Leading for Excellence: Leadership Behaviors That Support a High-Achieving School Environment

Amy Parangan

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Leading for Excellence: Leadership Behaviors That Support a
High-Achieving School Environment

A Dissertation by

Amy P. Parangan

Brandman University

Irvine, California

School of Education

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Committee in charge:

Douglas DeVore, Ed.D., Committee Chair

Marylou Wilson, Ed.D.

Nicholas Richter, Ed.D.
The dissertation of Amy P. Parangan is approved.

Douglas DeVore, Ed.D., Dissertation Chair

Marylou Wilson, Ed.D., Committee Member

Nicholas Richter, Ed.D., Committee Member

Douglas DeVore, Ed.D., Associate Dean

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“The miracle is not that we do this work, but that we are happy to do it.”

—Mother Teresa
ABSTRACT

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by Amy P. Parangan

Purpose: The purpose of this mixed methods study was to determine the degree of importance for the 12-step principles proposed by Harvey, Drolet, and DeVore (2014) to create a K-12 school environment that fosters high student achievement as perceived by public school elementary principals in Northern California. A secondary purpose was to explore and describe the leadership strategies for implementing the 12-step principles proposed by Harvey et al. (2014) to create a K-12 school environment that fosters high student achievement as perceived by public school elementary principals in Northern California.

Methodology: The researcher used sequential explanatory mixed methods for this study. The researcher worked with a thematic group of 7 peer researchers to develop the survey and interview protocol used for data collection. Purposeful sampling was used to identify participants who met the sample criteria for this study.

Findings: Based on quantitative research findings, the 12-step principles perceived to be the most critical by leaders are as follows: strong leadership, establish a culture of high achievement, flexibility and resilience, vision and values, and high expectations. Based on qualitative research findings, the researcher found codes related to the following principles that were reported by leaders at the highest percentage: strong leadership (22%), collaboration and shared decision-making (9%), and communication (9%). Qualitative research findings indicate an integration of leadership strategies across the
12-step principles and leadership strategies to support that each of the 12-step principles exists at high-achieving schools.

**Conclusions:** Conclusions from the research reveal a strong integration of the 12-step principles proposed by Harvey et al. (2014), recognizing strong leadership involves the interplay of several variables, establishing a culture of high achievement, creating a shared vision, recognizing the importance of collaborative leadership, ensuring leaders demonstrate flexibility and resilience, and ensuring a central focus on academics and data are critical for creating a high-achieving school environment.

**Recommendations:** Recommendations for future research include replication studies, comparative studies, and a case study.
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Staying connected with people
Focus on learning and rigor
Use data to set goals and strategies for learning
Focus on growth
Focus on a few areas
Embedded professional development
Provide on-site coaching and professional development
Provide time for teacher collaboration
Use student data to determine professional development needs
Based on teachers’ professional development needs
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Utilize CAASPP data to inform decisions
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PREFACE

Following collaborative discussions regarding high-achieving public schools, seven doctoral students in collaboration with faculty researchers developed a common interest in investigating how K-12 educational leaders create an environment that supports high student achievement. This resulted in a thematic study conducted by a research team of seven doctoral students. This mixed methods study was designed with a focus on Harvey, Drolet, and DeVore’s (2014) *Leading for Excellence*, which details a 12-step program to attaining high student achievement: strong leadership; a culture of high achievement, vision and values, high expectations, love and passion, focus on learning and academic rigor, embedded professional development, academic achievement and assessment for the 21st century, strength of teams, collaboration and shared decision-making, communication, and flexibility and resilience. The purpose of this study was to determine the degree of importance for the 12-step principles proposed by Harvey et al. to create a K-12 school environment that fosters high student achievement as perceived by public school principals in Napa, Solano, and Sonoma Counties. In addition, a secondary purpose was to explore and describe the leadership strategies for implementing the 12-step principles proposed by Harvey et al. (2014) to create a K-12 school environment that fosters high student achievement as perceived by public school principals in Napa, Solano, and Sonoma Counties.

Educational leader participants were selected by each member of the thematic research team from various public K-12 school districts in California to examine the degree of importance of the 12 principles these site leaders used. In addition, the researchers also examined the leadership strategies used for implementing the 12-step
principles at the school sites. The researcher then administered a survey to principals to determine the perceived degree of importance for implementing the 12-step principles as proposed by Harvey et al. (2014). Next, each researcher interviewed 12 K-12 school leaders to determine what leadership strategies helped them to establish a culture of high student achievement. To ensure thematic consistency and reliability, the team cocreated the purpose statement, research questions, definitions, interview questions, survey, and study procedures.

Throughout the study, the term peer researchers was used to refer to the other researchers who conducted this thematic study. Each peer researcher studied school site implementation of the 12 principles following populations in California K-12 school districts: Kristen Belknap, elementary school principals in Fresno, Tulare, and Placer counties; Reyna Garcia, elementary school principals in San Bernardino County; Allison Hernandez, Title I elementary school principals in Fresno County; Khaled Khaled, high school principals in Sacramento County; Atikah Osman, urban high school principals in Orange and Los Angeles Counties; Amy Parangan, elementary school principals in Napa, Solano, and Sonoma Counties; and Robert Sherlock, assistant superintendents of curriculum and instruction in Orange and Riverside Counties.
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The Partnership for 21st Century Skills advocates for preparing students to be competitive in a global “service economy driven by information, knowledge and innovation” (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2008, p. 2). Consequently, public schools have been changing their landscape to engage students and adults in 21st-century learning (Duffey, & Fox, 2012). To prepare students for success in the 21st century, schools are responsible for ensuring high academic achievement for all students. Researchers explain that school leadership plays a key role in supporting access to quality 21st-century learning in high-achieving, K-12 schools (Harvey, Drolet, & DeVore, 2014).

Standardized test scores have been a characteristic of high-achieving public schools (Causey-Bush, 2005) in the United States. Federal legislation between the 1980s and 2000s called for school reform efforts aimed at increasing student achievement through standards-based education and educational accountability systems (Causey-Bush, 2005). For example, California schools utilized various standardized tests until No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Elmore (2003) described NCLB as “the single largest nationalization of education policy in the history of the United States” (p. 6).

Under NCLB, student achievement in California schools was defined by Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). During the 2013-2014 school year, California public schools began using the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP), which provided more accurate and timely measures of student progress toward college and career readiness (California Department of Education [CDE], n.d.-b).

In addition to standardized test scores, authors from the early 1980s described high-achieving schools with other characteristics. High-achieving schools had strong
leadership, high expectations, an orderly atmosphere conducive to learning, a focus on basic skills, and frequent monitoring of student progress (Purkey & Marshall, 1983).

Purkey and Marshall’s (1983) research in the 1980s described the culture of an effective school as having “a structure, process, and climate of values and norms that emphasize successful teaching and learning” (p. 442). Similarly, strong leadership involves utilizing proactive managerial strategies, specifically with acquiring new concepts about organizational improvement and applying theory into practice (Fullan, 1985; Kim, 1986).

School leaders in the K-12 public school system are expected to meet numerous demands for continuous improvement, specifically in the area of student achievement. Leadership principles including a shared vision, professional development, communication, collaboration, and shared decision-making are common in high-achieving schools and have been well-documented in the research (Fullan, 2014; Harvey et al., 2014; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). Harvey et al. (2014) identified additional leadership principles that support high achievement such as establishing a culture of high achievement, high expectations, love and passion, focus on learning and academic rigor, achievement and assessment for the 21st century, and flexibility and resilience. A school leader may be stronger at employing effective leadership practices than others; however, creating a high-achievement environment may be accomplished by following a 12-step framework developed by Harvey et al. (2014).

**Background**

School leaders in the K-12 public schools are responsible for creating environments that foster high student achievement. Public schools with high student
achievement have been characterized by high standardized test scores (Causey-Bush, 2005). Other measures for student achievement were AYP, which was replaced by the CAASPP in 2013 (CDE, n.d.-b). Strong leadership is also a characteristic of high-achieving schools (Purkey & Marshall, 1983).

Leadership principles that contribute to high student achievement are well-documented by research (Houchens, Hurt, Stobaugh, & Keedy, 2012). The following section provides a description of the theoretical foundations and a theoretical framework for effective leadership.

**Theoretical Foundations**

The theoretical foundations examined in the literature review provide a construct for understanding leadership at high-achieving schools. Instructional leadership focuses on supporting growth for teaching and learning (Reeves, 2003). The major tenet for transformational leadership, according to Bass and Avolio (1993), is the ability to “encourage motivation and positive development of followers” (p. 116).

**Instructional Leadership**

Hallinger and Murphy (1985) identified several domains of effective instructional leadership: articulating the school’s mission, monitoring and providing feedback to teachers, and a strong emphasis on professional development. Houchens et al. (2012) argued that instructional leadership is the most important aspect of school leadership because it is aimed at supporting high quality instruction that yields positive student outcomes. However, Fullan (2014) claimed that instructional leadership should not have a narrow focus. Fullan supported the notion that principals should be lead learners by not only increasing the efficacy of instructional teams but also learning alongside them.
Transformational Leadership

According to Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005), transformational leadership leads to the greatest results. Transformational leadership is characterized by inspiring others to work collectively toward a common goal while motivating individuals toward self-improvement (Bass & Avolio, 1993). In the educational system, Leithwood and Sun (2012) described a transformational leader as one who sets high expectations for teachers, pays attention to individuals, promotes innovative ways of thinking, and models preferred behaviors for teachers.

The Impact of Leadership on Student Achievement

The K-12 public school system is responsible for preparing students to be successful in a 21st-century global society (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2008). Meanwhile, policymakers recognize the impact of leadership on student achievement (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005). School principals are expected to meet the increasing demands of standards-based education and accountability systems that were established by federal legislation (Causey-Bush, 2005). The accountability systems under NCLB in 2003 utilized standardized test scores to measure student achievement.

Research on the impact of leadership in high-achieving schools, synonymous with effective schools, has been studied for several decades. Historically, the body of literature explains that high-achieving schools were characterized by strong leadership that fosters a culture of continuous school improvement (Purkey & Marshall, 1983). Effective leadership also involves utilizing proactive managerial strategies, specifically with acquiring new concepts about organizational improvement and applying theory into
practice (Fullan, 1985; Kim 1986). According to Sebastian, Allensworth, and Huang (2016), principals can indirectly impact student achievement by influencing classroom instruction through teacher leadership and creating a school climate for learning. The body of literature further explains each of Harvey et al. (2014) 12 leadership principles.

**Theoretical Framework**

The topic of leadership practices has been extensively researched. Within leadership practices, several theoretical frameworks have been adopted, such as work from Rigby (2014) and Leithwood et al. (2004). One framework that has been used by recent researchers is *Leading for Excellence* (Harvey et al., 2014), which describes a 12-step program to create a high-achieving school environment. Each step describes a leadership principle that claims to have an impact on student achievement. The 12 steps include strong leadership, establishing a culture of high achievement, vision and values, high expectations, love and passion, focus on learning and academic rigor, embedded professional development, academic achievement and assessment, strength of teams, collaboration, communication, and flexibility and resilience.

**Strong Leadership**

Influence is a key characteristic of strong leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1993; Leithwood et al., 2004). According to a study conducted by Leithwood et al. (2004), collective leadership is a strong influence on student achievement. Collective leadership involves teachers, parents, and other school stakeholders making shared decisions for school improvement. School principals may not have a direct impact on teachers’ knowledge and skills, but have an influence on teacher motivation and desirable working conditions (Miller et al., 2016).
Establishing a Culture of High Achievement

Creating a culture of high achievement is grounded in the belief that all student can succeed; therefore, school leadership plays a critical role in leading the school’s culture (Teasley, 2017). Ohlson, Swanson, Adams-Manning, and Byrd (2016) cited Deal and Peterson’s claim that high-achieving schools foster collaboration, empowerment, and engagement. Tichnor-Wagner, Harrison, & Cohen-Vogel’s (2016) study in an urban school district yielded results in which “the intentional and active role of school leaders in reinforcing deliberate structures and norms” (p. 633) engrained a culture of learning and consequently led to high student achievement.

Vision and Values

Researchers have also found that in addition to establishing a culture of high achievement, successful principals also establish a shared vision (B. Brown & Jacobsen, 2016; Nitta, Wrobel, Howard, & Jimmerson-Eddings, 2009). According to C. M. Taylor, Cornelius, and Colvin (2014) and Hitt, Woodruff, Meyers, and Zhu, (2018), visionary leadership is identified as an essential competency of effective leadership. Furthermore, effective principals communicate the school’s vision and lead efforts for continuous improvement by engaging the school community and utilizing various forms of data to determine needs and progress toward the school’s goals (Mombourquette, 2017).

High Expectations

As mentioned in the previous sections, high expectations is a shared belief that all students can achieve at high levels and must be communicated through the school’s vision and fostered by the school’s culture (Mendels, 2012). Several bodies of literature point to the idea that school leaders with high expectations lead their schools toward high
student achievement (Chenoweth & Theokas, 2013; Fullan, 2014; Harvey et al., 2014).

The research conducted by Balyer (2012) and Mayes and Gethers (2018) further asserted that a principal with high expectations for students inspires and motivates teachers to improve their instructional practices.

**Love and Passion**

Harvey et al. (2014) emphasized the importance of loving the work and loving the people in the organization. According to Crowley (2011), leaders who build relationships, inspire, and motivate every employee support employee engagement, which ultimately leads to overall positive contributions to an organization. Louis, Murphy, and Smylie (2016) explained that caring leadership practices are not identified; however, school leaders may be able to create caring environments by engaging the whole school community to promote a sense of belonging and vested interest toward the school’s achievement. The passion for continuous school improvement is driven by using different forms of student data, anecdotal and observational data from around the school, and stakeholder perceptions (Harvey et al., 2014; Love, Stiles, Mundry, & DiRanna, 2008).

**Embedded Professional Development**

According to Gleason and Gerzon (2014), positive transformation in a school is achievable when the school culture is focused on professional development. The role of the school leader is to align professional development with the school’s goals and ensure relevancy with key instructional practices (Leithwood et al., 2004). Most importantly, embedded professional development involves teacher training that exists during the
school day, sometimes with an instructional coach, as opposed to training that occurs away from the classroom setting (Mombourquette & Bedard, 2014).

**Focus on Learning and Academic Rigor**

Rigby’s (2014) instructional leadership framework supports a focus on learning and academic rigor as an essential leadership practice. According to Hoy and Hoy (2006), teaching and learning are the primary focus for school leaders. Rigby (2014) described instructional leadership in three forms of logic. First, prevailing logic expanded the school principal’s focus on management of the organization to an added focus on teaching and learning, thus instructional leadership. Second, instructional leadership involves entrepreneurial logic, which is demonstrated by professional development focused on teachers utilizing data to inform their instruction. Data are not only limited to student test scores but also data from classroom walkthroughs, teacher observations, teacher conversations, and conversations from families and students. Finally, instructional leadership theorists recognized social justice logic as a commitment to addressing achievement gaps, specifically aimed at supporting marginalized student populations.

**Academic Achievement and Assessment for the 21st Century**

The results of Mombourquette and Bedard’s (2014) study described that learning should be the focus at all levels in the organization. Furthermore, using student data as the basis for making instructional improvements is also a key component of leadership. Principals who used student data to set learning goals and strategize plans for instructional improvement observed a positive impact, not only on student achievement
but also as a catalyst for data-driven collaboration (Love et al., 2008; Tichnor-Wagner et al., 2016).

**Strength of Teams.**

According to Burns et al. (2018), professional learning communities with a focus on data-driven systems for learning and collaborative leadership processes have an impact on student achievement. Additionally, establishing team norms, working toward a common goal, and having trusting relationships are characteristics of high-functioning teams (Hakanen & Soudunsaari, 2012). School principals who operationalize regular meeting times for teams to collaborative increase the team’s effectiveness (Desravines, Aquino, & Fenton, 2016).

**Collaboration and Shared Decision-Making**

Based on a 6-year study conducted by the Wallace Foundation (Leithwood et al., 2004), school leaders, namely principals, can lead schools toward high achievement when they implement a collaborative approach toward student achievement. Leithwood et al. (2004) explained that principals who collaborate with school staff, other principals, and district personnel are effective and work toward clear, common goals. Collaboration and shared leadership extend to teachers. Leithwood et al. stated, “Consequently, principals who support collaboration and shared leadership, increase teacher capacity since teachers are more likely to use instructional practices that improve student learning” (p. 282).

**Communication**

The school principal is the driver for articulating the school’s vision and goals (Arnold, Perry, Watson, Minatra, & Schwartz, 2007). Communication is the essential to building trusting relationships between the school principal, teachers, and the school
community (Tyler, 2016). The body of research also explains that lines of communication need to exist throughout the whole community, within smaller teams and between individuals (Halawah, 2005; Tyler, 2016). Finally, Halawah (2005) and Harvey et al. (2014) emphasized that principal visibility, outside of the principal’s office, is critical to communicating with individuals, gathering feedback, and articulating the school’s focus on student achievement.

**Flexibility and Resilience**

According to Isaacs (2012), “Resilient principals who manage change successfully not only improve their school’s performance but also become more effective leaders” (p. 128). The responsibilities of a school principal can be overwhelming, but according to Offutt (2012) and Harvey et al. (2014), principals must remain focused on the success of the organization and take action toward finding solutions during challenges and setbacks. Finally, based on Merritt’s (2017) study, principals at high-poverty, high-performing schools are flexible and are able adapt to changes in their schools while sustaining academic achievement.

**Organizational Leadership**

Several theories describe effective leadership in successful organizations. Trait leadership theories attempt to identify specific, leadership characteristics (Miller, 2016), while behavioral leadership theorists claim that a leader’s behaviors and interactions with followers have an impact not only on the leader’s success but also on the organization. Contingency leadership theory emphasizes a matched case scenario where leaders are effective with certain followers and situations (Merritt, 2017).
K-12 Leadership and Student Achievement

In addition to the managerial and operational responsibilities of school leaders in the public school system, principals are instructional leaders who create systems to maximize and improve student learning (Hoy & Hoy, 2006). The body of literature points to the concept that effective K-12 leadership, namely school principals, is common among high-achieving schools. Effective school leaders possess several characteristics such as the ability to establish a school culture that is focused on achieving the school’s vision through collaboration, high expectations, and professional development (Huguet, 2017; Leithwood et al., 2004). Although several organizational leadership theories describe varying behaviors, traits, and contingencies among effective leaders, research confirms that strong school leaders have an impact on student achievement (Leithwood & Sun, 2012).

Statement of the Research Problem

Although a vast amount of research supports leadership in the K-12 public school system, research also points to a need for further studies regarding leadership at high-achieving schools. The literature suggests that additional research is needed to operationalize strategies to sufficiently support high student achievement. For example, Tichnor-Wagner et al. (2016) claimed that a school culture may include collaboration, a focus on learning, and strong leadership, but may not be sufficient for overall school improvement and may need further investigation.

Conversely, Goddard, Goddard, Kim, and Miller (2015) recommended utilizing specific leadership practices to foster a collective efficacy: provide frequent opportunities for teachers to collaborate, utilize agendas and goals geared toward instructional
M. Anderson (2017) recommended that additional research needs to be conducted on the direct impact of school leadership as it relates to specific learning activities in successful classrooms. The degree to which individual leadership practices have a direct or indirect impact on student achievement has yet to be explored.

Additional research on the impact of leadership in high-achieving schools will further identify and increase the knowledge base about effective leadership practices. For example, authors such as Mendels (2012) and G. Brown (2015) described leadership that supports urban school populations and emphasized the importance on community building with a high degree of academic focus. Other studies conducted by Harvey et al. (2014) and Goddard et al. (2015) described leadership practices that support teacher collaboration and shared decision-making.

Finally, research on leadership in high-achieving schools may serve as a foundation of resources for other school leaders. While authors of theoretical frameworks such as transformational leadership and instructional leadership provide a construct for research on the impact of leadership on student achievement (Leithwood & Sun, 2012), several contemporary authors, such as Harvey et al. (2014), Leithwood, Patten, and Jantzi (2010), and Gleason and Gerzon (2014) described specific strategies on how to implement effective leadership practices. Because school leaders are responsible for meeting the increased demands of local, state, and federal stakeholders (M. Anderson, 2017), research on effective leadership practices may provide guidance aimed at increasing student achievement.
Purpose Statement

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to determine the degree of importance for the 12-step principles proposed by Harvey, Drolet, and DeVore (2014) to create a K-12 school environment that fosters high student achievement as perceived by public school elementary principals in Northern California. A secondary purpose was to explore and describe the leadership strategies for implementing the 12-step principles proposed by Harvey et al. (2014) to create a K-12 school environment that fosters high student achievement as perceived by public school elementary principals in Northern California.

Research Questions

1. What is the degree of importance for the 12-step principles proposed by Harvey et al. (2014) to create a K-12 school environment that fosters high student achievement as perceived by public school elementary principals in Northern California?

2. What are the leadership strategies for implementing the 12-step principles proposed by Harvey et al. (2014) to create a K-12 school environment that fosters high student achievement as perceived by public school elementary principals in Northern California?

Significance of the Problem

Because of the increasing demands of leaders in the K-12 public school system, the need for additional research exists to explore effective leadership principles that support high student achievement. School leaders are accountable for managerial tasks, community-based responsibilities, and improved student achievement (M. Anderson, 2017; Terosky, 2014). Furthermore, additional research is needed to identify leadership
practices that may potentially be used in leadership preservice programs (Davis et al., 2005; Liou & Hermanns, 2017).

An extensive amount of research supports the indirect impact of leadership on student achievement; however, the direct impact of leadership on student achievement suggests a need for further research (G. Brown, 2016). According to a study conducted by Sebastian et al. (2016), school principals can influence student achievement by creating a school climate that fosters learning with students and teachers. Although Sebastian et al.’s (2016) study provides insight on leadership’s influence on student achievement and suggests topics for leadership preservice, evidence to support leadership effectiveness after receiving preservice is insufficient.

Researchers over the past few decades have identified effective leadership practices that have a positive impact on student achievement. However, additional research that focuses on school leadership in high-achieving urban schools may strengthen the foundation of resources for other school leaders (Huang et al., 2012; Terosky, 2014). Authors of theoretical school leadership frameworks and contemporary authors have provided valuable guidance for supporting student achievement in K-12 public schools.

This section describes the anticipated methodology used for this study. A mixed methods approach was used to describe the degree of importance and strategies for implementing the 12-step leadership principles proposed by Harvey et al. (2014) to create a K-12 school environment that fosters high student achievement as perceived by elementary principals. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), researchers have
recently found mixed methods designs to be the best approach to answering research questions as opposed to research based solely on quantitative or qualitative methods.

Definitions of Terms

The following terms are relevant to the study. The theoretical definitions for each of the 12-step leadership principals (Harvey et al., 2014) are presented as follows.

Theoretical Definitions

Academic achievement and assessment. Academic Achievement and Assessment for the 21st century is value placed on assessment data driving educator’s decision-making and establishing a student’s development of 21st-century skills such as communication, collaboration, and creativity (Harvey et al., 2014; McGuigan & Hoy, 2006).

Collaboration and shared decision-making. Collaboration and shared decision-making involve communication across the entire team of any information that collectively binds a team to support increased student achievement as well as the establishment of a high-functioning team (Forman, Stosich, & Bocala, 2017; Harvey et al., 2014).

Communication. Communication is the message sent through various means such as written and spoken language as well as body language, behavior, and actions (Arnold et al., 2007; Harvey et al., 2014).

Embedded professional development. Embedded professional development is a leader’s consistent and purposeful actions to ensure that professional development is ongoing and aligned to increased student achievement and highly functioning professional relationships (Harvey et al., 2014; Lynch, Smith, Provost, & Madden, 2016).
Establish a culture of high achievement. Culture of high achievement is established when value is placed on high student achievement, trust, and agreed upon norms (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Harvey et al., 2014).

Flexibility and resilience. Flexibility and resilience are displayed through a leader’s ability to adapt leadership behavior to support growth in an organization while overcoming adversity and remaining focused on an organization’s goals and needs (Harvey et al., 2014; Hoy & Hoy, 2006; Marzano et al., 2005).

Focus on learning and academic rigor. Focus on learning and academic rigor is the ability of a leader to establish a set of defined standards for increased student achievement supported by professional development and aligned to site vision and goals (Bamburg & Andrews, 1991; Harvey et al., 2014).

High expectations. High expectations define the beliefs and goals set by educational leaders for all students and staff to achieve high standards of behavior and achievement to which student achievement will be increased (Day, Harris, & Hadfield, 2001; Harvey et al., 2014; Printy & Marks, 2006).

Love and passion. Love and passion are the values a leader places on establishing relationships and being intentionally committed to connecting and relating to a team and include remaining aware of the personal needs of teachers, maintain personal relationships with teachers, and inspiring teachers to accomplish things that might seem beyond their grasp (Arnold et al., 2007; Harvey et al., 2014; T. Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003)
**Strength of teams.** Strength of teams is confidence that all team members are focused on the same vision and goals, have collective self-efficacy, feel highly valued, and celebrate high achievement together (Harvey et al., 2014; McGuigan & Hoy, 2006).

**Strong leadership.** Strong leadership is the ability of a leader to establish clear vision and goals for an organization focused on student achievement and team collaboration (Harvey et al., 2014; Leithwood et al., 2010)

**Vision and values.** Vision and values are the establishment and strategic planning of an organization’s goals and collective efforts toward increased student achievement (Harvey et al., 2014; Lunenburg, 2010).

**Operational Definitions**

The operational definitions that are relevant to the study are presented as follows:

**Elementary school.** A school that provides comprehensive academic instruction to students in kindergarten through sixth grade.

Delimitations for this study restricted participation in this research by setting specific boundaries for the study. This study was delimited to 12 elementary school principals with evidence of leading a student high-achieving organization, defined as scoring in the green or blue achievement markers on the CA Dashboard in both English language arts and mathematics academic indicators and four of the six following criteria:

- The principal was employed at a school within the Napa, Solano, and Sonoma Counties with a minimum of 30 staff members.
- The principal has a minimum of 3 years of experience at his or her current site.
- The principal has a minimum of 5 years in the profession.
- The principal has membership in professional associations in his or her field.
• The principal has articles, papers, or materials written, published, or presented at conferences or association meetings.

• The principal was willing to be a participant and agreed to the informed consent form.

**High student achievement.** For the purpose of this study, high achievement is defined by the California School Dashboard as schools that have met or exceeded standard, scoring in the green or blue achievement markers on the California School Dashboard in both English language arts and mathematics academic indicators.

**Principal.** For the purpose of this study, the principal is defined as the organizational and instructional leader of a public-school organization.

**Delimitations**

This study was delimited to five elementary school principals determined by geographical boundaries within close proximity to the researcher. Delimitations for this study included five elementary principals who lead high-achieving schools from Napa, Solano, and Sonoma Counties. High-achieving schools were defined by scoring green or blue (met or exceeded expectations on English language arts and mathematics) on the California School Dashboard. Additionally, participants were required to meet four of the six following criteria:

- The principal was employed at a school within the Napa, Solano, and Sonoma Counties with a minimum of 30 staff members.
- The principal has a minimum of 3 years of experience at his or her current site.
- The principal has a minimum of 5 years in the profession.
- The principal has membership in professional associations in his or her field.
• The principal has articles, papers, or materials written, published, or presented at conferences or association meetings.

• The principal was willing to be a participant and agreed to the informed consent form.

**Organization of the Study**

The remainder of this study is organized in four chapters, a bibliography, and appendices. Chapter II presents a review about what is known about the 12 steps to high student achievement (Harvey et al., 2014): strong leadership, establishment of a culture of high achievement, vision and values, high expectations, love and passion, focus on learning and academic rigor, embedded professional development, academic achievement and assessment, strength of teams, collaboration and shared decision-making, communication, flexibility and resilience. Chapter III explains the research design and methodology of the study. Chapter III also includes an explanation of the population, sample and data collection procedures, and the procedures used for data analysis. Chapter IV presents, analyzes, and provides a discussion of the findings of the study. Chapter V includes the summary, findings, conclusions, and recommendations for actions and additional research.
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The K-12 public school system is responsible for preparing students across the nation for success in the 21st century. Since the 1980s, federal policies have guided school reform efforts that were aimed at increasing student achievement through standards-based education and school accountability (Crowley, 2011). For example, in 2002 No Child Left Behind legislation was instituted in all public schools and was replaced by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015 (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). High-achieving schools have historically been defined by standardized test scores; furthermore, the research based on a review of the literature describes that common leadership tenets exist in high-achieving K-12 schools (Harvey et al., 2014).

