crucial part of the interview process (Klenke, 2016).

The questions for the teacher focus group and administrator interviews are composed of previous research studies. Using a combination of questions pulled the Management of Meaning Scale, a national research questionnaire conducted in the U.S. to ascertain what leadership actions contribute to student achievement and the work of Mombourquette in his research that focused on a similar area of focus (Fairhurst, Jordan, & Neuwirth, 1997; Louis, Dretzke & Wahlstrom, 2010; Mombourquette, 2017). The questions for the administrator interview are similar to the research conducted by Mombourquette (2017). After Alberta, Canada had administered new guidelines for effective school leadership, one of them being centered around the principal's vision, he interviewed several principals to examine how their vision for their schools was manifesting and found that the principals that had a well thought out vision for their school communities tended to be more effective in their roles (2017). The teacher focus group questions are primarily drawn from the research of Fairhurst and colleagues and Louis, Dretzke & Wahlstrom. Fairhurst and colleagues examined a leader's ability to effectively communicate and implement a company's vision statement as perceived by its employees. While their research was conducted with the Department of Energy, the Environmental Protection Agency, and subsequent contractors and sub-contractors and not in an educational setting, many of the questions asked are context agnostic and can be applied to a school setting (1997). Louis and colleagues conducted a national survey of teachers to determine what aspects of a leader's behavior contribute to student achievement. While their study was trying to determine the relationship between leader behaviors and student achievement, several of their questions also relate to the leader's perceived ability to create a coherent and shared learning community for a school (2010).

Focus Groups

School leaders were asked for a list of teachers who may be available for a focus group. From the list, between five to six teachers were typically selected. The school leader was informed that the information shared in the focus group is confidential. The school leader will not be shared on their school-specific focus group's findings to protect the teacher participants' confidentiality. The focus groups were to be held at the hosting school, but due to the context of the pandemic, almost all focus groups were exclusively conducted over video conference. Focus groups were chosen as the medium for data collection because of their unique ability to generate data that could not be obtained through interviews or surveys. Since focus groups allow participants to build upon one another's responses, this medium improves participant response depth. Focus groups enabled the researcher to gather more data about the group's experience rather than the individual (Hennink, 2013).

Artifact Collection

Artifacts give a more comprehensive picture of how the work of the school is manifesting (Broderick, Jones & McGreal, 1984). Upon gaining permission from the principal, the researcher asked the principal for specific artifacts that showcase how the vision is enacted throughout the school community. The same artifacts were collected from each school: parent/family handbook, website, parent/family sample communication (e.g., newsletters, flyers, etc.), family/school calendar. The list of artifacts obtained is drawn from *The Handbook for Enhancing Professional Practice* by Danielson (2008). In her book, she outlines different kinds of artifacts that should be collected on learning walks to evaluate teaching in relation to the Danielson Framework, a rubric designed to evaluate teaching performance. School districts have used this list of artifacts to

generate their own custom list of artifacts to be collected on learning walks (David Douglas School District, n.d.).

Artifact Instrumentation

While many coding schemes and systems have been developed to evaluate a vision statement or visioning process, the creation of tools related to the evaluation of artifacts connectedness to vision appears limited (Kirkpatrick, Wofford, & Baum, 2002; Locke, Kirkpatrick, & Baum, 2000; Rideout, McKay, & Morton, 2004). In lieu of a research-based rubric to determine artifact related to the school leader's articulated vision, the researcher has created a three-point rubric that will give an overall score to how well all of the artifacts collected speak to the articulated vision of the school community. Mertens establishes how rubrics are useful for assessing a portfolio of work because they operate on a continuum and create a normative variable to help compare data sets (Mertens, 2014). One point was awarded if most artifacts do not relate to the school leader's articulated vision. Two points were awarded if the majority of the artifacts partially relate to the articulated vision. Three points were awarded if all artifacts collected directly reflected the school leader's articulated vision.

Data Analysis

After all interviews had been collected and relevant artifacts had been gathered, the data was analyzed. After each interview, the interview was transcribed and coded using the coding software Quirkos. The coding schema was informed mainly by the works of Stemler, Bebell, Kirkpatrick, and colleagues. Specifically, Stemler and Bebell's analysis of the components of school's vision and mission statements, and Kirkpatrick and colleagues examination of non-educational organizational vision statements (Bebell & Stemler, 2014; Bebell & Stemler, 1999;

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Kirkpatrick, Wofford, & Baum, 2002; Locke, Kirkpatrick, & Baum, 2000). Using emergent

coding, Stemler and Bebell developed a coding rubric and found that school vision statements

can systematically be coded into eleven different themes. Their coding rubric, provided in

Appendix F, was used as a platform to inform the coding system of school leaders' articulated

visions. In addition, articulated visions were reviewed for depth, clarity, and specificity. As the

researcher examined the transcripts from the interview and patterns in the data begin to develop,

a codebook was developed (Mertens, 2015). Memos were generated throughout the coding

process as overarching themes emerged. These memos served to give insight into the researchers'

thinking and capture patterns in the coding of the data set over time (2015). Similar to the coding

work conducted by Charmaz, the researcher engaged in the process of initial and focused coding,

by which the researcher generated an initial set of codes and then compared those codes to the

more prominent codes established by the predominant literature in an iterative process

(Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014). The codes were then sorted into categories based on how each

code is thematically related to one another. The goal was that throughout the coding process, the

codes are organized into fewer and fewer thematic categories (Klenke, 2016). To ensure the

coding schema's accuracy and validity, the researcher engaged in frequent peer debriefing in

which the researcher had colleagues review the transcripts while maintaining participant

confidentiality and examine whether they see the same patterns and themes emerge (Barbour,

2014). As the codes become solidified, codes were cross-referenced with school leader

characteristics and school community characteristics to see if patterns emerge, such as training

location. The patterns were also used to examine if there is a connection between what the

principal articulated the school's vision to be and how they understood this vision to manifest,

and how the teachers understood and experienced the school's vision.

Protections for Participants

Participants were told how the information would be used in the study and can withdraw their consent to participate at any time. All identifying information was masked with pseudonyms, including names, locations, and any other information that could be used to trace participants back to their actual identity. All interviews were recorded and kept on a secure password-protected server to limit access to participant information.

Limitations of the Study

Due to time constraints and the nature of the COVID-10 pandemic, principals' and teachers' sample size was relatively small. Therefore, it would be hard to generalize the findings of this study to the population at large. Furthermore, the study was limited by the volume of stakeholders that will be able to be interviewed. If time were not a factor and more participants, the researcher would interview additional teachers, community members, students, and supervisors. Lastly, there has not been much research on rating the quality and comprehensiveness of vision and ensuring a fair and reliable method for measuring pervasiveness and coherence of vision within an organization. While informed by previous research, many of my questions and rubric rating systems were tailored to meet this research project's needs. They, therefore, will not have a comprehensive, evidence-based background as research tools.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This qualitative study was designed to better understand how school leaders build and instantiate the vision for the school that they lead and ultimately how that vision is perceived to be manifested by one the most critical stakeholders - the teacher. Specifically, this study attempts to answer the questions of:

1. Do principals have a clearly defined personal vision for the schools they serve, and in what ways do they enact their vision?

2. What professional and training experiences contribute to how a principal develops a vision for a school?

3. What is the relationship between the articulated vision and the culture of the school?

Findings

This study collected data in three ways. First, through direct semi-structured interviews with the school leaders. Second, the interviews with each school leader were subsequently followed by focus groups subsisting of teaching staff from the leader's school. Finally, supporting artifacts were obtained directly from the school principal or publicly available materials that showcased the vision manifesting. Each question relies on either a singular data source or multiple data sources to create coherent findings. To answer the first part of question one - do principals have a clearly defined personal vision for the schools they serve? - the data is primarily pulled from the principals' report during the direct interviews. For the second part of the first question, the findings are a combination of how the principal reported seeing themselves invest others in the focus group's vision and conclusions and how the instructional staff found

themselves invested in the vision. Findings to question number two - what professional and training experiences contribute to how a principal develops a vision for a school? - come directly from the principal interviews. As part of the interview process, principals were asked to self-report their training and formal education experiences that aided in developing their vision. No formal transcripts or HR data was collected to verify a principal's participation in these experiences to protect participant confidentiality. The final question, question number three, and its findings are a combination of all data sources collected as part of this research - the principal interviews, focus groups, and the artifact collection.

<div align="center">Research Question One Findings</div>

The first question of this research is: do principals have a clearly defined personal vision for the schools they serve, and in what ways do they enact their vision?

The first question is a two-part question. The first part of this question seeks to understand if principals can articulate a vision at all or if they have been leading absent of a vision. Because the term vision, as established in the literature review, has come to mean so many different things depending on the context and is often conflated with the mission, core values, and other organizational guiding statements - what this question will try to address is if the principals were leading with any *guiding statements* (Brockett, 2014). In addition to reviewing the principals' responses to see if they did or did not have a guiding statement, this research also examined if what the school leader articulated was a formal vision (idealized future state) or another kind of organizational guiding statement. Drawing from the work of Baum, Lock, and Kirkpatrick, I did not want a principal's response to be shoehorned into a formal vision statement if that was not the guiding statement that was driving their work (Baum, Lock & Kirkpatrick, n.d.). In other words, if a principal was asked their vision for their school and they

replied with a statement that spoke about what they desired for their school, but not necessarily a written down and codified vision statement - this would count as them having a guiding statement because this is what they articulated an underlying guiding philosophy that drives their work. The second part of the first question is about how they worked to invest others in that vision into action. Principals invest others in the vision through a wide variety of different mechanisms. Depending on the school's context, the principals used everything from engaging in a formal visioning process with their school communities to directly dictate to their teams what the school community's vision needed to be.

School Leader Articulated Vision

The findings in part one of the first question reveal that most principals do have an underlying guiding statement that drives their work. The breadth and depth of these guiding statements for each school leader also varied greatly. Some articulated a detailed vision for every aspect of the school's daily operations to the very broad and open-ended guiding philosophy.

Every leader who was interviewed as part of this study was able to identify and articulate some kind of guiding statement that they indicated helped drive their school's work and shaped their leadership. However, not every articulated guiding statement would be formally classified as a vision statement as defined by the Encyclopedia of Leadership (an ideal future state) or Collins and Porras (core ideology and envisioned future), with several leaders articulating what would more likely be classified as mission statements (strategy) or non-negotiables/principles (2004; 2002).

To understand what principals were articulating as their guiding philosophies, articulated visions were classified into three categories: traditional vision statements (an idealized vision of

the future), mission statements (statements that primarily focused on the *how*), and core

values/non-negotiables. Again, while the researcher did not want to test or define a formal

definition of vision for school leaders, it is crucial to understand how school leaders understand

the vision and the underlying philosophy driving their work. The table below illustrates the

classification of each articulated vision into the three major categories.

Table 1: Classification of Articulated Vision

School Leader	Traditional Vision (Idealized Vision of the Future)	Mission (Strategy Statement)	Core Values/Non-Negotiables (Parameters for the Work)
School Leader #1			X
School Leader #2			X
School Leader #3	X		
School Leader #4	X		
School Leader #5	X		
School Leader #6			X
School Leader #7		X	
School Leader #8		X	
School Leader #9	X		

The four school leaders who expressed a more traditional vision statement articulated more

overarching visions that illustrated their school communities striving for some kind of envisioned

future. School Leader #3, for example, expressed their vision as:

> I've never really been able to articulate it [the vision], I can tell you, it's something along
> the lines of oh, something along the lines of we want to create like a transformational
> learning community that disrupted a traditional school to prison pipeline and built a
> school to career pipeline. So my vision is very much to disrupt a traditional narrative and
> create a new pathway for our kids.

Their idealized future was for their school community to disrupt the school to prison pipeline and instead create a school to career pipeline. Another example is School Leaders #5, who, while expressing a vision within a given time, was still expressing a vision with a future state.

> I explained [my vision to the staff] that in 10 years, I felt like it would take us ten years. But in 10 years, we could be the number one dual language. School in the state of Ohio.

While it could be argued that this is more of a goal statement than a vision statement because it is expressed as a future state and because the goal is intangible - there is no formal way to measure this statement - this guiding statement was classified as a formal vision statement. School Leader #9's goal was to stand out from the other schools within their district, but also offered up an intangible future-oriented vision:

> So really, my vision, without being a fancy word, just, I really want to be this community school. And I want to build, and we are, build this place that kids feel like it's their home, not just a place they come to school to learn, that parents feel that is their home and their resource and that we are able to offer to community into our parents, things that other people offer across the city, but we're a community hub, which we should be. And that will be a place where parents can come for help. Place where parents feel comfortable coming to talk with the teacher and not a parent-teacher conference. Place where parents can come and feel like they're always welcome to sit in a classroom, they're always welcome to come in and say, "Hey, I have this such and such, and I hear the families need help, can I drop this off?" A place where the city knows that we exist.

The vision expressed by this school leader is essentially to be a community school and provide comprehensive services to the students and the larger community. While more tangible than breaking the school to prison pipeline, this vision statement still expresses the school leader's idealized future state and what they want their school to become.

An example of what Collins and Porras would most likely classify as a traditional vision statement can be found in School Leader #4, who states both a strategy and an end outcome in their guiding statement:

> So my vision for my school is to provide high-quality learning experiences for students no matter their demographic background, or their setting, or anything else, their family circumstances that they are afforded an opportunity to have early childhood experiences that can really change their life.

The school leader's core ideology was that students need to be immersed in high-quality learning experiences that were developmentally appropriate, which would lead to the envisioned future of a life-changing experience.

All of these articulated visions indicate an idealized future that is immeasurable. While there is a loose understanding of what it may mean to be a community school or to be the top-performing dual language program, these responses to the question of what is your vision for your school community drove the work of their respective schools. These statements would all be formally classified as a vision statement.

The next group of school leaders articulated a strategy that they were adopting and committed to, but not necessarily how the strategy would result in an idealized end-state or envisioned future. What these leaders articulated would be more closely aligned with a mission statement than a vision statement. There are instances where the school leader discusses an idealized future, but overall the leader focuses on inputs rather than expected outcomes. School Leader #7, while expressing what could be argued as some kind of future state, mainly discussed and focused on strategy rather than idealized future.

> And so that is my overarching vision for the school to have a place where our staff and our students are so active and leading it that I'm literally managing them to try to keep them all moving in a similar direction, as opposed to, you know, disciplining them, to keep them in line with my vision, so to speak. And I think if we do that, it will be an informed leadership that I couldn't do because I'm one person. But if we actually have real representation and real voices for our staff and our students, we can solve real problems in efficient ways.

The school leader focused on increasing voice amongst both students and teachers but did not articulate what this input would ultimately lead to. Similarly, School Leader #8 expressed the guiding statement of their network as synonymous with the guiding statement of the school:

> Transform this community and impact the lives of every scholar that enters our doors, specifically scholars that live in communities that are disadvantaged.

There is no expressed future state in this statement, but instead what the school community intends to do in the present - to transform the community. Each of these principals articulated a strategy that guided their work and their thinking rather than an end-state. Whether that was a focus on creating increasing student and teacher voices or transforming a community - the focus is on the how and not necessarily the future state.

The final set of principals focused on parameters/non-negotiables that helped them understand their work. School Leader #2 articulated their vision as a series of non-negotiables:

> Well, certainly, I want a school that supports and brings out the absolute potential of our students and gives them every opportunity to succeed and to improve. That's always our outcome. And for it to be a supportive, positive, just amazing place for adults to work every day where they feel like they can do their best jobs, feel supportive, grow, be pushed to grow and develop. I don't mean an easy place to come to work. But a place where you can come and do that thing that you wanted to do when you went to school to become a teacher, you feel empowered to do that work within this framework that we've all decided about the decisions we make together. Here's what we're going to focus on to develop professionally. Here's how we're going to do that. Here's how we're going to operate as a team. Here's how we are going to interact with students. These are our common agreements. Here's where autonomy is. You know, in your classroom, I'm not micromanaging that as long as these common agreements are met, you have this flexibility to do that. Here's how we're going to engage together in the best of times and the worst of times, but our outcome is always the best possible experience and growth and development for our children; that is our outcome together. And that parents feel that their children get to go to the best possible school. Where they [parents] want to leave them and not where they have to go, because that's where they live and they can't get anywhere else.

School Leader #2 articulates a series of joint decisions that they are making in conjunction with the school community. There is some semblance of a future state towards the end - a place where

parents want to send their children, but overall this school leader focuses on the parameters that will help drive the work and not a future state or specific strategy. School Leader #6's guiding statement was also very adult-focused:

> When you as a leader, you hope that you can influence the bigger picture of the institution that you're in. And the climate and culture is huge for me. Something that I think is huge and important is you have to define what your non-negotiables are; what are those hills you're going to die on as a leader? And what's most important to you, in a building? I think about what I want it to feel like and what do I want it to look like? Smell like? Thinking about it? That whole picture, you know, when you walk into any, any store, any restaurant, any anywhere, you immediately feel something, whether it's positive, or negative, or blah, or excited. I mean, humans are emotional beings; we pick up on feelings, we feel certain things. And so something that is huge and a non-negotiable, for from a non-negotiable for me is you have to be able to tell kids, you love them. Every child in this building every day is told by multiple adults - I love you.