Harvey et al. (2014) identified a 12-step process that leads to high student achievement. The 12 steps include the following leadership principles: strong leadership, establishing a culture of high achievement, vision and values, high expectations, love and passion, focus on learning and academic rigor, embedded professional development, academic achievement and assessment, strength of teams, collaboration, communication, and flexibility and resilience.

A review of the literature was conducted to provide the theoretical foundations and theoretical framework for the 12 leadership principles that were implemented in high-achieving schools. A synthesis matrix was designed to guide this review of the literature (see Appendix A). The review of the literature was organized into four parts. Part I includes background information of high-achieving schools and common characteristics. Part II describes three theoretical foundations: instructional leadership, transformational leadership, and the impact of leadership. Part III describes the
theoretical framework, *Leading for Excellence*, developed by Harvey et al. (2014). Part IV explains the major variables, which include the 12 leadership principles and organizational leadership theories and implications for future research.

**Theoretical Foundations**

The significance of the impact of leadership in high-achieving schools has been well established because the topic has been researched for several decades. Educational leaders, such as principals, are responsible for creating a culture to support high student achievement and “meet the increased demands of local, state, and federal stakeholders” (M. Anderson, 2017, p. 5). Research also suggests that high-achieving schools either meet or exceed student performance expectations as a result of effective leadership practices. Before an exploration of the specific leadership practices that impact student achievement, the researcher first discusses the theoretical foundations that provide a construct for understanding high-achieving schools.

**Instructional Leadership**

The research on instructional leadership points to various characteristics that support high student achievement. For example, Hallinger’s (2003) model of instructional leadership is composed of three dimensions. The first dimension characterizes instructional leadership by clearly articulating the school’s goals and mission (Hallinger, 2003). The second dimension emphasizes the principal’s role in leading curriculum and instructional programs (Hallinger & Heck, 1998). Finally, the third dimension supports a focus on setting high expectations and establishing a positive school climate. According to Marzano et al. (2005) and Fullan (2014), instructional leaders provide resources,
participate in trainings with teachers, communicate clear expectations, and are highly visible in their organizations.

**Transformational Leadership**

The research on transformational leadership and its impact on student achievement has been well-documented for several decades. The literature suggests that the key tenets of transformational leadership include the ability to motivate, inspire, mentor, and align the work a group of individuals with the organization’s vision. Developing not only followers, but potential leaders (M. Anderson, 2017; Bass & Avolio, 1993; Hallinger, 2003). Similarly, transformational leaders have the ability to motivate others through their beliefs and behaviors, therefore establishing followers (Elliott, 2018).


Elliott’s (2012) study of elementary principals highlights various models of transformational leadership. In addition to Bass and Avolio’s description, Elliot (2012) explained that the basis for Kouzes and Posner’s model was specific personal traits that individuals preferred in leadership, which led to five effective practices. Finally, Elliott (2012) described Kotter’s 1990 model as one that focuses on “not just communicating goals to obtain the vision, but seeks commitment from individuals, building teams and coalitions to create a positive sustainable organization” (p. 37). Table 1 displays the various transformational leadership models described by contemporary theorists.
Table 1

Transformational Leadership Models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Idealized influence</td>
<td>Challenging the process</td>
<td>Establishing vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspirational motivation</td>
<td>Inspiring a shared vision</td>
<td>Aligning people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual stimulation</td>
<td>Enabling others to act</td>
<td>Motivating and inspiring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualized consideration</td>
<td>Modeling the way</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Encouraging the heart</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Adapted from The Impact of Elementary Principals’ Preferred Leadership Frame on Teachers’ Perception of Their Principal’s Transformational Leadership Behaviors (Doctoral Dissertation), by L. Elliott, 2018, retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database (UMI No. 10747084).

When describing leadership theories, many authors emphasize the difference between transformational and transactional leadership (Jensen et al., 2019). For example, transactional leaders lead others to make changes in an existing culture while transformational leaders shift the culture of the organization and focus on empowering others to realize the organization’s vision, help others in reaching their full potential, and resist from settling for the status quo (M. Anderson, 2017; Hamstra, Van Yperen, Wisse, & Sassenberg, 2014). Transformational leaders are intellectually stimulating, focus on supporting individual needs, articulate the connection between learning and competence, and encourage collective goals with members of the organization (Boies & Fiset, 2019; Elliot, 2018). Hamstra et al. (2014) argued that transactional leaders focus more on rewards for individuals and place less emphasis on shared goals.

Leithwood and Sun’s (2012) research on transformational leadership suggested a positive impact on schools. Transformational leadership includes practices that address the demands of the 21st century and is appropriate for schools because of the emphasis
on leading others in transforming school culture that supports improvement (Leithwood & Sun, 2012). Leithwood and Sun cited several studies from Hallinger (2003) and validated the significance of common leadership practices such as establishing a culture of high achievement, a focus on academics and rigor, and the power of shared decision-making. Hallinger (2003) drew the following conclusions about leadership that has an impact on school improvement:

For the long haul of school improvement, school leaders have to develop and expand their leadership repertoires. The school improvement journey offers a context for the development of new understandings, both about leadership and about school development. The collaborative processes inherent to the enquiry approach to school improvement offer the opportunity for teachers to study, to learn about, to share and to enact leadership. (p. 340)

Organizational Leadership

Organizational leadership theorists describe effective leadership in successful organizations. Three types of leadership theories are explored in the review of the literature. Theories ranging from identifying specific leadership traits, to leadership behaviors, and finally, leadership skills that were contingent-based specific situations and how the theories evolved over time are described in this section.

Trait leadership. Trait leadership theories attempt to identify specific leadership characteristics (Miller, 2016). Research was conducted on trait theories of leadership during the first half of the 20th century. According to Bass (1990), early trait leadership theorists conducted research under the premise that leaders possessed certain attributes, unlike nonleaders. Bass (1990) recognized the following researchers who provided lists
of leadership traits: Kohs and Irle in 1920, Bernard in 1926, Bingham in 1927, Tead in 1929, Page in 1935, and Kilbourne in 1935. However, in 1948, Stogdill claimed that leadership was also contingent on situations.

Similarly, Colbert, Judge, Choi, and Wang (2012) validated the idea that early trait theorists found inconsistent results and gleaned numerous leadership traits. Colbert et al. (2012) claimed that early trait leadership theories were unsuccessful because they did not have a personality framework to guide their studies. Thus, the Big Five personality traits were used to guide subsequent research. Colbert et al. (2012) referred to The Big Five personality traits related to leadership: neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and consciousness.

Research aimed at finding the relationship between personality traits and leadership and lists of personality traits linked to leadership were highlighted. Chatwin’s (2018) research claimed that the following traits are specific to elementary school administrators. First, they do not take a laissez-faire approach to leadership because of the structured environment that elementary students need. Also, elementary principals demonstrate agreeableness characterized by being friendly and willing to work with teams. Next, elementary principals are conscientious and dependable. Finally, Chatwin (2018) emphasized that elementary leaders are the most open to change, as compared to middle and high school principals, and remain enthusiastic for creating environments that support growth for staff and especially students.

**Behavioral leadership.** The direction of leadership theorists diverted to behaviors in lieu of leadership traits (King, 1990). Behavioral leadership theorists claim that a leader’s behaviors and interactions with followers have an impact not only on the
leader’s success but also on the organization. According to Bass (1990), “Supervisors do not directly cause subordinates’ behavior; they merely set the occasion or provide a discriminative stimulus for the evocation of it” (p. 49). While Yun, Cox, and Sims’s (2006) research explained the effects of positive rewards from leadership, Kerr and Stanfel (1993) described the counterproductive effects of leadership behaviors focused on intense demands (Bass, 1990).

Proponents of behavioral leadership theories claimed that the research provided strong, empirical evidence and appreciated the recommendations for improvement that could be easily implemented (King, 1990). Contemporary research conducted by Covelli and Mason (2017) utilized Bass and Avolio’s (1990) full range leadership theory (FRLT) to describe behaviors. Table 2 summarizes three broad classes of leadership behaviors: transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire.

Table 2

*Full Range Leadership Theory Behaviors*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transformational leader behaviors</th>
<th>Transactional leader behaviors</th>
<th>Laissez-faire nonleader behaviors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>attributed charisma</td>
<td>contingent reward</td>
<td>avoidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>idealized influence</td>
<td>management-by-exception</td>
<td>absence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inspirational motivation</td>
<td>active</td>
<td>delayed response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intellectual stimulation</td>
<td>management-by-exception</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>individualized consideration</td>
<td>passive</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>


Two landmark studies were conducted at Ohio State University and the University of Michigan. The Ohio State University researchers designed the Leadership
Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) to gather responses from subordinates about their leaders in two categories: (a) initiating structure, which described setting standards and systems for monitoring systems for work performance and (b) consideration, which pertained to relationship behaviors (Halpin, 1957). The results revealed that effective leaders demonstrated behaviors in both initiating structure and consideration. According to Bray (2012), the research from the University of Michigan explained leadership behaviors within the context of small groups as determined by employee orientation and production orientation. Studies from Ohio State and the University of Michigan allowed leaders to evaluate their behaviors and make necessary changes. Bray (2012) further asserted that one theory of leadership does not provide a consistent formula for effective leadership.

**Contingency leadership.** Contingency leadership theory emphasizes a matched case scenario where leaders are effective with certain followers and situations (Merritt, 2017). Fielder (1972) constructed the contingency leadership theory by studying leader behaviors in different situations and was able to make several generalizations. By observing effective and ineffective leadership, leaders are either task-motivated or relationship-oriented (Fiedler, 1972). Task-motivated leaders focus on achieving a goal while relationship-oriented leaders thrive on establishing relationships with individuals and the organization (Yun et al., 2006).

A review of the literature points to the strengths and weaknesses of contingency leadership. Prior to contingency leadership theories, a one-size-fits-all explanation of leadership was widely recognized and often framed the approach for how to lead (Vroom & Jago, 2007). Theorists also claimed that leadership effectiveness is predictable based
on different situations (Fielder, 1972; Yun et al., 2006). Conversely, critics of contingency leadership argued that the claims for why effective leadership is situational are unsubstantiated (R. D. Waters, 2013).

Researchers found partial support for contingency theorists or were able to make predictions for their studies. Walter, Caldwell, and Marshall (1980) reported that “flexible and balanced use of task and relationship behaviors is beneficial for both organizational productivity and personal satisfaction” (p. 621). Williams and Hoy (1971) predicted the outcome from their research with elementary school principals. The results relied on the principal relationships with teachers. Task-oriented leadership was perceived as effective leadership with principals who were supported by their teachers while relationship-oriented leadership style was perceived as more effective with principals who were less supported by their teachers (Williams & Hoy, 1971).

Impact of Leadership

A body of research supports that strong leadership has an impact on student achievement. While Hallinger and Heck’s (1998) research supported the school principal’s direct impact on student achievement, Hallinger (2003) argued that leadership has an indirect impact on student achievement. A study conducted by Marzano et al. (2005) revealed that “the leadership behavior of the principal can have a profound effect on student achievement” (p. 32). Conversely, Marzano et al. cited Witziers, Bosker, and Kruger’s 2003 study, which showed nearly no correlation between strong leadership and student achievement. Nonetheless, school leaders may have a positive impact on student achievement by continually monitoring and supporting innovation and change efforts.
One of the challenges of ensuring high student achievement, according to Elmore (2003), was the inability to choose the right work that would impact student achievement. He explained that schools often focus on short-term solutions instead of finding powerful solutions such as professional development. Furthermore, establishing a culture for learning combined with transformational leadership practices that support organizational improvement can indirectly impact student achievement (Fullan, 2014; Leithwood & Sun, 2012). The literature suggests a range of leadership principles that may lead to positive student outcomes when utilized effectively.

**Theoretical Framework**

Several landmark studies have grounded the research of leadership practices in high-achieving schools. Furthermore, seminal authors have conducted research that explains the impact of leadership on student achievement (Bass & Avolio, 1993; Louis et al., 2010). Reeves (2003) claimed that high-achieving schools have a strong focus on academic achievement with an emphasis on improvement in a few specific efforts as opposed to many, unfocused efforts. High-achieving schools are also characterized by a collaborative culture (B. M. Taylor, Pressley, & Pearson, 2000).

Leithwood and Sun (2012) cited several studies including Hallinger (2003) and Robinson (2008). The body of research explains that leadership practices that support a climate and culture focused on learning and instruction will positively impact student achievement. The degree to how each leadership practice directly affects student achievement requires further research; however, effective leadership has direct effects on teacher behaviors and school conditions (Leithwood & Sun, 2012).
Leadership and Student Achievement

Educational leaders are ultimately responsible for establishing a school culture that supports high student achievement (M. Anderson, 2017; Harvey et al., 2014). According to Causey-Bush (2005), standardized test scores have been a characteristic of high-achieving schools in the United States. Federal legislation during the 1980s and 1990s became increasingly existent in the K-12 public school system. School reform efforts were aimed at increasing student achievement through standards-based education and educational accountability systems (Causey-Bush, 2005).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was established in 2001 and also known as the largest federal policy in education Elmore (2003). Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) measured student achievement across the United States including California. According to the California Department of Education ([CDE], n.d.-a), “The goal was for all students to meet or exceed state standards within a 12-year timeframe starting with the 2002-03 academic school year” (para. 1).

NCLB was replaced with the ESSA in 2015. Accountability systems continued to be mandated by ESSA; however, states had more flexibility with designing multiple measures for their accountability systems. In alignment with the California Common Core Standards in English language arts and mathematics, the current high-stakes accountability system in California is the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP), which measures student achievement and progress toward college and career readiness (CDE, n.d.-b). In addition to standardized test scores, the literature also explains that high-achieving schools were defined by other characteristics including strong leadership.
Research on effective leadership practices that support high student achievement is extensive. *Leading for Excellence: A Twelve Step Program to Student Achievement* (Harvey et al., 2014) was designed to describe 12 steps to high student achievement. The 12 steps include 12 leadership practices: strong leadership, establishing a culture of high achievement, vision and values, high expectations, love and passion, focus on learning and academic rigor, embedded professional development, academic achievement and assessment, strength of teams, collaboration, communication, and flexibility and resilience. Harvey et al.’s (2014) 12-step program was developed based on instructional, transformational, and organizational leadership theories. The review of the literature explains each of the 12 leadership principles as they pertain to high student achievement in K-12 public education. Each principle is described as a variable that contributes to the overall impact of leadership on student achievement. Figure 1 represents the 12-step program that leads to high student achievement.

**Strong Leadership**

The body of research explains the impact of strong leadership on student achievement. Effective school leaders are able to influence student learning by establishing trust, utilizing collective leadership practices, and learning with teachers (Louis et al., 2010). Additionally, strong leaders establish and articulate a shared vision that promotes high expectations for all students to achieve (Harvey et al., 2014; Tichnor-Wagner et al., 2016). According to Goddard et al.’s (2015) study, principals who frequently monitored instruction and provided guidance for instructional improvement had a direct impact on the collective work of teachers.
According to a review of the literature, high-achieving schools are characterized by strong leadership that establishes a culture of continuous school improvement. Thus, transformational leadership and instructional leadership are common at high-achieving schools (M. Anderson, 2017). Purkey and Marshall’s (1983) research in the 1980s described the culture of an effective school as having “a structure, process, and climate of values and norms that emphasize successful teaching and learning” (p. 442). Similarly, strong leadership involves utilizing proactive managerial strategies, specifically acquiring new concepts about organizational improvement and applying theory into practice (Fullan, 1985; Kim 1986).

 Principals who support teacher collaboration and shared decision-making are commonly found in the research on strong leadership. The results of Mombourquette and
Bedard’s (2014) study described that learning should be the focus at all levels in the organization. Furthermore, using student data as the basis for making instructional improvements is also a key component of leadership. Principals who used student data to set learning goals and strategize plans for instructional improvement observed a positive impact, not only on student achievement but also as a catalyst for data-driven collaboration (Love et al., 2008; Tichnor-Wagner et al., 2016).

**Establish a Culture of High Achievement**

School culture is unique to individual school settings. A school’s culture is defined by its norms, behaviors, ceremonies, values, philosophies, and stories that people tell (Teasley, 2017; van der Westhuizen, Mosoge, Swanepoel, and Coetsee, 2005). Additionally, high-achieving schools have common elements of school culture, including strong leadership that fosters a culture of high achievement (Harvey et al., 2014; Tichnor-Wagner et al., 2016). Although the body of research (Leithwood et al., 2004) claims that school leadership has an indirect impact to student learning, research also strongly supports that leadership should focus on school culture since culture is a powerful determinant of student achievement.

Establishing a culture committed to equity is an essential leadership practice that is well-documented in the research. Love et al. (2008) claimed that high-functioning cultures are committed to equity where educators, including school leaders, can speak openly about issues regarding race and implement strategies to provide resources so all students can succeed. Tichnor-Wagner et al.’s (2016) study in an urban school district yielded results in which “the intentional and active role of school leaders in reinforcing
deliberate structures and norms” (p. 633) engraigned a culture of learning and consequently led to high student achievement.

Finally, the literature suggests that establishing a culture of high student achievement requires adopting various leadership practices. For example, Harvey et al. (2014) and Tichnor-Wagner et al. (2016) explained that school leaders should reinforce school norms and promote a culture of collaboration. Similarly, Mendels (2012) and G. Brown (2015) confirmed that school leaders who work in urban settings should work diligently to build school cultures focused on community building with a high degree of academic focus.

Vision and Values

Visionary leadership is a common characteristic of principals who lead high-achieving schools (C. M. Taylor et al., 2014). Researchers explain that effective principals create a shared vision of a school that achieves its goals, promotes ownership of the vision with the school community, and supports an environment where teachers work cohesively to make decisions (Arnold et al., 2007).

The body of literature supports that a component of creating and establishing a shared vision is empowering key stakeholders to take action on helping to achieve the school’s goals (Arnold et al., 2007). Effective principals build on the strengths and knowledge of the community to address challenges that prohibit the school from achieving its vision (Hitt et al., 2018). Furthermore, effective principals inspire teams to make critical changes by engaging them and aligning all actions toward the school’s vision (G. Brown, 2016; Mombourquette & Bedard, 2014).
The research suggests that effective principals articulate a clear vision. According to Hitt et al. (2018), educational leaders regularly communicate with school teams and ask for their input for continuous improvement. Furthermore, through consistent communication, principals who gather information about the community’s understanding of the school’s vision are able to make adjustments so all stakeholders are clear about their responsibilities within the organization (Nitta et al., 2009). On the contrary, principals who are not visionary leaders offer excuses for not achieving the school’s goals (Jones, 2009).

**High Expectations**

Research suggests that principals who lead high-achieving schools have high expectations; furthermore, high expectations is a shared belief that all students can achieve and is effectively communicated by the principal (Chenowith & Theokas, 2013; Mendels, 2012). According to Balyer (2012), principals who articulate a belief that all students can achieve motivate and inspire teachers to make continuous growth with their instruction. Research also suggests that creating systems of support for teachers and students is necessary to reach high expectations (Harvey et al., 2014; McCommons, 2014).

A study conducted by McKinney, Labat, and Labat (2015), suggested that principals who communicate high expectations foster continuous growth toward student achievement. McKinney et al.’s (2015) study also revealed that principals who set high expectations “ensure alignment between school goals and curriculum, and demand that the school’s curriculum is preparing students to become enlightened global citizens” (p. 165). Furthermore, principals who regularly monitor classroom instruction by
conducting walkthroughs and providing timely feedback set the tone for having high expectations (Mayes & Gethers, 2018; Mendels, 2012).

In order to support a culture of high expectations, the research strongly suggests that principals must create systems of support for teachers and students. For example, Merritt (2017) claimed that principals who implement policies and routines that are conducive for instruction support the belief that students will learn. The body of literature identifies systems of support to include the following: setting an expectation that all staff will participate in professional development, differentiated support for teachers and students, and encouraging and motivating staff to critically assess challenges and participate in making decisions (Chenowith & Theokas, 2013; Merritt, 2017).

**Love and Passion**

Harvey et al. (2014) explained that leaders who express love and passion are likely to reach a high-achieving environment. According to Harvey et al. (2014), one of the key principles that leads to love and passion is establishing relationships and is well-documented in the research. Effective leaders connect with their employees to understand what inspires them, know how to utilize their talents, and align work that is meaningful and challenging (Crowley, 2011; Ferris, 1988). Also, a study conducted by Cherkowski (2012) revealed that principals who demonstrated compassion for their teachers encouraged commitment toward improvements in teaching.

According to Boies and Fiset (2019), a principal who demonstrates relationship-oriented behaviors supports, recognizes, and develops teachers. Addressing the social-emotional needs of teachers and keeping lines of communication open are examples of support (Boies & Fiset, 2019; Cherkowski, 2012). Examples of recognizing behaviors
include giving praise and providing timely feedback while developing behaviors include providing resources and training that will further support teachers’ growth (Boies & Fiset, 2019; Louis et al., 2016). Complimentary to Boies and Fiset’s (2019) study, Crowley (2014) further asserted that leaders who celebrate and mentor their employees reap great benefits and increase productivity in their organizations.

According to McKee, Boyatzis, and Johnston (2008), “Resonant leaders are attuned to themselves and to the needs, desires, and dreams of the people they lead” (p. 2). While the body of literature explores the impact of a leader’s love and passion, research indicates that these behaviors have an indirect impact on student achievement. According to Louis et al. (2016), principals who demonstrate a genuine concern for their schools are able to impact student achievement by creating systems for academic support. Furthermore, principals who provide and participate in relevant professional development motivate teachers to think critically and explore new practices (Fullan, 2014; Mombourquette & Bedard, 2014).

**Focus on Learning and Academic Rigor**

As described in the previous sections of this literature review, high-achieving schools foster a school culture with a focus on learning. Harvey et al. (2014) claimed that principals must make learning the top priority of the school day. Instructional leadership is a style of leadership with a strong focus on strengthening learning and teaching (Thompson, 2017). According to Goddard et al.’s (2015) study, principals who frequently monitored instruction and provided guidance for instructional improvement had a direct impact on the collective work of teachers.
A significant amount of literature suggests that a focus on learning and academic rigor leads to high student achievement. For example, Terosky’s (2014) study found that principals seek to focus on a learning imperative where learning is priority and is a shared foundational belief. Sebastian et al. (2016) asserted that effective principals support teacher leadership where teachers determine instructional practices that glean positive student outcomes. One comparative study conducted between low-achieving and high-achieving, low-income schools suggested that a focus on learning was a priority at the high-achieving school.

While McCollister and Sayler’s (2010) study focused on rigorous learning experiences for gifted students, the body of literature suggests that rigor is essential for all students. According to Maye (2013), academic rigor can increase if instructional strategies are specifically aligned with the standards being addressed, provide opportunities for students to think critically, and are engaging for students. Professional development should therefore be grounded in instructional practices that support rigor (G. Brown, 2016).

**Embedded Professional Development**

Effective professional development at high-achieving schools is well-documented in the research. According to Hitt and Meyers (2018), a direct correlation exists with effective professional development provided by high-performing principals and high-performing teachers. Professional development topics that are needs based and determined by multiple forms of student data ensure relevancy and practical application for teachers (Chang, Chen, & Chou, 2017). However, effective principals not only expect teachers to participate in professional development, but also expect staff to
analyze various aspects of the school’s needs prior to implementing common strategies (Duke, 2014).

A critical component of embedded professional development is professional learning communities in which the school leader is an active participant. Fullan’s (2014) research asserted that the principal must assume the role as the lead learner and learn alongside teachers while designing systems to support ongoing learning. Furthermore, Fullan (2014) made a strong distinction between the need to collaborate and professional learning communities that focus on specific strategies aimed to raise student achievement. Research showed that schools that utilized effective professional learning communities experienced gains in student achievement (Duke, 2014; Fullan, 2014; Terosky, 2014).

Embedded professional development that includes instructional coaching is vastly supported in the research. Johnson (2016) explained that instructional coaching is a nonevaluative process and is structured around shared goals for teacher improvement. Principals may either become instructional coaches or maintain a strong relationship with instructional coaches to ensure alignment with the school’s priorities for students and teacher development. Furthermore, several authors (G. Brown, 2016; Duke, 2014; Johnson, 2016) explained that principals who supported or were instructional coaches experienced academic gains at their schools.

**Academic Achievement and Assessment for the 21st Century**

A study of the literature describes the shifts and demands in K-12 leadership as a result of globalization. Litz (2011) and O’Connell (2014) explained that because large-scale changes with globalization are complex and inevitable, educational leaders must
remain well-educated in economic, social, and political shifts in order for their work to be relevant and support high student achievement. Researchers have further described the roles and responsibilities of educational leaders. With the consistent goal of achieving positive student outcomes, educational leaders are responsible for ensuring adequate infrastructure, ongoing support and professional development for teachers, and monitoring and evaluation of 21st-century learning (Litz, 2011).

Based on the current trends, transformational and distributed are predictable forms of leadership that will continue to support 21st-century learning, which is grounded in critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication. In order for students to demonstrate their 21st-century competencies, student assessments should be more open-ended and performance-task based (Harvey et al. 2014). Assessments for learning provide information about student progress while assessments of learning directly link instructional practices for improved student achievement (Kutlu & Kartal, 2018).

Additionally, the research from Kutlu and Kartal (2018) suggested that the data from assessing students’ interpersonal and intrapersonal skills would provide information about cognitive skills and could be used to implement instruction that addresses diverse learners.

An exploration of the impact of using data in high-achieving schools is reported throughout the research. While Sebastian et al. (2016) claimed that student data from formative assessments should be the basis for making instructional changes, Domenech, Sherman, and G. Brown (2016) further suggested that decisions should be shared and enacted by staff and principals.
The Strength of Teams

A vast amount of research explores the impact of high-functioning teams and student achievement. Burns et al. (2018) found moderate correlations between professional learning communities and student achievement in their study. Furthermore, several characteristics were found common among strong teams. First, effective teams frequently analyze student data to make critical decisions for student learning and improvements in instruction (Burns et al., 2018; Merritt, 2017). Next, team norms were established to define behaviors that provided cohesion for working toward a common goal with a focus on learning (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2006). Moreover, leaders of an organization support the team’s success (Ahmed, Siantonas, & Siantonas, 2008; Burns et al., 2018).

According to Harvey et al. (2014), building strong relationships is essential to the strength of teams. Although teams share a common vision, the potential for conflict to arise exists because of diverse perspectives. Leaders who manage conflict contribute to strengthening relationships (Benoliel & Berkovich, 2017; Harvey et al., 2014). Furthermore, if the expectation for professional learning communities is to support student achievement, the literature suggests that principals should provide adequate resources for teams to function effectively (Burns et al., 2018; Hakanen & Soudunsaari, 2012). Finally, Harvey et al. (2014) emphasized the importance of a systemic approach to celebrating high student achievement at all levels. Consequently, principals who celebrate accomplishments will motivate teams and individuals to continue their work toward achieving the goals of the organization.
Finally, trust is a hallmark of strong teams (Hakanen & Soudunsaari, 2012; Love et al., 2008). For example, when teams share a deep understanding of their roles and are willing to discuss complex matters such as race and equity, trust is established and contributes to team effectiveness.

**Collaboration and Shared Decision-Making**

It is well-documented in the research that educational leaders who implement collaboration and shared decision-making practices lead schools to high student achievement. For example, the Wallace Foundation (Leithwood et al., 2004) conducted a study and found that principals who supported collaboration were able to increase teacher capacity because the teachers determined and utilized instructional practices that improved student learning (Leithwood et al., 2004). In addition to school staff, Leithwood et al. (2004) also explained that principals who extend collaboration with other principals and district-level staff are effective because they work toward clear, common goals.

An essential component of collaboration and shared decision-making is the emphasis on instructional improvement and positive student outcomes. Shaked and Schechter (2013) argued an intentional, collective approach to evaluating curriculum and instruction supports systems thinking and is necessary for effective leadership. Based on Heck and Hallinger (2010), collaborative school leadership involves diverse perspectives and has the potential to build capacity and increase student achievement. Nonetheless, the literature illustrates the importance of a school leader’s role in supporting a collective effort toward school improvement.
Collaboration and shared decision-making empower stakeholders for several reasons. First, collective efforts are grounded in the idea that everyone is responsible for student learning and all students can improve (Harvey et al., 2014; Love et al., 2008). Also, the potential to build capacity and promote distributive leadership exists when teams utilize data to make informed decisions about adjustments to programs and practices (Love et al., 2008).

In contrast, some school leaders who do not support shared decision-making experience resistance toward implementation of efforts to improve student achievement (Harvey et al., 2014). Collaboration and shared decision-making processes are essential to student achievement; however, Leithwood et al. (2004) cautioned educators to be intentional and ensure alignment between collaborative efforts and goals to support growth for the school and students.

**Communication**

The body of literature points to the importance of communication for effective leadership. As the driver for continuous improvement, the school principal must articulate the school’s vision, goals, and focus on student achievement (Arnold et al., 2007). Without strong communication skills, principals are unable to establish strong relationships with teachers and other stakeholders of the school community (Tyler, 2016). Communication behaviors of effective leaders are highlighted in the research.

Sharing information is one form of communication. Sending information via e-mail, posting accomplishments on social media, and disseminating information during faculty meetings are common methods of communication; however, the importance of high visibility and daily interaction between the principal and the school community are
important for building relationships (Arnold et al., 2007; Harvey et al., 2014). Consequently, opportunities for collaboration were increased with regular face-to-face interactions.

The results from Arnold et al.’s (2007) and Tyler’s (2016) research explained that conducting regular classroom walkthroughs was another behavior of effective communication. In addition to gathering information about the current state of learning and instruction, principals collaborated with teachers about effective practices and provided feedback that would further improve classroom instruction. Consequently, ongoing communication centered on student-learning not only establishes relationships and builds trust but also supports high student achievement (Hakanen & Soudunsaari, 2012).

The body of research also explains that lines of communication need to exist throughout the whole community, within smaller teams and between individuals (Halawah 2005; Tyler, 2016). Professional learning communities may involve teachers and parents. G. Brown (2016) emphasized the principal’s role as the main facilitator of communication and collaboration. By creating systems for parents, staff, and individuals to collaborate, principals were able to establish a positive school culture (G. Brown, 2016; Goddard et al., 2015).

**Flexibility and Resilience**

With the increasing and sometimes conflicting demands of stakeholders, staff, and government organizations, the literature suggests that flexibility and resiliency are necessary traits for effective leadership. Regardless of the overwhelming responsibilities, principals must remain focused on the success of the organization (Offutt, 2012; Harvey
et al., 2014). Day (2014) and Merritt (2017) further asserted that principals who work in high-poverty, high-performing schools were flexible and adapted to changes in their schools and managed to sustain high student achievement.

The definition of resilience varies across different disciplines; however, the ability to recover and adapt during adverse situations was commonly found in the research (Isaacs, 2012). Harvey et al. (2014) explained that resiliency involves persistence and remaining focused on high achievement while modeling flexibility and resilience for others. Flexibility also requires transparency and the willingness to seek and utilize feedback from others (D. Anderson & Ackerman Anderson, 2010; Harvey et al., 2014). Conversely, Offut’s (2012) research described nonresiliency as giving a response that demonstrates disengaged or dysfunctional behaviors; therefore, resilient leaders develop and apply appropriate responses during ambiguous situations rather than responding in a defensive manner.

When faced with change efforts, individuals tend to resist change; therefore, the need to provide flexible, differentiated leadership for teachers often exists (Brezicha, Bergmark, & Mitra, 2015). This type of differentiated leadership promotes collaboration and processes by which school leadership and teachers determine instructional improvements that eventually lead to increasing student achievement (Arnold et al., 2007; Brezicha et al., 2015; Leithwood et al., 2004).

**K-12 Leadership and Student Achievement**

In addition to the managerial and operational responsibilities of school leaders in the public school system, principals are instructional leaders who create systems to maximize and improve student learning (Hoy & Hoy, 2006). The body of literature
points to the concept that effective K-12 leadership, namely school principals, is common among high-achieving schools. Effective school leaders possess several characteristics such as the ability to establish a school culture that is focused on achieving the school’s vision through collaboration, high expectations, and professional development (Huguet, 2017; Leithwood et al., 2004). Although several organizational leadership theories describe varying behaviors, traits, and contingencies among effective leaders, research confirms that strong school leaders have an impact on student achievement (Leithwood & Sun, 2012).

**K-12 Educational Leadership**

The role of educational leadership has increased in complexity (Bray, 2012). In addition to school-based administrators, such as principals and assistant principals, educational leaders in the K-12 public school sector include district office staff such as superintendents and other administrators who are ultimately responsible for leading student achievement. The body of literature emphasizes that the success of school districts and schools hinge on effective leadership. Furthermore, accountability measures have prompted greater efforts for developing teachers and supporting struggling students. Although schools are social organizations, contemporary researchers suggest that schools have become business organizations, and educational leaders are expected to also manage the daily business aspects of running a school (M. Anderson, 2017).

Based on the literature of K-12 high-achieving schools, principals are perceived as change agents leading efforts to improve all aspects of their schools’ operations. One critical role of K-12 principals is to provide instructional leadership aimed at supporting the growth of teachers that will further impact student achievement (Sebastian et al.,
2016; Terosky, 2016). Hallinger (2003) explained that instructional leadership influences the quality of school outcomes as they pertain to systems aligned with the school’s mission.

While other forms of leadership, such as teacher leadership, distributed leadership, and transformational leadership, emerged in the educational setting during the 1990s, critics found instructional leadership had too much emphasis on the principal and was perceived as a top-down approach (Hallinger, 2003). Conversely, transformational leadership practices were focused on empowering staff, building capacity for development of all stakeholders, and promoting a commitment for positive outcomes (Leithwood & Sun, 2012). Regardless of what leadership models are utilized, the literature points to the importance of adopting a range of practices that support the school’s mission and goals (Covelli & Mason, 2017; Perrone & Tucker, 2019).

**Role of Elementary Principal and Student Achievement**

Merriam-Webster defines elementary school (n.d.) as “a school including usually the first four to the first eight grades and often a kindergarten; a school in the U.S. for young children” (para. 1). Though the implications for effective leadership practices that influence student achievement also exist in elementary school settings, the research explains that elementary principals have roles that differentiate them from secondary education. For example, elementary principals in high-poverty schools address challenges with students who are unprepared to meet the rigorous standards of elementary schools (Bray, 2012). Factors such as limited parental support at home, inadequate nutrition, high mobility, and concerns about safety at home may negatively impact a student’s ability to learn. Nonetheless, Bray (2012) and Jackson (2018)
substantiated the claims that elementary principals have an impact on student achievement when they adopt shared leadership practices, demonstrate a genuine concern for the development of staff and students, establish structures to maximize time for student learning, and build relationships with parents.

A significant amount of research seeks to explain effective leadership practices and their impact on student achievement, particularly with elementary principals. Several commonalities were found in research conducted in low-income schools. Bray’s (2012) study described elementary principals as superheroes who showed compassion, were highly visible and constantly interacted with the entire school community, and actively participated in the learning processes that supported positive change for teaching and learning. Similarly, G. Brown, Bynum, and Beziat (2017) explained that principals who created a culture of learning engaged frequently with parent groups, visited classrooms regularly, and allocated resources to support the school’s goals, thereby increasing student achievement.

According to California Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (CPSEL), effective school administrators must be able to demonstrate the following standards (WestEd, 2019):

- Development and Implementation of a Shared Vision
- Instructional Leadership
- Management and Learning Environment
- Family and Community Engagement
- Ethics and Integrity
- External Context and Policy. (p. 1)
Although the literature claims that principals have an indirect impact on student achievement, effective principals have the capacity and are ultimately responsible for creating a culture for learning and teaching that will increase student achievement (Jackson, 2018).

**Conclusion**

The impact of leadership on student achievement has been well-documented in the research. Conducting research on effective leadership practices is significant because school leaders are responsible for establishing systems that support student achievement. Although the body of literature claims that school leadership has an indirect impact on student learning, research also supports the idea that school leadership that fosters a culture focused on learning is a powerful determinant of student achievement (Louis et al., 2010). Numerous school improvement strategies exist; however, school success depends on school leadership (Leithwood et al., 2004). The literature reveals that the challenge is defining effective leadership that contributes to school success. Furthermore, research from studies in high-achieving schools supports the notion that effective leadership practices need to be identified (Teasley, 2017; Tichnor-Wagner et al., 2016).

Despite the information presented, research points to a need for further studies regarding leadership at high-achieving schools. The literature suggests that additional research is needed to operationalize strategies to sufficiently support high student achievement. For example, Tichnor-Wagner et al. (2016) claimed that a school culture may include collaboration, a focus on learning, and strong leadership but may not be sufficient for overall school improvement and need further investigation. Conversely,
Goddard et al. (2015) recommended specific leadership practices to foster a collective efficacy: provide frequent opportunities for teachers to collaborate, utilize agendas and goals geared toward instructional improvement, and participate as a collaborative member of the team. M. Anderson (2017) recommended that additional research needs to be conducted on the direct impact of school leadership as it relates to specific learning activities in successful classrooms. The degree to which individual leadership practices have a direct or indirect impact on student achievement has yet to be explored.

Additional research on the impact of leadership in high-achieving schools will further identify and increase the knowledge base about effective leadership practices. For example, authors such as Mendels (2012) and G. Brown (2016) described leadership that supports urban school populations and emphasized the importance on community building with a high degree of academic focus. Other studies conducted by Harvey et al. (2014) and Goddard et al. (2015) described leadership practices that support teacher collaboration and shared decision-making.

Finally, research on leadership in high-achieving schools may serve as a foundation of resources for other school leaders. While authors of theoretical frameworks such as transformational leadership and instructional leadership provide a construct for research on the impact of leadership on student achievement (Leithwood & Sun, 2012), several contemporary authors, such as Harvey et al. (2014), Leithwood et al. (2010), and Gleason and Gerzon (2014) described specific strategies on how to implement effective leadership practices. Because school leaders are responsible for meeting the increased demands of local, state, and federal stakeholders (M. Anderson,
2017), research on effective leadership practices may provide guidance aimed at increasing student achievement.

A synthesis matrix (Appendix A) was used by the researcher to organize the study variables presented in the literature. The synthesis matrix enabled the researcher to view the literature in an overview format and draw conclusions about relationships between entries. The matrix was used by the researcher to organize the references and themes related to the variables presented in this study.
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Overview

Chapter III describes the research methodology and procedures used to conduct this study. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), the methodology includes the purpose of the study, the research questions, the research design, a description of the population and sample, the development and descriptions of the instrument, field-testing, a description of the data collection procedures, and the limitations of the study. An explanatory mixed methods study approach was used to describe the degree of importance and strategies for implementing the 12-step leadership principles proposed by Harvey et al. (2014) aimed at creating a K-12 school environment that fosters high student achievement. The purpose statement and research questions that guided the methodological design are presented first in this chapter. Next, a detailed description of the quantitative and qualitative research design methods for data collection is described in this chapter, preceded by the population and sample. The procedures and development of data collection instruments, which include surveys and interviews, are further explained. Additionally, this chapter includes the limitations of the study and a summary explaining the overall methodology of the study.

Purpose

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to determine the degree of importance for the 12-step principles proposed by Harvey, Drolet, and DeVore (2014) to create a K-12 school environment that fosters high student achievement as perceived by public school elementary principals in Northern California. A secondary purpose was to explore and describe the leadership strategies for implementing the 12-step principles
proposed by Harvey et al. (2014) to create a K-12 school environment that fosters high student achievement as perceived by public school elementary principals in Northern California.

**Research Questions**

1. What is the degree of importance for the 12-step principles proposed by Harvey et al. (2014) to create a K-12 school environment that fosters high student achievement as perceived by public school elementary principals in Northern California?

2. What are the leadership strategies for implementing the 12-step principles proposed by Harvey et al. (2014) to create a K-12 school environment that fosters high student achievement as perceived by public school elementary principals in Northern California?

**Research Methods**

An explanatory mixed methods design was used for this study to explain how elementary principals perceived the 12-step leadership principles proposed by Harvey et al. (2014) to create a K-12 school environment that fosters high student achievement. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010) and Patton (2015), mixed methods research is appropriate to use when designing a more comprehensive study. Furthermore, McMillan and Schumacher (2010) have recently found mixed methods designs to be the best approach to answering research questions as opposed to research based solely on quantitative or qualitative methods. When qualitative and quantitative methods are used independently and do not provide sufficient information to answer the research questions of a study, researchers have found mixed methods to be a more favorable approach.
McMillan and Schumacher, 2010) with “design flexibility depending on the research question” (Patton, 2015, p. 91).

The research methods that were used for this study described and measured the perceptions of elementary school principals as they relate to high student achievement. Quantitative methods included collecting survey data about the degree of importance of Harvey et al.’s (2014) 12 leadership steps. Additionally, qualitative data collection methods, such as interviews, were used to identify strategies for implementing Harvey et al.’s (2014) 12 leadership steps. The 12 steps include strong leadership, establishing a culture of high achievement, high expectations, collaboration, vision and values, love and passion, focus on learning and academic rigor, embedded professional development, academic achievement and assessment for the 21st century, strength of teams, communication, and flexibility and resilience.

**Quantitative Research Design**

This study employed a survey research design method. Survey research was appropriate because according to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), the information gathered from the survey can be generalized from the sample population. Furthermore, McMillan and Schumacher stated, “Surveys are used frequently in educational research to describe attitudes, beliefs, opinions, and other types of information” (pp. 22-23). Five elementary principals participated in the study by completing a digital survey. Quantitative data were collected from the survey and measured the degree of importance of each of Harvey et al.’s (2014) 12 steps for creating environments that support high student achievement as perceived by elementary school principals.
Qualitative Research Design

Qualitative research methods were also used to understand phenomenon and perspectives. The researcher was the instrument for data collection through interviews (Patton, 2015). Because data were collected in a natural setting, the need to modify the research process surfaced (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Themes and patterns about strategies to implement Harvey et al.’s (2014) leadership principles surfaced (Patton, 2015). The results from qualitative methods were explanatory and may be utilized as a resource for school leaders.

Method Rationale

Seven peer researchers participated in a thematic study to measure the degree of importance of 12 leadership principles that would lead to high student achievement as perceived by a range of K-12 leaders including principals, superintendents, and school board members. The group of thematic researchers worked independently, and each researcher identified a sample population to conduct his or her study. However, all seven researchers utilized the same explanatory mixed methods to examine the degree of importance of the 12 leadership principles within their sample population.

The seven peer researchers utilized the same survey instrument and interview questions to examine the breadth and depth of the phenomenon studied using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The goal was to identify and describe the degree of importance of the 12 leadership principles and strategies for implementation in efforts to establish an environment of high student achievement. Additionally, the mixed methods study approach addressed the gap in the literature between the 12 leadership principles, the “what,” and the strategies for implementation, “the how.”
The population used for this specific study was elementary school principals. Elementary principals are responsible for contributing to school effectiveness and student performance by developing teachers, creating a positive learning environment for staff and students, building relationships with the school community, and aligning resources to support the school’s mission and goals (Wahlstrom, Louis, Leithwood, & Anderson, 2010).

**Population**

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) defined population as “the total group to which results can be generalized” (p. 129). The population for this study included K-12 public school site administrators employed in high-achieving schools in California as determined by California Dashboard. School site administrators included principals, vice-principals, assistant principals, deans, coordinators, and any individual who works as a site administrator and holds a California Administrative Credential. Because the group of individuals was defined by specific criteria, the results from the study can be generalized (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

According to the California Department of Education ([CDE], n.d.-a), California has 5,873 elementary schools and is therefore led by 5,873 principals. Elementary school principals manage school operations and facilities, provide instructional leadership, articulate the school’s vision, work with the community to support students, and are accountable for ensuring a safe and positive environment that supports high student achievement (Leithwood & Sun, 2012). For purposes of this study, narrowing the population led to defining a target population or a sampling frame.
Sampling Frame

Creswell (2012) stated that a target population or sampling frame is “a group of individuals (or a group of organizations) with some common defining characteristic that the researcher can identify and study” (p. 142). Similarly, McMillan and Schumacher (2010) explained the necessity for the researcher to carefully define the sampling frame, which is as an “actual list of sampling units from which the sample is selected” (p. 129). The sampling frame for this study was narrowed to elementary principals in Napa, Solano, and Sonoma Counties to provide for greater generalization, avoid bias, and offer convenience for data collection. There are 23 elementary schools in Napa County, 52 elementary schools in Solano County, and 108 elementary schools in Sonoma County. The target population included 183 elementary school principals from Napa, Sonoma, and Solano Counties. Out of the 183 elementary schools, 23 schools met the criteria for high student achievement.

Sample

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) defined the sample as “the group of subjects or participants from whom the data are collected” (p. 129). Creswell (2012) defined the sample as “a subgroup of the target population that the researcher plans to study for generalizing about the target population” (p. 142). Therefore, a sample of five elementary principals from high-achieving schools was selected from the sampling frame of schools that met the high-achieving criteria. The criteria for high-achieving schools were based on 2018 California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) scores that were published on the California School Dashboard (CDE, n.d.-a).
Schools were required to score “met standard,” coded by green, or “exceeded standard,” coded by blue, in both English language arts and mathematics performance measures.

A purposeful and convenience sampling method was used to the select five elementary school principals. A purposeful sampling method was chosen because of its emphasis on gathering in-depth information from the sample group (Patton, 2015). Purposeful (synonymous with purposive) sampling methods described a selection process of participants who represented the population because of their experience with the phenomenon (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Furthermore, McMillan and Schumacher (2010) stated that “the researcher selects particular elements from the population that will be representative or informative about the topic” (p. 138). In qualitative and quantitative studies, “convenience samples are widely used because this may be the best the researcher can accomplish to due to practical constraints, efficiency, and accessibility” (p. 137).

For the purpose of this study, sample selection began with the target population of elementary principals from high-achieving schools in Napa, Solano, and Sonoma Counties. Then, the researcher employed convenience and purposeful sampling methods to select participants based on the following criteria:

- The principal was employed at a school within the Napa, Solano, and Sonoma Counties with a minimum of 30 staff members.
- The principal has a minimum of 3 years of experience at his or her current site.
- The principal has a minimum of 5 years in the profession.
- The principal has membership in professional associations in his or her field.
● The principal has articles, papers, or materials written, published, or presented at conferences or association meetings.

● The principal was willing to be a participant and agreed to the informed consent form.

The sample for this study included five elementary principals. According to Patton (2015), “The size of the sample depends on what you want to find you, why you want to find it out, how the findings will be used and what resources you have (including time) you have for the study” (p. 311). McMillan and Schumacher (2010) explained that sample size should be determined by the following guidelines: “1) purpose of the study; 2) the focus of the study; 3) primary data collection strategies; 4) availability of informants” (p. 328). Patton (2015) also claimed that “in-depth information from a small number of people can be very valuable, especially if the cases are information-rich” (p. 311). Therefore, the sample size of five principals was appropriate for this study.

**Instrumentation**

Mixed methods instrumentation was utilized for this study. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) claimed that *mixed methods* is the appropriate term because it “includes substantial information from each approach” (p. 396). In partnership with faculty, the seven peer researchers, who conducted the thematic study, administered a custom survey for the quantitative analysis and conducted purposeful interviews for the qualitative analysis (Appendices B and C). Both instruments were field-tested through a pilot survey and pilot interview protocol. The feedback from the field tests were utilized to make adjustments in order to effectively increase understanding of the 12 leadership principles proposed by Harvey et al. (2014).
Quantitative Instrumentation

Seven peer researchers designed quantitative research instruments for data collection. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), a researcher administers a questionnaire to select respondents from a target population to collect information about a set of variables. Thus, a survey was developed using the 12 leadership principles proposed by Harvey et al. (2014) as the variables for the study. Survey research is widely used in education and captures attitudes, beliefs, and opinions (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The seven researchers collaborated to formulate questions aligned with the 12 leadership principles. Furthermore, alignment tables were designed to ensure that the survey questions were aligned with the 12 variables, the research questions, and the purpose of the study (Appendix D). Permission was granted by the authors of Leading for Excellence: A Twelve Step Program to Student Achievement by Harvey et al. (2014) to use the Likert scale data collection instrument located in the back of the book (Appendix E).

The survey (Appendix B) was developed and field-tested by each researcher. The participants of the field test met the study criteria but were not included in the actual study. After the field test, the seven peer researchers and faculty experts utilized the feedback from the field-test participants to make adjustments to the survey protocol. Consequently, the survey protocol was finalized for data collection. An online survey, Survey Monkey, was used to collect the quantitative data. The online survey included close-ended questions that were aligned with the leadership principles proposed by Harvey et al. (2014). Each researcher sent the Survey Monkey link to five elementary principals who were identified in the sample for data collection.
Qualitative Instrumentation

In this study, the peer researchers collected qualitative data to gain a deeper understanding of their participants’ perceptions on the 12 leadership principles proposed by Harvey et al. (2014). McMillan and Schumacher (2010) stated, “In-depth interviews use open-response questions to obtain data on participants’ meanings—how individuals conceive of their world and how they explain or make sense of important events in their lives” (p. 355). Similarly, Patton (2015) explained that qualitative methods address and attempt to make meaning of a lived experience by a group of individuals.

The seven peer researchers developed and utilized a semistructured interview process to capture the perspectives of their sample group. The questions were purposefully designed to align with the 12 leadership principles, research questions, and purpose of the study (Appendix F). The alignment table aimed to establish the validity of the study to ensure that the evidence collected from the interviews matched the purpose of the study (Creswell, 2012). Probing questions were constructed and available as an option to clarify the depth of understanding for each interview question (Patton, 2015). By employing a semistructured interview process, the researcher was able to reflect and act upon the natural progression of the interview process and establish reciprocity (Galletta, 2012).

The interview protocol (Appendix C) was developed and field-tested by each researcher. The participants of the field test met the study criteria but were not included in the actual study. After the field test, the seven peer researchers and faculty experts utilized the feedback from the field-test participants to make adjustments to the interview
protocol. Subsequently, the interview protocol was finalized for data collection. Each researcher conducted semistructured interviews with five participants.

**Researcher as Instrument of the Study**

According to Barrett (2007) and Patton (2015), the qualitative researcher becomes the instrument of the study when the researcher seeks to understand the phenomena by being immersed in the environment as a method of collecting data. Each of the peer researchers in this study collected data by conducting guided interviews and utilizing an online survey tool. The researcher for this study used a digital recorder to capture the responses from each participant and then transcribed the recorded responses. Each participant of the interview received a copy of the transcripts to validate the accuracy of the responses. The researcher of this study has been an elementary educational leader in the K-12 public school system for 14 years and has worked in education for a total of 25 years. The researcher was experienced in conducting interviews. As a former district-level administrator and current school-based administrator, the researcher has conducted interviews for hiring purposes and for acquiring statements during investigations.

**Validity and Reliability**

According to Kimberlin and Winterstein (2008), validity and reliability are the key indicators for measuring the instruments used for research. Validity measures appropriateness while reliability measures consistency (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The seven peer researchers employed a process to establish validity and reliability with the instruments used for this study. In collaboration with the faculty, the thematic team members developed the criteria for reliability and designed the questions for the online survey and interviews. Alignment tables guided the development of the questions to
ensure that all were aligned with the 12 variables, the research questions, and the purpose of the study (Appendices D and F). Upon completion of quantitative and qualitative field-testing, adjustments were made to the survey and interview protocols to produce the final versions.

**Quantitative Field-Testing**

The seven peer researchers collaborated with faculty to design the quantitative method of data collection for this study. In order to establish content validity, the seven peer researchers collaborated to ensure that the survey questions were developed to measure what was intended to be measured (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010) by referring the alignment table (Appendix D). According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), pilot testing, synonymous with field-testing, is a critical step and provides the following information: modifications needed for clarity, approximate time required for completion of the survey, and potential pattern of responses. An online survey was developed to gather quantitative data. The survey included close-ended questions, using a Likert scale to rate each item.

The thematic team members included seven educational leaders (five principals, one superintendent, one director of educational services). Each team member participated in the pilot test by sending a specific survey link to respondents who met the criteria for the sample population. The respondents received an introduction, instructions, and questions for the field test. Survey Monkey, an online application, was used to collect responses and maintain confidentiality. Upon completion of the field test, the faculty and seven peer researchers discussed the feedback from the respondents of the field test and made final adjustments to the survey instrument. Field-test participants
used a feedback form (Appendix G) to share their feedback. Consequently, criterion validity, which indicates whether the survey instrument was a predictor of the expected outcomes (Creswell, 2005), was established. Using the final version of the survey tool, each peer researcher collected data from five K-12 educational leaders from the public school system, which totaled 35 participants for this study.

**Qualitative Field-Testing**

Qualitative field-testing was also conducted to obtain feedback and make adjustments to the final instrument (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Along with faculty, the thematic team of seven researchers developed an interview protocol that included open-ended questions and additional probing questions. Content validity was established when the seven peer researchers collaborated to ensure that the interview questions were designed to address the measures that were intended to be measured (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Furthermore, the feedback from the field test was used to make adjustments to the final interview questions in order to establish criterion validity, which pertained, as described by Creswell (2005), to “whether the scores from an instrument are a good predictor of some outcome they are expected to predict” (p. 165).

Each researcher identified a participant who met the criteria for the sample and conducted face-to-face interviews. The field-test participant did not participate in the actual study. First, the interview questions were sent to each field-test participant prior to the field-test interview. Then, the field tests were conducted. Additionally, an observer with previous research experience was present during the field test and provided feedback on the length of the interview, interaction between the researcher and participant, and the
researcher’s ability to follow the protocol. A feedback form was used (Appendix H) as a guide to capture the observations from the field test. After the completion of the field tests, the team of researchers along with faculty reconvened to make modifications for the final interview protocol. The final interview protocol, which included open-ended questions and probing questions, was used to conduct the qualitative research component of this study.

Reliability

The seven peer researchers and faculty employed several strategies to increase reliability of the instruments used for data collection. Reliability in research can be established through consistency in all aspects of data collection and data analysis (Creswell, 2003; Patton, 2015). Regardless of the instrument, Kimberlin and Winterstein (2008) and McMillan and Schumacher (2010) explained that conducting a field test increases the reliability of the study. Furthermore, since the researcher becomes the instrument for the qualitative data collection method, Patton (2015) emphasized the importance of stating any potential bias in the study. The thematic team members further established reliability by utilizing a scripted protocol for the interviews and by using the same survey tool for all participants of the study.

Data Collection

Creswell (2012) stated, “Collecting data in a mixed methods study follows rigorous quantitative procedures and persuasive qualitative procedures” (p. 556). In this study, survey questions were used to help the researchers identify the relationship between the independent and dependent variables (Creswell, 2003; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010) while open-ended interviews were used to describe the phenomena
(Creswell, 2012; Patton, 2015). Prior to collecting data from the participants of the study, a process was used to protect their privacy and confidentiality. The researcher submitted an application (Appendix I) to the Brandman University Institutional Review Board (BUIRB) for approval. According to Creswell (2012) and McMillan and Schumacher (2010), the IRB is a committee to ensure that the research protects the rights of the participants in the study. The application included information about the purpose of the study, research methodology, participants, data collection, and how potential risks may be addressed in the study (Creswell, 2012; Patton, 2015). This section further describes the sequence and methods for collecting and organizing the information (Creswell 2012). The researcher located the participants’ contact information on the public access school districts’ and individual school’s websites.

**Quantitative Data Collection**

An online survey instrument, developed and refined by the team of thematic peer researchers and faculty, was used to collect quantitative data. The following steps were used to acquire data for this component of the study:

1. Approval was obtained from Brandman University Institutional Review Board to conduct the study.

2. An e-mail was sent to five elementary principals who met the criteria to participate in the study. The e-mail described the purpose and overview of the study.

3. Principals who agreed to participate in the study replied to the researcher via e-mail.

4. The researcher made personal phone calls to the participants who agreed to participate in the study and provided more detailed information about the quantitative data collection method via Survey Monkey.
5. The researcher sent a follow-up e-mail (Appendix J) with the researcher’s contact information. The following documents were attached to the follow-up e-mail:

- Invitation to participate (Appendix K)
- Informed consent form (Appendix L)
- Purpose of the study overview (Appendix M), and
- BUIRB Participant’s Bill of Rights (Appendix N)

6. When the researcher obtained the necessary documents, a website link for Survey Monkey was sent to each participant.

7. Each participant completed the online survey.

8. The responses from the surveys were password protected.

**Qualitative Data Collection**

A series of interview questions developed by the team of thematic researchers and faculty was used to collect qualitative data for this portion of the study. The researcher for this study enacted the following steps summarized below:

1. Approval was obtained from Brandman University Institutional Review Board to conduct the study.

2. An e-mail was sent to five elementary principals who met the criteria to participate in the study. The e-mail described the purpose and overview of the study.