They wanted a school where every child felt loved and was verbally told by the school team that they were loved. A non-negotiable for them, and ultimately what drove a lot of their work, was finding staff who could commit to this and building a school community where everything came back to students' idea of feeling loved. Similarly, School Leader #1 did not present one coherent vision for their school community but instead outlined a pervasive set of core values that they wanted to see manifest within their school community.

> It really comes down to my three pillars. And so they are Ignite, Empower and Lead. And so when I think about Ignite, I, you know, I believe that you know, students learn best when they're really excited, and, and really bought into their learning, and its relevance, and they know, they wake up every day just hungry for more. And so that's, that's really Ignite. I also believe in, you know, our teachers being really excited. And, you know, I believe in strong, high-quality teaching, and I want to make sure that, you know, as a leader, I am growing and developing my teachers to make sure that, that they have that passion, as well as that, that content, knowledge, and background to make sure that they can, you know, really spread that to our students in our community. The second, you know, a pillar for me is Empower and so when I think about empowerment, you know, I want to make sure that we are empowering our students to have a voice, that we recognize that you know, we are all different, and we bring, we look at differences as assets rather than deficits, right? We want to make sure that, you know, our families know that they have a voice in the community and in our school and that our doors are always open, that our teachers are modeling empowerment, and they are showing, you know, what, what makes them unique, and you when you walk into a classroom that

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you're going to see kids that are raising their hands, and you know, every second because they want to push each other. They want to ask those questions to push their teachers' thinking, and they continue to feel comfortable having a voice because they know that it's valued. I also, you know, when I think about Lead, we want to make sure that at the end of the day, when our kids leave us, they are strong leaders ready to take on the world and change the world. And so we want to make sure that our kids have the 21st-century skills to be strong leaders. We want to make sure that our kids have that strong foundation of academic excellence to make sure that they have all the tools and all, you know, all the things that they need to make sure that they are, you know, able to be successful with whatever they end up doing. So they end up going, you know, to become a doctor, we want to make sure that they have those skills, and that they have that excitement around, around being a doctor, if they want to go into, you know, becoming a lawyer or, you know, whatever it may be, we want to make sure that we promote all of that, and that our kids are really truly, you know, strong leaders when they when they enter society, and they're a strong contributor to society.

Whether or not a school leader articulated what would traditionally be classified as something that would be considered a vision statement, mission statement, or non-negotiables - these expressed guiding statements were seen by them to be central to their work. Later on in the analysis of the focus groups' understanding of the school community vision, it becomes even more apparent that what the school leader articulates to be the vision behind the work - becomes the engine that drives the work regardless of the formal definition.

All of the school leaders who were interviewed were able to articulate some kind of guiding statement that drove their work - these would not necessarily be formally classified as vision statements. Still, they do meet the intent of the vision statement. All of these guiding statements give direction and purpose to the work of the principal and their teams. The magnitude to which these statements impact and influence a team depends largely on how the school leader rallied their school community around their guiding beliefs.

<div align="center">School Leader Enactment of Vision</div>

The first part of question one was focused on if school leaders had a clearly defined personal vision for the schools that they serve. The second part of the first question focuses on

how principals put their espoused guiding statements into action and rally others to create a unified vision for their school community. This section of findings is not focused on how effective these practices were - this will be answered in question three - but instead, it will identify strategies that principals employed to get buy-in from the school community to create a shared vision.

After coding the principal interview results, eight themes were identified that principals used to invest their teams and community in a vision. These themes identify how principals garnered the school community's initial creation and investment into a shared vision and how they saw themselves maintaining and continually motivating their school communities towards a unifying vision. The seven themes identified from the school leaders' interviews were encouraging input and feedback, relationship building, engaging in a formal visioning process, delegated leadership, modeling, talent management, and technical skill development.

The seven themes were characterized after multiple patterns that emerged through the iterative coding process. Encouraging input and feedback was characterized by principals actively seeking stakeholder's thoughts on various aspects of the school's vision or, more generally, what stakeholders wanted or needed from the school community. Relationship building was characterized by statements principals made that dealt with building trust, getting to know stakeholders on an individual level, and attempting to understand the community's needs. A distinction was made between encouraging input and feedback from relationship building. During the interviews, garnering feedback was such a present tactic to build investment that it earned its own separate theme. Formal visioning was identified in the transcripts whenever a principal stated that they brought multiple stakeholders together with the distinct purpose of creating a shared vision for the school community - they may not have followed a specific

visioning framework. Still, they attempted to formalize the vision creation process. Delegated leadership refers to principals investing other members of their team by empowering them to act or take responsibility for a specific aspect of the school community that supports the overall vision. Examples of the delegated leadership theme emerged in everything from teachers leading the formal visioning process themselves to teachers owning a specific initiative that was part of the overall vision. Modeling the vision was characterized by the principal stating explicitly that they were trying to embody the vision by performing a specific action for others to learn from. Talent Management, in this case, refers to the practice of selective hiring. During the research, multiple principals discussed how the vision and their guiding principles were essential to the hiring process and the maintenance and eventual fruition of various aspects of their vision. Lastly, Technical Skill Development was characterized by principals encouraging their teams to undertake professional development, engage in book studies, etc., to grow their practice to be more adept at integrating and actualizing part of the vision. The table below illustrates if a principal reported implementing one or more of these strategies to build investment.

Table 2: Implementation Strategies Employed by School Leaders

School Leader	Visioning	Feedback	Model	Relationships	Talent	Delegated	Technical	Total
#1	X	X					X	3
#2	X	X		X	X			4
#3			X				X	2
#4	X	X			X			3
#5	X		X	X		X		4
#6	X	X	X		X			4
#7								0

Table 2 (continued).

#8			X			X		2
#9	X	X		X		X		4
Total	6	5	4	3	3	3	2	

The leaders who employed the most strategies were principals #2, #5, #6, and #9. These principals were from traditional districts and not charter schools and had led at least one building before taking on the principalship at their current placement. It should also be noted that Principal #7 is listed as having implemented no implementation strategies. After coding Principal #7's interview, there was no apparent initiative or plan to invest staff or the larger school community. This finding will be discussed later in question #3 and how the focus group experienced Principal #7's leadership.

Formal Visioning Process

The most prominent theme that emerged as a strategy to invest stakeholders in a shared vision was using a formal visioning process. Six out of the nine principals interviewed during this study reported having used this strategy in some way. This finding does not necessarily mean that a school leader abided by a specific visioning protocol. Instead, they rallied multiple stakeholders together to meet and design a vision for the school community. The majority of principals spoke about launching a visioning process with their teams as part of their introduction to the school community. There were several similarities in the way the principals talked about this process. They discussed convening focus groups, garnering input from the larger school community, and eventually designing a codified vision statement or at least guiding core values.

This process was usually undertaken during the launch of the school year or over the summer.

Principal #9 described the process like this:

> We actually started with developing a vision statement. Then we had our back to school blast; you know before school started with everyone open to everyone. And that vision statement was rolled out to parents; we handed it to them when they walked through the door; we have big chart paper posted around the building to post it and ask them to give comments on it. We took it back to our focus group, made some edits, took it to my staff, they looked at it, I took it back to my focus group, and then it went into effect.

The majority of the school leaders described the launch of these design sessions as having multiple stakeholders, giving numerous opportunities for feedback and input on what was created, and facilitating these meetings by infusing some of their core values while also asking open-ended questions to those in attendance. School Leader #6 described the process as starting with a call to action, grounding the meeting in a common goal, and then asking questions:

> But there was a culture and climate piece that was not working; there was not necessarily a global emphasis on student success and academic achievement. There were pockets within the building. But there wasn't a clear, okay, we want our students to be successful, [...] you would ask what does success mean? Or What does achievement mean? And so, in that visioning process, where have you been? Where are you now? Where do you want to go? We also need to define what does student achievement mean?

Two school leaders placed a premium on the visioning process and brought outside consultants to support the work. This finding will be discussed later in answer to question three, but the principals who brought in outside consultants to help the visioning process described it as iterative. In contrast, the other principals who went through a self-supported visioning process only discussed undertaking this process during the launch of their first year in the school community. Principal #4 described the outside helped she received from The Ohio State University as:

> And then also she was one of my professors at Ohio State. But she has these like different protocols. And so we went through in my use some of those to kind of walk through that process. And then there will be feedback and reflections, then, you know, coming back

together, and then last year, we started the year by revisiting those and saying, Okay, this is what we had the first year. Is this what we want to keep? Or do we want to tweak? Right and so now this year, we have again been in this virtual space. We have not focused on that as much. I think we've kind of just taken what we've had and adopted it, but we'll definitely feel revisited.

Principal #5 also described the visioning process as iterative and also mentioned during the interview that their team was most likely going to come back together and continue to work on refining the vision. Principal #5 also used support from Ohio State University.

> So I found some partners through Ohio State, [names removed]. And they came in and worked with us, as a staff, to really talk about dual language immersion and different types of immersion that you can use in order to grow whatever your population is. And so we started working with OSU. I got the experts in to come and help us.

During the visioning process, a sub-theme that emerged was that the school leader often experienced tension between their personal vision or pre-established ideology and the school community's direction. School leaders often described feeling pressured to give up one of their core values or an aspect of where they wanted to take the school community. Principal #2 had been a school leader before and came into their school community with a preconceived frame of where they wanted to take their school. They had ambitions of turning around a school climate and establishing high expectations and specific practices for adults as part of their vision and received a great deal of push-back from teachers.

> I developed this whole foundation, the culture of climate about how we were going to operate, and how this was going to be a different place for kids because we needed to stabilize that was a very unsafe environment, very unsafe for physically for kids and adults. And how we were going to do that, and we taught it to each other and how we were going to teach the kids and how we were going to let the parents know. And they were really skeptical. They were really skeptical. You could just tell that they were thinking. I know so and so [a student], and you don't know and [students names] so just wait. So does this and you meet so and so's not the skeptics, right? And, and they almost got to me, they almost got in my head because I started thinking maybe I may have lost it. You know, I haven't been a principal, maybe I've been gone for the six years, and I've really lost it. And I had to start pushing that away. But again, it consumed me until that first day of school. I was consumed with Nope, nope, nope. Don't give up your core value. That's not the kids. It's what the adults do that matters.

Teachers were also not the only stakeholders who pushed back in the visioning process. Principal #9 described feeling pushback from specific community members. They served at a school with a long history of legacy families and families that had attended that school for generations. When they tried to gather community input, they received pushback on the school's idea of becoming a community school.

> [After the initial visioning process], we had to push a little bit because it [the vision] talked more about our vision as a school, which didn't really match my vision as to become a community school. And so one of the parents, though, that I talked a lot with, we actually went to high school together, and he's a pastor on this site on the west side of town. So he still serves in that area. And I explained to him what I want [the school] to be, you know, I've read all the things that neighborhood has to offer and the things that we don't have the other neighborhood school path.

Even with the tension in creating a vision statement through a formal visioning process, all of the school leaders who went through this process stated that they made a formal vision statement by the end of it. However, it should be noted that while the principals indicated that they created a formal vision statement, that what they articulated during the course of the interview did not necessarily meet the formal criteria for being considered a vision. The table below compares the principals who stated that they engaged in some kind of formal visioning process with their teams to those who asked what their vision for their school community was articulated what would academically be classified as a traditional vision statement.

Table 3. Comparison of Formal Visioning Process to Articulated Vision

School Leader	Engaged in Formal Visioning Process	Traditional Vision (Idealized Vision of the Future)
School Leader #1	X	
School Leader #2	X	

Table 3 (continued).

School Leader #3		X
School Leader #4	X	X
School Leader #5	X	X
School Leader #6	X	
School Leader #7		
School Leader #8		
School Leader #9	X	X

Only two of the six principals who engaged in a formal visioning process ultimately articulated a

formal vision statement when asked for their school communities' vision. The two principals,

School Leader #4 and School Leader #5 were the only ones to engage in a formal visioning

process and articulate a formal vision. These two school leaders were also the only two during

the study who brought in outside consultants to support the visioning process formally.

Encouraging Input and Feedback

The second most common practice to invest stakeholders in a shared vision was

encouraging input and feedback. Unlike the visioning process, where a school leader may solicit

feedback during a few sessions to create a vision, this theme was characterized by ongoing and

continual solicitation of feedback. In other words, the school leader asked for input during the

vision creation process, as initiatives were being implemented that aligned to the vision and input

on how their leadership style could be improved to meet the needs of the school community

better. The school leaders in all the examples below, also actively sought out feedback. They

reported not just being open to feedback but actively seeking out feedback and input from

stakeholders.

Multiple principals reported wanting to create a culture of open doors where anyone could come to them and voice their opinions. Several principals reported actively creating structures that would inform their approach and lift the community's voices. Principal #1 said it like this:

> I feel like the doors were not as open when it came to empowering our teachers. And so when I stepped in, you know, I made it very clear that I want our doors to be open, I want our families to be very involved. And so an example of that is I put in place a, you know, PTO, or a Parent Advisory Group right away for our families to have focus groups throughout the year.

In addition to the multiple structures that they built, they also explicitly named for their staff that they would be approachable and open to new ideas. Principal #9 stated it as:

> You know, I tell them that first year, as you're walking around, I'm going to have all these huge ideas, I'm going to need one thing for you guys. Tell me what you like, what you don't like, and what you want to help with. And then eventually, finally, in my third year, I said, and then tell me what you think is too much for me, because I will keep taking on things all the time.

Another common feature present in the interviews was that almost all of the principals who used this strategy to invest others typically launched with it. They took time when they first inherited or founded the school to get to know the community and engaged in lots of questioning and motivational interviewing with the school community. Principal #2 made this a central focus of their leadership. Having led at other levels before, this strategy for them was one of the critical tenets of their entry approach into an organization.

> So we started meeting all summer. It was that cycle that I told you. I went through a question question, question, question, spend time together with everybody. questioning about things, walking, physically having them walk through the entire building with me what happens here? What happens there show me what happens. Take me through the kid, what happens to me all day, walk me through that, literally walk me through all of that, show me where it happens. Talk about what your experiences have been interviewing everybody on the staff. Spending time together, then we scheduled a retreat, a two-day retreat before school started in August, and I wasn't sure who was going to

show up, I got the money. And I wasn't sure who was going to show up. But everybody did well. And we talked about some hard things.

Another veteran principal who had adopted this approach and advocated for this being a central entry and implementation strategy was Principal #6. Principal #6 also expressed the importance of getting all levels of staff involved and not just the teachers:

> So when I first got here, I came in over the summer, I sat down with the entire staff, anybody who's willing to come in, and I said, here's what I want to know. I want to know, what was[the school], you know, 5, 10, 15 years ago? Where's [the school] now? And what do we want from [the school] in the future? So some of our folks have been here 25 years, some of our folks have been here, you know, one year, and so but when I had a group, and I had the lunch lady in there, and I had the classified staff because everybody's part of the family, right? You know, we're all part of one family.

While almost all of the principals who were identified as using this approach stated that they wanted parent/community feedback. Principal #9 was the only principal in the study, who indicated that they engaged in dedicated parent outreach to understand the community better and get parent feedback.

> But I reached out to, at that time [newly hired principal], I called, like, 20, some parents randomly on the phone, to introduce myself, and invite them to be part of a focus group. So I had one of the it was, well, parents that came out may try, I had to get some help. So I want to reach out to my Spanish speaking families, and then my Somali families. But I had a pretty good blend. And I asked them the same questions I was going to ask the staff, you know, their perception of [the school], we talked about why they send their kids to [the school] because, you know, we have an option in our district. And what they were too happy with, what would they change about [the school]? And then if you can, as a parent, you could speak as we all know, the elevator speech. So if you're in an elevator with another parent, and they're debating if they want to send their kid to Wedgwood or not, what would you say? Until we've had that conversation, and then I asked them what they thought about our vision statement.

All of the principals who described this strategy were adamant about it. They felt like this strategy was crucial to their understanding of the school community and building a vision around the existing school community instead of forcing a vision onto a school community.

The third most prominent implementation strategy exhibited by the school leaders was the use of modeling the vision. These were instances in which the principal stated that they self-identified trying to embody the school's vision or model an action, strategy, or initiative that supported the vision. A common theme amongst principals who utilized this strategy was that they also self-identified as the primary keepers of the vision and the key person responsible for lifting up the vision. Principal #1 summarized the feeling like this:

> Yeah, so I think it starts with me. I think that you know, this is a vision that really pulls my values out of me, as well as the community and in our students and our staff. And so really think about all stakeholders, but I really do think that the principal needs to be the one leading the charge.

Principal #6 was even more explicit in how they felt about shouldering the responsibility of carrying the school's vision and acting as a model, "where there is no vision the people will perish. And I love that thought. And it's the job of the leader, to not necessarily come up with the vision, but to facilitate that vision." Principal #6 went on to explain the role of the leader as, "I'm the energy driving the drivers behind building this [the vision] out." Principal #6 described the responsibility to model the vision as a model for others in how to act and lead within the school:

> Well, I'm responsible for getting that energy going, right. And then if I'm tired, one day, somebody else has to get it going. Because we're all, we're all pushing to make students feel a certain way. Every child, every parent, every visitor should feel value; they should feel safe; they should feel loved.

In addition to identifying themselves as having to model the vision, they also attempted to undertake actions they would expect from their teachers when modeling the vision. For example, Principal #3 did not believe in suspensions because it supposed their vision for disrupting the school to prison pipeline. So, they modeled for the teachers how to respond to students in crisis and stated that she engaged with students and families how they would have wanted teachers to:

You know, I don't want this kid suspended. But at the end of the day, the principal is the one who gets to make those decisions. And sometimes it's harder, and sometimes it's easier. There are times I now, I think. Honestly, my staff does not want me to suspend a kid, but I think early on in those initial days, they probably thought I was like one screw loose, but they were willing to put up with it because they weren't in the room anymore. Right like but at the end of the day, they didn't care if they were in the building. They just didn't want them in the room right then, and they are allowed to have that—that grace.

Relationship Building

Relationship building tied with Talent Management and Delegated Leadership for the fourth most prominent implementation strategy. This strategy involved getting to know the school community and stakeholders on an individual level - not just who they were as professionals, but also what motivated them as individuals. This theme also encompassed anytime the principal mentioned them acting as a support structure for the school community and doing things like empathizing, showing caring, and honoring the humanity of the work. This strategy was much more prominent in the focus group discussions but was not as explicit in the principal interviews.

One of the ways this manifested was by principals describing how they built relationships with some of the more challenging staff members to win over the larger team. Principal #2 described the experience below:

> What happens if this doesn't work, and they don't listen, but it did work. It worked my work through the most toxic personal building, which was the union rep. He was known to sabotage everything, everything he was the ringleader, and he was the one I engaged with right away at the very beginning before school was out. And we ended up partnering, and he was on my side, and that enabled us to turn the place around little by little. And it was through those individual relationships and meeting and talking and following through on what I said I was going to do and some quick wins.

Principal #9 was the most prominent user of this implementation strategy. The theme of investment through relationships was identified in their interview transcript on eight different

occasions. Principal #9 described their approach through an empathetic lens to try and show the

staff that they cared about them.

> And that was taking something off their plate. I didn't feel like I was doing anything I couldn't handle. I work non-stop all the time. But I knew in the end; it was going to pay off not because I was playing this game, but because truly if I, if you know, I care about you individually as a teacher, and you and you see me, you watch me with kids, then if you're not that kind of person, that's fine. But I need you to know how important you are and that I believe that you can do anything.

Principal #9 wanted to understand their teachers as individuals and not just professionals:

> And so I spent a lot of time the first year asking a lot of questions and finding out as many little things personally about teachers that I could because I wanted to make sure that anytime I came in contact with a teacher in the hallway, that I had something non-instructional to say to them. I had to make sure that they knew and that first year I acknowledge you as a human being, as a mom, as a dad, as a grandmother, as a person who loves dogs. And I mean it'd be little things I will walk down the hallway and say hey, Miss [name removed]. Did those shoes come in that you ordered last week? You know now, mind you I don't remember exactly what shoes but I knew she ordered some shoes, right? Or I will walk down the hallway and say, hey, you know Miss [name removed], how's hockey going for your son?

While Principal #9 exemplified this approach to investment through relationship building, the

other principals who utilized this strategy also discussed how they attempted to show genuine

caring and support for the teachers and the larger school community.

Talent Management

Often referred to as differential retention, selective hiring, or talent selection - talent

management in this instance refers to the theme of principals hiring for fit with the school's

vision/guiding principles or, on the other hand, counseling out or firing teachers who they saw as

not fitting with the school's vision.

Principal #3, who described their vision manifesting slowly over the years, contributed a

large part of this vision being able to take hold to selective hiring. "We were extremely

intentional when it came to hiring. Around 70% of the staff were not the right fit." They

described several of the teachers as self-selecting out because they did not feel a sense of
belonging to the school's new direction:

> I could see they [staff who did not fit the vision] were unhappy, and they didn't need to
> be, you know, asked or coached, or they wanted to go somewhere else. And I never
> stepped in to stop that, which is because I wanted them to find another place to like. I just
> didn't know if they would be a good fit. And I do think that part of turning around the
> building often is having your own team do it.

Some principals described the process of staff self-selecting out of their school buildings as
challenging and hard not to take personally. Principal #4 described their initial reaction as one
where they felt personally responsible for the teachers leaving, but eventually coming to see this
process as necessary for the rest of the staff to truly invest in the vision:

> These, you know, new things which I didn't think were new. But to them, it was very
> new. And so I stayed really passionate about, you know, what I knew that students in that
> community deserved and what I knew was possible in early childhood overall. And so
> some people made some decisions to leave, which you know, at the time I took personal
> because I'm like, girl like, This is crazy. But it ended up being the best thing. And so for
> there were like two teachers out of the six [identifier removed] teachers that stayed. But
> out of the six [identifier removed] teachers, only two teachers stayed.

During the interview, other principals described teachers' self-selecting to leave due to not fitting
with the school's vision/mission and engaging in active counseling out teachers to build a team
that fit their vision for a school community. Principal #6 described a high level of comfortability
with the counseling process because they understood how critical staffing was to allow their
vision to take hold:

> In my first year in a building, I got rid of about a third of the staff. I have no problem
> getting rid of difficult, you know, teachers who cannot cut it. Unfortunately, I've had to,
> you know, some of the teachers I've worked with have removed their licenses, many of
> them move out from me quickly, because they know that they're not going to make it if
> they stay. So with that first year, a whole third of the staff, I just got to go. I say, 'listen;
> you have a vision of philosophy that's just different than mine; I'm here to stay.' And for
> you to be successful for you to thrive, there are 86 other [identifier removed] schools that
> you need to really check into. Because if you stay, I'm going to have to evaluate you out.
> And I do it, and I smile. So I do think that's an important piece too. I get my own people
> and people with a similar vision. And it's interesting because people don't know that

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because I am very. I have great energy. I'm kind. I'm calm. But I have no problem firing people when people have. If you're not, you know, I have my charge. And what I have to do, and one of my non-negotiables is always do what's best for kids. And if you can't form relationships with kids, you need to be a great person, and I respect you; you're so much fun, and you'll be great in a different building, just not hear me. And those are the ways I just say it. And so and I make that very clear, when I first get to a building, you know, many of you are going to really thrive under me, many of you won't, and that's okay, there's nothing wrong with that. We don't have to hate each other. We don't have to dislike each other.

The principals each reported how, ultimately, this strategy allowed their vision to take hold and build investment in what they were trying to create. Principal #6 said that eventually, they saw this strategy benefit the school community and that the staff felt a different level of investment as well:

Now. It's interesting because the staff surveys come out every year, all the staff anonymously and every building. And this year, I think we were in the top 10 and eight out of 10 categories. Well, it's not that I don't have a great staff. But it takes you know; I say three years to get that great staff. And only about a third stay around. And those are the best.

Delegated Leadership

Delegated Leadership was characterized by school leaders giving autonomy or ownership of part of the responsibility of developing the school's vision or leading an initiative or system that supported the manifestation of the school's vision. The principals who utilized delegated leadership as an implementation strategy typically described building a core group of teachers often referred to in the transcripts as a building leadership team (BLT). Principal #5 spoke extensively about how they created a building leadership team specifically charged with building the vision for the school:

I developed a building leadership team. And so, we just took what I learned at [identifier removed], and I brought it to Columbus. And in doing that, we did that we created a mission we created a vision at [identifier removed] we did you know what we wanted our sixth grader, you know, what, what a sixth-grader looks like when they're leaving? What What, what do they need to be able to do? We did all of that visioning. And that work.

And then, at the same time, I started taking my teachers out. We went to Massachusetts and attended some other schools who also had dual language teaching.

Principal #5 dedicated this team of teachers to identify best practices and research what a premiere dual language school could/should look like. Their goal was essentially to delegate and empower their team to the extent that they could be self-sufficient and drive the vision in their absence:

But it was really those teachers [the building leadership team], I'm talking about. Like, [names removed] those were my first two ladies that were right on board. And, you know, they worked with me all the time. How can we do this? How can we transform our building leadership teams? Um, you know, we have one of the best building leadership teams in the district. Because it really doesn't matter if I was there or not. That was all it was, right? Because they need to do that work.

Principal #9 took a similar approach but expanded the delegated leadership strategy beyond just the leadership team. When they first started at the school, they opened up the decision-making process to all teachers. They underwent an entire redesign process and opened up the redesign of the school-wide systems to all staff members who wanted to take part. They described their reason for doing this as, "I don't want to sit in the office and do this alone. Any of your teammates that want to come, let's come meet and hash this out together."

Technical Skill Development

Technical Skill Development was the least used implementation strategy identified. However, the principals that identified this as an approach to build capacity in their teams and get others on board with their vision were very committed to this approach.

Principal #3 described a multi-stage and comprehensive approach to training and developing their staff to get them bought in and execute on the vision. Principal #3's school required a complete turnaround and adoption of a new teaching methodology and approach to

school culture. This level of change needed staff even changing their vocabulary and building a common language to create a shared vision for the school community.

> So, in January, I met with my BLT, and I'm like, here's an idea, guys. Does anybody have any other ideas? And everybody at that point was frustrated and tired and exhausted. And it's January in Ohio. And they're like, no, but we got to do something. So we ordered the book. We just started ordering the book, PLC once a month we met, I boarded the staff for an additional 15 hours or something to come and meet after school to go over like there's like questions you can print off online that are free. But we started with those but didn't really use those. But what was great was that people were like, Oh my gosh, I saw [student name] in this chapter, or I saw you know, so and so in this chapter, and I almost feel like it gave you know we have this huge national statistic of the overwhelmingly white middle-class female teaching force, working with a majority non-white student population. And I really, and we have a ton of students who have experienced, we got I was learning all of this at the time, most of our kids had six-plus ACE factors. But I didn't know any of that language. I didn't know any of those things. I just knew that the kids were at the time, I thought like wild crazy, you know, angry, I had no idea why now I know that they were in crisis.

Principal #1 also described developing their team with literacy instruction and other practical skills training to support the team in taking the vision to actualization and showing them that the work they were trying to undertake could be accomplished. They described contextualizing the professional development and always bringing the work they were doing back to the vision:

> This is not something that you want to do like in August; you know, during PD week, you should already have teachers reflecting and thinking about your vision over the entire summer and what it's going to look like. And so, I think that's just something that I've done in the past that has really helped with just solidifying the vision and making sure that you know folks have time to reflect and ask questions. And, you know, pick your brain and what does that mean to you. And this is what it means to me. And I think that that's very powerful. And that has to take time. You cannot shove it all into one PD day or session. It has to be something that is sprinkled in throughout before you launch.

Summary of Themes in School Leader Articulated Vision

Part one of the first question is: Do principals have a clearly defined personal vision for the school they serve? - uncovered a more nuanced answer than a binary yes or no. Although all of the principals who were interviewed for this research were able to articulate what would be

described as some kind of guiding statement, they did not necessarily express what would traditionally be defined as a vision (Brockett, 2014 & Encyclopedia of Leadership, 2004). These principals were grounding their work in a kind of underlying ideology and frame that guided their thinking and what they wanted for their school community, but it was often not future-facing. Also, the depth and clarity of these guiding statements varied greatly from principal to principal.

Second, the findings of the second part of question 1 - in what ways do they enact their vision? - highlighted a great variety in the way principals were instantiating their visions. Ironically, while most principles did not end up articulating a formal vision statement, the most common implementation strategy was to undergo a visioning process with their teams when they first arrived at their schools. It is worth noting that the two principals who went through a formal visioning process with outside consultants did articulate a formal vision statement. In addition, the second most prominent implementation strategy was the use of promoting input and feedback on both the vision itself and how it was being operationalized. This strategy was characterized as an iterative process in which the school leaders constantly sought out and solicited feedback from those who were actively working on manifesting the vision.

Research Question Two Findings

The second central research question is: what professional and training experiences contribute to how a principal develops a vision for a school? The findings to this question are generated solely based-off of the principal interviews. Principals were asked to share any formal educational experiences that helped them craft their vision, such as undergraduate courses, licensure programs, etc. In addition, principals were asked if there were fellowships, mentorships

(informal or formal), books, or other professional development experiences that helped them craft what they wanted their schools to become. In some instances, principals reported personal experiences that helped them form their vision - because there were a significant number of personal experiences that principals referenced. These were also captured in the coding process. In addition, several principals shared instances where they began to form their vision by learning what not to do from others or from prior work experiences - these were also included as findings. Finally, all of the principals who were interviewed as part of this study carried their formal principal licensure and had at least a Master's degree; however, not all of these experiences were coded as having informed their vision if the school leader reported that their formal education was either not helpful or they simply did not say their formal education as having any kind of impact on their vision.

<div align="center">Formative Experiences for Vision Development</div>

The major themes that were identified from the coding process were learning from peers/mentors, formal education, prior work experience, fellowship/administrative internship, professional development, and family background. The table below showcases the prevalence of these themes within the various principal interviews.

Table 4. Experiences that Foster a Leaders' Vision

School Leader	Learning from Peers/Mentor	Fellowship /Internship	Prior Work Experience	Formal Education	Professional Development	Family Background	Total
#1	X	X					2
#2	X	X					2
#3	X	X			X		3

Table 4 (continued).

#4			X	X			2
#5	X		X		X	X	4
#6	X		X	X			3
#7	X	X	X		X		4
#8				X		X	2
#9	X	X	X				3
Total	8	5	5	3	3	2	

Principal #7 and #5 identified the greatest variety of experiences that informed their vision. Principal #7 was also the principal who reported the least number of implementation strategies around their vision. Principal #5 was a principal who identified some of the greatest utilization of implementation strategies around their vision. Principals #1, #2, #4, and #8 were coded as having the least variety of experiences that informed their vision. These principals' experience levels in the principalship varied greatly, with Principal #1 having less than a full year of experience in their role in contrast to Principal #2 who was entering their 15th year in leadership.

The defining experience that was most identified throughout the interviews as impacting the shape of their vision was the relationship between mentors and peers. The only principal who did not report this as having shaped their vision was Principal #8, who may not have reported this because they went through a non-traditional pathway to leadership and were still developing their peer group. The second most impactful experience was their involvement in a Fellowship/Internship. This theme was separated from Prior Work Experience and Formal

Education because of the unique nature and focus of a fellowship and its prominence as an emergent code in the interviews.

In the next section, each theme will be discussed and broken down into its elements. The narrative of how these experiences impacted their overall vision and did not impact their vision will be analyzed by theme.

Learning from Peers/Mentors

Learning from peers/mentors was the most prominent theme captured during the coding process that principals reported as impacting how they developed their vision. Eight of the nine principals interviewed reported that they had had their vision shaped by learning from a peer/mentor. It should be noted that not all of the learning from peers was a positive experience for the principals, with several reporting that they developed their vision by learning what not to do from other leaders or, in some instances, even creating their vision as a response to a negative experience with a peer/mentor.

Principal #1 had both positive and negative experiences with peers that shaped their vision. The principal worked out of state and before taking on their current leadership role and had the opportunity to work under a mentor principal as part of their principal preparation program.

> Yeah, I, you know, I've been able, I've been very fortunate to work with a lot of really strong leaders and mentors along my journey. And so, you know, I would say, when, for example, when I was out in [identifier removed], I was able to work with one turnaround principal. She, you know, she has been a turnaround principal for over 25 years, and she, you know, brought with her a lot of experience, as well as, you know, just different systems and strategies, and, you know, different things that I can really pull in to my leadership. And so I know, she was a very strong mentor, you know, for me, and I really feel to see, you know, how do you make sure that you know, the vision that you create, really continues to, you know, live out every single day on your campus. And so I was

able to really, you know, just follow, follow her lead, and really pull a lot of a lot of those strategies, and a lot of those systems that she had created, you know, over the years.

Principal #1 also stated that they were able to sieve their experience working under different principals and decide which experience they did not want to be a part of their eventual vision:

> I also, you know, I've been able to see what not to do. And I think that that is very unique, when it comes to, you know, my experience, I also was in a few different schools, that did not have strong leadership, did not have strong structures and strong systems in place. And so over the years, I find that very invaluable, because I, you know, for me, if you show me an exemplar and a strong model, I can replicate, I can make it my own, I can really, really learn from that, when you show me, you know, non-examples as well, that really, you know, I'm very reflective. And so that really makes me take a step back and think through, okay, what can I pull from this system? Is it completely broken? Is this vision, you know, just not aligned with the community and the community needs? And what they, you know, what they're asking for? Or like, Where is the breakdown? So then, you know, what can I do to make sure that I have a vision that is very strong and that it doesn't have some of these breakdowns that I'm currently seeing [at previous placements].

Principal #1 explicitly addresses that if they can see an exemplar, they can unpack the model and begin to decide which parts of the model they want to keep or discard to create their eventual vision. Principal #1 highlighted an example that would eventually help them develop the *pillars* that would become a central part of their vision.