3. Principals who agreed to participate in the study replied to the researcher via e-mail.

4. The researcher made personal phone calls to the participants who agreed to participate in the study and provided more detailed information about the interview process and additional documents, described in Step 5, which would be sent via e-mail.
5. The researcher sent a follow-up e-mail (Appendix J) with the researcher’s contact information. The following documents were attached to the follow-up e-mail:
   - Invitation to participate (Appendix K)
   - Informed consent form (Appendix L)
   - Purpose of the study overview (Appendix M), and
   - BUIRB Participant’s Bill of Rights (Appendix N)
6. When the researcher obtained the necessary documents, interviews were scheduled based on the availability of the participant.
7. A copy of the interview questions was sent to each participant prior to the scheduled interview.
8. During the semistructured interviews, the researcher followed the interview protocol (Appendix C) for each interview. Probing questions were asked occasionally for clarification and to elicit additional responses.
9. The interviews were recorded with a digital device.
10. The researcher also took notes to capture additional observations.
11. After each interview, the researcher followed up with an e-mail (Appendix O) to thank the participant for his or her time and willingness to share his or her perspectives on the 12 leadership principles proposed by Harvey et al. (2014).
12. The notes and digital recording were later transcribed and sent to each participant for accuracy.
13. All notes, digital recordings, and transcribed documents were kept in a secure locked drawer.
Data Analysis

In this study, an analysis of the data was conducted using quantitative and qualitative methods. Data gathered from the survey questions and the interviews were analyzed separately. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), “Quantitative results enhance generalizability, and qualitative results help explain context” (p. 403). All forms of data acquired from this study were securely stored and password protected in the researcher’s hard drive and Google drive. This section describes the methods used to analyze the data from the online survey and interview questions.

Quantitative Data Analysis

The purpose of this study was to describe elementary principal’s perceptions of the 12-step leadership principles proposed by Harvey et al. (2014). The online survey instrument, Survey Monkey, was used to collect quantitative data from five elementary principals at high-achieving schools.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), “The use of descriptive statistics is the most fundamental way to summarize data, and it is indispensable in interpreting the results of quantitative research” (p. 149). Descriptive statistics was used to answer Research Question 1: “What is the degree of importance for the 12-step principles proposed by Harvey et al. (2014) to create a K-12 school environment that fosters high student achievement as perceived by public school elementary principals in Northern California?” A 6-point Likert scale was used to respond to each item on the survey and included: strongly agree, agree, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, disagree, and strongly disagree.
The researcher deployed the online survey to each participant, which provided immediate access to the data for analysis. The data were presented in tables for symbolic interpretations of the results. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) stated, “Descriptive statistics are used to transform a set of numbers or observations into indices that describe or characterize the data” (p. 149). Additionally, central tendency was used for data analysis. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) described central tendency using three indices: mean, median, and mode. For purposes of this study, the mean, frequency, and percentage were to interpret the scores calculated by the Survey Monkey instrument.

**Qualitative Data Analysis**

According to Creswell (2003) and McMillan and Schumacher (2010), qualitative data analysis involves preparing and organizing the data, transcribing the data, and coding the data. The researcher employed a transcription service to transcribe the audio recordings from all five interviews. Each principal who participated in the interviews received a copy of the transcriptions for feedback and to check for accuracy. After the data were organized and transcribed, the researcher began the coding process by reviewing the participants’ responses from the interviews. The process of coding qualitative data allows the researcher to compare, organize, and synthesize the data (Patton, 2015). According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), a code is a label that is used to provide meaning to a data segment. They stated, “A data segment is text that is comprehensible by itself and contains one idea, episode, or piece of relevant information (p. 370). The data segments for this study included words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs from the transcribed notes.
The NVIVO software application was used to organize the data. The researcher focused on responses that answered the Research Question 2: “What are the leadership strategies for implementing the 12-step principles proposed by Harvey et al. (2014) to create a K-12 school environment that fosters high student achievement as perceived by public school elementary principals in Northern California?” The researcher began to make sense of the data by allowing “the data to suggest the codes” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 371). Consequently, tentative codes were formulated and were further refined as the interview process progressed with the remaining participants. The codes were organized into larger categories in which several themes emerged. Tables and charts were used to represent the themes generated from all five interviews.

**Intercoder Reliability**

Intercoder reliability refers to the consistency or agreement between the ratings of different observers who use the same instrument (Kimberlin & Winterstein, 2008; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton (2015). Furthermore, it is a necessary step in coding qualitative data because without it, the data cannot be considered valid and perceived as a standard measure for research quality (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2005). In this study, the researcher conducted an intercoder reliability check with one other peer researcher. According to Creswell (2003), an agreement level of 80% or higher is required when determining themes that emerge from the coding process. The peer researchers reached an 80% agreement level.

**Limitations of the Study**

Creswell (2012) described the importance of offering information about limitations or weaknesses in a study: “These limitations may address problems in data
collection, unanswered questions by participants, or better selection of purposeful sampling of individuals or sites for the study” (p. 259). Participant geography, time, sample size, and the researcher as the instrument of the study were the limitation of this study and are described as follows.

**Geography**

The research was delimited to three public school districts in Northern California. There are 5,873 elementary schools within the three school districts, therefore led by 5,873 principals. The generalizability of the data collected during face-to-face interviews was limited to five elementary principals who were within 100 miles away from the researcher’s location.

**Time Constraints**

Given the busy schedules of school principals, time was a limitation of the study. The researcher allocated a maximum of 60 minutes of interview time for each sample participant. Based on the availability of each principal, the interviews were scheduled at least 2 to 4 weeks in advance. Furthermore, the limited amount of time may have compromised the depth of responses from the sample participants.

**Sample Size**

The sample size was a limitation for this study. The researcher conducted interviews and surveys with five participants. Consequently, the small sample size impacts the researcher’s ability to generalize the findings.

**Researcher as the Instrument of the Study**

According to Patton (2015), in qualitative research the researcher serves as the instrument of the study and attempts to “make it possible for the interviewee to bring the
interviewer into his or her world” (p. 427). Furthermore, Patton (2015) emphasized that the interviewer needs to remain nonjudgmental, authentic, clear, and remain focused on the purpose of the interview. The researcher of this study limited bias by adhering to the interview protocol that was developed by the team of thematic peer researchers and Brandman faculty.

Summary

Chapter III presented the methodology used to conduct this mixed methods study. The methodology was aligned with the purpose and research questions, which were stated at the beginning of the chapter. The qualitative and quantitative research design along with the method rationale was described. The population, sample, instrumentation, validity, and reliability were also discussed. Furthermore, data collection and analysis procedures were described in detail with an explanation of the limitations of the study. The outcomes and findings that describe how elementary school principals measure the degree of importance and strategies for implementing the 12 leadership principles that support high-achieving schools (Harvey et al., 2014) are presented in Chapter IV.
CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS

Overview

This explanatory mixed methods study explored the perspectives of elementary principals as they relate to a high-achieving school climate. Chapter IV describes the process used for research, data collection, and findings for this mixed methods study. The chapter begins with the purpose and research questions followed by the research and data collection methods. The population, sample, and demographic data are also described in this chapter. Most importantly, the data and analysis are presented in this chapter in the form of tables, narratives, and direct quotes. The major findings describe the degree of importance of 12 leadership principles proposed by Harvey et al. (2014) and strategies for implementing the 12 principles. A summary of the major elements concludes Chapter IV.

Purpose

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to determine the degree of importance for the 12-step principles proposed by Harvey, Drolet, and DeVore (2014) to create a K-12 school environment that fosters high student achievement as perceived by public school elementary principals in Northern California. A secondary purpose was to explore and describe the leadership strategies for implementing the 12-step principles proposed by Harvey et al. (2014) to create a K-12 school environment that fosters high student achievement as perceived by public school elementary principals in Northern California.
Research Questions

1. What is the degree of importance for the 12-step principles proposed by Harvey et al. (2014) to create a K-12 school environment that fosters high student achievement as perceived by public school elementary principals in Northern California?

2. What are the leadership strategies for implementing the 12-step principles proposed by Harvey et al. (2014) to create a K-12 school environment that fosters high student achievement as perceived by public school elementary principals in Northern California?

Research Methods and Data Collection Procedures

An explanatory mixed methods study approach was used to describe the degree of importance and strategies for implementing the 12-step leadership principles proposed by Harvey et al. (2014) aimed at creating a K-12 school environment that fosters high student achievement. Mixed methods research is appropriate to use when designing a more comprehensive study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton 2015). For the quantitative portion of this study, the researcher used an online survey developed by the peer researchers to measure the degree of importance of the 12-step principles proposed by Harvey et al. (2014). The five elementary principals completed the online survey anonymously. For the qualitative portion of this study, face-to-face interviews were conducted to identify the strategies for implementing the 12-step principles that foster high student achievement. Audio recordings were used during the interviews and were later transcribed. The quantitative and qualitative data were stored in a secured file, accessible only to the researcher.
Prior to collecting data from the participants of the study, a process was used to protect their privacy and confidentiality. The researcher submitted an application (Appendix I) to the Brandman University Institutional Review Board (BUIRB) for approval. According to Creswell (2012) and McMillan and Schumacher (2010), the IRB is a committee to ensure that the research protects the rights of the participants in the study. The application included information about the purpose of the study, research methodology, participants, data collection, and how potential risks may be addressed in the study (Creswell, 2012; Patton, 2015). Upon approval of the application, the researcher located the participants’ contact information on the public access school districts’ and individual schools’ websites. The researcher sent an invitation letter (Appendix K) via e-mail and made phone calls to gather interest from potential participants. Consequently, the principals who agreed to participate received a copy of the informed consent form via e-mail, signed it, and returned it to the researcher. The researcher explained the details of the study and also discussed the Participant’s Bill of Rights (Appendix N), which was also sent via e-mail.

**Interview Data Collection**

The researcher conducted five face-to-face, semistructured interviews utilizing a set of questions developed by the team of researchers and Brandman faculty. The five participants included five elementary principals. Prior to each interview, the participants received a copy of the interview questions (Appendix C). Each interview was scheduled based on participant availability. The identities of each participant remained confidential but were assigned an identification code for data analysis.
The researcher collected qualitative data by using the same set of scripted, open-ended interview questions for each participant. Probing questions were occasionally used to encourage a greater depth of responses as they pertained to the 12 leadership principles. A digital device was used to record the interviews while the researcher took notes to capture additional observations. The audio recordings were transcribed using the Otter application and later sent to each participant. The researcher analyzed the qualitative data by using the transcribed interviews to code the data and identify common themes as they emerged from the data.

**Population**

The population for this study included K-12 public school site administrators employed in high-achieving schools in California as determined by California Dashboard. School site administrators included principals, vice-principals, assistant principals, deans, coordinators, and any individual who works as a site administrator and holds a California Administrative Credential. According to the California Department of Education ([CDE], n.d.-a), California has 5,873 elementary schools and is therefore led by 5,873 principals. For purposes of this study, narrowing the population led to defining a target population or a sampling frame.

The sampling frame for this study was narrowed to elementary principals in Napa, Solano, and Sonoma Counties to provide for greater generalization, avoid bias, and offer convenience for data collection. There are 23 elementary schools in Napa County, 52 elementary schools in Solano County, and 108 elementary schools in Sonoma County. The target population included 183 elementary school principals from Napa, Sonoma,
and Solano Counties. Out of the 183 elementary schools, 23 schools met the criteria for high student achievement.

**Sample**

A purposeful and convenience sampling method was used to the select five elementary school principals. The sample selection began with the target population of elementary principals from high-achieving schools in Napa, Solano, and Sonoma Counties. Then, the researcher employed convenience and purposeful sampling methods to select participants based on the following criteria:

- The principal was employed at a school within the Napa, Solano, and Sonoma Counties with a minimum of 30 staff members.
- The principal has a minimum of 3 years of experience at his or her current site.
- The principal has a minimum of 5 years in the profession.
- The principal has membership in professional associations in his or her field.
- The principal has articles, papers, or materials written, published, or presented at conferences or association meetings.
- The principal was willing to be a participant and agreed to the informed consent form.

Table 3 presents the analysis of study participant criteria. Participants were identified by academic achievement data demographic school site data from the California School Dashboard. Current elementary principals met at least four of the six qualifying criteria.
### Criteria for Selecting Elementary Principals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The principal was employed at a school located within Napa, Solano, and Sonoma Counties with a minimum of 30 staff members.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The principal has a minimum of 3 years of leadership experience at his or her current site.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The principal has a minimum of 5 years in the profession.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The principal has membership in professional associations in his or her field.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The principal has articles, papers, or materials written, published, or presented at conferences or association meetings.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The principal was willing to be a participant and agreed to the informed consent form.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Demographic Data

Five elementary principals from Napa, Solano, and Sonoma Counties were selected to participate in this study. To maintain confidentiality, demographic data were reported excluding individual or district references. The participants were assigned a number and identifying demographic data, gender, age, and number of years as a principal. Two of the participants were male and three were female. All participants met the eligibility criteria. The participants demographic data are described in Table 4.

### Table 4

#### Demographic Information of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age in years</th>
<th>Years at current site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2 Male</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 Female</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>31-40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>41-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50-60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Presentation and Analysis of the Data**

The presentation and analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data are described in the following sections. The data were obtained through a mixed methods research design. Quantitative data were collected through an electronic survey that included 61 questions that measured the degree of importance of the 12-step principles proposed by Harvey et al. (2014) as perceived by elementary school principals. Qualitative data were collected through face-to-face interviews about strategies used to implement the 12-step leadership principles used to create a school environment that fosters high achievement. The participants included five elementary principals who met the criteria for this study. The participants were asked the same 61 questions on the survey and the same 12 interview questions. The processes and procedures for the survey and interviews are explained in addition to intercoder reliability. Next, the findings for Research Question 1 describe the elementary principals’ perceptions of the degree of importance of each of the 12-step leadership principles that support a high-achieving school environment proposed by Harvey et al. (2014). Finally, the findings for Research Question 2 describe how the elementary principals implemented the leadership strategies to create a high-achieving school environment.

**Data Results and Analysis by Research Question**

**Results for Research Question 1**

Research Question 1 asked, “*What is the degree of importance for the 12-step principles proposed by Harvey et al. (2014) to create a K-12 school environment that fosters high student achievement as perceived by public school elementary principals in Northern California?*” An electronic survey tool, SurveyMonkey was utilized to collect
quantitative data. Each set of survey questions was aligned to one of the 12 leadership steps (Appendix D) that create a school environment that fosters high student achievement as perceived by public school elementary principals. The participants responded to each question by using a Likert scale defined as follows: 1 (*strongly disagree*), 2 (*disagree*), 3 (*disagree somewhat*), 4 (*agree somewhat*), 5 (*agree*), and 6 (*strongly agree*).

The SurveyMonkey link was deployed to the participants via e-mail. The five elementary principals read and acknowledged the informed consent information which was included in the beginning of the survey prior to their participation. Each principal responded to the same survey and all data collected were secured with a password-protected account. Upon completion of all surveys, the researcher analyzed the survey data. The analysis included a process for finding the mean score of each leadership principle, then ranking the 12 principles from the highest mean to the lowest mean.

**Summary of Survey Data on Leadership Behaviors**

The survey data results for Research Question 1 were organized by the 12-step leadership principles. Each leadership principle was further defined by a set of skills and behaviors that were used to create a high-achieving school environment. A total of 61 questions were included in the survey and each question addressed a leadership behavior that aligned with one of the 12-step leadership principles. The 12-step leadership principles include: strong leadership, a culture of high achievement, vision and values, high expectations, love and passion, focus on learning and achievement, embedded professional development, academic achievement and assessment for the 21st century,
strength of teams, collaboration and shared decision-making, communication, and flexibility and resilience (Harvey et al., 2014).

Table 5 provides a summary of the overall results of the leading for excellence survey that measures the degree of importance of each of the 12 principles of leadership as perceived by elementary school principals. According to the survey results, all respondents perceived that all 12 leadership principles were important for establishing a culture for high achievement. Overall, the results show that strong leadership was the most important principle with 72% of responses rating in strongly agree category with a mean score of 5.73. Establishing a culture of high achievement was ranked second with a mean score of 5.28, 43% of responses in the strongly agree category and 48% of responses that fell in the agree category. The third leadership principle was flexibility and resilience that yielded a mean score of 5.27 with 33% reporting that they strongly agreed 60% agreed. The fourth leadership principle was vision and values with a mean score of 5.25 and 53% of respondents reporting that they strongly agreed.

Embedded professional development and communication both came in fifth with mean scores of 5.13. Ninety percent of respondents reported that they either strongly agreed or agreed with embedded professional development while 77% reported that they strongly agreed or agreed about the importance of communication. Academic achievement and assessment followed close in sixth place with a mean score of 5.11 and 74% of responses in the strongly agree and agree categories. A focus on learning and academic rigor followed in seventh with a mean score of 5.04 and 72% of respondents who the strongly agreed and agreed.
### Table 5

Summary of Number of Respondents and the Perceived Degree of Importance of Each of the 12 Leadership Principles—Includes Percentage and Mean of Totals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>12 Leadership Principles (total # of questions answered for each principle)</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree somewhat</th>
<th>Agree somewhat</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strong leadership (25)</strong></td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>7 28%</td>
<td>18 72%</td>
<td>5.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Culture of high achievement (40)</strong></td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>2 5%</td>
<td>2 5%</td>
<td>19 48%</td>
<td>17 43%</td>
<td>5.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Flexibility and Resilience (15)</strong></td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>1 7%</td>
<td>9 60%</td>
<td>5 33%</td>
<td>5.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vision and values (19)</strong></td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>5 26%</td>
<td>4 21%</td>
<td>10 53%</td>
<td>5.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>High expectations (20)</strong></td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>2 10%</td>
<td>8 40%</td>
<td>5 25% <strong>5.20</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Embedded professional development (29)</strong></td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>3 10%</td>
<td>19 66%</td>
<td>7 24%</td>
<td>5.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication (15)</strong></td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>3 20%</td>
<td>7 47%</td>
<td>5 30%</td>
<td>5.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic achievement and assessment for the 21st century (45)</strong></td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>12 27%</td>
<td>16 36%</td>
<td>17 38%</td>
<td>5.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus on learning and academic rigor (25)</strong></td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>7 28%</td>
<td>10 40%</td>
<td>8 32%</td>
<td>5.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Love and passion (20)</strong></td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>4 20%</td>
<td>11 55%</td>
<td>5 25%</td>
<td>4.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strength of teams (20)</strong></td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>1 5%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>5 25%</td>
<td>8 40%</td>
<td>6 30%</td>
<td>4.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collaboration and shared decision-making (25)</strong></td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>1 4%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>6 24%</td>
<td>13 52%</td>
<td>5 20%</td>
<td>4.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>High expectations (20)</strong></td>
<td>3 15%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>2 10%</td>
<td>2 10%</td>
<td>8 40%</td>
<td>5 25% <strong>4.35</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Question 19, “Lower student expectations” included in the analysis of mean.

** Question 19, “Lower student expectations” not included in the analysis of mean.
The eighth principle was love and passion, which yielded a mean score of 4.95 and 79% responses falling in the *strongly agree* and *agree* categories. The strength of teams was ranked in ninth place according to its mean score of 4.9. Collaboration followed in tenth place with a mean score of 4.84.

Lastly, the leadership principle of high expectations, which included a total of four questions, was analyzed in two ways. Questions 19 and 20 counteracted the ratings for high expectations. Question 19 asked elementary principals to rate their perception of “lower student expectations,” while Question 20 asked elementary principals to rate their perception of “higher student expectations.” When all questions were included, high expectations was reported to be the 11th leadership principle with a mean score of 4.35; 73% strongly agreed, agreed, or somewhat agreed while 27% strongly disagreed or disagreed somewhat. When “lower student expectations” was removed from the calculations, the mean score was 5.2. The calculation without “lower student expectations” appeared to be a more accurate perception of “high expectations” with 87% of responses in the *strongly agree* and *agree* categories and 13% in the *agree somewhat* category.

**Data analysis for the 12 leadership principles.** An analysis for each of the 12 leadership principles is described in the following sections. The sequence is based on the survey results from the leadership principle with the highest mean score to the lowest mean score. Each leadership principle included a set of questions that addressed skills or behaviors that elementary principals utilized to create a high-achieving environment. Respondents used a Likert scale to score each question. A table for each of the 12
leadership principles illustrates the mean score for each question and an overall mean score.

**Strong leadership.** Table 6 shows the degree of importance of behaviors that develop strong leadership as perceived by elementary principals to create a high-achieving school environment. Strong leadership was perceived to be the most important principle that school leaders used to support high achievement out of the 12 leadership principles proposed by Harvey et al. (2014). Participants responded to six questions about behaviors that support strong leadership by using a Likert scale that ranged from 1—*strongly disagree* to 6—*strongly agree*. The behavior with the highest degree of importance was “develop and adhere to goals that focus on student achievement” with a mean score of 6 and 100% of respondents in the *strongly agree* category. Three behaviors were equally ranked second out of the six behaviors, “establish clear vision for the organization,” “use collaboration,” and “manage the relationships of the institution.” The three behaviors received a mean score of 5.8 with 80% of responses in the *strongly agree* category and 20% in the *agree* category. “Do the right thing (versus do things right)” was ranked third with a mean score of 5.6 (60% reported that they *strongly agreed*; 40% reported that they *agreed*). The behavior with the least perceived degree of importance was “encourage the good idea of others” with a mean score of 5.4 (40% reported that they *strongly agreed*; 40% reported that they *agreed*).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviors measured for strong leadership</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree somewhat</th>
<th>Agree somewhat</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Develop and adhere to goals that focus on student achievement</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish a clear vision for the organization</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use collaboration</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manage the relationships of the institution</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do the right thing (versus doing things right)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage the good ideas of others</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall degree of importance</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Degree of importance by number, % of responses, plus mean.*
**Culture of high achievement.** Table 7 shows the degree of importance of behaviors that establish a culture of high achievement as perceived by elementary principals. This leadership principle had the second highest mean score of 5.28 out of the 12 principles and although it was ranked in second place, 90% of the responses were in the *strongly agree* and *agree* categories. Elementary principals responded to eight questions about behaviors or skills that establish a culture of high achievement and rated the scores from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). “Establish trust” was the behavior that elementary principals perceived as most important with a mean score of 5.8 with 100% of the responses in the *strongly agree* and *agree* ratings. The second behavior was “turn a toxic environment around” with a mean score of 5.6; 60% of the respondents gave a rating of *strongly agree* and the remaining 40% gave a rating of *agree*.

The remaining behaviors that elementary principals perceived to be important for establishing a culture of high achievement received mean scores ranging from 4.4 to 5.4. Two behaviors, “use norms” and “celebrate” were both ranked third with mean scores of 5.4. “Use norms” had 60% of responses in the *strongly agree* rating, 20% in the *agree* rating, and 20% in the *agree somewhat* rating. “Celebrate joy” scored 40% with *strongly agree* and 60% with *agree*. Next, “make people want to be there,” “know my staff members’ stories and honor them,” and “use joy” were equally ranked fourth with mean scores of 5.2. “Use joy” and “make people want to be there” both had 80% of ratings in the *agree* category and 20% in the *strongly agree* category. “Know my staff members’ stories included 40% in the *strongly agree* rating, 40% in the *agree* rating, and 20% in the
Table 7

Degree of Importance of Leadership Behaviors for Establishing a Culture of High Achievement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviors measured for establishing a culture of high achievement</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree somewhat</th>
<th>Agree somewhat</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Establish trust</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>1 20%</td>
<td>4 80%</td>
<td>5.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turn a toxic environment around</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>2 40%</td>
<td>3 60%</td>
<td>5.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use norms</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>1 20%</td>
<td>1 20%</td>
<td>3 60%</td>
<td>5.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrate</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>2 40%</td>
<td>3 60%</td>
<td>5.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make people want to be there</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>4 80%</td>
<td>1 0%</td>
<td>5.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know my staff members’ stories and honor them</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>1 20%</td>
<td>2 40%</td>
<td>2 40%</td>
<td>5.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use joy</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>4 80%</td>
<td>1 20%</td>
<td>5.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use artifacts, heroes, and stories</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>2 40%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>2 40%</td>
<td>1 20%</td>
<td>4.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall degree of importance</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>2 5%</td>
<td>5 0%</td>
<td>19 48%</td>
<td>17 42%</td>
<td>5.28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Degree of importance by number, % of responses, plus mean.
agree somewhat rating. Finally, “use artifacts, heroes, and stories” received the lowest rating with a mean score of 4.4 and the following breakdown of responses: 20% strongly agree, 40% agree, and 40% disagree somewhat.

**Flexibility and resilience.** Table 8 shows the degree of importance of behaviors that develop flexibility and resilience as perceived by elementary principals. Out of the 12 leadership principles, flexibility and resilience was ranked third with a mean score of 5.27, which was only .01 points behind establishing a culture of high achievement.

Elementary principals responded to three questions about behaviors or skills that develop flexibility and resilience. By using a rating system from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree), “practice persistence” received the highest mean score of 5.6 with 60% of responses in the strongly agree category and 40% of responses in the agree category. “Practice adaptability” was ranked second with a mean score of 5.4; 40% of the responses were in the strongly agree category and 60% of the responses were in the agree category. The least perceived behavior of importance was “behave resiliently” with a mean score of 4.8; 80% of responses were in the agree category, and 20% of responses were in the agree somewhat category. Although flexibility and resilience ranked third out of the 12 leadership principles, a significant percentage of responses (93%) fell into the strongly agreed and agreed categories.
Table 8

*Degree of Importance of Leadership Behaviors for Developing Flexibility and Resilience*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviors measured for flexibility and resilience</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree somewhat</th>
<th>Agree somewhat</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practice persistence</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (40%)</td>
<td>3 (60%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice adaptability</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>3 (60%)</td>
<td>2 (40%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behave resiliently</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (20%)</td>
<td>4 (80%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall degree of importance</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>9 (60%)</td>
<td>5 (33%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Degree of importance by number, % of responses, plus mean.
Vision and values. Table 9 shows the degree of importance of behaviors that support the leadership principle of vision and values as perceived by elementary principals. With an overall mean score of 5.25, vision and values was perceived as the fourth most important out of the 12 leadership principles utilized to create a high-achieving school environment. Principals were asked to answer four questions about behaviors that develop vision and values. “Have high achievement as a goal” was ranked in first place with a mean score of 5.6; 80% of responses were in the strongly agree category and 20% of responses were in the agree somewhat category. “Do strategic planning” came in second place with a mean score of 5.4, in which 40% of principals rated this behavior in the strongly agree category and 60% in the agree category. “Establish common team values” was ranked in third place and received a mean score of 5.2; 60% of the responses were in the strongly agree category while 40% were in the agree somewhat category. Lastly, “have all constituents buy-in to the values” was rated the least important with a mean score 4.8 and the following breakdown of responses: 20% strongly agree, 40% agree, and 40% agree somewhat. Although vision and values was rated fourth, all responses were rated in the strongly agree, agree, and agree somewhat categories. None of the five elementary principals disagreed with the importance of behaviors to develop vision values.
### Table 9

**Degree of Importance of Leadership Behaviors for Developing Vision and Values**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviors and skills measured for vision and values</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree somewhat</th>
<th>Agree somewhat</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have high achievement as a goal</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>1 20%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>4 80%</td>
<td>5.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do strategic planning</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>3 60%</td>
<td>2 40%</td>
<td>5.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish common team values</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>2 40%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>3 60%</td>
<td>5.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have all constituents buy into the values</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>2 40%</td>
<td>2 40%</td>
<td>1 20%</td>
<td>4.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall degree of importance</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>4 20%</td>
<td>16 80%</td>
<td>5.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Degree of importance by number, % of responses, plus mean.*
Embedded professional development. Table 10 shows the degree of importance of behaviors that support the leadership principle of embedded professional development as perceived by elementary principals. Embedded professional development was perceived as the fifth most important principle out of the 12 leadership principles utilized to create a high-achieving school environment. Principals were asked to answer six questions about behaviors that support embedded professional development. The behavior with the highest rating was “align professional development with school improvement” and received a mean score of 5.6; 60% of responses were in the strongly agree category, and 40% were in the agree category. “See professional development as an intensive, ongoing and connected practice” and “use teacher self-assessment needs, evaluation needs, and student achievement needs to propel professional development” both received a mean score of 5.2 and ranked second. “See professional development as an intensive, ongoing and connected practice” responses included 40% in the strongly agree category, 40% in the agree category, and 20% in the somewhat agree category. “Use teacher self-assessment needs, evaluation needs, and student achievement needs to propel professional development” responses included 20% in the strongly agree category and 80% in the agree category. “Establish technology as a focus for professional development priorities and goals” and “use school-based coaching to enhance professional learning” were equally ranked in fourth place, both with a mean score of 5.0, 100% of responses in the agree category. “Establish mentoring and induction programs for new teachers” received the lowest rating of a 4.8 mean score; however, 20% of the responses were strongly agreed, 40% agreed, and 40% agreed somewhat. Embedded professional development was equally ranked in fifth place with the leadership principle
### Table 10

**Degree of Importance of Leadership Behaviors for Developing Embedded Professional Development**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviors and skills measured for embedded professional development</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree somewhat</th>
<th>Agree somewhat</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Align professional development with school improvement priorities and goals</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>2 40%</td>
<td>3 60%</td>
<td>5.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>See professional development as an intensive, ongoing and connected practice</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>1 20%</td>
<td>2 40%</td>
<td>2 40%</td>
<td>5.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use teacher self-assessment needs, evaluation needs, and student achievement needs to propel professional development</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>1 20%</td>
<td>4 80%</td>
<td>5.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish technology as a focus for professional development priorities and goals</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>5 100%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use school-based coaching to enhance professional learning</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>5 100%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish mentoring and induction programs for new teachers</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>2 40%</td>
<td>2 40%</td>
<td>1 20%</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall degree of importance</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>3 10%</td>
<td>19 66%</td>
<td>7 24%</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Degree of importance by number, % of responses, plus mean.
of communication; however, embedded professional development had more weight because it included six questions as opposed to communication, which was composed of only three questions.

**Communication.** Table 11 shows the degree of importance of behaviors that support the leadership principle of communication as perceived by elementary principals. Communication, which yielded a mean score of 5.13, was also perceived as the fifth most important principle out of the 12 leadership principles utilized to create a high-achieving school environment. Elementary principals were asked to answer three questions about behaviors that support communication. “Use two-way communication” was perceived to be the most important behavior with a mean score of 5.4; 40% of responses were in the *strongly agree* rating, and 60% were in the *agree* category. “Use all avenues of communication” was rated in second place with a mean score of 5.2 and included the following breakdown of responses: 40% in the *strongly agree* rating, 40% in the *agree* rating, and 20% in the *agree somewhat* rating. The behavior with the least degree of importance was “communicate that high achievement is for all” and received a mean score of 4.8 and included 20% of responses in *strongly agree* rating, 40% in *agree*, and 40% in *agree somewhat*. All responses fell into the *agree somewhat* to *strongly agree* ratings, and none of the principals *disagreed* with the behaviors to support communication.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviors and skills measured for communication</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree somewhat</th>
<th>Agree somewhat</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>$M$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use two-way communication</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>3 60%</td>
<td>2 40%</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use all avenues of communication</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>1 20%</td>
<td>2 40%</td>
<td>2 40%</td>
<td>5.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate that high achievement is for all</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>2 40%</td>
<td>2 40%</td>
<td>1 20%</td>
<td>4.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall degree of importance</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>3 20%</td>
<td>7 47%</td>
<td>5 33%</td>
<td>5.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Degree of importance by number, % of responses, plus mean.*
**Academic achievement and assessment for the 21st century.** Table 12 shows the degree of importance of behaviors that support the leadership principle of academic achievement and assessment for the 21st century as perceived by elementary principals. Out of the 12 leadership principles, academic achievement and assessment for the 21st century was perceived as the sixth most important principle that elementary principals utilized to create a high-achieving school environment. Elementary principals were asked to answer eight questions about behaviors that support academic achievement and assessment. Three behaviors were equally ranked in first place with a mean score of 5.6: “employ formative assessments,” “use multiple assessments,” and “use data over and over again.” “Employ formative assessments” and “use data over and over again” resulted in an equal distribution of responses: 60% *strongly agreed* and 40% *agreed*. The responses for “use multiple assessments” included 80% in the *strongly agree* rating and 20% in the *agree* rating. “Use data assiduously” ranked in second place with a mean of 5.4; 40% of the responses were in the *strongly agree* category, and 60% were in the *agree* category. Respondents ranked “use criteria that are authentic” in second place with a mean score of 5.0; 20% *strongly agreed*, 60% *agreed*, and 20% *agreed somewhat*. Two behaviors, “use trend data” and “use a team to analyze data,” ranked fourth place with a mean score of 4.8. “Use trend data” included 40% of responses in the *strongly agree* category and 60% in the *agree somewhat* category. “Use team to analyze data” included 20% who *strongly agreed*, 40% who *agreed* and 40% who *agreed somewhat*. The two behaviors that were perceived as the least important yet had no responses in the *disagree* categories included “use assessment for 21st century skills” and “change assessment for common core standards” both with a mean score of 4.60. The responses for “use
Table 12

*Degree of Importance of Leadership Behaviors for Developing Academic Achievement and Assessment for the 21st Century*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviors and skills measured for academic achievement and assessment for the 21st century</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree somewhat</th>
<th>Agree somewhat</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employ formative assessment</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>2 40%</td>
<td>3 60%</td>
<td>5.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use multiple assessments</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>1 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>4 80%</td>
<td>5.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use data over and over again</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>2 40%</td>
<td>2 40%</td>
<td>3 60%</td>
<td>5.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use data assiduously to improve</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>3 60%</td>
<td>2 40%</td>
<td>5.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use criteria that are authentic</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>1 20%</td>
<td>3 60%</td>
<td>1 20%</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use trend data</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>3 60%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>2 40%</td>
<td>4.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use a team to analyze data</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>2 40%</td>
<td>2 40%</td>
<td>1 20%</td>
<td>4.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change assessments for Common Core Standards</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>3 60%</td>
<td>1 20%</td>
<td>1 20%</td>
<td>4.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use assessment for 21st century</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>2 40%</td>
<td>3 60%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>4.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall degree of importance</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>12 27%</td>
<td>16 36%</td>
<td>17 38%</td>
<td>5.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Degree of importance by number, % of responses, plus mean.*
assessment for 21st century skills” included 60% in the agree category and 40% in the agree somewhat category. Finally, “change assessments for common core standards” included the following responses: 20% in strongly agree, 20% in agree, and 60% in agree somewhat.

**Focus on learning and academic rigor.** Table 13 shows the degree of importance of behaviors that support the leadership principle of focus on learning and academic rigor as perceived by elementary principals. Out of the 12 leadership principles, focus on learning and academic rigor was perceived as the seventh most important principle that elementary principals utilized to create a high-achieving school environment.

Elementary principals were asked to answer five questions about behaviors to develop a focus on learning and academic rigor. “Set high expectations” and “support rigor” were perceived to be the most important behaviors, both with a mean score of 5.40. “Set high expectations” included 40% who strongly agreed and 60% who agreed. “Support rigor” included 60% who strongly agreed, 20% who agreed, and 20% who agreed somewhat.

Respondents ranked “make student learning the chief responsibility of everyone” was ranked in second place with a mean score of 5.20 and a breakdown of the following responses: 40% who strongly agreed, 40% who agreed, and 20% who agreed somewhat.

Two behaviors were equally ranked in third place and both with a mean score of 4.60, “define rigor” and “demand rigor.”

**Love and passion.** Table 14 shows the degree of importance of behaviors that develop the leadership principle of love and passion as perceived by elementary principals. Out of the 12 leadership principles, love and passion was perceived as the
### Table 13

**Degree Importance of Leadership Behaviors for Developing a Focus on Learning and Academic Rigor**

| Behaviors and skills measured for focus on learning and academic rigor | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Disagree somewhat | Agree somewhat | Agree | Strongly agree | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | M |
| Set high expectations for learning | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 3 | 60% | 2 | 40% | 5.40 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 3 | 60% | 2 | 40% | 5.40 |
| Support rigor | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 1 | 20% | 1 | 20% | 2 | 40% | 5.40 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 1 | 20% | 2 | 40% | 5.40 |
| Make student learning the chief responsibility of everyone | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 1 | 20% | 2 | 40% | 2 | 40% | 5.20 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 2 | 40% | 3 | 60% | 0 | 0% | 4.60 |
| Define rigor | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 2 | 40% | 3 | 60% | 0 | 0% | 4.60 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 3 | 60% | 1 | 20% | 1 | 20% | 4.60 |
| Demand rigor | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 3 | 60% | 1 | 20% | 1 | 20% | 4.60 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 7 | 28% | 10 | 40% | 8 | 32% | 5.04 |

*Note.* Degree of importance by number, % of responses, plus mean.
Table 14

Degree of Importance of Leadership Behaviors for Developing Love and Passion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviors and skills measured for love and passion</th>
<th>Strongly disagree n</th>
<th>Strongly disagree %</th>
<th>Disagree n</th>
<th>Disagree %</th>
<th>Disagree somewhat n</th>
<th>Disagree somewhat %</th>
<th>Agree somewhat n</th>
<th>Agree somewhat %</th>
<th>Agree n</th>
<th>Agree %</th>
<th>Strongly agree n</th>
<th>Strongly agree %</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Love the work</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>5.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on the positive in others</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love the people I work with</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice skills of love</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall degree of importance</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>4.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Degree of importance by number, % of responses, plus mean.
eighth most important principle that elementary principals utilized to create a high-achieving school environment. Elementary principals were asked to answer four questions about behaviors to support love and passion in the context of leadership. The overall mean score was 4.95. First, the behavior with the highest rating was “love the work,” which included a mean score of 5.4, 60% with responses in the strongly agree rating, 20% in the agree rating, and 20% in the agree somewhat rating. “Focus on the positive in others” was ranked second with a mean score of 5.2, 20% of respondents who strongly agreed and 80% of respondents who agreed. “Love the people I work with” ranked third with a mean score of 4.8, 80% in the agree category and 20% in the agree somewhat category. Lastly, “practice skills of love” had a mean score of 4.4, 40% of respondents who agreed and 60% who agreed somewhat.

**Strength of teams.** Table 15 shows the degree of importance of behaviors that support the leadership principle of strength of teams as perceived by elementary principals. With an overall mean score of 4.95, strength of teams was perceived as the ninth most important principle that elementary principals utilized to create a high-achieving school environment. Elementary principals were asked to answer four questions about behaviors to support strength of teams. Two behaviors that were equally ranked in first place and with a mean score of 5.2 were “make sure that everybody goes in the same direction” and “make sure that I have a high role in high achievement.” The breakdown of responses for both behaviors were also equal: 40% who strongly agreed, 40% who agreed, and 20% who agreed somewhat. “Make sure that I have a high functioning team” was ranked second with a mean score of 5.0, 40% respondents who
Table 15

*Degree of Importance of Leadership Behaviors for Developing Strength in Teams*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviors and skills measured for the strength of teams</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree somewhat</th>
<th>Agree somewhat</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Make sure that everybody goes in the same direction</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>1 20%</td>
<td>2 40%</td>
<td>2 40%</td>
<td>5.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make sure I have a role in high achievement</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>1 20%</td>
<td>2 40%</td>
<td>2 40%</td>
<td>5.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make sure I have a high-functioning team</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>2 4%</td>
<td>1 20%</td>
<td>2 40%</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend to the personal side of the teams</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>1 20%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>1 20%</td>
<td>3 60%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>4.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall degree of importance</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>1 5%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>5 25%</td>
<td>8 40%</td>
<td>6 30%</td>
<td>4.90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Degree of importance by number, % of responses, plus mean.
strongly agreed, 20% who agreed, and 40% who agreed somewhat. “Attend to the personal side of teams” was perceived as the least important behavior with a mean score of 4.2 and the following breakdown of responses: 60% who agreed, 20% who agreed somewhat, and 20% who disagreed. It is noted that although one respondent gave a rating in the disagree category, the remaining four respondents gave ratings in the agree somewhat (4) to strongly agree (6) categories.

**Collaboration and shared decision-making.** Table 16 shows the degree of importance of behaviors that support the leadership principle of collaboration and shared decision-making as perceived by elementary principals. Out of the 12 leadership principals, collaboration and shared decision-making was ranked as the ninth most important leadership principle that elementary principals utilized to create a high-achieving school environment. The overall mean score was 4.84. Elementary principals were asked to answer five questions about behaviors that develop collaboration and shared decision-making. The behavior that was perceived as most important was “implement good decision-making practices,” which had a mean score of 5.4; 40% of responses were in the strongly agree category, and 60% were in the agree category.

“Share the information” and “use participation to get investment success” were equally ranked in second place, both with a mean score of 5.00. Furthermore, both behaviors included a breakdown of the following response ratings: 20% who strongly agreed, 60% who agreed, and 20% who agreed somewhat. “Broaden the involvement” was ranked in third place with a mean score of 4.6, 20% in the strongly agree rating, 20% in the agree rating, and 60% in the agree somewhat rating. The least important behavior was “make
Table 16

*Degree of Importance of Leadership Behaviors for Developing Collaboration and Shared Decision-Making*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviors and skills measured for collaboration and shared decision-making</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree somewhat</th>
<th>Agree somewhat</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Implement good decision-making practices</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>3 60%</td>
<td>2 40%</td>
<td>5.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share the information</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>1 20%</td>
<td>3 60%</td>
<td>1 20%</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use the participation to get investment success</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>1 20%</td>
<td>3 60%</td>
<td>1 20%</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broaden the involvement</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>3 60%</td>
<td>1 20%</td>
<td>1 20%</td>
<td>4.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make sure the what goes down, but the how goes up</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>1 20%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>1 20%</td>
<td>3 60%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>4.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall degree of importance</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>1 4%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>6 24%</td>
<td>13 52%</td>
<td>5 20%</td>
<td>4.84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Degree of importance by number, % of responses, plus mean.
sure the what goes down, but the how goes up” with a mean score of 4.20 and the following ratings: 60% in the agree category, 20% in the agree somewhat category, and 20% in the disagree category. Four out of five respondents gave ratings that ranged from agree somewhat (4) to agree (5) while only one respondent gave a rating of disagree (1).

**High expectations.** Table 17 shows the degree of importance of behaviors that support the leadership principle of high expectations as perceived by elementary principals. The data were analyzed in two ways. The first analysis explained that out of the 12 leadership principals, high expectations was rated as the least important leadership principle that elementary principals utilized to create a high-achieving school environment. The overall mean score was 4.35. Elementary principals were asked to answer four questions about behaviors that develop high expectations. “Give support for high expectations” was perceived to be the most important behavior with a mean score of 5.6, 60% or respondents who strongly agreed and 40% who agreed. Two behaviors, “higher student expectations,” and “have a high-achieving environment” were equally ranked in second place, both with a mean score of 5.0. The breakdown of responses was also equal and included the following percentages: 20% of respondents strongly agreed, 60% agreed, and 20% agreed somewhat. “Lower student expectations” was ranked least important with a mean score of 1.80 and 100% of the respondent ratings in the strongly disagree and disagree somewhat categories—40% disagreed somewhat and 60% strongly disagreed.

The second analysis of the leadership behaviors that develop high expectations eliminated “lower student expectations.” Because of the lack of context for this behavior,
Table 17

*Degree Importance of Leadership Behaviors for Developing High Expectations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviors and skills measured for high expectations</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree somewhat</th>
<th>Agree somewhat</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give support for high expectations</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher student expectations</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a high achievement environment</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower student expectations</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall degree of importance</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Degree of importance by number, % of responses, plus mean.
* Question 19, “Lower student expectations” included in the analysis of mean.
** Question 19, “Lower student expectations” not included in the analysis of mean.
100% of the respondents, which is clearly significant, rated this behavior in the *strongly disagree* and *disagree somewhat* ratings and counteracted the leadership behavior of “higher student expectations.” By eliminating the responses for “lower student expectations,” the mean score for the leadership principle of high expectations would have been a 5.20 and ranked in fifth place out of the 12 leadership principles as opposed to last place.

**Results for Research Question 2**

Research Question 2 asked, “What are the leadership strategies for implementing the 12-step principles proposed by Harvey et al. (2014) to create a K-12 school environment that fosters high student achievement as perceived by public school elementary principals in Northern California?” For this research question, elementary principals were asked to describe the leadership strategies they implemented to create a school environment that fosters high student achievement. All five of the elementary principals who participated in this study were asked the same interview questions. The participants responded to the 12-step leadership principals proposed by Harvey et al. (2014), which are strong leadership, culture of high achievement, vision and values, high expectations, love and passion, focus on learning, embedded professional development, academic achievement and assessment for the 21st century, the strength of teams, collaboration and shared decision-making, communication, and flexibility and resilience.

Face-to-face interviews were conducted to collect qualitative data. Prior to the interview, each participant read and signed the Informed Consent form. A semistructured interview process was used, which included open-ended questions and probing questions when needed to gain a deeper understanding of each of the 12 leadership principals.
Each interview was recorded with a mobile device using the Otter application that automatically transcribed the audio version from speech to text. The transcriptions were uploaded onto a secure, local file on the researcher’s computer. The transcribed interviews were then transferred to the NVivo software that coded qualitative data. As a result, the researcher was able to code the data, identify themes that emerged from the data, and identify thematic descriptors.

After analyzing the data from the interviews, a total of 41 themes with 306 frequencies were identified. A minimum of four frequencies were needed for a theme to include in the overall analysis. Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of themes across the 12 leadership principles utilized to create a high-achieving school environment. Each leadership principle was identified as a variable. Figure 3 shows the frequency distribution for each variable.

Figure 2. Distribution of themes for each variable.
The leadership principle of strong leadership surfaced five themes. Four themes emerged from each of the leadership principles of culture of high achievement, embedded professional development, and collaboration and shared decision-making. Vision and values, high expectations, love and passion, focus on learning and academic rigor, academic achievement and assessment, strength of teams, communication, and flexibility and resilience generated three themes.

The distribution of frequencies varied among the 12 variables. Strong leadership had the highest number of frequencies 67 (22%). Collaboration and shared decision-making emerged with 28 frequencies (9%) followed closely by communication with 27 frequencies (9%). Next, embedded professional development had 26 frequencies (8%),
and academic achievement and assessment had 25 frequencies (8%). Culture of high achievement generated 23 frequencies (7%), strength of teams generated 22 frequencies (7%), and vision and values had 21 frequencies (7%). Flexibility and resilience had 20 frequencies (7%) while love and passion generated 19 frequencies (6%). Finally, focus on learning and rigor had 15 frequencies (5%), and high expectations generated 14 frequencies (5%). A detailed analysis of each of the 12 steps for creating a high-achieving school environment are further described in the remaining sections of this chapter.

**Strong leadership.** Harvey et al. (2014) quoted Jacoby: “The importance of leadership cannot be overstated in an environment where the goal is every student will achieve high levels” (Chapter 1, Section 1, para. 1). Strong leadership is the ability of a leader to establish clear vision and goals for an organization focused on student achievement and team collaboration (Harvey et al., 2014; Leithwood et al., 2010). Furthermore, effective school leaders influence student learning by establishing trust, utilizing collective leadership practices, learning with teachers (Louis et al., 2010). Based on the interviews with five elementary principals, strong leadership has an impact on creating a high-achieving school environment.

Table 18 and Figure 4 represent the themes and frequencies that emerged from the NVivo analysis of the interviews. The emerging themes are described in Table 18 and include the number of participants who contributed to each theme, the percentage of participants who contributed to each team, and the frequency count of responses received for each theme. The themes emerging from an analysis of the interview transcripts...
represent the leadership strategies for implementing the 12-step leadership principles as perceived by the participants.

Table 18
Themes and Patterns Resulting From an Analysis of the Interviews Related to Research Question 2: Strong Leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme/pattern</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>% based on N</th>
<th>Frequency of reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use data to drive your actions</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide support based on needs and relevance</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilize collaborative leadership practices</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build relationships and get to know people</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The N for interview participants = 5.

*Figure 4.* Themes and frequencies for strong leadership.
Four strategies emerged from the coding process for strong leadership. The strategies for strong leadership were referenced 67 times (22%) and had the highest frequency count out of all 12 leadership principles for all coded data. Each strategy for strong leadership included 80% or higher of respondents. The main finding concluded that using data to drive one’s actions is a behavior for strong leadership.

**Use data to drive your actions.** Using data emerged as the strategy with the most references. Four out of five elementary principals mentioned the importance of using data to drive their actions 19 times. One elementary principal explained,

You also need to go back and look at your data, because our decisions need to be data-driven. Your actions are really based on your data. If you don’t know where you’re at, you don’t really know where you’re going to go. Use the data to determine the work.

Another participant expressed,

And you have to make the data relevant and meaningful to the people you’re working with, which is your staff, your parents, your students. So after you’ve done a data analysis, with all the stakeholders, it would be great to do it all together, then what you would do is you would start letting the data dictate the vision and dictate the needs and dictate your actions.

Also, one participant stated,

You have to look at data from all sources—student achievement, attendance, discipline data—then analyze the data to know where the school is and where it needs to go . . . it helps determine where you need to go.
**Provide support based on needs and relevance.** Support for staff was mentioned 16 times throughout four out of the five interviews with principals. One principal explained,

It’s really been a shift for me—supporting adults in the role of supporting children. And really supporting adults on campus and that’s the primary goal. Getting them to see that they have those skills and that they have the support to do what’s best for kids. I think that if they do that, then the vision will really take off no matter what the vision is.

Principals who are genuinely concerned for their schools create systems for academic support that will impact student achievement (Louis et al., 2016). Furthermore, McKee et al. (2008) stated, “Resonant leaders are attuned to themselves and to the needs, desires, and dreams of the people they lead” (p. 2). Two participants described the importance of collecting data from different stakeholder groups about their needs as a strategy for determining specific types of support. For example, one participant stated, “collect their interests and collect what they feel the data is telling them and the needs telling them. From there, you’ll be able to better serve them.”

**Build relationships and get to know people.** All five of the participants commented on the importance of knowing the people and knowing the school culture. This strategy was referenced 10 times as an important characteristic of strong leadership. One participant responded, “I think that has to do with knowing your staff, know your people, their strengths, and then really leveraging their strengths to help you bring your actions to life and bring your goals to life.” Another participant explained,
The real work rests in the relationships you build with individual staff members. It’s really those relationships; getting in there meeting people; seeing their instruction; seeing how they interact with children and showing that you really can support them.

As a final comment to the question about strong leadership, one participant stated, “So, I’d say they are most important is building relationships, listening and, and then building from there.” The body of research explains that principals who demonstrate relationship-oriented behaviors can support, recognize, and develop teachers (Boies & Fiset, 2019; Louis et al., 2016).

**Utilize collaborative leadership practices.** Although this strategy yielded only five frequencies, which was the lowest number out of all themes, 100% of the participants made references to collaborative leadership practices. According to Heck and Hallinger (2010), collaborative leadership involves having diverse perspectives that may contribute to building capacity and increasing student achievement. For example, one principal explained,

As far as encouraging the good ideas of others, way to do that is to invite different stakeholders to take part in any type of work and that is for improvement of the organization. Also, it’s important to get different perspectives so that you have accurate representation of your organization.

Similarly, another principal stated, “You really have to utilize your teams: grade level leads; leads in the classified departments; and then your school site council, your student council.”
**Culture of high achievement.** According to the theoretical definition developed by the team of seven peer researchers, “a culture of high achievement is established when value is placed on high student achievement, trust, and agreed upon norms” (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Harvey et al., 2014). The results from the elementary principal interviews are captured in Table 19 and Figure 5. The emerging themes are described in Table 19 and include the number of participants who contributed to each theme, the percentage of participants who contributed to each team, and the frequency count of responses received for each theme. The themes emerging from an analysis of the interview transcripts represent the leadership strategies for implementing the 12-step principles as perceived by the participants.

Three strategies emerged from the coding process for culture of high achievement. The strategies for culture of high achievement were referenced 23 times, which was 7% of the frequencies for all coded data. Three out of the four themes for culture of high achievement included 80% or higher of respondents, and one theme included 20% of respondents. The main finding concluded that using a focus on high student achievement supports a culture of high achievement.

Table 19

*Themes and Patterns Resulting From an Analysis of the Interviews Related to Research Question 2: Culture of High Achievement*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme/pattern</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>% based on N</th>
<th>Frequency of reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus on high student achievement</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish a culture of collaboration</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support growth for the organization</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The N for interview participants = 5.
Figure 5. Themes and frequencies for culture of high achievement.

*Focus on high student achievement.* The strategy for focus on high student achievement generated the most frequencies for 100% of the participants. A focus on high student achievement was concluded to be one of the essential behaviors for establishing a culture of high achievement. According to Merritt (2017) and Chenowith and Theokas (2013), a focus on high student achievement involves setting the expectation that all staff will participate in professional development and working collaboratively with staff to critically assess challenges and participate in making decisions to support student progress.

Another principal explained that a focus on high student achievement requires coaching, being in classrooms, and “giving tons of positive feedback and asking teachers
reflective questions about their instructional practices on a regular basis.” Another participant stated,

Well high student achievement should always be at the forefront of the work. And it’s also important to define what high student achievement is and setting high student achievement as a priority. It should be included in some type of a strategic plan. All of the goals and all of the actions that the school is responsible for should be aligned with high student achievement.

Finally, one principal stated,

It’s through professional development and whatever goals you set forth with your leadership team and how are you going to push those goals out to the students to show them that high achievement is crucial.

**Establish a culture of collaboration.** Establishing a culture of collaboration emerged as a strategy for culture of high achievement. Establishing a culture of collaboration generated four frequencies with 80% of the respondents. One principal explained,

The whole team needs to come together to make sure that the expectations for student achievement are set and clear across the board. It helps to really have community support in terms of high achievement and the expectation from the community of what they want for children and how we can achieve that.

Similarly, another principal explained,

It takes a team vision to be involved in the work so that there is a buy in. And also, there’s an accountability piece so that people that are doing the work, want
to do the work and also are clear about what the work is in order to reach high student achievement.

**Support growth in the organization.** One last strategy that emerged was support growth in the organization. Four out of five principals mentioned the concept of growth when responding to strategies to establish a culture of high achievement. For example, one principal described his system for coaching and providing feedback to teachers and stated, “It’s really about them building the capacity to seek those answers or start a conversation about what best practices look like.” Another principal discussed professional development that her staff received which was focused on change that impacts growth for students as a result of changes in instructional practices.

One participant referred to growth as the responsibility of everyone in the organization and stated,

Again, well-established systems within the start, not just pockets, but the whole organization needs to work together—it’s not just about proficiency levels, but it’s about what actions or what do we need to do differently to see growth. You still need those strong pockets because everyone has their expertise and can contribute to achievement—teachers, office staff, support personnel.

Overall, the principal’s role in establishing a culture of high achievement is to reinforce structures and norms engrained in a culture of learning (Tichnor-Wagner et al., 2016).

**Vision and values.** According to the theoretical definition developed by the team of seven peer researchers, “vision and values are the establishment and strategic planning of an organization’s goals and collective efforts toward increased student achievement” (Harvey et al., 2014; Lunenburg, 2010). The body of literature further supports the idea
that visionary leadership is an essential competency of effective leadership (Hitt et al., 2018; C. M. Taylor et al., 2014). The results from the elementary principal interviews are captured in Table 20 and Figure 6.

Table 20

*Themes and Patterns Resulting From an Analysis of the Interviews Related to Research Question 2: Vision and Values*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme/pattern</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>% based on N</th>
<th>Frequency of reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Align with the district’s vision</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team approach to developing the vision</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Must be clear and communicated</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. The N for interview participants = 5.*

*Figure 6. Themes and frequencies for vision and values.*
The emerging themes are described in Table 20 and include the number of participants who contributed to each theme, the percentage of participants who contributed to each team, and the frequency count of responses received for each theme. The themes emerging from an analysis of the interview transcripts represent the leadership strategies for implementing the 12-step principles. Three strategies emerged from the coding process for vision and values. The strategies for vision and values were referenced 21 times, which generated 8% of the frequencies for all coded data. At least 80% of respondents contributed to all four strategies. The main finding concluded that the site’s vision should be aligned to the district’s vision.

*Align with the district’s vision.* One of the strategies that emerged as a leadership behavior that supports vision and values is the importance of aligning the school’s vision with the school district’s vision. All five of the respondents (100%) commented on the importance of alignment seven times during the interviews. Moreover, one principal stated,

So organizational vision, making sure that my staff, my team knows the district goals and vision, because if they don’t know what the district goals are, then they can’t build a site-based vision. Yes, we’re a site but we’re also part of a unified system. And because we’re part of a unified system, we need to know what the big picture is before we can funnel it down to the site.

Similarly, another principal explained, “The first part was to look at the district vision, then the next part was to think about the school and ask the stakeholders, especially, teachers, where they want to see their students.”
**Team approach to developing the vision.** Research suggests that successful principals establish a shared vision and lead efforts to engage the community to develop the school’s vision (B. Brown & Jacobsen, 2016; Mombourquette, 2017). Similarly, a team approach to developing the vision was a strategy that emerged as a leadership behavior. The emphasis on working with key stakeholders to develop the school vision was mentioned four times with 80% of the respondents. “Our vision was narrowed down to our values, per se, and developed through parent leadership councils, teachers, and input from the community,” explained one principal. According to Arnold et al. (2007), the process of creating a shared vision empowers key stakeholders to take ownership toward helping the school achieve its goals.

One responded explained,

> It takes several steps, including identifying what the values are of the different key groups from the school community, and then coming to some agreements about what work needs to be done to in order to support high student achievement. Then you can facilitate the conversation about writing your vision. And it’s not only writing your school’s vision but also revisiting it.