> I worked with a leader that had really, really strong systems. She was very, very, you know, strong at creating structures and systems. But the vision was not aligned with the community at all. So the vision, you know, was a vision that was kind of a blanket vision that you would think would just build a cover a lot of different schools, but the community never was bought into the vision; they didn't even really know what the vision was or what the pillars and you know what those values were within the school, and what made that school special and unique. And when I saw that, I saw the disconnect between the community and what they wanted to see every day and what the principal wanted to see. You could clearly see that the input from the community was not there and wasn't a part of the vision. […] It's almost like a domino effect of what can happen when your vision is not aligned to the community and the needs of the community. And so when I saw that, I'm like, 'Okay, let's make sure you know,' as I'm writing down in my journal, that we got to make sure that the community is heard, they are empowered, they have a voice and that they know that they, they are represented in that building.

The journal that Principal #1 is referring to a practice that they adopted as they went along their leadership journey. They spent time reflecting on their experience and kept a log where they specifically recorded events that they found would or would not be useful for eventually leading their school. Principal #1 would describe how this specific experience would help them foster their pillar of *Empower* and how they wanted their school community to have a voice in the decisions that were being made.

Principal #2 described a mentor principal at the beginning of their career, giving them the confidence to pursue a leadership position. They also described how it was not just the specific systems that the mentor principal put into place that they wanted to replicate, but also their overall leadership presence and style when leading the team. They were a teacher under this principal, and no formal mentor relationship had been established outside of the pre-existing managerial relationship. They described the experience of being part of a staff culture turnaround, which Principal #2 would eventually go on to do themselves at more than just one school:

> I had an amazing mentor principal when I was a teacher. And I watched him before he came to the school, the staff was very divided. And seeing this as a brand new teacher, you know, I don't have a frame of reference, this is the only place I've ever known, but the staff was divided. It's just a negative overall atmosphere. And the person that was at the building at that time, the principal, she was new, she was brand new. And that was the first assignment they gave her in a very challenging school. And she, I think, was good with the children. But she just was not great with the staff. And so they brought in a new principal, and he was experienced. And he just immediately knew how to work with the adults and recognize strengths and people. And he just allowed me to have some opportunities to try some things in the school. As far as working with the staff and working with the adults, I don't think he I don't know that he did it intentionally. But I soaked that up. And I thought, well, I kind of like this, I would like to work on my master's degree. And so I went into administration, and continued to have these experiences and liked working in developing adults. So I went into administration.

They describe that it was the experience of seeing a successful leader turnaround a school culture that even got them interested in leadership and started them on their path to school administration. Principal #2 also describes the support of their manager as a critical element that helped them develop the confidence to lead:

> [My manager] developed me so much, but he allowed me that autonomy. And I messed up a few big times as[identifier removed], but he would require me to pick myself back up and get back out there and give me the hard feedback, let alone grow and develop without squashing me in my development. And he allowed me to do the same with him. We would disagree so many times he valued challenge and disagreement. We would disagree so many times, sometimes like heated disagreements, because my job as [identifier removed] wasn't to agree with him all the time. You have enough people around him doing that. Knowing him, everything he did was great. That wasn't my job to the point where he would say Can I do anything right? Am I doing anything right? But he was so so sometimes how harsh, harsh and reflecting back to me about things that I needed to realize about myself as a leader, that then I think that positively impacted my growth and returning to the building. And being a much better principal than I was at my other four places, or more now, where I am having the big picture, understanding how all the pieces fit together.

Principal #2 described the necessity of critical feedback from their manager to become the leader they are today. They also expressed a level of comfortability with their mentor because they had a relationship on the level where they could give each other very direct feedback. This level of directness allowed Principal #2 to understand their role as a leader and make all the leadership elements come together.

Principal #3's experience was different from the other principals in that they reached out to peers to help them foster their vision in the absence of an apparent model. They described working in a very challenging building and not having a model for success. Unlike Principal's #1 and #2, they had not seen a successful turnaround experience but were asked to turnaround a school. So, they took it upon themselves to reach out to peers and find a model that they could build their vision off of:

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[One of my colleagues] was the principal of a school called[identifier removed]. [It] was a rough place, also very similar demographics to what we were having. So I'm sitting, and I'm super competitive, too, by the way. So we're sitting at a meeting at [a work gathering] in December. And [identifier removed] had been at this a little bit longer than me, and I was halfway to 180 out of school suspension. So right around 90 for that school year, and I had we have office referrals or peak write-ups, or whatever you call them. I had, you know, I want to say that year like I was halfway to 1800, or something like 900, like ten a day, like you, 're just drowning in paperwork, and then I'm suspending kids, which is meetings and more paperwork. And she was at like 14 or something. And I'm exaggerating, but it was really low comparatively. So I was like, [identifier removed], what are you doing? Because, like, I'm drowning in paperwork, these kids got me so stressed out. The staff has been so stressed out; the parents have me so stressed out like this is a nightmare. I never wanted to do this. What are you doing with those are your numbers. And these are my numbers. And so she said that I should reach out to an organization called the [identifier removed]. And she had been changed. Her whole staff had been changed.

This conversation would eventually lead Principal #3 to build an entirely different school model and vision. This informal relationship with a peer and actively seeking out a new way of leading would lead to a cascade of varying training and readings and research for their leadership and ultimately greatly inform their vision. Principal #3 also had a formally established mentor that they reached out to for ongoing support. They leaned on the peer for both emotional support and as a model for leading their school. Principal #3 described their reliance on their mentor as follows:

And but I felt like the whole building was off like dysregulated, everybody, the staff, the students, the kids were running through the halls, leaping, jumping, cursing, fighting, just over and over and over again, I did and that first night. I'd only been with [identifier removed] for six months in a program that was supposed to be three years, where I was taught, I never had to be a principal, but three months into it, they're like go down there and fix that. So that was like a time of soul searching. I had my toes broken because desks were getting thrown at me. [identifier removed] had to come down to the hospital. It was like, and then the police every day and like, and you just are like soul searching, right? Like I'd been at that point, teaching classes for the university for four or five years, I'd never worked in a building that had a unit of students who have been identified with emotional disturbances, let alone like a whole building that was so dysregulated I didn't even have the language at the time for knowing what dysregulation or adverse childhood experiences where I just knew that the building was crazy, I cried every day like your soul searching like I'm telling people how to transform a school, how to turn around a

school, how to work with students who are linguistically diverse, and I can't figure this out like you either have to do what you say, should be done, or you're going to have to go work somewhere else, because you can't go around telling people this is what needs to be done and not be able to do it yourself.

They specifically illustrated how their mentor principal taught them how to engage in differential retention conversations and how to adapt their leadership approach to build buy-in for their vision.

> [Identifier removed] has taught me so much of my nature is to come in like a bull in a china shop, right like it my whole life, I've used analogy that has been used with me many, many times, like bull in a china shop, like, finesse was never my thing. Um, but [identifier removed] really helped me to see oftentimes that. But sometimes, that's not the right way to go about things. And he really showed me how to help people sort of reflect on themselves. He's like a master of, you know, he's who taught me sitting down with someone and saying, like, you're not happy. So if you're not happy, how can you know, so it wasn't just me, there were a lot of people that were like, I'm happy. And I could see they were unhappy, and they didn't need to be, you know, asked or coached, or they wanted to go somewhere else.

Principal #3's relationship with their initial assigned mentor continued to be an ongoing partnership where they ended up consistently seeking their counsel:

> He's my family now. So I don't know how that happened or why that happened. He's wicked smart. He's very good at; he has this voice. And I'll be like, Don't use your mentor voice on me, like, turn it off. Go back to your regular voice, because he'll just ask, you know, he gave me permission to leave if I needed to and said, you know, you don't have to do this, you can get out of this. You're smart, you have a [identifier removed], and you can go to work anywhere else. But also, he leads by example. But he's always really good about, but we've also dedicated our lives to public education. So I'm not leaving, you know, well, I could never let him down and leave.

Principal #3 also described that their vision also manifested as part of a response to how the previous administration ran the school. When describing the process of inheriting a pre-existing vision and responding to a vision that they disagreed with, they described the process like this:

> So, it kind of, and that would have been his vision. So one of the things I know about his vision was that it was very, and there are many different leadership styles and many different ways of turning around to school. His methods were more militaristic, I would say, like everybody getting in the line and staying in the line. And there, there is a place

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for that behaviorism has a whole world and education. There are a lot of people that say everything has to you know; there've been turnaround schools that have done everything in that sort of way. That's why people love military schools. And he could pull that off. that was something that he felt comfortable with my heart and my way of, I can't be a, I was never going to fit in the military. So I could not be that type of leader. And if somebody felt like there, they were in line with that leadership style, that leadership style was not ever going to be me, so they weren't going to be happy with me. I actually had one staff member during that first nine months or six months, the first 90 days that I was there. And she said something to a kid, and the kid said something back, and she looked at me and said, well, they're just not afraid of you. And I was like, my goal is not to make the children. Like That wasn't my, but that was what they felt that there had to be like a healthy fear of the principal, even my kids who go to school and like suburbia. They're like, I'm scared of my principal. I don't know. But that wasn't how I was going to leave. So there have to be some. And I didn't know what my leadership style was at that point. But I knew I couldn't be military. And I knew that I couldn't keep going on like that because it felt awful.

Principal #5 also described working under a mentor who, similar to Principal #3, described the mentor as an individual who helped them craft their vision for their school and who helped them understand how to lead and enact that vision.

[From my mentor what I learned] is that you know, your admin as an administrator, you're just another member of the team. You're only as good as everybody that's working with you. And if you don't rely on their expertise and talents, and if they don't have the buy-in, nothing's going to happen. You know, I think a leader is to be a good leader, you have to be service-oriented, and you have to be other-centered.

Principal #5 would eventually describe how they used this "other-centered" approach to essentially delegate the responsibility of crafting their entire vision to the school team.

Similarly, Principal #6 credited a good portion of who they were as a leader and how they led to mentors' significance in their career. They spoke about how they never had a bad mentor in their career and that they described both their informal mentors, formal mentors, and managers as very impactful on their leadership and vision.

I had a principal who was known to be one of the better principals in the districts in our district regarding getting high test scores. And so she quickly took me under her wing and did the same thing, just groomed me, got me into the leadership intern program. I had great mentors there. And I've just always had great mentors who I've surrounded myself

with. The secret is surrounding yourself with good people. I always say I'm one of my gifts. I'm a collector of good people. And if you collect good people, and good people will follow you.

They described their ability to find good mentors as their innate characteristic of always being curious and actively seeking out people around them who they want to learn more about: "Like good leaders want to build the capacity of those around them, so I've sought out leaders who wanted to do that. I also probably present as a lifelong learner."

Principal #7 also described mentors being central to their vision and leadership development. They also described the benefit of the mentor as giving them some feedback around their initial leadership ideas that were hard to hear. When describing a previous mentor who became their current supervisor, they expressed their relationship like this:

> So, I have, let's say three or four people who regularly speak with [...] they have helped provide really good feedback and perspective and historical perspective. One, he's almost 80. So, his perspective of education over the years is pretty significant. I meet with a guy probably quarterly [...] just really good insight, not only at the federal level, but then also general policy and education, and kind of had some pretty strong views about what's working and what's not working. Not everything I agreed with, but again, a good person to just talk to, and he's the first person really to tell me that. So, when I was going through the superintendent licensure program and looking at superintendencies, you know, he's like, Well, I mean, do whatever your ego needs, and it was kind of a harsh thing to hear. And then as we talked about it, you know, he didn't even mean it with necessarily negative connotation, but on some level, obviously, you know, that's there. But it was kind of a challenge, like, in order to lead, you have to have some level of ego, because, you know, in order to keep your eyes on the horizon, when the waters aren't smooth, you have to have some belief that what you're doing is right, and worth the trip, even if the trip isn't easy. I think that's my path, and I'll put myself out there, but there's a lot of nudges along the way from people.

Principal #9, similar to the other principals described above, discussed how their initial journey into leadership was inspired and motivated by watching other leaders who they would go on to identify as exemplars in the work.

> I did have some people around [identifiers removed], who I [met from prior work experience], And I watched them work. And I watched the respect that people have, like, I can walk anywhere in our district of 100 and some schools and talk to any administrator

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or teacher who came across [identifier removed], and not one person has ever said anything negative about this man. And [identifier removed] was the same way. So when they came to me about leaving teaching and going into school improvement, I trusted their judgment. Like I really, you know, trusted that because I watched them and the way that works and how they respect it and their knowledge of things and people and the people that they put in places to lead. You know, I said, it was very scary. But I had to trust that those people that I've seen with others, they saw, and they were specifically set with why and what they thought and why they thought would be great for this district position. And I stepped out on faith because they believe in me.

While the vast majority of school leaders described their experience as finding or being assigned a mentor as a positive experience, one principal described their experience as generic and not beneficial to their growth as a leader or the development of their vision. Principal #4 described their mentorship program as a "one and done" and felt more like a "checklist" than a formal support structure, so the experience of a formally assigned mentor was not recognized universally as always being a positive experience.

The findings from the mentor/peer relationships and their impact on the principals' development of vision and how they brought those visions to manifest will be discussed further in the results section. However, the sub-themes that emerged from the impact of the mentors were that they almost all (1) delivered critical or even harsh feedback, (2) they ushered them in their career trajectories, and that (3) when the school leaders were paired with what they described as "exemplars" they were able to unpack the work of these leaders to help inform their own vision and implementation of that vision.

Fellowships/Internships

Fellowships/Internships were a common facet of a principal's training experience. What distinguished these experiences from the experience of the Peer/Mentor theme was the specific mentioning of how the overall experience of being part of a Fellowship impacted their leadership/vision. There was substantial overlap between the mentioning of a fellowship and

having a mentor since these two often go hand in hand, but if a principal cited the overall experience of being part of a Fellowship and not just a specific mentor from the fellowship as being an indelible or formative experience this was coded as Fellowship/Internship.

An example of this is Principal #1; as previously mentioned, they cited working under a specific principal as a defining attribute of their final vision, but they also pointed towards their participation in the principal fellowship itself as a key to their vision development. They cited the fellowship as key to helping them both create and operationalize their vision:

> I did a leadership and management fellowship. Again, this was more around, you know, what does it take to operationalize and, you know, create systems and operating mechanisms to really carry out your vision So that was a really strong fellowship, I was a part of, I also was a part of a [different] fellowship [...] And so it was a really robust cohort and fellowship to be a part of, to really learn and practice what it takes to be a very, you know, strong and efficient leader, a true visionary. Again, that was a year-long fellowship, and that really focused on again, you know, what, what are the steps you need to take to make sure that you are 100% ready to open either a new building or takeover.

Principal #1 cited these two fellowships that they were a part of as being focused on practice and practical skill development and adaptive skill development. They also highlighted how both fellowships they were a part of were a cohort model, and they would say that they believed that this was one of the things that they enjoyed most about the Fellowship experience.

Similarly, Principal #2 cited the cohort model of the fellowship that they participated in as very impactful and the overall experience of leading within the fellow/intern role. They described a situation in which they were supposed to do a full rotation at different schools but ended up being assigned as a long-term principal sub at just one school:

> Because the principal left and didn't come back, and so for one whole year, I did it as a leadership intern, just covering that school for the full year. And I just, I loved it, I loved being able to go in, assess what was going on, and begin to support teachers while I was working with students; it's a given when you're a school principal that you like kids that is a given. But do you like working with adults, that's your work. And so I was developing relationships with children. My main work was to begin to figure out what's going on here, that the students are fighting and people are yelling, and what's going on.

And we've just begun to work together to make those small changes that made a lot to the adults so that they could do their work in the classroom. And so we worked on culture and climate a lot that first year just to stabilize the environment, you have to be able to prioritize. And the priority that year was stabilizing the environment and figuring out who were the right adults to be at this school to work with children. So we stabilize his environment with culture, climate procedures, resources, defining who we were, you know, what were our non-negotiables [...] But with that program [the internship], I mean, we got our cohort of principals that all went through that together. And that was a good support network, but not necessarily going to have good bosses along the way that I think we're all good mentors, and they all had that quality, where they valued autonomy.

Despite not getting the full internship experience, they described the practice of turning around a school on a microscopic level and practice with building non-negotiables, which they would later go on to design at their placement school. Also, they described the cohort model allowing them to build a support network.

Principal #3 participated in a similar internship program where they were supposed to rotate between schools. Participating in this program helped codify for them that they would even go into leadership.

[Initially] they [her manager] said, 'be a principal' and I said, 'no, thank you.' I don't ever want to be a principal that is not for me. And they're like; we have this program in Columbus. It's called the leadership internship program [...] you learn so much, you may never have to be a principal, just do the program. [I had] only ever been at the one elementary school for like, 12 years. So, it would allow me to see, you know, Columbus has like 120 schools, and I've only ever been at one. So, I was like, well, that'll, you know, help me broaden my perspective and do some leadership work.

They would describe how, through that program, they would meet other peers who would later help them and act as a support system.

Principal #7 described their first internship as not impactful because of who they were paired with, but then described a second internship that they participated in as instrumental to them helping develop their vision. The first internship they participated in was for their principal licensure, but the second was for their superintendent licensure.