**Must be clear and communicated.** A strategy that emerged as a leadership behavior that supports vision and values was that the vision must be clear and communicated. Five out of five respondents (100%) referenced the importance of communicating a clear vision 10 times. Hitt et al. (2018) suggested that educational leaders regularly communicate the school vision’s so that all members of the organizational are clear about their role toward the success of the school. One principal stated,
Sometimes the school may not reach its potential if the people are not clear about the end goal. That’s the time when you want to remind them of the vision. I don’t think about (talking about the vision) but it helps me guide my staff. It goes back to our purpose.”

Another principal explained,

Whether your team writes a slogan together, you have to articulate it [the vision]. And it has meaningful and relevant to your school or else why have one. Our job is to tie our work to the vision, align resources, and ask input from others.

The respondents overwhelmingly commented on the importance of communicating the vision and making clear connections with the work that leads to student achievement.

“Your values and vision need to address what’s best for kids. Everything else needs to be set aside,” explained one respondent.

**High expectations.** According to the theoretical definition of high expectations that was developed by the team of peer researchers, “high expectations define the beliefs and goals set by educational leaders for all students and staff to achieve high standards of behavior and achievement to which student achievement will be increased” (Day et al., 2001; Harvey et al., 2014; Printy & Marks, 2006). The research further suggests that school leaders who have high expectations establish a shared belief that all students can achieve (Chenowith & Theokas, 2013).

The emerging themes are described in Table 21 and Figure 7 and include the number of participants who contributed to each theme, the percentage of participants who contributed to each team, and the frequency count of responses received for each theme. The themes emerging from analysis of the interview transcripts represent the leadership
strategies for implementing the 12-step principles as perceived by the participants. Three strategies emerged from the coding process for high expectations. The strategies for high expectations were referenced 15 times, which generated 5% of the frequencies for all coded data. At least 60% of respondents contributed to all three strategies. The main finding concluded that high expectations were focused on growth for all student groups.

Table 21

*Themes and Patterns Resulting From an Analysis of the Interviews Related to Research Question 2: High Expectations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme/pattern</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>% based on N</th>
<th>Frequency of reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus on growth for all student groups</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believe that all students can achieve</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work collaboratively to determine how students can reach high expectations</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The N for interview participants = 5.

![High Expectations](image)

*Figure 7.* Themes and frequencies for high expectations.
**Focus on growth for all student groups.** One of the strategies that emerged was the importance of focusing on growth as a behavior to support the leadership principle of high expectations. Five out of the five respondents commented six times about the importance of a focus on growth for all students when establishing high expectations. For example, one respondent explained,

> I try to instill them that I’m going to support their decision-making and that their decisions geared towards improvement . . . we have all those kids who have struggles and I don’t want to gloss over that. It’s all about how are we getting kids to grow? We’re always looking for growth.

Similarly, McKinney et al. (2015) suggested that principals foster continuous growth for student achievement by communicating high expectations.

Another respondent commented,

> To me high expectations is really about our actions and how we respond to all student groups. It doesn’t matter if they’re low socioeconomic, English learners; look at your demographic data. We may have to scaffold instruction, but we hold everybody to high standards for growth.

**Believe that all students can achieve.** Another strategy that emerged was the importance of having a belief that all students can achieve. Eighty percent of the respondents commented five times about how their belief that students can achieve supports high expectations. School leaders who communicate the belief that all students can achieve have the ability to inspire and motivate teachers.

According to one respondent,
It can’t just be lip-service. Do we buy into it? Do we really believe the students can achieve? Yes, but we have to take action. As the leader I’m making sure that the teams are moving in the same direction which is toward high achievement. I model, the verbiage that makes high expectations observable.

Similarly, Merritt (2017) argued that principals who establish systems to support classroom instruction demonstrate the belief that students can achieve. “Our community, across the board, believes that our children will succeed; it’s part of the culture and the they’re immersed in a supportive culture of people believing in them,” explained another respondent.

**Helping students reach high expectations is a collaborative effort.** The leadership behavior that demonstrates a collaborative effort to help students reach high expectations was a strategy that emerged from the coded data. This strategy was mentioned four times by 60% of the respondents. Chenowith and Theokas (2013) and Merritt (2017) claimed that a principal supports high expectations by motivating teachers to assess challenges and participate in decision-making to improve instruction. One principal stated,

It’s really important to work as a team to define what successful schools look like. And that may involve, being able to reach and attain certain school goals that were set by teams. Also, look at other types of data—survey data from parents, teachers, and even students. It might be relevant to determine whether or not expectations were met but also ask them what else can we do to meet our goals?

Two principals described varying levels of support and scaffolding for teachers and students. Three principals provide instructional coaches and collaboration time to
strategize about what’s working and what’s not working with students who have gaps in their learning. One principal stated, “The curriculum isn’t enough. Teachers adapt their practices to get all of their students at grade level. Whether a kid is at a 1 percentile, or 70th percentile, we’re looking for them to grow.”

**Love and passion.** According to the seven peer researchers, the theoretical definition of love and passion is as follows:

The values a leader places on establishing relationships and being intentionally committed to connecting and relating to a team and include remaining aware of the personal needs of teachers, maintaining personal relationships with teachers and inspiring teachers to accomplish things that might seem beyond their grasp. (Arnold et al., 2007; Harvey et al., 2014; T. Waters et al., 2003)

The results from the elementary principal interviews are captured in Table 22 and Figure 8. The emerging themes are described in Table 22 and include the number of participants who contributed to each theme, the percentage of participants who contributed to each team, and the frequency count of responses received for each theme. The themes emerging from an analysis of the interview transcripts represent the leadership strategies for implementing the 12-step principles perceived by the participants. Three strategies emerged from the coding process for the leadership behavior of supporting love and passion. The strategies for love and passion as a behavior to create a culture of high achievement were referenced 19 times, which was 5% of the frequencies for all coded data. All of the three strategies for love and passion included responses from 60% or higher of the elementary principals who participated in
the survey. The main finding concluded that providing feedback and support is a leadership behavior that develops love and passion.

Table 22

*Themes and Patterns Resulting From an Analysis of the Interviews Related to Research Question 2: Love and Passion*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme/pattern</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>% based on N</th>
<th>Frequency of reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide feedback and support</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be visible and connect with people outside the office</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stay connected</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The N for interview participants = 5.

*Figure 8.* Themes and frequencies for love and passion.
**Provide feedback and support.** One strategy that emerged as a leadership behavior that elementary principals demonstrate to develop love and passion is providing feedback and support to teachers. Four out of the five (80%) principals mentioned the importance of providing feedback and support eight times. Boies and Fiset (2019) and Louis et al. (2016) explained that providing timely feedback develops teacher behaviors and growth. For example, 80% of the respondents emphasized that one of their priorities was being in classrooms and providing feedback to teachers. One principal explained,

I have a process for giving feedback to all 32 teachers, every month and making sure that we’re hitting the intentional pieces. Is there academic discourse? What is the level of rigor? Is there writing on the wall? Is there evidence of instruction? Is there evidence of goals? Then giving them some narrative feedback. And then additionally trying to come in two or three more times and giving them a grow and a glow. So I’m very intentional about that.

Two of the principals commented on the importance of giving authentic praise and positive feedback. One principal stated, “I live and give in the moment. I give positive praise; then later, we can have conversations about practice. So honoring people and what they do is the biggest gift I can give.” Similarly, Harvey et al. (2014) suggested that giving positive feedback in the moment may shift behaviors with someone who is low-performing.

**Be visible and connect with people outside of your office.** All of the respondents commented on the emerging strategy of being visible and connecting with people outside of the principal’s office. One hundred percent of the respondents mentioned this leadership behavior six times. One principal described her time outside of her office, “I
really try to stay outside of this office and be present in the classroom, in the play-yard, so I know what’s going on.” Similarly, another principal explained, “Not only is it important to talk to staff during formal meetings but also in the staff lounge, or in common areas in the hallways; it’s just really important to connect with your teachers.”

The respondents justified the importance of being visible because “you can’t strengthen relationships with your community if you’re not accessible,” according to another principal. “During my first year at the school, a parent came up to me and was surprised that I was out and about all the time,” shared another principal. Another principal commented, “The greatest part of my job is to be a servant; it’s just serving the kids. So I’m out there serving with passion for teachers and especially for my kids.”

**Staying connected with people.** A third strategy that emerged from the coded data was the leadership behavior of staying connected with people to develop love and passion. This strategy was referenced five times with 60% of the respondents. According to Crowley (2011) and Ferris (1988), effective leaders connect with their employees to understand what inspires them in order to align work that is challenging and meaningful. One principal defined staying connected as “being in the trenches, relating to your teams, and doing the work alongside them.” Another principal stated, “I don’t bark orders; I work with my teachers to really understand how hard or how rewarding the work is, whatever it may be.”

Louis et al. (2016) suggested that principals who connect with their staff and demonstrate a genuine concern for their schools effectively create systems of support that lead to high student achievement. For example, one principal explained,
If you know your teachers and if they know that you follow through with their needs, they can trust you. It makes the work less challenging. I’m committed to letting teachers and staff know that if they need support with anything, or if there’s something getting in the way of good work that I am there to support them.

**Focus on learning and rigor.** The theoretical definition of a focus on learning and rigor that was developed by the team of seven peer researchers was “focus on learning and academic rigor is the ability of a leader to establish a set of defined standards for increased student achievement supported by professional development and aligned to a site’s vision and goals” (Bamburg & Andrews, 1991; Harvey et al., 2014). The results from the elementary principal interviews are captured in Table 23 and Figure 9. The emerging themes are described in Table 23 and include the number of participants who contributed to each theme, the percentage of participants who contributed to each team, and the frequency count of responses received for each theme. The themes emerging from an analysis of the interview transcripts represent the leadership strategies for implementing the 12-step principles perceived by the participants.

Three themes emerged from the coding process for the leadership behavior of developing a focus on learning and academic rigor. The strategies for focus on learning and academic rigor as a behavior to create a culture of high achievement were referenced 15 times, which was 5% of the frequencies for all coded data. The strategies for focus on learning and academic rigor included responses from 80% or higher of the elementary principals who participated in the survey. Because 100% of the respondents commented,
the main finding concluded that a focus on growth was the behavior to develop a focus on learning and academic rigor.

Table 23

*Themes and Patterns Resulting From an Analysis of the Interviews Related to Research Question 2: Focus on Learning and Rigor*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme/pattern</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>% based on N</th>
<th>Frequency of reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use data to set goals and strategies for learning</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on growth</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on a few areas</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The N for interview participants = 5.

*Figure 9.* Themes and frequencies for focus on learning and rigor.

*Use data to set goals and strategies for learning.* One of the strategies that emerged from the coded data was the leadership behavior of using data to set goals and
strategies for learning. This strategy, which develops a focus on learning and academic rigor, was mentioned five times from 80% of the respondents. According to Sebastian et al. (2016), effective principals support teachers in determining instructional practices that result in positive student outcomes. One respondent explained that she collaborates with staff to analyze student data regularly and guides her teachers to “set goals but also adjust practices that aren’t working.” Another respondent stated,

There’s time to really dig into the data then take action. I’ve tried to shift our meetings so a smaller percentage of the time is looking at the data, setting goals, but really taking the time to share strategies that teacher A has found effective either this year or previous years.

Similarly, another respondent shared, “Rigorous lessons are created by a systematic way of looking at data, identifying standards or concepts that students really need, and finding the right teaching practices to address those standards.” Maye (2013) claimed that academic rigor can increase if instructional strategies are specifically aligned to academic standards.

*Focus on growth.* Another strategy that emerged as a leadership behavior to support a focus on learning and academic rigor was a focus on growth. Four out of five (80%) elementary principals mentioned this theme four times. “So again, it’s all about looking at the data so it’s not only about reaching certain levels of proficiency but looking at the growth,” explained one respondent. Another respondent stated,

Also, a focus on learning requires that everybody has bought into understanding that the work is around learning. Learning means growth and learning is not only
about students learning but also about adult learning and professional
development.

Goddard et al.’s (2015) study claimed that principals who frequently monitored
instruction and provided guidance for instructional improvement had a direct impact on
the collective work of teachers.

Focus on a few areas. One strategy that emerged from the coded data was the
leadership behavior of focusing on a few areas to support a focus on learning and
academic rigor. According to Harvey et al. (2014), learning should be the top priority of
the principal’s day. Five out of five (100%) elementary principals mentioned the
importance of focusing on a few areas. One principal shared that small-group instruction
is the focus of the current professional development plan. He stated, “It’s all we talk
about; not that the other topics aren’t there, but it’s what we need to improve in the
classrooms to help reach our goals.” Another principal explained, “A few, specific
actions will propel us forward. We feel scattered sometimes and it’s easy to be pulled in
many directions.” One principal explained that rigor demonstrates depth of
understanding and also stated,

Well, rigor is meaningful learning activities that are challenging and engaging.
Kids apply what they know. If we want our own students to show rigor, we
should also have a solid understanding of those essential, instructional practices
that are most relevant for rigorous learning.

Embedded professional development. The theoretical definition of embedded
professional development that was developed by the team of peer researchers was
“embedded professional development is a leader’s consistent and purposeful actions to
ensure that professional development is ongoing and aligned to increased student achievement and highly functioning professional relationships” (Harvey et al., 2014; Lynch et al., 2016). The results from the elementary principal interviews are captured in Table 24 and Figure 10. The emerging themes are described in Table 24 and include the number of participants who contributed to each theme, the percentage of participants who contributed to each team, and the frequency count of responses received for each theme. The themes emerging from an analysis of the interview transcripts represent the leadership strategies for implementing the 12-step principles perceived by the participants.

Table 24

*Themes and Patterns Resulting From an Analysis of the Interviews Related to Research Question 2: Embedded Professional Development*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme/pattern</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>% based on N</th>
<th>Frequency of reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide on-site coaching and professional development</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide time for teacher collaboration</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use student data to determine professional development needs</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based on teachers’ professional development needs</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The *N* for interview participants = 5.
Four themes emerged from the coding process for the leadership behavior of embedded professional development. The themes for embedded professional development utilized by elementary principals as a strategy to create a culture of high achievement were referenced 26 times, which contributed to 8% of the frequencies for all coded data. The strategies for embedded professional development included responses from 80% or higher of the elementary principals who participated in the survey. A combination of two main findings were found as essential leadership behaviors to support embedded professional development: (a) provide on-site coaching and professional development and (b) survey teachers to determine their professional development needs.

*Provide on-site coaching and professional development.* One of the strategies that emerged as a leadership behavior to develop embedded professional development was provide on-site coaching and professional development. Five out of five (100%) of
the elementary principals commented on this strategy seven times. In order for professional development to be genuinely embedded, by definition, the elementary principals emphasized that professional development needed to take place at their school sites. The body of literature supports instructional coaching as an effective strategy for improving classroom instruction. Furthermore, all respondents provided examples of instructional coaches who work directly with their teachers. One principal shared, “Our instructional specialists model lessons to get teachers to try different approaches. Teachers try new methods and get feedback from the specialists.” Another principal stated,

> Once we know what kind of professional development needs to take place, then it’s really about leveraging those people. Whether they’re on your site, district personnel or consultants, they deliver effective professional development at our school to ensure that teachers are getting what they need out of it.

**Provide time for teacher collaboration.** One strategy that emerged from the coded data about embedded professional development was the leadership behavior of providing time for teacher collaboration. Five out of five (100%) of the respondents commented on this strategy six times. The structure for teacher collaboration included common planning time during the contracted work day and/or outside of the duty day when teachers received additional pay. Research on professional learning communities supports high student achievement (Duke, 2014; Fullan, 2014; Terosky, 2014). Fullan (2014) emphasized the role of the principal as the lead learner and collaborating with teachers to support learning. One respondent provided an example of the focus for teacher collaboration and shared, “Two of our big topics for professional learning
communities is revisiting number corner and understanding the CAASPP claims at a deeper level.” Another respondent stated,

Shared leadership from collaboration is the mothership of all professional development here. It’s about essential standards and giving time for teachers to talk about what they need. They surface as instructional leaders because they all have strengths and I’m able to leverage their expertise in certain areas every time they meet.

**Use student data to determine professional development needs.** Another strategy that emerged as a leadership behavior to support embedded professional development was use student data to determine professional development needs. This strategy was referenced six times by 80% of the respondents as an essential leadership behavior to create a high-achieving school environment. According to Chang et al. (2017), professional development based on student data ensure relevant and practical applications for teachers. One principal explained, “In order to align that (professional development) with increasing student achievement, it’s really important that teachers look again at their specific student data and determine—is it more training in math, reading?” Similarly, another principal stated,

It’s all data driven. It’s based on this is what our data says. We were really strong in this one area and the data also says what need to work on. With the academic data we’re able to make some informed decisions about our professional learning and what needs to happen.

**Based on teachers’ professional development needs.** One strategy that emerged from the coded data on leadership behaviors that support embedded professional
development was that professional development should be based on teachers’ needs. Five out of five (100%) of the respondents mentioned this strategy seven times. All of the respondents emphasized the importance of teachers having a choice in their learning. For example, one responded explained, “We have our site-specific goals and professional development here, but the teachers also have choices from the district-based trainings. Adult learning is all about meaningful learning and choice.” Another respondent shared, “It’s real authentic when teachers see the data and strategize a plan around what support they need. Some need coaching and some need the ‘sit-and-get’ trainings that are useful for some.” Lastly, one respondent emphasized, “When you give them choice, and you give them opportunities to pick their own learning, implementation is high.”

**Academic achievement and assessment for the 21st century.** The theoretical definition of academic achievement and assessment for the 21st century that was developed by the team of peer researchers was “academic achievement and assessment for the 21st century is value placed on assessment data driving educator’s decision-making and establishing a student’s development of 21st-century skills such as communication, collaboration, and creativity” (Harvey et al., 2014; McGuigan & Hoy, 2006). The results from the elementary principal interviews are captured in Table 25 and Figure 11. The emerging themes are described in Table 25 and include the number of participants who contributed to each theme, the percentage of participants who contributed to each team, and the frequency count of responses received for each theme. The themes emerging from an analysis of the interview transcripts represent the leadership strategies for implementing the 12-step principles perceived by the participants.
Table 25

*Themes and Patterns Resulting From an Analysis of the Interviews Related to Research Question 2: Academic Achievement and Assessment for the 21st Century*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme/pattern</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>% based on N</th>
<th>Frequency of reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Utilize CAASPP data to inform decisions</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilize formative assessment data</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make data meaningful for teachers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The N for interview participants = 5.

**Figure 11.** Themes and frequencies for academic achievement and assessment for the 21st century.

Four strategies emerged from the coding process for the leadership behavior of embedded professional development. The strategies for academic achievement and assessment for the 21st century utilized by elementary principals as a strategy to create a
culture of high achievement were referenced 25 times, which contributed to 8% of the frequencies for all coded data. The strategies for academic achievement and assessment for the 21st century included responses from 80% or higher of the elementary principals who participated in the survey. Findings from the elementary principal interviews concluded that utilizing formative assessments was a leadership behavior that supported academic achievement and assessment and led to creating a high-achieving school environment.

**Utilize CAASPP data to inform decisions.** One strategy that emerged as a leadership behavior that elementary principals demonstrate to support academic achievement and assessment was to utilize CAASPP data to inform decisions. Five out of five (100%) of the respondents mentioned this strategy five times. One principal shared “The high stakes CAASPP data compares us to the big picture and measures our yearly growth. It tells us where we need to allocate resources.” Another principal explained, “Our strategic plan is mainly based on our CAASPP data. It’s a starting point; then we dive deeper into more fine-grain, specific areas of need or maybe specific student groups. Decisions are made collaboratively with my school site council.”

**Utilize formative assessment data.** One strategy that emerged from the interviews with elementary principals was the importance of utilizing formative assessment data as a leadership behavior to support academic achievement and assessment. Five out of the five (100%) respondents mentioned utilizing formative assessment data 11 times. Sebastian et al. (2016) claimed that formative assessment data should be the basis for making instructional changes. One principal explained, “Some of the curriculum assessments are formative and give real-time data about our students. My primary staff
seem to be assessing all the time, especially in reading. They know their students and know specific skills they’re lacking.” Similarly, another principal stated, “The formatives give immediate feedback to teachers about where they [students] need to grow.” The five elementary principals cited several formative assessments ranging from literacy assessments to performance-tasked based assessments in English language arts and math.

Make data meaningful for teachers. One strategy that emerged from the elementary principal interviews was make data meaningful for teachers and students. Four out of five (80%) of the respondents commented on this strategy four times as a leadership behavior that supports academic achievement and assessment. According to Kutlu and Kartal (2018), assessments for learning provide information about student progress while assessments of learning directly link instructional practices for improved student achievement. The elementary principals commented on ensuring practices to help teachers understand the data. One principal stated, “The data has to be meaningful to teachers. So for 21st century successful schools, students would be able to explain their knowledge in different ways through authentic assessments which oftentimes give data that’s easier for teachers to interpret.”

Strength of teams. The theoretical definition of strength of teams that was developed by the team of peer researchers was “confidence that all team members are focused on the same vision and goals, have collective self-efficacy, feel highly valued, and celebrate high achievement together” (Harvey et al., 2014; McGuigan & Hoy, 2006). The results from the elementary principal interviews are captured in Table 26 and Figure 12. The emerging themes are described in Table 26 and include the number of
participants who contributed to each theme, the percentage of participants who contributed to each team, and the frequency count of responses received for each theme. The themes emerging from an analysis of the interview transcripts represent the leadership strategies for implementing the 12-step principles perceived by the participants.

Three themes emerged from the coding process for the leadership behavior of strength of teams. The strategies for strength of teams utilized by elementary principals as a strategy to create a culture of high achievement were referenced 22 times, which contributed to 7% of the frequencies for all coded data. The strategies for strength of teams included responses from 60% or higher of the elementary principals who participated in the survey. Findings from the elementary principal interviews concluded that establish protocols and working agreements was a leadership behavior that supported strength of teams and led to creating a high-achieving school environment.

Table 26

Themes and Patterns Resulting From an Analysis of the Interviews Related to Research Question 2: Strength of Teams

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme/pattern</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>% based on N</th>
<th>Frequency of reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Establish protocols and working agreements</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop skills and leverage strengths of individuals</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend to the personal side of teams</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. The N for interview participants = 5.*
Figure 12. Themes and frequencies for strength of teams.

*Establish protocols and working agreements.* One strategy that emerged from the transcribed data from elementary principal interviews was establish protocols and working agreements as a leadership behavior that supports strength of teams. Four of the five (80%) of the respondents mentioned this strategy 10 times as an essential leadership behavior that supports a high-achieving school environment. According to DuFour et al. (2006), establishing team norms define behaviors that support working toward a common goal with a focus on learning. One principal stated, “The norms really help with teams who struggle.” In addition to establishing team norms, the four principals who commented on this theme provided examples of specific protocols utilized during grade level collaboration. For example, one principal explained,
We use a 30-minute meeting structure. We look at data; figure out how many students are proficient, strategic, all the various bands; then explore ways to adjust the work in classrooms. Sure, we’re flexible, but the conversations are rich and we teachers are free to agree and agree to disagree.

**Develop skills and leverage strengths of individuals.** One strategy that emerged from the coded data about strength of teams was develop skills and leverage strengths of individuals. Four principals (80%) mentioned this strategy four times as an essential leadership behavior that supports the strength of teams. The body of literature suggests that principals should provide resources for teams to function effectively if the expectation is to support student achievement. Similarly, one principal explained, “I think of my teams. What are their strengths? I’ve got the techie teacher who can help teachers who aren’t yet computer savvy but need those skills for the 21st century classroom.” Another principal stated,

Sometimes when you try to teach them [teachers] something or explain something to them, they don’t get it. But then when they hear from their peers, all of a sudden, they buy into it or get it. So it’s leveraging your team members when appropriate, and as necessary.

**Attend to the personal side of teams.** Another strategy that emerged from the coded data was attend to the personal side of teams. This strategy was identified as an essential leadership behavior that develops the strength of teams. Three out of five (60%) of the respondents mentioned this theme five times. One respondent explained,

You have two pieces, the interpersonal side of teams and the structure. You have to guide them in connecting with each other in an authentic way so they can work
together effectively. As the principal, you may also have to address teams where one person dominates the conversation or are toxic. At that point, it’s important to talk to them individually to figure out how to help them move forward.

Two of the respondents utilize icebreakers or grounding activities to build team relationships. One respondent shared, “The grounding activities help them transition to the team structure so they’re ready to work.”

**Collaboration and shared decision-making.** According to the theoretical definition developed by the team of peer researchers, “Collaboration and shared decision-making involves communication across the entire team of any information that collectively binds a team to support increased student achievement as well as the establishment of a high-functioning team” (Forman et al., 2017; Harvey et al., 2014).

The results from the elementary principal interviews are captured in Table 27 and Figure 13. The emerging themes are described in Table 27 and include the number of participants who contributed to each theme, the percentage of participants who contributed to each theme, and the frequency count of responses received for each theme. The themes emerging from an analysis of the interview transcripts represent the leadership strategies for implementing the 12-step principles perceived by the participants.

Four strategies emerged from the coding process for the leadership behavior of collaboration and shared decision-making. The strategies for collaboration and shared decision-making utilized by elementary principals as a behavior to create a culture of high achievement were referenced 28 times, which contributed to 9% of the frequencies for all coded data. The strategies for collaboration and shared decision-making included
Table 27

*Themes and Patterns Resulting From an Analysis of the Interviews Related to Research Question 2: Collaboration and Shared Decision-Making*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme/pattern</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>% based on N</th>
<th>Frequency of reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus on academics</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involve stakeholders</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide various opportunities to collaborate</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish shared leadership roles</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The $N$ for interview participants = 5.

*Figure 13.* Themes and frequencies for collaboration and shared decision-making.

Responses from 60% or higher of the elementary principals who participated in the survey. Findings from the elementary principal interviews concluded that involving
stakeholders was a leadership behavior that supported collaboration and shared decision-making and led to creating a high-achieving school environment.

**Focus on academics.** One strategy that emerged from the principal interviews was a focus on academics was an essential leadership behavior that supports collaboration and shared decision-making. Four out of four (80%) of the respondents commented on a focus on academics four times as a leadership behavior to create a high-achieving school environment. According to Leithwood et al. (2004), effective principals support collaboration and increase teacher efficacy which results in improved student outcomes. One principal explained, “In parent meetings, in staff meetings, and even in school climate meetings we develop site plans which always focus on academics.”

Another principal shared,

> We have something called learning sprints which is like SMART goals. We look at student data at every collaboration meeting to ensure that curriculum and what’s happening in classrooms changes that data. We ask ourselves how did our academic programs and practices lead to that data and what do we need to see more growth?

**Involve stakeholders.** The second strategy that emerged as a critical leadership behavior that supports collaboration and shared decision is involve stakeholders. This strategy was mentioned nine times by 100% of all respondents. The body of literature strongly suggests that collaboration and shared decision-making is an essential leadership tenet. For example, Heck and Hallinger (2010) stated that involving diverse perspectives has the potential to build capacity and increase student achievement. For example, one respondent shared,
We have a strong SSC (School Site Council) that I’ve developed and empowered by trying to take a step back. Anytime there’s an opportunity to engage with parents and the community, you’ve got to get out there and tell your story. It’s a great way to get them interested come to the PTA or SSC meetings.

Another respondent shared,

It’s important to have different representations ethnic groups, parents of special ed students and such. Parents from all backgrounds should have a voice in our decision-making processes. It’s about including diverse perspectives so we don’t miss anything when making those big decisions for the school.

**Provide various opportunities to collaborate.** The third strategy that emerged from the elementary principal interviews was provide various opportunities to collaborate as a leadership behavior to support collaboration and shared decision-making. Three out of five (60%) of the respondents mentioned this strategy eight times as a leadership behavior that supports a high-achieving school environment. The respondents provided examples of different venues for collaboration such as staff meetings, formal meetings, parent meetings, and various digital media platforms where parents and staff can comment on current school topics. According to one participant, “Parents who can’t attend formal meetings have options; we use Parent Square and it’s very interactive. It’s about making sure that all parents know what’s going on at school. It sparks an interest and they’ll want to give input.”

**Establish shared leadership roles.** The fourth strategy that emerged as an essential leadership behavior was establish leadership roles to strengthen collaboration and shared decision-making. Three out of five (60%) of the respondents mentioned this
strategy five times as a leadership behavior that leads to creating a high-achieving school environment. According to Love et al. (2008), building capacity and distributive leadership exists when teams make informed decisions to adjust programs and instructional strategies. The three respondents commented on having teacher leadership roles at each grade level. The teacher leaders, often referred to as “grade-level leads” often lead their teams during collaboration or lead the entire staff meetings. One principal explained, “We have monthly leadership meetings. Decisions are made within that team and then brought to the bigger staff meetings for input for discussion and for implementation.”