My first principal internship experience was with the sitting principle. And I found it to be insightful, but it's kind of like student teaching. If you're put with the right people, it's great. And if you're put with the wrong people, that helps you understand what you do and don't want to do [...],

Their second internship for their superintendent licensure was much more impactful because of who they described as being paired with and that it was structured in a way to be able to give them the time to reflect and refine their practice - "I was being more intentional about thinking about them and reflecting on them [the experience of the internship] as I was going through it."

Principal #9's experience was similar to Principal #3. They participated in a structured internship designed to have them rotate between schools, but because of a principal absence, only being able to experience the internship at one school. They described both the cohort model and the support network that came with along with the professional development from the program as impacting their leadership:

The leadership intern program is very helpful. And like I said, I didn't get to fully go through it after a month and a half. But it's something that, um, yeah, I can say that was helpful. So the nice thing about that program is you're in it for a year, maybe sometimes two years, depending. But each month, there is intentional training around the leadership aspect. And so you're actually in a room for a PD with those who are like you, other leadership interns. And it's, it's like your own mini-school until you're able to talk through some of those challenges you have as a new leader, building leader. And then some of the operations things too.

A common trait among all of the principals who stated that they benefited from a fellowship was highlighting the cohort model and the experience of fellowship and the support network that came with it. The other resounding sub-theme was the idea of practice with practical skills. All of the school leaders who went through the fellowship discussed the benefit of getting practice leading systems, even if only for a few months, and learning the technical and operational side of school systems leadership.

Prior professional experiences to the principalship were often cited in the interviews as a source of vision development. This was distinguished from prior experiences working with a mentor or participating in a fellowship/internship by exclusively identifying the work in a specific previous position that helped them develop their vision. For example, while a principal may have stated that they previously led as an assistant principal, if they described the core aspect of that experience as being informed by their work with their mentor/supervisor, it was coded as a mentor/peer relationship. Still, if it was exclusively the work that they did while in that position that informed their vision, then it was coded as prior work experience. There were instances where the principal described both having the mentor inform their position and the work itself of previous employment experiences - in these instances, the experiences were coded as both or multiple themes.

Principal #5 described leading in a different district and being mentored. In contrast, in that experience, however, they specifically described the work they performed while in that position as having a direct impact on their ability to create and implement a vision. In their previous experience, they had to develop a vision and execute it from scratch, and they used this experience to create a vision for the school that they were presenting leading:

> I mean, really, that's, we had to create everything, we had to create the mission, we had to create the vision [...] I mean, it took a long time. I mean, it took us a whole year just to get it [the vision] down. Mission and vision, right, and you know, what we wanted our students to look like, when they left [...] we were doing all of that work.

The experience of leading at a different school almost all of the principals who had served as a principal before reported having impacted their vision development. Principal #6 described their experience in school turnaround as instrumental and informative of their work as their present

school. They described essentially taking all of the strategies that they had learned leading school turnaround prior and bringing it to their current placement:

> That was my first building. But the African American students in the building weren't making adequate yearly progress at the time, which means after two or three years of that, then the designation of the state report card would fall automatically to continuous improvement. So many kids scored so highly on the state test. What that did is it washed out the progress in our black kids weren't making. So we had an overall high average, but we were missing a group of kids. And so my charge was to fix that. And so my two years there in the spring was excellent with distinction on the state report card. It was that way for two years. It was the two years I was there. So I fixed that and then moved on. I got to West broad, the state. We were designated a focus school. My job was to fix it. So within four years, we got out of focus status, we got into watch status, and we've got the momentum award from the State. So I fixed that. So then they said, okay, now you're going to go to [make progress at the present school].

Principal #7 described both a teacher leadership role and a prior principalship that impacted their vision formation. As a high-level teacher leadership position supporting policy work, they described the experience of understanding collective bargaining rights and negotiating with district leadership as a vital role that led to their wanting to be involved in administration:

> So I bring that up because I kind of solidified my interest in working with people. I have all this background philosophy on what education should be about and how it should work. And then, you know, the on the job stuff is really trying to marry those two things like do those things actually happen the way we think they should.

> Finally, Principal #9 described their experience working in school improvement as one of the defining aspects that allowed them to form their vision. This position was unique amongst the interviewees because they had the experience of supporting multiple different schools and being able to observe several school leaders in action:

> I would travel between about four or six buildings, with two teachers and administrators from each building, all in one room, providing that professional development, facilitating those classroom visits, talking about their proper practice. And even those professional development, to be able to sit with those layers of leaders, teachers, and principals, and then even my boss at that time, and to see the dynamics and how people talk we work together and how they collaborate around that proper practice was very impactful. So then to be able to go back into their building after that and talk with their building leadership team and then to be able to talk with the principal separately. The class

observation data, you know, what were their thoughts and more. So the personal part of how they react because, you know, no one wants feedback, really, that was new to our district, what strangers are coming in our building, and they're going to look at our classrooms, and they're going to write these things down, and, you know, tell us what maybe next steps should be. And so to hear how those building leaders dealt with their teachers and what things that they put in place, it didn't work. It was like my own PD within a PD.

Principal #9 describes their ability to observe and watch other leaders in action in their previous role as a "PD (professional development) within a PD."

Principals being able to engage in vision creation previously or who had prior experience leading or working with teams reported that these experiences impacted their final visions. Later on, in the focus group discussions, it also became apparent that these prior leadership experiences affected how they led in different environments.

Formal Education

Formal Education emerged as a theme multiple times throughout the coding process; however, it more often manifested as principals reporting it not to be beneficial to their overall leadership and vision formation and instantiation. This next section will discuss how formal education did and how it did not benefit the principals in this research.

Principal #4 had just completed their doctorate in education and described how both the classes and the cohort model of the doctoral program helped define their leadership vision:

So, it was through bn, you know, taking those classes at the time. And just applying that real knowledge in real-time was the best - so helpful. So, and then, at the same time, being able to have that support. So definitely it was; it would have been the courses that I took that [helped me define the vision].

Principal #4 described the classes that help them define their leadership vision and the emotional and mental support they received from being part of a cohort.

But probably the most beneficial [in helping define the vision] was the doctoral program support because that was real-time. That was, you know, a group of us, I was in a cohort.

And so, we got to come together. And they knew my journey from moving. So, I was crazy, right? So, I'm in my doctoral program for a year. I'm supposed to start writing; I take this job. And so, it was a lot if you didn't mean and so I never knew, like, random what part of this is really hard isn't that it's just hard, because you already have so many other things going on in your life. And then my parents are sick; I'm hearing so many different things. So, I tried to always separate it, but they provided the most helpful and consistent support.

This is a similar experience to the other principals described in being part of a cohort in the fellowship or internship programs they took part in.

Principal #6 described their experience with formal education and training similar to how they described the internship - with what you put into it, you get out of it. They cited both the classes and the professors who taught the coursework as formative experiences:

Like, for many of us, we may take courses, or we may take whatever for because they're required, or somebody's picking up the fee. You know, like, for example, the superintendent's license, I didn't pay very much out of pocket for the district paid for most of it. But it's what you, it's what you want to get out of it. It's what you want to take away from it. And so, yeah, there were experiences that I look back on, and didn't get much out of that. But I blame us sometimes for not getting as much out of it as we could, perhaps for whatever reason, maybe we're busy. Maybe you've got five kids at home, maybe, you know, like, for example, my mom's sick. So, we moved her in with us this summer. And so, you know, there we all have life, and so sometimes we don't, maybe push ourselves to get what we could get out of something.

They specifically mention that the operational pieces that they learned from the formal coursework, specifically from their superintendent classes, had helped them develop a foundation from which to build their vision:

And so, part of it for me is sure baptism by fire once you get out [and lead a school], obviously, nothing prepares you 100%. And I felt like I got a good foundation [from the coursework] of who I was, what I wanted, why I wanted to do it. And in those mechanical pieces, how a board of education operates, and you know, what you need to do to keep the building safe and secure and things like that. So, I really felt like my graduate school training for my master's for the principal licensure gave me a pretty solid foundation on that.

Principal #6 would go on to say that their principal training and formal coursework would be instrumental in helping them define their non-negotiables, "I learned a lot about myself in the [principal preparation] program, it pushed me to kind of evaluate who I am as a person, develop those non-negotiables."

Principal #8 was unique because they did not have a background in education and went through an alternative principal preparation program focused on business management. They cited the program specifically as enabling them to lead their team.

> My background, crafts, a lot of the vision that I have, I've been in experience, the communities that I serve and cared about most ultimately. So, I think the vision piece was not necessarily hard for me. Um, that said, I mean, I was in an [alternative principal preparation program]. [It was] very different from education programs, in that you talk a lot about, like, how do you? How do you get a group of people to move from point A to point B? And vision is obviously a big part of that. A couple of our like, speakers and things that were really most like, impactful for me, we're talking about, like, resonant leadership, like how do you resonate with people, and a lot of that has to, like, do with the heart stuff, you know, not the hard stuff, the heart stuff, and that I think, is really closely tied to vision.

Each of these principals cited specific coursework and how that coursework contributed to their development of a vision. Still, several principals brought up the coursework during the interviews to say that it was not relevant to their jobs or their leadership.

Three of the study's principals specifically mentioned that their formal education was not helpful to their development of vision or their overall leadership. These principals reported the experience of undertaking the formal courses necessary to obtain their licensure or formal degrees as tedious and often referred to the work as compliance oriented.

Principal #2, who had the greatest depth of experience of any principal interviewed for this study, summarized it like this:

> And going through the coursework that I needed to get my license, it's like when you learn to drive when you're getting your driver's license, you really learn to drive after you get the license, you're doing what you need to do in your driver's ed courses for

compliance to pass the test and pass your driver's test. But until you get in that car, and you're out there, driving it, that you learn a lot of lessons, but my master's program, I went to [identifier removed], and it was not viable, I can't even tell you what I did wasn't I just couldn't wait to be finished with it, it did not have an impact on me whatsoever.

Principal #3 described their experience, particularly in their principal training program, in a similar way:

You learn nothing [referring to the principal preparation program]. You just pay your money, and you get your license. Like, I was like, 'No, I don't want to work hard. Like I already have the Ph.D.'. I just want the license. So, I went to [identifier removed], I learned nothing. They actually had a class called professional development that taught you how to do PowerPoints.

Principal #7 described their undergraduate experience also as being detached from the actual work of the principalship:

But one of the things that initially frustrated me for my undergrad was, I felt like we only pretty much taught philosophy and didn't get a bunch of technical training. And that's kind of been my experience in my leadership programs, too. It's a lot of philosophy and not a lot of technical training.

These findings are drawn out specifically in the results section of this research because the purpose of the coursework and licensure programs that these principals refer to are often explicitly designed to support a principal in their leadership and vision development. However, it is evident from these interviews that these classes and their formal educational experiences are not contributing to their vision development for these principals.

Professional Development

The theme of Professional Development was a prominent theme for three of the nine principals describing how they developed their visions. This theme was characterized by principals representing specific professional development series or events outside of required

classes to maintain licensure or obtain a formal degree. These events were either a series or a one-time event meant to support the principal and their team in their craft.

Principal #3 was the principal who most attributed their articulated vision for the school as a product of professional development, with this theme being identified on five different occasions in the interview transcript. The first situation that they described as the introduction to a book about a specific framework regarding understanding trauma and an organization that offered professional development on that framework. After engaging in a book study and the professional development provided by this organization, they began to research the topic to eventually flesh out their vision and operationalize it for their team. They would subsequently pursue an outside consultant and ongoing professional development for the entire staff for this specific model:

> So we did 15 hours of professional development in August of that year [the launch year], where they came in and talk to us about creating regulation stations in every room, helping us to understand the brain helping us to understand what happens as a kid goes from a state of calm into a state of crisis and kind of seeing the limbic system, the tapping of the pencil is now a limbic system sign that we can watch for the tapping of your foot. There are certain things that we can almost see the future. And if we get really good at watching all those little signs, and we get a kid regulated before they escalate, it's easier to keep them like we learned so much. And I was like mind blown. It was like, to me, this was the missing piece of education that I never had; to me, as I told everybody, it was the most impactful, important, professional development of my entire life. I feel like it's criminal that institutes of higher ed aren't teaching educators this stuff. Because it solves every problem I've ever had with adults, with kids with everybody

They would describe how they engaged in over 200 hours of professional development over the summer and throughout the year to ensure that the entire staff could execute this model.

Principal #5 also described how they engaged in a professional development series that informed their entire model. As a dual-language school, they adopted an entirely different model in response to the professional development that they received and time spent reviewing and researching other dual-language schools. They brought in outside consultants from a university

to help consult and train their team on best practices within a specific model of dual-language instruction.

Principal #7 was unique in the research in that they were the only principal to describe a one-time professional development event that helped them inform their vision. There was an opportunity for leaders from across the community to hear a prominent social justice advocate speak. This one event inspired them to revisit the way they were currently working with and supporting students. The speaker described the school to prison pipeline and African American students' struggles in the public-school education system. This one-time event immediately inspired them to take action and helped them inform their vision:

> And I sat there for 90 minutes listening to a story. And him talking about the school to prison pipeline, basically. And all of a sudden, I wanted to look at my discipline data; let's see how disproportionate I was. And look at my achievement data and see how disproportionate I was. And try to figure out why. And with, you know, a bunch of thinking and intentionality, I got to this place where I believe that if we don't focus on relationships with kids, we will never move them. And it will not hurt our high achievers. But it will definitely help some of our low achievers disenfranchise disengaged kids. And I saw race as a big factor in that.

They would describe how this event would help inform their ultimate vision of increasing student voice in decision making and making staff aware of their implicit bias in the work they do with students. This would also cause them to revisit their discipline policies and uniform policies to create an anti-racist system.

While Professional Development was a less prominent theme than some of the others as a formative factor in principal vision development, for the principals who cited this as a source of vision creation, there was a clear through-line between their experiences in these sessions and their articulated vision.

Family Background was only cited as a source of vision development for two of the principals. However, the principals who mentioned this as a formative experience attributed this as a factor in their vision development and, at least, part of the reason they felt motivated to go into education.

Principal #5 described their family as a constant source of guidance and helped them shape their school direction. They described the experience below:

> Well, honestly, through all of my administrative experience, I always asked my parents, you know, anytime I'd get into a situation where it wasn't quite sure what to do, um, being a newbie, I always asked my parents even in this new position, you know, my mom was a [in a district leadership position over curriculum. So, I don't, I don't know. It's just what I did. I just, I thought my parents were very good administrators and teachers as well. I grew up in the school, you know, I went to school with them. All you know, when I was a kid, I grew up that way.

They described that their parents acted as a model for them and greatly influenced their vision formation.

Principal #9, who came into education through a non-traditional pathway, was supported through this pathway by their family. They also described feeling reassured and inspired by their non-traditional approach to education because they had seen the gaps in a traditional educational path from their family: "I could see how ill-equipped sometimes they are to deal with some of the realities [of education], especially in the urban education environment."

While Family was the least present theme as a source of vision development for the principals, their families acted as sources of initial motivation to go into education and ongoing support and feedback during their vision development.

Summary of Themes in Formative Experiences for Vision Development

While it is clear that multiple sources of experience inform a principal's vision development, a few, in particular, stand out from these findings. Almost all of the principals described learning from peers/mentors as having a significant, if not defining, impact on the development of their vision and how they led and ultimately implemented the vision within their schools. It is important to note here that a sub-theme that emerged was (1) that when the principal was paired with what they considered to be an exemplary leader and (2) that they could learn from negative examples. They claimed to be able to decipher and unpack the elements that made that person's leadership exemplary and which aspects of that leadership they wanted to keep for their own leadership and vision development. In addition, leaders also learned a significant amount from negative examples in so much as they often ended-up creating visions and leading in a way that was the antithesis of what they had previously experienced. In addition, Fellowships/Internships and Prior Work Experience also appear to impact significantly these principal's vision development. The Fellowships/Internships were most noteworthy for (1) the experience of being in a cohort and receiving ongoing support from a community of peers and (2) the on the job training and experience that these internships afforded them. Second, Prior Work Experience was the most informative on vision development when a school leader had previously led as either a school leader or another leadership role. Having led before and the lessons learned from those prior experiences, the leaders carry with them into the next school community in which they lead. Finally, it is worth mentioning that while Formal Education was impactful for some of the principals in the study, just as many who reported it as impactful also reported explicitly as not beneficial or possibly even counterproductive to their leadership/vision development.

Research Question Three Findings

The third question of this study is: what is the relationship between the articulated vision and the culture of the school?

Unlike the first two questions, this section's findings are derived from multiple sources and not just the principals' interviews, which was the sole source of information to answer questions one and two. The findings in question three are gleaned from (1) the principal interviews, (2) the focus group interviews and (3) artifact collection. This section aims to understand how and to what degree the school leader's articulated vision of the school is manifesting. During the focus group discussions, groups were not told what the principal articulated as the school's vision or shared any aspect at all of the principal interviews so that their answers could be delivered directly from their experience. In addition, the focus groups were not asked to read a vision statement or recite a vision verbatim, but to articulate what they believed the vision of the school to be and how they saw this vision taking hold in the school. The focus group responses were compared with both how the school leader articulated the vision and how the school leader believed the school's vision to be manifesting.