**Communication.** The team of seven peer researchers developed the theoretical definition of communication, which was “communication is the message sent through various means such as written and spoken language as well as body language, behavior, and actions” (Arnold et al., 2007; Harvey et al., 2014). The results from the elementary principal interviews are captured in Table 28 and Figure 14. The emerging themes are described in Table 28 and include the number of participants who contributed to each theme, the percentage of participants who contributed to each theme, and the frequency count of responses received for each theme. The themes emerging from an analysis of the interview transcripts represent the leadership strategies for implementing the 12-step principles perceived by the participants.

Three strategies emerged from the coding process for the leadership behavior of communication. The strategies for communication utilized by elementary principals as a strategy to create a culture of high achievement were referenced 27 times which contributed to 9% of the frequencies for all coded data. The strategies for
Table 28

Themes and Patterns Resulting From an Analysis of the Interviews Related to Research Question 2: Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme/pattern</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>% based on N</th>
<th>Frequency of reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Utilize various methods of sharing information</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be visible and talk to people</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share student data and other relevant topics</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The N for interview participants = 5.

![Communication](chart.png)

Figure 14. Themes and frequencies for communication.

communication included responses from 100% of the elementary principals who participated in the survey. Findings from the elementary principal interviews concluded
that utilizing various methods of sharing information was an essential leadership behavior to support communication and necessary for creating a high-achieving school environment.

**Utilize various methods of sharing information.** One strategy that emerged from the interviews with elementary principals was the leadership behavior of utilizing various methods of sharing information to support communication. Five out of five (100%) of principals mentioned this strategy 11 times in order to create a culture of high achievement. The respondents emphasized the importance of communication through various forms. Principals communicate via e-mail, school websites, newsletters, formal meetings, generated phone calls that were distributed to all staff and family, and informal conversations throughout the day. One principal stated,

> If we want our school to succeed, we have to engage the staff and the public and that’s done through communication. That said, as a leader, I know it can be frustrating when people don’t get your message, which is why it’s important that you explore different modes of communication. In this digital age we have many options.

**Be visible and talk to people.** Another strategy that emerged from the elementary principal interviews was the importance of being visible and talking to people as leadership behavior that supports communication. All of the five principals commented on this strategy six times. The body of research explains the importance of strong lines of communication throughout the entire school community (Tyler, 2016). One principal stated,
Remember, communication is two-ways. I find that the best way to talk about our goals and how we’re doing is by having those informal conversations that really get to the gist of what’s important. A by-product of that you’re constantly building relationships.

*Share student data and other relevant topics.* One of the strategies that emerged as an essential leadership behavior that elementary principals utilized to support communication was share student data and other relevant topics. Five out of five (100%) of the elementary principals mentioned this strategy 10 times. The principals commented on the importance of regularly sharing information that is relevant and current. For example, one principal shared,

I have to make sure that when I’m communicating information, I highlight important information and try not to bombard people with irrelevant information. It depends on my audience. Teachers want information about classroom topics, recess, etc.; parents want information about their children and family events. One topic remains constant—sharing student data.

According to Hakanen et al. (2012), ongoing communication about student learning builds relationships and supports high student achievement. “When you have academic discourse with staff, they make informed decisions and collectively to change practice when the data is right in front of them,” stated one principal.

**Flexibility and resilience.** According to the theoretical definition that was developed by the team of peer researchers, “Flexibility and resilience are displayed through a leader’s ability to adapt leadership behavior to support growth in an organization while overcoming adversity and remaining focused on an organization’s
goals and needs” (Harvey et al., 2014; Hoy & Hoy, 2006; Marzano et al., 2005). The results from the elementary principal interviews are captured in Table 29 and Figure 15. The emerging themes are described in Table 29 and include the number of participants who contributed to each theme, the percentage of participants who contributed to each theme, and the frequency count of responses received for each theme. The themes emerging from an analysis of the interview transcripts represent the leadership strategies for implementing the 12-step principles perceived by the participants.

Three strategies emerged from the coding process for the leadership behavior of flexibility and resilience. The strategies for flexibility and resilience utilized by elementary principals as a strategy to create a culture of high achievement were referenced 20 times, which contributed to 7% of the frequencies for all coded data. The strategies for flexibility and resilience included responses from at least 60% of the elementary principals who participated in the survey. Findings from the elementary principal interviews concluded that being flexible about how goals are achieved was an essential leadership behavior to support flexibility and resilience and necessary for creating a high-achieving school environment.

Table 29

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme/pattern</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>% based on N</th>
<th>Frequency of reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Be flexible about how goals are achieved</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involve staff with determining best practices</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem solve together</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. The N for interview participants = 5.*
Figure 15. Themes and frequencies for flexibility and resilience.

**Be flexible about how goals are achieved.** One strategy that emerged from the elementary principals was that being flexible about how goals are achieved is an essential leadership behavior that develops flexibility and resilience. Five out of five (100%) of the respondents mentioned this strategy seven times. Harvey et al. (2014) explained that resiliency involves modeling flexibility but remaining focused on high achievement. One principal explained,

I have a teacher that doesn’t meet all of the checkboxes, but students are achieving at high levels. There are basic level things that need to be happening in classrooms, but if kids are engaged, I’m okay with that. I want to be the leader that had teachers try something out and really push achievement to a new level.

Similarly, another principal stated,
We are always being flexible, but not willy-nilly. We have to know our end goal and how we get there may be a little different. I tell my staff that we have to get to our same destination at a certain time.”

**Involve staff with determining best practices.** Another strategy that emerged from the elementary principal interviews was involve staff with determining best practices as a leadership behavior that develops flexibility and resilience. Five out of five (100%) of the respondents mentioned this strategy eight times. The need to provide differentiated leadership for teachers is crucial during change efforts (Brezicha et al., 2015). One principal explained how she stayed on course when resistance surfaced during new textbook implementations, “It’s about helping the staff stay focused on the goals, but understanding that the tools and materials that are available require their knowledge and their application of their most effective instructional practices that are going to help students succeed.” Another principal stated, “Resilience with supporting teachers who are struggling is difficult for me. I give them positive praise because that’s what will get them to the next level.” Two principals mentioned that they meet individually with teachers who are struggling and agree on specific strategies that will support them with meeting instructional objectives.

**Problem solve together.** A third strategy that emerged from the elementary principal interviews was that problem solve together was a leadership behavior that develops flexibility and resilience. Three out of five (60%) of the respondents mentioned this strategy five times. According to D. Anderson and Ackerman Anderson (2010) and Harvey et al. (2014), flexibility requires the willingness to seek and utilize feedback from others. One respondent stated,
I always tell my staff to come to me with problems and solutions. So when we hit those walls, let’s have a discussion about it. What are the challenges? What are the obstacles? And what are possible solutions to get us over these humps so that we can keep moving towards that end goal?

Another respondent described a time when a group of students was not making academic growth and recognized that their access to rigorous learning was nonexistent. He consulted with teachers and district office staff to replace an existing reading program that was ineffective. He further explained, “We were finally knocking out of the park. That was my open-mind moment when I had to stay the course with teachers. And students who were basic performance bands made improvements.”

**Quantitative and Qualitative Summaries**

Chapter IV reported the data and analysis of the research aimed at answering two research questions that addressed leadership behaviors to create a high-achieving school environment. The elementary principals who participated in this study ranked the 12 leadership principles by degree of importance. The 12 leadership principles proposed by Harvey et al. (2014) include strong leadership, strong leadership, culture of high achievement, vision and values, high expectations, love and passion, focus on learning, embedded professional development, assessment and evaluation, the strength of teams, collaboration and shared decision-making, communication, and flexibility and resilience.

Additionally, the participants noted that all 12 leadership principles were essential to supporting high student achievement.

The quantitative and qualitative data results supported the 12 leadership principles that elementary principals employ to create a high-achieving school environment. This
mixed methods study utilized two data collection methods, an electronic survey to measure the degree of importance of the 12 leadership principles proposed by Harvey et al. (2014) and face-to-face interviews to explore the strategies elementary principles use to implement the 12 leadership principles.

Quantitative Summary

Overall, the participants rated all 12-step leadership principles with a high degree of importance. The majority of responses fell under the strongly agree to agree somewhat categories. Five of the leadership principles proposed by Harvey et al. (2014) were ranked with the highest degree of importance as perceived by elementary principals for creating a high-achieving school environment. Table 30 represents the elementary principals’ perceived degree of importance on each of the top five leadership principles.

The leadership principle of strong leadership had 100% of responses in the strongly agree and agree category resulting in a mean score of 5.73. Although the leadership principle of establish a culture of high achievement responses ranged from disagree somewhat to strongly agree, a total of 91% of responses fell into the strongly agree and agree ratings generating the second highest mean score of 5.28. The responses for the leadership principle of flexibility and resilience ranged from agree somewhat to strongly agree, with 93% of the ratings in strongly agree and agree categories, and a mean score of 5.27. Vision and values followed close with a mean score of 5.25 with responses that ranged from strongly agree (53%), agree (21%) and agree somewhat (26%). Lastly, high expectations (without “low expectations” counting toward the overall mean score) had a mean score of 5.20, with 25% or responses in the strongly agree rating, 40% in the agree rating, and 10% in the agree somewhat rating. These
Table 30

*Leadership Principles Perceived With the Highest Degree of Importance*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>12 Leadership Principles (total # of questions answered for each principle)</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree somewhat</th>
<th>Agree somewhat</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strong leadership (25)</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>7 28%</td>
<td>18 72%</td>
<td>5.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture of high achievement (40)</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>2 5%</td>
<td>2 5%</td>
<td>19 48%</td>
<td>17 43%</td>
<td>5.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility and Resilience (15)</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>1 7%</td>
<td>9 60%</td>
<td>5 33%</td>
<td>5.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision and values (19)</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>5 26%</td>
<td>4 21%</td>
<td>10 53%</td>
<td>5.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High expectations (20)</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>2 10%</td>
<td>8 40%</td>
<td>5 25%</td>
<td><strong>5.20</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Degree of importance by number, % of responses, plus mean.*

**Question 19, “Lower student expectations” not included in the analysis of mean.
findings illustrate the use of strong leadership, culture of high achievement, flexibility and resilience, vision and values, and high expectations as leadership behaviors that create a high-achieving school environment.

The specific behaviors that support the development of the most important leadership principles received high ratings as they relate to strong leadership, culture of high achievement, flexibility and resilience, vision and values, and high expectations. Furthermore, the behaviors were perceived as critically important for creating a high-achieving school environment. Under strong leadership, 100% of the elementary principals reported strongly agree for “develop and adhere to goals that focus on student achievement.” “Establish a clear vision for the organization,” “use collaboration,” and “manage the relationships of the institution” each generated 80% of the ratings in the strongly agree category and 20% in the agree category. Under culture of high achievement, “establish trust” with a mean score of 5.80 and “turn a toxic environment around” with a mean score of 5.60 were perceived as most important with 100% of the responses in the strongly agree and agree ratings.

Also, the important perceived behaviors for flexibility and resilience were “practice persistence” and “practice adaptability” with 100% of the ratings in the strongly agree and agree categories. The behavior for vision and values “have high achievement as a goal” with 100% of the responses within the strongly agree to agree somewhat categories and a mean score of 5.8; “do strategic planning” and “establish common team values” had 100% of the responses in the strongly agree to agree somewhat categories each with a mean score of 5.4. Finally, under high expectations, “give support for high expectations” included 100% of the responses in the strongly agree to agree categories.
with a mean score of 5.6, while “higher student expectations” and “have a high achievement environment” included 100% of responses from the strongly agree to agree somewhat categories, each with a mean score of 5.0.

**Qualitative Summary**

During the face-to-face interviews, five elementary principals responded to questions about how they create a high-achieving school environment by implementing the 12 leadership principals proposed by Harvey et al. (2014), which include: strong leadership, culture of high achievement, vision and values, high expectations, love and passion, focus on learning, embedded professional development, assessment and evaluation, the strength of teams, collaboration and shared decision-making, communication, and flexibility and resilience.

A total of 41 themes were coded with 305 frequencies. The top leadership principle with the highest percentage of frequencies was strong leadership (67%). The themes that emerged from strong leadership included the following: “use data to drive your actions” (19 frequencies); “provide support based on needs and relevance” (16 frequencies); “know the people and the culture” (10 frequencies); and “work collaboratively with different stakeholders” (four frequencies). Collaboration and shared decision-making was the second highest leadership principle with 9% of the total frequencies. The themes that emerged from collaboration and shared decision-making included the following: “involve stakeholders” (nine frequencies); “provide various opportunities to collaborate” (eight frequencies); “establish shared leadership roles” (five frequencies); and “focus on academics” (four frequencies). The leadership principle of communication also generated 9% of the total frequencies. The following themes
emerged from the coding process for communication: “utilize various forms of sharing information” (11 frequencies); “share student data and other relevant topics” (10 frequencies); and “be visible and talk to people” (six frequencies).

Summary

Strong leadership was identified as the most critical leadership behavior from both the quantitative and qualitative data analysis. The elementary principals who participated in this study understand that strong leadership has an impact on their ability to create and sustain a high-achieving school environment. The results of the analysis for the remaining leadership behaviors were not consistent; however, the leadership behavior of strong leadership provides an overarching framework for the remaining 11 leadership principles proposed by Harvey et al. (2014). Culture of high achievement, flexibility and resilience, vision and values, and high expectations were also rated with a high degree of importance from the quantitative data analysis. Collaboration and shared decision-making and communication resulted in the highest percentage of frequencies from qualitative analysis.

Chapter IV reported the comprehensive findings for both the quantitative and qualitative data analysis. Chapter V presents a detailed discussion of the findings, conclusion, and recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER V: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter V begins with an overview of the research study, purpose statement, research questions, methodology, population, and sample. A discussion about the major findings and unexpected findings are also presented in this chapter. The researcher also presents the conclusions based on the analysis of the study as it relates to the body of literature that explores effective leadership principles. At the end of the chapter, the researcher provides implications for elementary principals as they pertain to creating a high-achieving school environment. Furthermore, recommendations for future research are also noted. The researcher’s closing remarks and reflections concludes Chapter V.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to determine the degree of importance for the 12-step principles proposed by Harvey et al. (2014) to create a K-12 school environment that fosters high student achievement as perceived by public school elementary principals in Northern California. A secondary purpose was to explore and describe the leadership strategies for implementing the 12-step principles proposed by Harvey et al. to create a K-12 school environment that fosters high student achievement as perceived by public school elementary principals in Northern California.

Research Questions

1. What is the degree of importance for the 12-step principles proposed by Harvey et al. (2014) to create a K-12 school environment that fosters high student achievement as perceived by public school elementary principals in Northern California?
2. What are the leadership strategies for implementing the 12-step principles proposed by Harvey et al. (2014) to create a K-12 school environment that fosters high student
achievement as perceived by public school elementary principals in Northern California?

**Methodology**

An explanatory mixed methods design was used for this study to investigate how elementary principals perceived the 12-step leadership principles proposed by Harvey et al. (2014) to create a K-12 school environment that fosters high student achievement. Five elementary principals from Napa, Solano, and Sonoma Counties participated in this study. Quantitative data were collected via SurveyMonkey to measure the degree of importance of each of the 12-step leadership principles proposed by Harvey et al. (2014) to create a K-12 school environment that fosters high student achievement as perceived by public school elementary principals. The researcher collected qualitative data by conducting scripted face-to-face interviews with the five elementary principals to explore the leadership strategies for implementing the 12-step principles proposed by Harvey et al. (2014) to create a K-12 school environment that fosters high student achievement as perceived by public school elementary principals. The interviews were transcribed and uploaded onto NVIVO to identify emerging themes. Both quantitative and qualitative data were secured in password protected files. Furthermore, the identities of the participants remained confidential.

**Population**

According to Creswell (2003) and Roberts (2010), a population is a group of individuals who have common characteristics. The population for this study included K-12 public school site administrators. According to the California Department of Education ([CDE], n.d.-a), California has 5,873 elementary schools and is therefore led
by 5,873 principals. Elementary school principals manage school operations and facilities, provide instructional leadership, articulate the school’s vision, work with the community to support students, and are accountable for ensuring a safe and positive environment that supports high student achievement (Leithwood & Sun, 2012). For purposes of this study, narrowing the population led to defining a target population or a sampling frame.

**Sampling Frame**

Creswell (2012) stated that a target population or sampling frame is “a group of individuals (or a group of organizations) with some common defining characteristic that the researcher can identify and study” (p. 142). Similarly, McMillan and Schumacher (2010) explained the necessity for the researcher to carefully define the sampling frame, which is as an “actual list of sampling units from which the sample is selected” (p. 129). The sampling frame for this study was narrowed to elementary principals in Napa, Solano, and Sonoma Counties to provide for greater generalization, avoid bias, and offer convenience for data collection. There are 23 elementary schools in Napa County, 52 elementary schools in Solano County, and 108 elementary schools in Sonoma County. The target population included 183 elementary school principals from Napa, Sonoma, and Solano Counties. Out of the 183 elementary schools, 23 schools met the criteria for high student achievement.

**Sample**

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) defined the sample as “the group of subjects or participants from whom the data are collected” (p. 129). Creswell (2012) defined the sample as “a subgroup of the target population that the researcher plans to study for
generalizing about the target population” (p. 142). Therefore, a sample of five elementary principals from high-achieving schools was selected from the sampling frame of schools that met the high-achieving criteria. The criteria for high-achieving schools were based on 2018 California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) scores that were published on the California School Dashboard (CDE, n.d.-b). Schools were required to score “met standard,” coded by green, or “exceeded standard,” coded by blue, in both English language arts and mathematics performance measures.

A purposeful and convenience sampling method was used to the select five elementary school principals. A purposeful sampling method was chosen because of its emphasis on gathering in-depth information from the sample group (Patton, 2015). Purposeful (synonymous with purposive) sampling methods described a selection process of participants who represented the population because of their experience with the phenomenon (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Furthermore, McMillan and Schumacher (2010) stated that “the researcher selects particular elements from the population that will be representative or informative about the topic” (p. 138). In qualitative and quantitative studies, “convenience samples are widely used because this may be the best the researcher can accomplish to due to practical constraints, efficiency, and accessibility” (p. 137).

For the purpose of this study, sample selection began with the target population of elementary principals from high-achieving schools in Napa, Solano, and Sonoma Counties. Then, the researcher employed convenience and purposeful sampling methods to select participants based on the following criteria:
● The principal was employed at a school within the Napa, Solano, and Sonoma Counties with a minimum of 30 staff members.

● The principal has a minimum of 3 years of experience at his or her current site.

● The principal has a minimum of 5 years in the profession.

● The principal has membership in professional associations in his or her field.

● The principal has articles, papers, or materials written, published, or presented at conferences or association meetings.

● The principal was willing to be a participant and agreed to the informed consent form.

The sample for this study included five elementary principals. According to Patton (2015), “The size of the sample depends on what you want to find you, why you want to find it out, how the findings will be used and what resources you have (including time) you have for the study” (p. 311). McMillan and Schumacher (2010) explained that sample size should be determined by the following guidelines: “1) purpose of the study; 2) the focus of the study; 3) primary data collection strategies; 4) availability of informants” (p. 328). Patton (2015) also claimed that “in-depth information from a small number of people can be very valuable, especially if the cases are information-rich” (p. 311). Therefore, the sample size of five principals was appropriate for this study.

**Major Findings**

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to determine the degree of importance for the 12-step principles proposed by Harvey, Drolet, and DeVore (2014) to create a K-12 school environment that fosters high student achievement as perceived by public school elementary principals in Northern California. A secondary purpose was to explore and describe the leadership strategies for implementing the 12-step principles.
proposed by Harvey et al. to create a K-12 school environment that fosters high student achievement as perceived by public school elementary principals in Northern California. The major findings from this study are presented as they relate to the research questions.

**Research Question 1**

*What is the degree of importance for the 12-step principles proposed by Harvey et al. (2014) to create a K-12 school environment that fosters high student achievement as perceived by public school elementary principals in Northern California?*

Quantitative data were collected to answer Research Question 1. Five elementary principals completed the Leading for Excellence online survey to measure the degree of importance of the 12-step principles proposed by Harvey et al. (2014) for creating a high-achieving school environment. The principals rated the perceived degree of importance for each of the 12 leadership principles by using a rating system from 1 *strongly disagree* to 6 *strongly agree*. The number of respondents, percentages of responses, and the mean were calculated to determine the overall results as they relate to the 12 leadership principles that foster high student achievement.

**Major Finding 1. Strong leadership.** The results from the Leading for Excellence survey indicate strong leadership as the most important behavior establishing a high-achieving school environment. “Develop and adhere to goals that focus on student achievement” was perceived as the most important behavior with a mean score of 6.00 and 100% of the respondents indicating *strongly agree*. Additionally, “establish a clear vision for the organization,” “use collaboration,” and “manage the relationships of the institution” were also perceived as critically important, each with a mean score of 5.80 and 80% of respondents indicating *strongly agree* and 20% indicating *agree*. Marzano et
al.’s 2005 study suggested that principal’s leadership behaviors can have a profound effect on student achievement.

**Major Finding 2. Establish a culture of high achievement.** According to the Leading for Excellence survey, principals of high-achieving schools demonstrate four important behaviors to establish a culture of high achievement. “Establish trust” ranked the highest with a mean score of 5.80; 80% indicated *strongly agree* and 20% indicated *agree*. “Turn a toxic environment around” had a mean score of 5.60; 60% indicated *strongly agree*, and 40% indicated *agree*. “Use norms” had a mean score of 5.40 with 60% of respondents who *strongly agreed*, 20% who *agreed*, and 20% who *agreed somewhat*. Leithwood et al. (2004) suggested that leadership should focus on school culture, which is a strong determinant of student achievement.

**Major Finding 3. Flexibility and resilience.** The results from the Leading for Excellence survey indicate that principals of high-achieving schools practice persistence, practice adaptability, and behave resiliently to develop flexibility and resilience. The behavior of “practice persistence” was perceived as most important with a mean score of 5.60; 60% of respondents *strongly agreed*, and 40% agreed. “Practice adaptability” resulted in a mean score of 5.40; 40% of the respondents indicated *strongly agree*, and 60% indicated *agree*. “Behave resiliently” was perceived as important with a mean score of 4.80; 80% of respondents *agreed*, and 20% agreed *somewhat*. Harvey et al. (2014) explained that resiliency involves persistence and remaining focused on high achievement while modeling flexibility and resilience for others.

**Major Finding 4. Vision and values.** Principals of high-achieving schools develop vision and values by demonstrating three critically important behaviors. Based
on the Leading for Excellence survey, one of the behaviors that was perceived as important was “have high achievement as a goal,” which scored a 5.60 mean; 80% of respondents indicated strongly agree, and 20% of respondents indicated agree somewhat. “Do strategic planning” with a mean score of 5.40 was also identified as a perceived important behavior; 40% of respondents indicated strongly agree, and 60% indicated agree. Finally, “establish common team values” also resulted in a mean score of 5.40 with 60% who strongly agreed and 40% who agreed somewhat. Effective principals create a shared vision of high achievement and work with the school community to promote ownership of the vision (Arnold et al. 2007; C. M. Taylor et al., 2014).

**Major Finding 5. High expectations.** The results from the Leading for Excellence survey indicate that effective principals of high-achieving schools demonstrate behaviors that promote high expectations. “Give support for high expectations” was perceived as critically important with a mean score of 5.60; 60% of the respondents indicated strongly agree while 40% indicated agree. “Higher student expectations” and “have a high achievement environment” generated identical results from the survey—mean score of 5.00; 20% indicated strongly agree, 60% indicated agree, and 20% indicated agree somewhat. Creating systems of support for teachers and students is needed to reach high expectations (Harvey et al., 2014; McCommons, 2014).

**Research Question 2**

*What are the leadership strategies for implementing the 12-step principles proposed by Harvey et al. (2014) to create a K-12 school environment that fosters high student achievement as perceived by public school elementary principals in Northern California?*
Qualitative data were collected through face-to-face interviews with five elementary principals of high-achieving schools to answer Research Question 2. The researcher utilized an interview protocol that included open-ended, scripted questions developed by the team of peer researchers. The elementary principals responded to questions about the 12-step principles proposed by Harvey et al. (2014) that foster a high-achieving school environment. The responses included leadership strategies for implementing strong leadership, culture of high achievement, vision and values, high expectations, love and passion, focus on learning, embedded professional development, assessment and evaluation, the strength of teams, collaboration and shared decision-making, communication, and flexibility and resilience.

**Major Finding 1. Strong leadership.** Based on the coded data that were analyzed from the face-to-face interviews, strong leadership was found to be the most critical leadership principle with 80% to 100% of the respondents mentioning strong leadership and 22% of the total frequencies. Principals who lead high-achieving schools implement the following strategies: “use data to drive your actions,” “provide support based on needs and relevance,” “utilize collaborative leadership practices,” and “build relationships and get to know people.” According to Harvey et al. (2014), strong leadership involves setting expectations for excellent instruction and supporting a learning environment for students and staff. Furthermore, strong leadership as an overarching principle involves the integration of other effective leadership behaviors.

The strategies that emerged from the coded data demonstrate an alignment with the “utilize collaborative practices” and align with the theoretical definition that was developed by the team of peer researchers: “Strong leadership is the ability of a leader to
establish clear vision and goals for an organization focused on student achievement and team collaboration” (Harvey et al., 2014; Leithwood et al., 2010). “Use data to drive your actions,” which was referred to 19 times by 80% of the principals and “provide support based on needs and relevance,” which was mentioned 16 times by 80% of the principals support Harvey et al.’s (2014) idea that strong leaders monitor progress toward desired outcomes and make adjustments when needed. Finally, all principals (100%) stated, “build relationships and get to know people” was an essential strategy for developing strong leadership.

**Major Finding 2. Collaboration and shared decision-making.** Based on the coded data from the face-to-face interviews, principals of high-achieving schools implement four critical strategies to develop collaboration and shared decision-making. With 9% of the total frequencies, the collaboration and shared decision-making was perceived as the second most important leadership behavior. The strategies to support collaboration and shared decision-making include “focus on academics,” “involve stakeholders,” “provide various opportunities to collaborate” and “establish shared leadership roles.”

The strategies that were coded demonstrate a strong alignment with the peer researchers’ theoretical definition, “collaboration and shared decision-making involves communication across the entire team of any information that collectively binds a team to support increased student achievement as well as the establishment of a high-functioning team” (Forman et al., 2017; Harvey et al., 2014). “Focus on academics” and “involve stakeholders” were mentioned by at least 80% of the respondents and illustrate the importance of working with teams to support high student achievement. Furthermore,
“provide various opportunities to collaborate” and “establish shared leadership roles,” which were referred to by 60% of the respondents support the concept of establishing high-functioning teams through building capacity.

**Major Finding 3. Communication.** According to the face-to-face interviews, leadership strategies to support communication emerged as another critically important leadership behavior with constituted 9% of the total frequencies. All five (100%) principals of high-achieving schools implement three essential strategies to support communication: “utilize various methods of sharing information,” “be visible and talk to people,” and “share student data and other relevant topics.”

Although the strategies that emerged from coded data demonstrate some alignment with the theoretical definition developed by the team of peer researchers, the elementary principals expressed the importance of maintaining strong lines of communication and sharing relevant information through different avenues. The theoretical definition of communication developed by the team of peer researchers states, “Communication is the message sent through various means such as written and spoken language as well as body language, behavior, and actions” (Arnold et al., 2007; Harvey et al., 2014). “Utilize various methods of sharing information” and “be visible and talk to people” support Harvey et al.’s (2014) recommendation to use two-way communication by walking around and using all avenues often. Furthermore, “share student data and relevant topics” was a strategy for leaders to communicate progress toward high achievement.

**Major Finding 4. Integration of leadership strategies across 12-step principles.** According to the face-to-face interviews, several strategies were not exclusive
to one leadership principle but emerged throughout several of the 12-step principles. Principals from high-achieving schools integrate several strategies concurrently: focus on academics, make data-driven decisions, support growth, and work collaboratively with stakeholders. Table 31 represents four strategies that are integrated throughout the 12-step leadership behaviors as perceived by elementary principles.