To cross-compare the school leader's articulated vision against the focus group responses, the transcripts were coded into the themes identified by Stemler and Bebell in their rubric for coding vision statements (1999, 2004). In Appendix F, their rubric identifies eleven different themes that are often found in vision statements. These eleven different themes are cognitive/academic development, social development, emotional development, civic development, physical development, vocational preparation, integration into the local community, integration into the global community, integration into the spiritual community, safe/nurturing environment, and challenging environment. While this rubric was originally

designed to code written mission statements, it is being used in this instance to code (1) articulated visions and (2) manifestations of the vision. For example, Stemler and Bebell coded the theme of Cognitive/Academic Development when they came across words or phrases such as "improve student test scores." In this research, for example, the theme of Cognitive/Academic Development would be identified if the principal or focus group either (1) specifically stated that the vision contained elements of improving student test scores or (2) that they believe that the vision was manifesting because there was a focus on improving student test scores. In summary, for the theme to be identified, it had to appear in either the (1) articulated vision from the focus group or school leader or (2) be stated as an example of the vision manifesting or as a result of the focus on the school's vision. It is important to note that while Stemler and Bebell identified eleven themes, in the analysis of all the transcripts, the theme of "integrate into spiritual community" never emerged along with the theme of "physical development."

After the transcripts were coded using the Stemler and Bebell coding rubric, the themes were analyzed for congruence or lack thereof. Table 5 below highlights an example of how the themes were cross-referenced.

Table 5. School Leader #1 Vision Alignment with the Culture of the School

School Leader #1		
Theme	School Leader	Focus Group
Cognitive Development	X	X
Emotional Development	X	X
Local Community	X	X

Table 5 (continued).

Safe/Nurturing	X	-
% of Overlapping Themes	3 out of 4 = 75%	

In the example of School Leader #1, there was 75% agreement between the School Leader #1 in the core themes they believe were driving and coming to fruition in the school and what the focus group believed. The detailed tables showcasing the degree of overlap in each school can be found in Appendix G.

After coding each school for alignment, the schools were grouped into three categories: high-alignment, moderate-alignment, and low-alignment. Each of the following sections will showcase evidence from the interviews and focus groups regarding how the principals were aligned or not aligned with how the teachers experienced the culture of the school. The table below illustrates the alignment clustering.

Table. 6 Schools Grouped by Level of Alignment between Principal and Teacher Focus Group

Level of Alignment	Range of Alignment Scores	Schools within Alignment--Band
High-Alignment	75% or Above	#1, #5, #8, #9
Moderate-Alignment	51 - 74%	#2, #3, #4, #6
Low-Alignment	0 to 50%	#7

Finally, due to the nature of the pandemic taking place at the time of this research, artifact collection directly from principals was limited, so most artifacts obtained were from publicly

available documents from the school. Four artifacts were obtained from each school leader or publicly available - these four artifacts were parent/family handbook, website, parent/family communication, and family/school calendar. These artifacts were reviewed to assess if the school leader articulated vision could be discerned from these artifacts. The artifacts collected from each school did not yield findings that support answering question three. Instead, the artifact collection revealed that principals working in large districts had their artifacts more tightly controlled and standardized than charter school leaders who were able to customize their artifacts to reflect their vision. Because of this finding, more time will be spent in the section that follows cross-comparing focus group responses to school leader responses in the interview process for similarities and differences. Detailed breakdowns of the results of the artifacts exploration can be found in Appendix G.

Characteristics of Schools with a High Degree of Alignment

The relationship between the school leader's articulated vision and the school's culture as measured by teacher focus groups was mostly in sync at four of the nine schools in this study. Two of the four schools in this high aligned group were charter, and two were traditional district schools. Defining themes of these well-aligned schools were (1) the school leader committed to one to two key priorities and (2) they had a concrete focus on bringing those priorities to life.

Establishing Key Priorities

One of the aspects that set the high alignment group apart from the other groups was that they named one to two key priorities, and then the teachers were also able to name these as clear priorities. For example, School Leader #1 established early on that family engagement and relationships with the community were a top priority for them. The teachers also were able to

identify a shift in prioritizing this aspect of the school's work. Principal #1 said, "making sure that our families feel invested in the school. That was a top priority when I moved in." The teachers also felt this, as evidence by the focus group stating, "for me, it's the communication. I think that's something we [the staff] really fought for and that's something [principal #1] is really on board with. [They] want that family communication."

Similarly, Principal #5 had a tremendous focus on becoming a top tier language immersion program. This was the driver of everything they did, and it was an evident passion and priority for the teachers' work. Principal #5's school was also only one of two schools in the study that had teachers articulate the school's vision verbatim to what the principal had said. The other school to achieve this level of alignment in vision articulation was School Leader #8, who also had their team articulate verbatim the same vision statement that they had articulated. In addition, School Leader #8 had established that their central role as a school was to reduce barriers to educational access and increase the level of trust between families and the school. Principal #8 stated when being asked to elaborate on their vision said, "[our school] is really about that we'll do whatever it takes to help scholars succeed." The focus group for their school responded similarly by saying, "I think that academic barriers and non-academic pieces are really important. I haven't heard of other schools that, like, think about the whole experience of the child. I think that we work really hard to also connect with family." School Leader #9 prioritized making staff feel safe and heard - believing that this was the first step in actualizing the vision. When discussing how they launched their vision, they described the first step as "to change the feelings and mindset of staff who felt like, you know, they haven't had a voice or you know, so that became my priority." When describing the comparison between prior leadership and the current leadership, they stated:

So [School Leader #9 is] very, very motivated. And [they are] very, very committed to making that vision happen, but doing it in a collaborative sort of way. I think our former principal had an idea of things that he wanted to see us moving towards. I think he had a vision. I don't know that it was as clearly defined in his mind or that he was as skilled in communicating that to staff in a way that ways to get that vision accomplished. I think with him was more big picture. He didn't have the detail orientation to the nuts and bolts of how to get there.

In each of the above examples, the school leader either framed their priority area by saying something to the effect of this is extremely important to me, a priority for me is, or something that is central is. They named one to two focus areas, and the school teams were able to also name these as priority or focus areas for themselves or the school. These priorities are directly related to the articulated vision.

Operationalizing the Vision

Operationalizing the vision concretely and tangibly for the teachers was also identified as a theme across all three schools classified as highly aligned. This finding appeared in the interview and focus group transcripts. The principals said that they focused on a specific aspect of their vision and then operationalized it through something very tangible to the teachers, such as curriculum, training, or pedagogy. For example, Principal #1 spoke about the desire to create a student-centered learning environment with flexible groupings, where every student receives the stretch opportunities that they need:

> I think about meeting the needs of all of our kids, you know, I think about all the flexible groupings that we have throughout the school. So, you know, we have students that are our, you know, that need just stretched and are either considered gifted or needed, you know, that enrichment. And so we have an enrichment specialist that meets with, you know, every student that needs that, you know, stretching and that happens every single day at inspire, we also have, you know, an intervention specialist that meets with our kids that are challenged and that you know, need an additional, you know, dose of reading fluency, or whatever the skill may be, we are meeting with those kids every single day. So we have really robust programs and resources to make sure that our kids, you know, have those opportunities to grow and develop, because, you know, that is our biggest

focus here is, you know, we want our kids to continue growing, we want them to get excited about growth.

The focus group also expressed a similar desire and manifestation of this part of the principal's vision:

Or even if a student needs pulled out for a couple minutes, I think because we're such a small staff, you know, I think we do a pretty good job of helping each other out. I think that's a big, big part of it. If someone needs something, normally, you know, it's not a problem for someone. So I think that's a big part of building it as a school for us. So great. And one thing we've all commented on before, and I've never ever been at a school, even schools that were this small, every single staff member knows every single child who their siblings are and knows their parents. And literally, we walk down the hallway, and we comment and interact and engage with every single child every single day

Similarly, Principal #1 put a great deal of emphasis on whole child development, coded as

emotional development, and ensuring that this was a part of the school's fabric. They specifically

stated, "more than just academics, we got to make sure that we are meeting our kids' social and

emotional needs - we want to focus on whole child development." The teachers saw this

manifesting in the curriculum of the school and how they spoke to and worked with children:

[We use] Responsive Classroom meetings every morning. So the kids could greet each other and learn how to greet each other, and how to look each other in the eye and how to speak in a proper tone. And then, they practice discrete social skills and read-aloud that taught social skills. And then the whole first quarter, we don't have a counselor on staff, but I actually had my counseling license. So I was going in and doing counseling guidance lessons every single week, for 40 minutes. And that's huge. And no other school does that; most do one a month for 30 minutes. And we were focusing on growth mindset, but also moving into impulse control and frustration tolerance level and things like that.

Principal #5's school invested in an entirely new way of teaching dual language instruction to

reach their vision of becoming the top-performing dual-language program in the state. Principal

#5 reported operationalizing this priority by investing in concrete strategies to promote language

development, "we've been working on the same two things for six years. You know, how a lot of

times everybody switches everything up. No. We have worked with [identifying strategy #1

removed], and[identifying strategy #2]. That's it. And teachers become experts on those in those

two pieces." The teachers felt that this program was integral to their work and identified how

they teach as a specific example of the school's vision manifesting.

> [speaker 1] because [the leader] gave, you know, a week every at the beginning at the end of every school year, beginning of every summer for the staff to come together and do things. And it didn't always gel into the vision exactly, but it kind of like pieces of it have moved or helped solidify the vision, I think [...]. I thought in my mind of framework and so on for you know, what does it take to achieve school transformation? [speaker 2] And I would say we probably feel that you must have a vision. And you must have for me after the vision, you need a framework, you know, how are you going to push that vision throughout the school? So, for example, ours is dual language and [identifying strategies], and I could see it another school, whatever your vision is. Then you have to match up what is the framework. There are a lot of schools that are doing cooperative learning, you know, social, emotional focus with restorative justice. So, you have to get it down to the concrete level of beyond the vision. What is the concrete framework?

The teachers at School #5 would go on to report how this concrete development would impact their ability to carry out the vision:

> And during all these years of work, the leadership team increases their knowledge along the spectrum, the staff increases their knowledge, but along that spectrum, it isn't a linear progression. It's progression, and then cycling back and revisiting fine-tuning, and then progression. And the same thing, always cycling back and revisiting. And then you get that deepening along the spectrum of so those, that's how I have it conceptualized in my head.

Similarly, Principal #8's teachers reported feeling a strong emotional attachment to the school's

vision and how the school leader was operationalizing the focus on social justice and increasing

opportunities for marginalized populations:

> I felt like on my interview day, I really, I really connected with [Principal #8], and I felt like that was a big deciding factor. Above everything, because and also it's weird like seeing the Black Lives Matter flag and like seeing the inclusivity of that piece because we do serve dominantly black student population, so that, to me is important that, you know, we're not just a bunch of white people trying to do good, but like, there is, you know, we see you, we want you to succeed. Yeah, there's like an undercurrent that's like, stronger than just academics.

The above quote was School Leader #8's most considerable focus - on increasing opportunities

for the students they served through an emphasis on social justice. They operationalized their

vision through the hiring process, physical signage in the building, and the teachers' overall

training and development. School Leader #9 had a deeply ingrained focus on becoming a

community school and operationalized that vision by bringing in numerous community partners:

> I want to build, and we are building this place that kids feel like it's their home, not just a place they come to school to learn, that parents feel that is their home and their resource and that we are able to offer to the community our parents, things that other people offer across the city. But we're a community hub, which we should be.

The focus group articulated the same sentiment when asked what they believed the focus of the

school was and how it was manifesting, "she has done an incredible job connecting with the

community around us, [identifying partners removed], there are a lot of programs and

partnerships that have been entered into in the last few years, that are giving our kids more

opportunities to see beyond [our school]." The focus group would list numerous partners and the

way they have seen these partners support the school's work.

The actions that the leaders took to be most aligned with their leaders were (1)

establishing key priorities that aligned to the vision with their team and (2) operationalizing those

priorities that related to the ultimate vision of the school community. While not all of the teacher

focus groups within this highest aligned group were able to articulate the school leader's exact

vision, they could always cite a school leader's priorities. The teachers were also able to recall

these priorities and express themes that aligned with the themes of the school leader because

their day-to-day work, i.e., the operationalizing of the vision, closely reflected those themes.

Characteristics of the School with a Low-Level of Alignment

Only one school in the study showed an alignment level at 50%. There was an evident

lack of alignment between how the principal perceived themselves as leading and manifesting

the vision and how the teacher focus group understood the vision. The first characteristic that

will be described below is that (1) there was no clear implementation strategy addressed by

either the principal or the teachers, and (2) there was not a named priority for the school community, but instead a loose guiding principle. The school leader articulated their vision as wanting to increase student and staff voice in decision making:

> And so that is my overarching vision for the school to have a place where our staff and our students are so active and leading it that I'm literally managing them to try to keep them all moving in a similar direction, as opposed to, you know, disciplining them, to keep them in line with my vision, so to speak. And I think if we do that, it will be an informed leadership that I couldn't do because I'm one person. But if we actually have real representation and real voices for our staff and our students, we can solve real problems in efficient ways.

However, the teachers were unsure if there was a vision for the school. When asked what the vision for the school community was, they responded with the following:

> "[Speaker 1] I don't think we have one. [Speaker 2] I think we do. I think [they] really wanted to make sure that students who were underprivileged and underrecognized had a voice."[Speaker 3] I think it is something about implicit bias. [Speaker 4] I don't think we have one?"

The focus group partially understood that the school leader focused on increasing voice and some sentiment about marginalized groups' representation. Still, there was an apparent lack of alignment amongst the focus group on precisely what the school was trying to accomplish.

The first possible reason for this lack of alignment (1) lack of implementation strategies will be explored below, followed by the other characteristic that emerged (2) lack of operationalization of the vision.

Lack of Implementation Strategy

School Leader #7 was the only school leader in this study to show no implementation strategies when discussing their vision. When the school leader was asked about how they garnered interest and input in their vision, they replied by describing their initial launch to their tenure:

> [The implicit bias training] that was my introduction to my staff, "Nice to meet you."
> And I had to explain to them like, I'm not coming here saying that you have a race
> problem, although I think we did and still do on some level. But I'm like, but this is
> everybody's problem. And we need to know what our role is in it and how to minimize
> our impact in a negative way and maximize our impact in a positive way. And so that
> culture piece, you know, and when it came to [school name], there was clearly a culture
> issue with staff and students.

And they also described how they delegated responsibilities through their leadership, but not

necessarily tied to a specific aspect of their vision or investing others in their vision:

> So the department chairs are kind of leading adults in our building leadership team and
> are kind of leading learning on some level. And then we even branch that out further like
> at our staff meetings, we have staff members leading professional development sessions.
> So you walk into a staff meeting for us, it's an hour in there are four sessions being
> offered you pick two. And so the four sessions end up being aligned with our or kind of
> continuous improvement plan.

When the teachers were asked to describe if they were involved in any kind of visioning process,

they could not recall any specific instance in which a clear direction, guiding principles, or vision

was set with them. They could only remember an event that dealt with the construction of their

student culture system, "[Speaker 1] Didn't we do something like creating sentences? [Speaker

2] That was for PBIS [Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports], was that [previous

principal's name]?" This conversation would ultimately reveal that the focus group mostly

believed that there wasn't anything unique about their school program. Since the focus group

was unable to describe a unified vision, they were asked if something made their school different

or unique that they were proud of, a common facet of a vision statement. They responded by

saying, "I don't think it's different. We're all of our [schools] are the same. We're dealing with

kids who some of them want to try [and] some of them don't want to try. It is a difficult job to

motivate [the students]. There are so many contexts that people don't know about. And we're all

just trying to do the best we can." Without a vision, the teachers felt nothing unique that set their

school apart from any other school.

A pillar of the school leader's vision was expanding the teacher's voice in decision making, but the teachers saw the opposite of this happening within their building. One of the sub-themes that emerged from the focus group was siloed communication. Different teachers understood their goals and what was essential to the school leader depending on the role that they held within the school. One exchange that took place revealed that those who were on the building's leadership team had a more positive view of the leader and a more optimistic understanding of the school's vision than those who were not:

> "[Speaker 3], so I am [teacher leader title], so I work with [School Leader #7], and [they] comes in my room a lot, so I am going to say that [they] think they are transparent and [they] want people to come up to [them] and trust and talk to [them]. [They] want us to be in this together." [Speaker 4]. Because you are one of [teacher leaders] [they're] like, "our goal was like "x" to all of the [teacher leaders], but like no one will tell you [what the goal was] or you have to have a one on one conversation with him.

Except for one of the building leadership team members, the other teachers felt like the antithesis of the culture the building leader wanted was being manifested, "I don't think [they're] as open as [they] thinks [they are]. I want to add that many people who are less comfortable being assertive about their opinions and questions do not feel like [they are] open or wanting us to ask questions."

The school leader did describe multiple instances in which they believed their vision was manifesting through increased student voice but did not express any cases in which they had intentionally built channels to raise teacher voice in decision making. However, the school leader had described a keen desire to focus on the specific area that the teachers were saying was not manifesting:

> My message is that this is not really my school. I am certainly in charge and responsible for what happens here, but it's really the school that is run by teachers and students. And my job is to make sure it's not running away, that's going to get us in trouble or, you

know, affects people incorrectly. So, anything I can do to improve and increase teacher's voices and leadership, and anything I can do to improve and increase student's voice, and leadership is important to me. That means that teachers have to feel safe to share their opinion, good, bad, ugly, teachers have to feel safe to try things and fail, and not be held instantly accountable for trying something new, like, need to encourage that you need to encourage experimentation.

The teacher focus group would describe trying to innovate and lift controversial items and not feel like they were being heard. They described the experience of creating a specialized teacher committee in response to the pandemic that was designed to discuss how to respond. Still, ultimately the leader ended up making their committee with those who they traditionally have in leadership roles within the building:

> But [the leader] also like, [they are] resistant [to hearing new ideas]. Like we use like the [special committee] things that came up with what are safe practices at the school are probably non-traditional. Like, they're not like people who are like leaders in the building, right? So there are people who have like a, they don't really have their voice heard, or their and his response to that was, well, we already have a committee, but the committee that [they] had in place, where people who are always on committees. So it is interesting that like [them], I think it has been given every once in a while a chance to hear different voices and has been resisted in a weird way.

Ultimately, the focus group perceived the leader as unable to actualize their inferred vision because they did not feel like there were avenues for them to voice their concerns or experiment.

Summary of Themes between the Articulated Vision and the Culture of the School

In this study, school leaders could manifest their visions to varying degrees of success as perceived by the school building teachers. While the majority of the schools in this study showed overlap in themes between what the principal believed the vision of the school to be and how it was being instantiated with their teachers, there were schools that showed to have a high degree of alignment and one with an exceptionally low level of alignment.

The schools with the high degree of alignment were characterized by leaders who had (1) established one to two priorities that directly linked back to their articulated vision and (2) had

taken those priorities and operationalized them through very tangible deliverables or work aligned to the teachers' day to day experiences. The school with the lowest level of alignment between the teachers and the leader were characterized by (1) lack of an implementation strategy and (2) not taking their vision and operationalizing it.

Conclusion

This study was designed to better understand the role of vision in school leadership, specifically addressing if principals have a vision, how they create their personal visions, and how they instantiate those visions. The significant findings from each of these questions are summarized below.

The principals who participated in this study demonstrated that they might not necessarily have what would academically be defined as a vision or vision statement. Still, all of the leaders had a guiding statement or philosophy that drove their work. In this study, principals also used a wide variety of mechanisms to invest their staff in a shared vision, with the most common approaches being the use of a formal vision creation process when they first arrived at their school and an iterative feedback process to improve how they were operationalizing that vision.

In addition, principals derive their personal visions from a wide variety of experiences, with the most often cited experiences being (1) learning from peers/mentors, (2) internships and fellowships, and (3) prior work experience. A key finding in this area is that principals reported learning from both negative and positive experiences with mentors and peers - with the negative experiences often reported to be more generative of a personal vision than even the positive experiences. Another key finding in this area was how little a role formal education and

professional development helped principals develop their personal visions with principals, often stating that these experiences did nothing to support them.

Finally, the principals who experienced the highest degree of alignment between their articulated vision and the understood vision from their teachers were principals who (1) broke down their vision into one or two priorities and (2) operationalized those priorities into actionable work that could be experienced in the day to day work of the teachers. The principal who was least aligned with their focus group demonstrated that when (1) there is not a clear implementation strategy and (2) the vision is not operationalized that there was a disconnect between the leader's desired experience and the perceived experience of the teachers.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The Wallace Foundation study characterized two types of school leaders - "copers" and "transformers." Copers were continuously trying not to feel overwhelmed and keep up with the day-day demands of the work. Transformers were school leaders who were thriving. They possessed strong leadership, united their teams, and ultimately fostered greater student achievement and a stronger overall school community (2007). Similarly, in recent years, there has been a renewed focus on James MacGregor Burns' idea of *transformational leadership* - which is the idea that a leader instills such a sense of purpose that those that follow that leader are essentially transformed and become a leader themselves (1978). For our school leaders today to become transformational leaders, these transformers must understand a critical prerequisite - how do school leaders develop and instantiate their visions?

The major themes that emerge from the findings of this research are the following:

Theme 1: Principals have guiding statements, but not necessarily formal visions.

Theme 2: Principals' primary mechanism for investing their teams in these guiding statements is through a visioning process.

Theme 3: Principals primarily develop their visions/guiding statements from their experiences working with others.

Theme 4: Principals whose articulated vision was most aligned with their teams' lived experience were principals who focused on how to operationalize the vision.

Theme 1: Principals Use Guiding Statements, but not Formal Vision Statements

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Leadership defines vision as an ideal future state (2004). Most principals in this study did not articulate what would academically be defined as a vision statement. Still, they did communicate something closer to what Brockett would describe as a guiding statement - a statement that may not necessarily have all of the components of a formal vision statement, but that serves the same purpose, which is to anchor the leader in the direction of the work and inform choices regarding how they and those in their organization act (2014). Every principal in this study articulated some kind of guiding statement. Each principal expressed a general guiding statement that informed their approach to the work and gave them a framework for making decisions. For example, School Leader #1 articulated their core values when asked for their school vision, School Leader #7 stated how increasing staff and students' voice was their goal. School Leader #2 articulated a series of non-negotiables and actions they wanted to see their staff take to increase their community outcomes. In every case, regardless of whether they expressed a formal vision statement, they articulated something that served the same purpose - it gave them a framework for decision making and guided how they led.

These guiding statements also informed what the staff understood the school's vision to be regardless of whether the articulated visions would be formally defined as vision statements. For example, School Leader #1 and School Leader #8 both had a very high degree of alignment between what the school leader stated as the school's vision and what they understood the school's vision to be. Still, neither school leader articulated what would formally be classified as a vision statement. It is clear that most of the participants in this study did not understand the formal definition of a vision statement, but they had guiding statements that served the same purpose. This is a similar finding to the work of Baum, Locke, and Kirkpatrick. When they

studied CEOs of various organizations found that what the leader articulated as their vision, whether it would have been academically defined as a vision or not, did not matter because it served the same purpose as a vision statement and guided the leaders and organizations actions (n.d.). Like their work, there was no difference in findings on how the vision impacted the school's work, whether the leader articulated a formal vision or just a guiding statement.

Theme 2: Principals Primarily Invest their Teams in a Shared Vision through a Visioning Process

All but one of the principals in this study engaged in a visioning process to some degree. Similar to the findings of previous research, the visioning process almost always emerged for these leaders at either a point of founding a school, disruption or purposeful planning to reset a school environment (O'Connell, Hickerson, & Pillutla, 2011; Meyers & Hitt, 2017; Vandenberghe, 1994). Almost all of the principals in this study mentioned engaging in some kind of visioning process as one of their first actions when they became part of a new school community. If they hadn't yet engaged in a visioning process, it was because they were a mid-year hire, but made mentions of plans to start this action as soon as they entered the new school year.

The majority of principals in this study did not engage in a formal visioning process - using formal protocols, creating a project plan, soliciting input from all stakeholders, etc. Instead, it rallied a loose congregation of staff members and some parents to ask them what they value and what they wanted for their school community. Only two principals in this study brought in outside consultants and engaged in a multiple month long, if not year-long, process of creating and establishing a defining vision. All but two principals in the study also used the method of creating a vision whereby a vision is co-created by leaders and followers coming together with only one principal in the study creating a vision by themselves and then communicating that

vision to their followers (O'Connell, Hickerson, & Pillutla, 2011). The most significant difference between the principals who engaged in a formal visioning process and those who did not is that the principals who brought in outside consultants emphasized the process as iterative with the vision continually being refined and revisited, which is a hallmark of the formal visioning process (Hooijberg, 2007; O'Connell, Hickerson, & Pillutla, 201; Weick, 1995).

When the visioning process undertaken by the school leaders in this study is evaluated against the framework developed by Hooijberg, in which (1) the leader sets the stage by asking questions and assessing, (2) the leader cascades the vision and ensures that the vision is being carried out throughout the organization and (3) the leader formally assesses the impact of the vision on the organization and aligns the organization to the vision, there would be a noticeable gap in the last two steps for most of the school leaders. The majority of the school leaders who did not undertake a formal visioning process did not mention spot-checking their vision against the reality of the work. Each school leader was able to identify initiatives where they saw their vision manifesting, but most often, there was not an accountability measure for when the vision was not manifesting (2007). In only one instance, with School Leader #5, did the school leader set formal milestones to measure reaching the vision against and developing a checklist and the like to hold their teams and themselves accountable for striving towards the vision. The accountability systems discussed were often vision agnostic - classroom observation tools provided by the district, lesson plan rubrics using a distinct framework, etc. For the most part, the leaders in this study were engaged in one-off visioning processes that were not iterative and were missing the part of the visioning process in which they check and assess how the vision is cascading.

Regardless of whether the leader engaged in a formal visioning process, this process appeared to be effective and memorable for their teams. For all but one school in this study, the teachers were able to recall engaging in this initial visioning process. While the process may not have been, and the vision may not have been revisited in its entirety, almost all leaders asked for feedback along the way as the vision was manifesting. There was the initial phase of asking for feedback during the informal or formal visioning process. Still, they also asked for input regarding how the initiatives they were implementing and how the staff was perceiving their overall leadership style.

<div align="center">Theme 3: Principals Develop their Visions from Working with Others</div>

While learning from a peer/mentor was the most impactful experience principals described in helping them form their vision, a close second was the experience of being part of a principal training fellowship. In both experiences, the principals described learning from either a cohort, a formal or informal mentor, and peers who were actively leading in a similar capacity.

The importance of principals having mentors was confirmed from this study. Principals discussed the impact of being paired with a formal mentor during their principal training. These experiences for them, as discussed in the results section, were not always positive. However, principals often reported learning and developing their visions from learning and reflecting on what not to do from principals with who they were paired with. The principals often reported great respect for their informal/formal mentors as well. They were able to use their value-set and their own experience to sieve and decide which experiences and learnings from their mentors they would take with them to the schools they would eventually lead. The principals often reported actively seeking out mentorship if they were not formally paired with one and maintaining these relationships well into their tenure. The importance of supporting principals in

being reflective in their mentor/mentee relationships cannot be understated. Principals all reported either engaging in a self-reflective process (e.g., journaling) or in a joint-reflective process with their mentor to help them decide the direction for their careers and ultimately how they wanted to lead their school.

Principals reported the comfort and support they received from a cohort's help when undergoing their initial training if they participated in a cohort fellowship. Having a network of peers who were engaging in a similar experience to themselves and being allowed to commiserate with those peers helped them reflect on their experiences and process those experiences to help them decide the direction for their careers, leadership styles, and their eventual vision for their schools. It should be noted that no principal ever mentioned engaging in a formal visioning process as part of their principal preparation program with their cohort of peers. So, it would seem that the pieces that helped them build their visions happened organically.

Principals also reported learning from peers as one of the most impactful experiences on their vision development. Several principals mentioned seeking out respected peers in their networks to learn from them, especially when what they were doing was not successful. They sought out models of success of schools with similar demographics. These peers often showcased their own best practices or referred them to other professional development resources. The primary benefit of the peer-to-peer relationship in vision building for these principals appeared to be in networking. Having these peers support them in accessing additional learning opportunities and leveraging different resources in the area. No principal in the study mentioned any kind of formal pairing process with peers. Still, they sought out these peers themselves and

made these connections during specific points of communal gatherings such as shared professional development or community celebrations.

Finally, as also discussed in the results section, a critical finding was that most principals reported formal training not having an impact on their vision development and often being referred to as a waste of time. This finding is a critical piece since accrediting bodies for principal training programs often evaluate and give accreditation to training programs based on their ability to train principals in their vision development (CAEP, 2018; NELP, 2018). For these principals, there is an apparent disconnect between their formal education experience and the reality of their work.

Theme 4: Principals who were Highly Aligned in their Shared Vision with their Teams were able to Operationalize their Vision

Four of the nine schools participating in this research were found to have 75% alignment in emergent themes between what the school leader articulated the school's vision to be and how the instructional staff experienced that vision. A defining characteristic of these four schools was that the school leader took part in their vision and turned it into an initiative that they could operationalize to the staff's lived everyday experience. School Leader #1 focused on family engagement, and the teachers felt this priority in the messaging to them and more visible family involvement in the school. Principal #5's vision was related to becoming a premiere dual-language program, and this vision cascaded into establishing a new teaching model and subsequent training for the staff. Principal #8 vision was to reduce the barriers that would prevent students from accessing education. The teachers felt that they spoke about the school and the supporting programs established to mitigate those barriers. Principal #9's vision was on becoming a real community school, and the focus group felt that through the establishment of

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formal partnerships with the larger school community. In each case, the principal took their

abstract vision and turned it into something concrete that the teachers could feel and experience.

In contrast, School Leader #7, who had the lowest level of alignment to their staff, could

not operationalize their vision. Both the focus group and the school leader spoke to one-off

training sessions that the school leader perceived as connected to their vision, but the staff did

not experience it this way because there was no explicitly stated vision. The teachers also

experienced the training sessions as one-time events and did not see them connected to larger

priorities or initiatives within the school.

Recommendations

To forge transformational school leaders, a necessary prerequisite is to have a vision.

Developing a vision for a school community, just like any other organization, is a skill that can

be taught and developed over time. We can teach our school leaders to facilitate the development

of an audacious vision for the school communities that they serve. Below, I outline four

recommendations for educational policymakers, higher education institutions, district leaders,

and principals themselves.

Recommendation 1: Teach Principals How to Develop Guiding Statements

This research's findings showcase an example where principals developed guiding

statements, but not necessarily formal vision statements. The guiding statements that they

developed, whether they were core values, formal vision statements, mission statements, or the

like, all served the same purpose for the school leader and the school community - set the

school's direction. The power of these guiding statements was evident throughout this study.

Even without formally establishing a vision statement or even naming a priority or a general

direction for the school community, if the principal stated that their vision was "x," the staff experienced that vision in some way - even in schools with little teacher to leader alignment in some way felt the influence of the leader's vision. Principal certification programs and national accreditation bodies laud the importance of vision in the work of the principalship, yet little time and energy are spent on training principals how to develop this essential skill (Hess & Kelley, 2007; King, 2013; NAELP, 2018).

Some organizations are solely dedicated to training others in vision development, and there are numerous methods for teaching school leaders on how to facilitate the visioning process within their schools (Future Search Network, n.d.; Hoojberg, 2007; Robinson, 1982; Jungk, Robert, Müllert, Norbert, 1987; Weick, 1995). I would argue that visionary and transformational leaders are not born but forged through proper training and experience. Principals need to understand the importance of having a personal vision, that this vision is iterative and that the work of the school leader is not to impose their vision on the school community but to come together to facilitate the creation of a shared vision. It is critical that principal preparation programs, charter management organizations, and districts support principals in the constant and iterative process of helping principals find their guiding statements and beliefs for the school communities that they serve.

Recommendation 2: Teach Principals How to Invest Others in a Shared Vision

The process of creating a vision is iterative, and for transformational leadership to be achieved, the leader must have their followers also carry the vision just as much if not more so than the leader does (Burns, 1978). While principals ended up creating their strategies to invest others in a shared vision through soliciting feedback or delegating parts of the vision to other staff members, there was not typically a holistic implementation plan. In addition, in the

instances in which the leader reported having some kind of implementation strategy to rally the team together, these strategies were centered around getting the staff and school community invested in themselves as leaders rather than the school community's vision.

Concrete strategies exist to invest a team around a central vision (Hoojberg, 2007; Meyer & Hitt, 2017; Wieck & Iwaniec, 2014; Wieck, 1995). Principal preparation programs, charter management organizations, and districts can train school leaders on both the visioning process and how to sustain investment in the shared vision through concrete implementation strategies. We know that teachers often follow their principals because they trust them, and this trust is built by ensuring that the principal establishes a direction for the school and there is consistency between words and actions (Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Bolger, 2001; Price, 2011; Tschannen, 2001). Teaching principals how to engage in a visioning process is the first step, but they also need to know how to sustain and build investment in that shared vision.

Recommendation 3: Mentor Matching and Reflection in Principal Training

Another key finding from the principals who participated in this research was that they developed their visions mainly by learning from mentors and peers. If the principals were not formally paired with a mentor (e.g., through a principal training fellowship), they often sought out the support of a mentor on their own, either through their network of peers or their managers. Suppose principals are primarily developing their vision for how they want to lead and what kind of school they want to build from these mentor/mentee relationships. In that case, more time and energy must be devoted to ensuring that principals are adequately paired with a mentor who will push their practice and that mentors are trained on how best to coach and support their mentees.

Principals often reported seeking out mentors or peers leading in schools or school systems with similar demographics to theirs. If principals are seeking out leaders leading similar

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schools to themselves, then maybe this should be taken into consideration during the mentor/mentee matching process.

In addition, principals often reported learning what not to do from mentors that they were paired with. These experiences were often just as valuable, if not more so, than being paired with a mentor they wanted to imitate. The principals who reported that they learned what they did not want their school to be due to being paired with a mentor also self-reported to be very reflective in their practice. These principals mentioned engaging in reflection on these negative experiences with peers, other mentors, or keeping a journal. In all of the cases in which a negative example influenced the principal, they engaged in some kind of reflective practice. This finding leads me to recommend that principal training programs need to support principals in unpacking the mentor/mentee relationship with the principal to understand that negative experiences can be just as formative as positive experiences.

Recommendation 4: Teach and Coach Principals on How to Operationalize their Vision

One of the critical players involved in supporting a principal who has not been mentioned yet in these recommendations is its role. The principals who were most aligned with their staff in their shared vision were able to operationalize their vision. While principals can be taught strategies on how to invest and operationalize their vision in principal training programs, the real work of putting a vision into practice is very context specific. It will entail ongoing field training and support (Marks & Printy, 2003; Portin, 2004).

Principals will need ongoing support from their managers and coaches on how to custom tailor the school community's vision and operationalize it to the school's specific needs. This need, in my experience, is often one of the most challenging parts of school leadership. As it has been noted, school leaders have numerous competing responsibilities, and it is easy for school

leaders to experience mission drift in response to the bureaucratic or sometimes unexpected nature of the work (Cotten, 2003; Hallinger & Murphy, 2013; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). Principals will need a manager or coach's support to help them engage in ongoing reflective practice to ensure that their work is aligned with the school community's vision and that the school maintains its velocity towards its vision.

Future Research

This study was small in scale and was only able to examine a small fraction of how principals develop and instantiate their vision for the schools they serve. I hope that future researchers can expand on this topic in greater depth to afford the even more significant development of principals' visions. Below I outline three future research areas that I would recommend for anyone interested in pursuing this topic.

First, to better understand how principals develop and enact their visions, I would recommend replicating this study at a larger scale with a more comprehensive review of how the school community perceives the school leader's vision. This study only examined the relationship between teachers and principals and how the vision was being manifested. Still, many other stakeholders, such as students, parents, and community members, should also be involved to gain a better understanding of how the vision is being manifested from a complete perspective. In addition, while this study took place during a pandemic and I was unable to visit the physical school communities, I would strongly recommend that future work on this topic involve an on-site visit to the school with corresponding classroom observations to understand how the vision is manifesting in daily classroom practice if at all.

Second, based on these research findings, I would recommend additional research into principal training programs' impact on principal vision development. In addition to the literature

review that highlighted evidence that not much coursework is dedicated to this subject matter, the principals themselves often reported that their formal training was not impactful at all. Future researchers should examine the impact of principal training programs on principals' ability to create and enact a vision and what components of their training help them do so, and what is not as impactful.

In addition, it is important to take into consideration that this research was only conducted with principals who were leading in urban settings. In future research, I would recommend interviewing principals and school communities in settings outside of, or in addition to, urban principals. The next researchers to undertake this vain of research should investigate the role vision plays in suburban and rural communities as well as urban communities.

Finally, this research highlighted that a mentor's impact greatly informed their eventual visions for the principals who participated in this study. I would encourage future researchers to examine this topic in isolation - "how does the mentor/mentee relationship impact vision development, and how do principals actively reflect on the mentor/mentee relationship for their growth and development?" Numerous other research questions could be generated from this subject matter, but it is worth examining how prevalent this finding was from this research.

Closing Remarks

I continue to be humbled by the work of school leaders and teachers. School Leaders and their teams face innumerable challenges in doing the most essential job in the world - educating our children. I cannot thank all of the school leaders, teachers, and support staff who participated in this study enough for giving me a window into their work and share their stories with me.

My study examined how principals develop and put into practice a vision for a school community. The four prominent themes that emerged from this research were that (1) principals

have guiding statements, not necessarily formal visions, but they serve the same purpose and help them, and their teams have a direction for the work, (2) principals invest their teams through a visioning process, but this is often without formal guidance or training, (3) principals develop their visions from their work with others - especially mentors, and finally (4) principals who were the most aligned with their staff in how the vision was manifesting were principals who were able to operationalize their visions into the daily experiences of their teams. I hope that policymakers, institutions of higher education, school systems leaders, researchers, districts, and charter-management organizations, and principals themselves will build off of this research to support school leaders in building the cornerstone of transformational leadership - vision.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL & QUESTIONS FOR THE SCHOOL LEADER

Introduction

Interviewer:

Thank you so much for your willingness to take part in this research project. The goal of this project is to ascertain how principals develop and implement their vision for their school communities. Your identity and all identifying information relating to you and your school will be anonymized. As part of this project, I would like to conduct a five to six person teacher focus group to better understand how the school's vision is manifesting from the perspective of the teachers. You will be asked to submit a list of ten teachers and their contact information who may be available to be part of the focus group. Five to six teachers will be chosen from the list at random and to protect the confidentiality of the participants, the school leader will not be informed who has been chosen. In addition to providing the list of teachers, you will also be asked to provide a sample family/parent handbook, school website, sample parent/family communication (newsletters, flyers, etc) and a school calendar so that I can better understand how the school's vision is being communicated in the community. interview one of your teachers to determine how your key stakeholders are perceiving the implementation of vision as well as collect any artifacts that you feel are relevant and can speak to how you are enacting the vision of the school. Do you have any questions? <Pause for interviewee questions>

At any time you are allowed to withdraw your consent for participation in this research and any subsequent data that has been gathered will not be used in the study. I would also like to record our interview and your teacher's interview. Again, if at any time you would like to stop the interview or stop being recorded or listen to a section of the recording back you are welcome

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to do so at any time. Do you have any questions before we begin? <Pause for interviewee questions>

Semi-structured interview questions for school leaders

1. Demographic Information

Years of teaching

Years as school leader

Type of Schools as Leader

Years in current position

Current school makeup - # of students, # teachers, grade levels

Male/Female

Last degree completed, where, when, in what

2. Leadership Training and Preparation

Why did you choose to go into leadership?

Can you describe for us your journey into leadership?

What preparation did you receive prior to your first formal leadership position? What mentorship did you receive?

What was most beneficial to you in your training in helping you craft your vision for your school?

Is there any aspect of your leadership and/or leadership preparation you would like to talk that perhaps we didn't cover in our questions?

3. Vision

What is the vision of your school?

Who was responsible for creating the vision for the school? Carrying out the vision?

Can you tell me how you arrived at this vision for your school? Who was involved in the creation of the vision? Who was not involved? When? Why?

How do you see this vision coming alive at your school? Students? Families? Staff?

 Where do you feel like there are gaps between your stated vision and the current reality of the school?

How do you go about assessing and responding to the unique and diverse community needs in the context of the school's vision and mission?

 What do you see as the greatest challenges to implementing the vision for your school community? How do you work to eliminate or overcome these challenges?

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL & QUESTIONS FOR THE TEACHER FOCUS GROUP

Introduction

Interviewer:

Teacher Focus Group

Participants: 5-6 teachers selected from a list provided by the school leader.

Welcome everyone. My name is Zachary Duberstein. I am a doctoral student at Temple University studying how principals develop and implement a vision for the school that they lead. I have asked each of you to be here today to be a part of this focus group to better understand how the articulated vision from your principal is being brought to life here in the school. There are no right or wrong responses to the questions in our discussion today, and your honest genuine answers will help guide this research study. I appreciate you taking the time out of your day to be here and value your thoughts and opinions.

I am audio recording today's meeting so that I can go back and review exactly what you had to say. If at anytime you would like to stop the interview or stop being recorded or listen to a section of the recording back you are welcome to do so at anytime. All of the information gathered today will be kept confidential and will not be shared with anyone including your school leader. Do you have any questions before we begin? <Pause for interviewee questions>

Semi-structured interview questions for the teacher focus group

1. Demographic Information

Years of teaching

Years in current position

Years spent working with the principal/school leader

Male/Female

3. Vision

What is the vision of the school community?

Were you involved in the creation of the school's vision?

Who was responsible for creating the vision for the school? Carrying out the vision?

Can you tell me how you arrived at this vision for your school? Who was involved in the

creation of the vision? Who was not involved? When? Why?

How do you see this vision coming alive at your school? Students? Families? Staff?

Where do you feel like there are gaps between your stated vision and the current reality of the

school?

How do you go about assessing and responding to the unique and diverse community needs in

the context of the school's vision and mission?

 What do you see as the greatest challenges to implementing the vision for your school

community? How do you work to eliminate or overcome these challenges?

APPENDIX C

ARTIFACT COLLECTION PROTOCOL

The researcher at the end of each interview will ask the participant to showcase artifacts that demonstrate the school vision coming to life.. The same artifacts will be collected from each school, these artifacts will include a parent/family handbook, website, sample parent/family communication, parent/family school calendar.

Interviewer: I would appreciate access to any artifacts that you feel are relevant to the school's vision. If you could provide me with a sample parent/family handbook, sample parent/family communication, parent/family calendar and your school's website that would be incredibly helpful to my research. Thank you again for your time and participation in this study.

APPENDIX D

ARTIFACT COLLECTION EVALUATION

Narrative Summary of Findings:

Point Scale	1	2	3
Descriptor	The artifact collected is not related to the articulate vision.	The artifact collected partially relates to the articulated vision.	The artifacts collected directly relate to the articulated vision.
Parent/family handbook			
Website			
Parent/family communication			
Family/school calendar			

APPENDIX E

SUGGESTED ARTIFACT LIST

(Modified from Danielson, 2008).

- Lesson Plans
- Staff Handbook
- Student Handbook
- Parent Handbook
- Vision Statement
- Mission Statement
- Posters
- Student Work
- Values or Vision Displays
- Behavior Management Plan
- Curriculum Maps
- Website
- Curriculum Resources
- Course Calendars-Pacing Guide
- Unit Outlines
- Assessments
- Pictures of Goals, Norms, Classroom Posters
- Photos of School Environment Related to Values or Vision
- Surveys
- Academic Language Posters
- Posting Goals/ Strategies/ Focus Skills/Learning Targets
- Photo of Materials Station to Support Learning
- Student Work Displayed
- Course Syllabus
- Layout of Room (photo)
- Space Organization
- Sample Family Communication
- Murals (photo)
- Professional Development Agendas
- Presentations
- Publications

STEMLER AND BEBELL CODING RUBRIC

(Stemler and Bebell, 1999)

A = COGNITIVE/ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT
    0 = Misc.
    1 = foster cognitive development
    2 = problem solving
    3 = creativity
    4 = effective communication
    5 = critical thinking
    6 = literacy
    7 = acquire knowledge
    8 = participate in the arts
    9 = improve student achievement/test scores

B = SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
    0 = Misc.
    1 = social interaction
    2 = become effective parents

C = EMOTIONAL DEVELOMPENT
    0 = Misc.
    1 = positive attitudes
    2 = ethical morality
    3 = joy for learning
    4 = life-long learning
    5 = self-sufficient
    6 = self-discipline
    7 = reach potential
    8 = emotional skills
    9 = promote confidence
    10 = spiritual development
    11 = respect for others

D = CIVIC DEVELOPMENT
    0 = Misc.
    1 = productive
    2 = responsible
    3 = public service
    4 = contributing member of society

E = PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT
    0 = Misc.
    1 = Physical development

F = VOCATIONAL PREPARATION
    0 = Misc.
    1 = competitive in the workforce
    2 = marketable skills

G = INTEGRATE INTO LOCAL COMMUNITY
    0 = Misc.
    1 = promote community
    2 = community partnerships

H = INTEGRATE INTO GLOBAL COMMUNITY
    0 = Misc.
    1 = appreciate diversity
    2 = global awareness
    3 = adaptive students

I = INTEGRATE INTO SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY
    0 = Misc.
    1 = religious education/environment

J = SAFE/NURTURING ENVIRONMENT
    0 = Misc.
    1 = safe environment
    2 = provide nurturing environment
    3 = person-centered

K = CHALLENGING ENVIRONMENT
    0 = Misc.
    1 = provide challenging environment
    2 = technologically advanced
    3 = provide engaging work
    4 = highly qualified faculty

APPENDIX G

SCHOOL LEADER VISION ALIGNMENT WITH THE CULTURE OF THE SCHOOL

School #1: School Leader & Focus Group Alignment		
Theme	School Leader	Focus Group
Cognitive Development	X	X
Emotional Development	X	X
Local Community	X	X
Safe/Nurturing	X	-
% of Overlapping Themes	3 out of 4 = 75%	

School #1: School Leader & Artifact Alignment			
Point Scale	1	2	3
Descriptor	The artifact collected is not related to the articulate vision.	The artifact collected partially relates to the articulated vision.	The artifacts collected directly relate to the articulated vision.
Parent/family handbook			X
Website			X
Parent/family communication		X	
Family/school calendar	X		

School #2: School Leader & Focus Group Alignment		
Theme	School Leader	Focus Group
Local Community	X	X
Safe/Nurturing	X	X
Challenging	X	-
% of Overlapping Themes	2 out of 3 = 67%	

School #2: School Leader & Artifact Alignment			
Point Scale	1	2	3
Descriptor	The artifact collected is not related to the articulate vision.	The artifact collected partially relates to the articulated vision.	The artifacts collected directly relate to the articulated vision.
Parent/family handbook		X	
Website	X		
Parent/family communication		X	
Family/school calendar	X		

School #3: School Leader & Focus Group Alignment		
Theme	School Leader	Focus Group
Cognitive Development	X	X
Local Community	-	X
Safe/Nurturing	X	X
% of Overlapping Themes	2 out of 3 = 67%	

School #3: School Leader & Artifact Alignment			
Point Scale	1	2	3
Descriptor	The artifact collected is not related to the articulate vision.	The artifact collected partially relates to the articulated vision.	The artifacts collected directly relate to the articulated vision.
Parent/family handbook	X		
Website	X		
Parent/family communication		X	
Family/school calendar	X		

School #4: School Leader & Focus Group Alignment School Leader		
Theme	School Leader	Focus Group
Cognitive Development	X	-
Social Development	X	X
Emotional Development	X	X
Local Community	X	X
Safe/Nurturing	X	X
Challenging	X	-
% of Overlapping Themes	4 out of 6 = 67%	

School #4: School Leader & Artifact Alignment			
Point Scale	1	2	3
Descriptor	The artifact collected is not related to the articulate vision.	The artifact collected partially relates to the articulated vision.	The artifacts collected directly relate to the articulated vision.
Parent/family handbook	X		
Website	X		
Parent/family communication		x	
Family/school calendar	X		

School #5: School Leader & Focus Group Alignment		
Theme	School Leader	Focus Group
Cognitive Development	-	X
Global Community	X	X
Safe/Nurturing	X	X
Challenging	X	X
% of Overlapping Themes	3 out of 4 = 75%	

School #5: School Leader & Artifact Alignment			
Point Scale	1	2	3
Descriptor	The artifact collected is not related to the articulate vision.	The artifact collected partially relates to the articulated vision.	The artifacts collected directly relate to the articulated vision.
Parent/family handbook	X		
Website	X		
Parent/family communication		X	
Family/school calendar	X		

School #6: School Leader & Focus Group Alignment		
Theme	School Leader	Focus Group
Cognitive Development	X	X
Social Development	-	X
Emotional Development	X	X
Civic Development	X	-
Vocational Preparation	X	X
Local Community	-	X
Safe/Nurturing	X	X
Challenging	X	X
% of Overlapping Themes	5 out of 8 = 63%	

School #6: School Leader & Artifact Alignment			
Point Scale	1	2	3
Descriptor	The artifact collected is not related to the articulate vision.	The artifact collected partially relates to the articulated vision.	The artifacts collected directly relate to the articulated vision.
Parent/family handbook	X		
Website	X		
Parent/family communication		X	
Family/school calendar	X		

School #7: School Leader & Focus Group Alignment		
Theme	School Leader	Focus Group
Emotional Development	X	X
Local Community	X	-
Safe/Nurturing	X	X
Challenging	-	X
% of Overlapping Themes	2 out of 4 = 50%	

School #7: School Leader & Artifact Alignment			
Point Scale	1	2	3
Descriptor	The artifact collected is not related to the articulate vision.	The artifact collected partially relates to the articulated vision.	The artifacts collected directly relate to the articulated vision.
Parent/family handbook		X	
Website		X	
Parent/family communication		X	
Family/school calendar		X	

School #8: School Leader & Focus Group Alignment		
Theme	School Leader	Focus Group
Emotional Development	-	X
Local Community	X	X
Safe/Nurturing	X	X
Challenging	X	X
% of Overlapping Themes	3 out of 4 = 75%	

School #8: School Leader & Artifact Alignment			
Point Scale	1	2	3
Descriptor	The artifact collected is not related to the articulate vision.	The artifact collected partially relates to the articulated vision.	The artifacts collected directly relate to the articulated vision.
Parent/family handbook		X	
Website		X	
Parent/family communication		X	
Family/school calendar	X		

School #9: School Leader & Focus Group Alignment		
Theme	School Leader	Focus Group
Vocational Preparation	X	X
Local Community	X	X
Safe/Nurturing	X	-
Challenging	X	X
% of Overlapping Themes	3 out of 4 = 75%	

School #9: School Leader & Artifact Alignment			
Point Scale	1	2	3
Descriptor	The artifact collected is not related to the articulate vision.	The artifact collected partially relates to the articulated vision.	The artifacts collected directly relate to the articulated vision.
Parent/family handbook	X		
Website	X		
Parent/family communication	X		
Family/school calendar	X		