Principals of high-achieving schools foster a high-achieving school environment by integrating four strategies across the 12-step leadership principles. “Focus on academic achievement” is implemented across 10 out of 12 (83%) principles. The strategies for “data-driven decisions” are implemented across six out of 12 (50%) principles. “Support growth” strategies are implemented across eight out of 12 (67%) leadership principles. Finally, “work collaboratively” strategies are implemented throughout 10 out of 12 (83%) of the leadership principles. According to Leithwood and Sun (2012), effective leaders utilize a combination of behaviors that contribute to high student achievement.
Table 31

Leadership Strategies That Are Integrated Across the 12-Step Principles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership behavior</th>
<th>Focus on academic achievement</th>
<th>Make data-driven decisions</th>
<th>Support growth</th>
<th>Work collaboratively</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strong leadership</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture of high achievement</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision and values</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High expectations</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love and passion</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on learning and rigor</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embedded professional development</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic achievement and assessment</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength of teams</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration &amp; shared decision-making</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility &amp; resilience</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Major Finding 5. Leadership strategies to support each of the 12-step principles exist at high-achieving schools.** Based on the face-to-face interviews, each of the five elementary principals was able to respond and provide comprehensive and specific examples of the strategies they implemented to establish a high-achieving school environment. Leadership strategies were represented by themes that emerged from the
qualitative data analysis. Five themes emerged from strong leadership; four themes emerged from culture of high achievement, embedded professional development, and collaboration and shared decision-making; three themes emerged from vision and values, high expectations love and passion, focus on learning and rigor, academic achievement and assessment for the 21st century, communication, and flexibility and resilience. Studies conducted by Bray (2012) and G. Brown et al. (2017) revealed that elementary principals demonstrate a combination of behaviors: they constantly engage with the parents, visit classrooms regularly, and actively support changes for teaching and learning.

**Unexpected Findings**

Unexpected findings were revealed from the investigation of the degree of importance of the 12-step principles and the implementation of the 12-step principles as perceived by elementary principals. Strong leadership was the only leadership principle that was perceived as a critically important leadership behavior in both the quantitative and qualitative data collection. No other matches occurred between the Leading for Excellence survey data and the data collected from the face-to-face interviews. Quantitative results for the leadership principles with the highest degree of importance as perceived by elementary principals included the following: strong leadership, culture of high achievement, flexibility and resilience, vision and values, and high expectations. Qualitative results indicated that leadership strategies to support strong leadership, collaboration and shared decision-making, and communication were perceived as critically important.
Conclusions

Based on the major findings and a review of the literature from this mixed methods study, several conclusions explain how elementary principals implement the 12-step principals proposed by Harvey et al. (2014) to create a high-achieving school environment: strong leadership, culture of high achievement, vision and values, high expectations, love and passion, focus on learning, embedded professional development, assessment and evaluation, the strength of teams, collaboration and shared decision-making, communication, and flexibility and resilience to create a high-achieving school environment.

Conclusion 1: Strong Leadership is the Overarching Leadership Principle

Elementary principals who demonstrate a combination of the 12 leadership behaviors foster a high-achieving school environment. Based on the findings from this study and the literature, the researcher concluded that strong leadership is the overarching principle that requires an interplay of the remaining 11 principles: culture of high achievement, vision and values, high expectations, love and passion, focus on learning, embedded professional development, academic achievement and assessment for the 21st century, the strength of teams, collaboration and shared decision-making, communication, and flexibility and resilience. Similarly, according to Arnold et al. (2007), effective principals communicate effectively, are visionary, utilize data for school improvement, impact the school culture, support collaboration, and understand effective instruction and curriculum.

Within the current public school system, school leaders, including elementary principals, are expected to meet the demands set by federal and state regulations for
continual improvement in addition to providing oversight for daily operations for schools to run efficiently. High-achieving schools are supported by strong leaders who establish a culture of high achievement and sustain continual growth (Purkey & Marshall, 1993) toward the school’s shared vision. Furthermore, strong leaders have the ability to influence others through collective leadership that involves staff, parents, and other stakeholders in the decision-making processes.

**Conclusion 2: Culture of High Achievement**

Based on the research and literature, the researcher was able to conclude that principals at high-achieving schools establish a culture of high achievement. Principals strengthen a culture of high achievement by leading with focus on academics, supporting growth, and collaborating with school community. Furthermore, they understand the importance of building trusting relationships with their people but also take action when the environment works against student achievement. Harvey et al. (2014) and Tichnor-Wagner et al. (2016) further suggested that norms should be developed collectively and implemented consistently to support a high-achieving school culture. Finally, principals who support their people and regularly celebrate growth effectively create a positive school culture (Harvey et al., 2014).

**Conclusion 3: Shared Vision**

Based on the research and literature review, effective principals who articulate a shared vision create a high-achieving school environment. Effective principals have a clear picture of where they want their schools to be and value the work of teams to help achieve the vision. The leadership behavior of creating a shared vision with the school community promotes ownership of the vision in which staff and parents take
responsibility to help the school achieve its vision (Arnold et al., 2007; Hitt et al., 2018). Effective principals articulate a clear vision as the driving force to align the school’s goals and actions strategically. According to G. Brown (2016) and Mombourquette and Bedard (2014), effective principals engage teams to make critical changes to instruction when schools are unable to meet their goals.

**Conclusion 4: Collaborative Leadership**

Based on the research and review of literature about collaboration and shared decision-making, the researcher concluded that leading with collaborative practices fosters a high-achieving school environment. Principals who lead high-achieving schools involve staff, parents, community members, and sometimes students in many aspects of the making decisions for supporting high student achievement. Effective leadership focuses on academics and relies on collaboration and shared decision-making to evaluate and implement systems to support instruction (Shaked & Schechter, 2013). Principals who work with teachers to improve teaching and learning have a direct impact on student achievement as opposed to principals who do not support a collaborative process. Hallinger (2003) explained, “The collaborative processes inherent to the enquiry approach to school improvement offer the opportunity for teachers to study, to learn about, to share and to enact leadership (p. 340).

**Conclusion 5: Flexibility and Resilience**

Based on the research and literature, principals who foster a high-achieving school environment are flexible and resilient. With the overwhelming demands of school leadership, principals must remain focused on the success of the organization. It is well-documented in the research that effective principals who adapt to changes at their schools
are able to sustain high student achievement (Day, 2014; Merritt 2017). Principals at high-achieving schools value feedback and input from others in an organization (D. Anderson & Ackerman Anderson et al., 2010). Furthermore, principals who sustain high-achieving environments are also flexible and address resistance from staff but are resilient and remain on course. Transformational leadership theories emphasize the importance empowering others to resist settling for the status quo in order to support the school’s goals (M. Anderson, 2017; Hamstra et al., 2014).

**Conclusion 6: A Focus on Academics and Data Are Equally Important**

Based on the research and literature review, effective principals focus on academics and data to drive all decisions. Elementary principals use a cyclical process to identify, implement, monitor, and adjust academic systems based on data that create a high-achieving school environment. Effective principals utilize classroom walkthrough data and student data in collaboration with staff to determine professional development needs and additional supports for students. Goddard et al.’s (2015) study suggested that principals who frequently monitored instruction and provided guidance for teachers had direct impact on effective instructional practices.

**Implications for Action**

The topic of effective leadership and its impact on student achievement resonates throughout the K-12 public school system. The conclusions based on this research provide substantial implications on leadership behaviors to support a culture of high achievement. Furthermore, school leaders have a common understanding of an integrated approach for applying the 12 leadership principles but also recognize the
importance of the leadership principles independently. The practical implications derived from this study are listed in the following section.

**Implication 1: Professional Development**

Based on the findings of this study and a review of the literature, professional development for site leadership is critical for supporting student achievement. School districts must be required to provide professional development in several forms. First, training on research-based, effective practices that are relevant to the school district culture must be a component of professional development. Next, collaboration time for site leaders to share strategies that support both staff and student growth builds capacity within the cohort of site leaders. Finally, coaching for all principals, not only new principals, must be provided because of the individualized approach toward helping principals reach their individual goals based on their needs to increase effectiveness. An essential component of coaching is the real-time, personalized feedback that principals receive from their coaches. The feedback may be used in a leadership development plan that addresses 12 leadership domains proposed by Harvey et al. (2014).

**Implication 2: Utilize the Data from the Leading for Excellence Survey to Design a Professional Development Plan**

Based on the findings of this study and a review of the literature, it is recommended that elementary principals complete the Leading for Excellence survey. The individual results from the survey will provide site leaders with an opportunity to reflect on the importance of each of the 12 leadership principles and will be used to develop a personal leadership development plan. Because principals’ needs are unique and often impacted by the conditions of their schools, the survey responses may reveal
specific practices for principals to implement at their school communities. Additionally, the collective data will be used at a district level to identify essential topics for professional development for site leaders.

**Implication 3: Prioritize a Focus on High Achievement**

Based on the findings of this study and a review of the literature, it is recommended that elementary principals prioritize a focus on high student achievement. Although principals have complex and an overwhelming number of responsibilities, student achievement must always be at the core of leadership. First, revisiting the school’s vision with key representatives of the school community is an essential step to ensuring that the vision is aligned with student achievement. Next, it is highly recommended that academics and student data are the driving factors to develop site-based strategic plans that are actionable and involve key stakeholders.

Communicating student progress is a critical component of a focus on student achievement. Principals who share academic data communicate the importance of academics and encourage input from others for continual growth for the school. For example, student data must consistently be a topic at all faculty meetings and establish a purpose for collaboration and efforts to improve instructional practices. Academic progress must also be presented to parents whenever possible, especially during formal parent meetings such as PTA, School Site Council, English Learners Advisory Council, and other community engagement meetings.

**Implication 4: Allocate Time for Consistent Classroom Walkthroughs**

Based on the findings of this study and a review of the literature, principals must allocate time for classroom walkthroughs and provide feedback for teachers. By
conducting frequent classroom visits, principals will gain a strong understanding of the curriculum and caliber of instruction at their schools. When principals are visible in classrooms and collaborate with teachers about instruction, student achievement is strongly perceived as the principal’s priority. Opportunities for dialogue about instruction are supported when principals provide feedback for teachers. Furthermore, the trend data gathered from walkthroughs must be used to determine professional development needs. Classroom walkthroughs may also involve teachers visiting their peers as a strategy for sharing effective practices and providing feedback for each other.

**Implication 5: Develop Interdistrict Collaboration Through County Offices**

Based on the findings of this study and a review of the literature, it is recommended that county offices provide opportunities for principals to collaborate. Professional learning communities for site leadership exist in most districts; however, interdistrict collaboration would provide another layer of support. Furthermore, principals must network in order to gain more perspectives on effective leadership practices from colleagues within their counties.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

The study revealed major findings on establishing a high-achieving school environment. The following recommendations are made for future research on leadership principles that foster high student achievement.

**Recommendation 1**

Conduct an explanatory mixed methods study to replicate this study using superintendents and district leadership at high-achieving school districts.
Recommendation 2

Conduct an explanatory mixed methods study to replicate this study using principals at alternative school settings.

Recommendation 3

Conduct a comparative study between elementary and secondary principals and their perceived degree of importance of leadership principles.

Recommendation 4

Conduct a case study of how a principal sustains a high-achieving school environment in a district with significant budget cuts.

Recommendation 5

Conduct a comparative study with elementary principals of different cultural backgrounds and their perceptions of the 12 leadership principals proposed by Harvey et al. (2014).

Recommendation 6

Conduct an explanatory mixed methods study to replicate this study using classroom teachers at high achieving schools.

Recommendation 7

Conduct an explanatory mixed methods study to examine how high achieving school principals respond to resistance.

Concluding Remarks and Reflections

The data gathered from the surveys, interviews with elementary principals, and a review of the literature reveal that site leadership is critical for establishing a high-achieving school environment. The leadership principles proposed by Harvey et al.
(2014) work in an integrated manner to foster high student achievement. Although the
degrees of importance for each of the 12 principles vary between individual principals,
each leadership principle must be applied in a strategic, intentional manner. This study
has had a profound effect on my own behaviors surrounding strong leadership, culture of
high achievement, vision and values, high expectations, love and passion, focus on
learning, embedded professional development, academic achievement and assessment for
the 21st century, the strength of teams, collaboration and shared decision-making,
communication, and flexibility and resilience.

Throughout my dissertation journey, I found it necessary to develop my own
personal definition of a high-achieving school environment. A culture of high
achievement values growth for students, staff, and the entire school community. A
culture of high achievement involves teams who work purposefully and passionately to
establish systems where all students have access to high quality educational experiences.
Finally, a culture of high achievement requires a multifaceted leader who is
transformative and strengthens relationships with students, teachers, classified staff,
parents, and all individuals who have a vested interest in the school’s success.

As an elementary principal, I am inspired by the findings from both the literature
review and the data I gathered from the elementary principals who are resilient and
collaborative. We have a pivotal role in our communities, and our responsibilities may
often be daunting yet incredibly rewarding as we impact children who matriculate
through our elementary schools. Principals can easily be distracted by managing the
daily demands of the school; however, demonstrating behaviors that celebrate, support,
and establish a high-achieving environment must be at the core of our leadership.


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## APPENDIX A

### Synthesis Matrix for Key Variables

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APPENDIX B

Leading for Excellence Survey

Leading for Excellence - Paragon

Survey of Leading for Excellence: Leadership Behaviors That Support A High Achieving School Climate

INFORMATION ABOUT: A school's student achievement may depend on leadership principles used to effectively create a high achieving school environment. The purpose of this inquiry is to seek your perceptions of the perceived importance of 12 specific leadership stepping stones: Strong leadership, establishing a culture of high achievement, creating a vision and values, high expectations, love and passion, a focus on learning, embedded professional development, assessment and evaluation, the strength of teams, collaboration and shared decision making, communication, and flexibility and resiliency.

Completing this survey will take approximately 15 minutes. Please choose to become a part of this important undertaking.

It is important to read the following consent information carefully and click the agree box to continue. The survey will not open until you agree.
INFORMED CONSENT

INFORMATION ABOUT:  Leading for Excellence: Leadership Behaviors That Support A High Achieving School Climate

RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR: Amy Parangon

The purpose of this exploratory mixed method study was to determine the degree of importance for the twelve step principles proposed by Harvey, Drolet and DeVore (2014) to create a K12 school environment that fosters high student achievement as perceived by K12 educational leaders in California. In addition, a secondary purpose was to explore and describe the leadership strategies for implementing the twelve step principles proposed by Harvey, Drolet and DeVore (2014) to create a K12 school environment that fosters high student achievement as perceived by K12 educational leaders in California.

Your participation in this survey is voluntary. You may choose not to participate. If you decide to participate in this electronic survey, you can withdraw at any time.

The survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Your responses will be confidential. The survey questions will pertain to your perceptions regarding the impact of the specific leadership principles that may create a high achieving school.

Each participant will use a three-digit code for identification purposes. The researcher will keep the identifying codes safe-guarded in a locked file drawer to which the researcher will have sole access. The results of this study will be used for scholarly purposes only.

No information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent and that all identifiable information will be protected to the limits allowed by law. If the study design or the use of the data is to be changed, I will be so informed and my consent re-obtained. There are minimal risks associated with participating in this research. I understand that the Investigator will protect my confidentiality by keeping the identifying codes and research materials in a locked file drawer that is available only to the researcher. I understand that I may refuse to participate in or may withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences. Also, the investigator may stop the study at any time. I understand that if I have any questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may write or call the Office of the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, at 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641.

If you have any questions about completing this survey or any aspects of this research, please contact Amy Parangon at mparangon@mail.brandman.edu or by phone at 489-568-0648, or Dr. Doug DeVore, Advisor, at ddevore@mail.brandman.edu

Clicking on the “agree” button indicates that you have read the informed consent form and the information in this document and that you voluntarily agree to participate.

If you do not wish to participate in this electronic survey, you may decline participation by clicking on the "disagree" button.

* The survey will not open for responses unless you agree to participate.

☐ AGREE: I acknowledge receipt of the complete Informed Consent packet and "Bill of Rights." I have read the materials and give my consent to participate in the study.

☐ DISAGREE: I do not wish to participate in this electronic survey
Leading for Excellence - Paragon

Leadership Principle Survey

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research on leadership strategies for developing a high achieving school. This study is focused on twelve principles to developing a high achieving school as described by Harvey, Drolet and DeVore (2014) in Leading for Excellence: A Twelve Step Program to Student Achievement. Upon completion of this study the researcher will send you an aggregate report on the results for each of the twelve principles.

It is best to not ‘overthink’ the statements and respond with your first perceptual thought. It is anticipated you can complete this survey in approximately 15 minutes. After you complete and submit the survey the researcher will contact you to schedule an interview to explore your thoughts on the leadership strategies for implementing the twelve step principles.

Directions: Using the 6 point scale below please rate your perception for the degree of importance for each of the following statements for the degree of importance to establish a school environment that fosters high student achievement.

Degree of importance to establish a school environment that fosters high student achievement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Agree Somewhat</th>
<th>Disagree Somewhat</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Establish a clear vision for the organization</td>
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<td>2. Develop and adhere to goals that focus on student achievement</td>
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<td>3. Encourage the good ideas of others</td>
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<td>4. Do the right thing (versus doing things right)</td>
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<td>5. Use collaboration</td>
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<td>6. Manage the relationships of the institution</td>
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Degree of importance to establish a school environment that fosters high student achievement:

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<td>7.</td>
<td>Turn a toxic environment around</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>Establish trust</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>Make people want to be there</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>Use norms</td>
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<td>11.</td>
<td>Use artifacts, heroes, and stories</td>
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<td>12.</td>
<td>Know my staff members' stories and honor them</td>
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<td>13.</td>
<td>Celebrate</td>
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<td>14.</td>
<td>Use joy</td>
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Degree of importance to establish a school environment that fosters high student achievement:

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<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Have high achievement as a goal</td>
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<td>16.</td>
<td>Establish common team values</td>
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<td>17.</td>
<td>Do strategic planning</td>
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<td>18.</td>
<td>Have all constituents buy-in to the values</td>
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Degree of importance to establish a school environment that fosters high student achievement:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Lower student expectations</td>
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<td>20.</td>
<td>Higher student expectations</td>
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<td>21.</td>
<td>Give support for high expectations</td>
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<td>22.</td>
<td>Have a high achievement environment</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>23.</td>
<td>Love the people I work with</td>
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<td>24.</td>
<td>Love the work</td>
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<td>25.</td>
<td>Practice skills of love</td>
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<td>26.</td>
<td>Focus on the positive in others</td>
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<td>27.</td>
<td>Make student learning the chief responsibility of everyone</td>
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<td>28.</td>
<td>Set high expectations for learning</td>
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<td>29.</td>
<td>Define rigor</td>
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<td>30.</td>
<td>Demand rigor</td>
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<td>31.</td>
<td>Support rigor</td>
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### Degree of importance to establish a school environment that fosters high student achievement.

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<tr>
<td>32. Establish technology as a focus for professional development priorities and goals</td>
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<td>33. See professional development as an intensive, ongoing and connected practice</td>
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<td>34. Align professional development with school improvement priorities and goals</td>
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<td>35. Use school based coaching to enhance professional learning</td>
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<td>36. Establish mentoring and induction programs for new teachers</td>
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<td>37. Use teacher self-assessment needs, evaluation needs, and student achievement needs to propel professional development</td>
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<tr>
<td>36. Use assessment for 21st Century Skills</td>
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<td>37. Employ formative assessment</td>
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<td>40. Use multiple assessment</td>
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<td>41. Use data over and over again</td>
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<td>42. Use data assiduously to improve</td>
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<td>43. Use trend data</td>
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<td>44. Use a team to analyze data</td>
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<td>45. Change assessments for Common Core Standards</td>
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<td>46. Use criteria that are authentic</td>
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### Degree of importance to establish a school environment that fosters high student achievement.

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<th>Disagree Somewhat</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
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<tr>
<td>47. Make sure I have a high functioning team</td>
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<td>48. Make sure that everybody goes in the same direction</td>
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<td>49. Make sure I have a role in high achievement</td>
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<td>50. Attend to the personal side of teams</td>
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<td>51. Make sure the what goes down, but the how goes up</td>
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<td>52. Share the information</td>
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<td>53. Use the participation to get investment success</td>
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<td>54. Broaden the involvement</td>
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<td>55. Implement good decision making practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>56. Use all avenues of communication</td>
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<td>57. Communicate that high achievement is for all</td>
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<td>58. Use two-way communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>59. Behave resiliently</td>
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<td>60. Practice adaptability</td>
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<td>61. Practice persistence</td>
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APPENDIX C

Thematic Interview Protocol and Questions

“My name Amy Parangan and I am an Elementary School Principal. I’m doctoral candidate at Brandman University in the area of Organizational Leadership. I’m a part of a team conducting mixed methods research to determine the degree of importance for twelve specific principles of leadership. These principles include strong leadership, establishing a culture of high achievement, vision and values, high expectations, love and passion, focus on learning and academic rigor, embedded professional development, academic achievement and assessment, the strength of teams, collaboration and shared decision-making, communication, and flexibility and resilience. In addition, this research will explore and describe the leadership strategies used to implementing these twelve leadership principles, as proposed by Harvey, Drolet, and DeVore (2014) to create a K-12 school environment that fosters high student achievement as perceived by public school elementary principals. This study is about the degree of importance of each of the twelve leadership principles and the strategies leaders employ to implement these leadership principles in order to develop a high-achieving school.

Our team is conducting approximately 35 interviews with leaders like yourself. The information you give, along with the others, hopefully will provide a clear picture of the thoughts and behaviors that exemplary leaders use to create a high-achieving school culture that fosters high student achievement within their organizations and will add to the body of research currently available.

Incidentally, even though it appears a bit awkward, I will be reading most of what I say. The reason for this to guarantee, as much as possible, that my interviews with all participating exemplary leaders will be conducted pretty much in the same manner.

Informed Consent (required for Dissertation Research)

I would like to remind you any information that is obtained in connection to this study will remain confidential. All of the data will be reported without reference to any individual(s) or any institution(s). After I record and transcribe the data, I will send it to you via email so that you can check to make sure that I have accurately captured your thoughts and ideas.

Did you receive the Informed Consent and Brandman Bill of Rights I sent you via email? Do you have any questions or need clarification about either document?

We have scheduled an hour for the interview. At any point during the interview you may ask that I skip a particular question or stop the interview altogether. For ease of our discussion and accuracy I will record our conversation as indicated in the Informed Consent.

Do you have any questions before we begin? Okay, let’s get started, and thanks so much for your time.”

Note: Do not share the probe with interviewees; it is used only if you deem it necessary. The final interview protocol you share with interviewees only contains the main interview questions for each element.
Strong Leadership
Question:
How do you establish a clear and effective vision for your organization that is focused on increased student achievement and encouraging the good ideas of others?

Probe:
If possible, can you share an example or two of how you use your organization’s vision and goals to promote a climate of high student achievement.

Culture of High Achievement
Question:
How do you establish with members of your organization that high student achievement should be a priority?

Probe:
As you consider all the leadership work you have done with your team, what would you identify as the most valuable strategy or strategies you employed as a leader to develop and establish a culture of high achievement with your team members?

Vision and Values
Question:
Please share with me how you worked with your team to develop an organizational vision and common values that foster high student achievement?

Probe:
Do you have a plan for assuring new members to the team will become familiar with the established vision and values statement?

High Expectations
Question:
What does “high expectations” look like in a successful school, and how do you establish and maintain them?

Probe:
How do you communicate and maintain high expectations to the different levels of stakeholders (students, parents, staff, community?)

Love and Passion
Question:
Can you please share with me how you stay intentionally committed to connecting and relating to your team?

Probe:
Can you share an experience when you were aware of the personal needs of someone on your team and how that helped you to maintain that personal relationship?
Focus on Learning and Academic Rigor

Question:
Focus on learning and academic rigor is a way to establish a set of defined standards for increased student achievement. Can you please share what you do to promote student achievement?

Probe:
Can you share some ways you encourage others to promote a focus on learning and academic rigor?

Embedded Professional Development

Question:
There is research to support that embedding professional development into the teacher’s day-to-day teaching practice can enhance teachers’ content-specific instructional practices with the intent of improving student learning. How do you ensure the professional development provided to teachers aligns to the goal of increasing student achievement?

Probe:
Can you share how professional development to your staff has directly impacted your school’s vision and goals in regard to increasing student achievement?

Academic Achievement and Assessment for the 21st Century

Question:
There is evidence that data driven decision-making can support increasing student achievement. What data do you use to support your decision-making focused on academic achievement?

Probe:
Can you provide an example of how data was used to support decision-making focused on increasing student achievement?

The Strength of Teams

Question:
Teams of individuals who work cohesively have the ability to achieve a common goal. As the leader in your organization, what are some practices you have used to strengthen teams?

Probe:
How do you support teams who are struggling?
Collaboration and Shared Decision-Making

**Question:**
School leaders who involve the school community in shared decision-making are able to impact student achievement. How do you foster collaboration with staff, families, and other key stakeholders in the school’s decision-making processes?

**Probe:**
*What do you do to ensure that key groups are represented when making decisions to support high student achievement?*

**Communication**

**Question:**
Educational leaders who have open conversations with teachers and other stakeholders can have a positive impact on student achievement. Can you share some examples of how you engage your stakeholders to help increase student academic outcomes?

**Probe:**
*How has your approach to communication changed over time?*

**Flexibility and Resilience**

**Question:**
Having an open mind helps leaders solve problems effectively. However, one must also know when to stay the course. Can you give some examples when you needed to adapt your leadership style to support changing school or district goals?

**Probe:**
*What are some strategies you use to encourage people to stay the course even during difficult times?*
APPENDIX D

Alignment Table for Research Question 1

Alignment of Survey Likert Scale to Research Question 1 for 12-Step Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research question</th>
<th>Descriptors for 6-Point Likert Scale</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ 1: What is the degree of importance for the twelve step principles proposed by</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvey, Drolet, and DeVore (2014) to create a K-12 school environment that fosters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>high student achievement as perceived by public school elementary superintendents.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Strong Leadership</td>
<td>Establish a clear vision for the organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Culture of High Achievement</td>
<td>Develop and adhere to goals that focus on student achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Encourage the good ideas of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do the right thing (versus doing things right)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manage the relationships of the institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Turn a toxic environment around</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establish trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Make people want to be there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use norms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use artifacts, heroes, and stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Know my staff members’ stories and honor them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Celebrate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use joy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Vision and Values</td>
<td>Have high achievement as a goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establish Common Team Values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do strategic planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Have all constituents buy-in to the values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. High Expectations</td>
<td>Lower Student Expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Higher Student Expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Give support for high expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Have a high achievement environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Love and Passion</td>
<td>Love the people I work with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Love the work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Practice skills of love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus on the Positive in Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus on Learning and Academic Rigor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Make student learning the chief responsibility of everyone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Set high expectations for learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Define rigor</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Demand rigor</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support rigor</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Embedded Professional Development</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Establish technology as a focus for professional development priorities and goals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>See professional development as an intensive, ongoing and connected practice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Align professional development with school improvement priorities and goals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use school-based coaching to enhance professional Development</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Academic Achievement and Assessment for the 21st Century</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Use assessment for 21st-Century Skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employ formative assessment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use multiple assessment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use data over and over again</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use data assiduously to improve</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use trend data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use a team to analyze data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Change assessments for Common Core Standards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use criteria that are authentic</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strength of Teams</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Make sure I have a high-functioning team</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Make sure that everybody goes in the same direction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Make sure I have a role in high achievement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attend to the personal side of teams</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Collaboration and Shared Decision-Making</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Make sure the what goes down, but the how goes up</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Share the information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use the participation to get investment success</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Broaden the involvement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Implement good decision-making practice</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Communication</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Use all avenues of communication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communicate that high achievement is for all</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use two-way communication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Flexibility and Resilience</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Behave resiliently</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Practice adaptability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Practice persistence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX E

Permission to Use Likert Scale Data Collection Instrument

From: “Devore, Douglas” <xxxxx@xxxxx.xxx>
Subject: Permission to use Likert Scale data collection instrument
Date: May 28, 2019 at 10:49:26 AM MST
To: “Devore, Douglas” < xxxxx@xxxxx.xxx >

Thank you for your inquiry about using the High Achievement Environment Scale from our Leading for Excellence: A Twelve Step Program To Student Achievement book. Consider this response approval to use that scale for your survey instrument.

Doug
Doug DeVore, Ed.D.
Professor
Organizational Leadership
BUIRB Chair
xxxxx@xxxxx.xxx
www.brandman.edu
Contact Information: T: xxx.xxx.xxxx | Fax: xxx.xxx.xxxx
xxxxx  xxxxx xxx
xxxxx, xx xxxxx
APPENDIX F

Alignment Table for Research Question 2

Alignment of Interview Questions to Research Questions for 12-Step Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research question</th>
<th>Corresponding interview questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>RQ 2:</strong> What are the leadership strategies for implementing the twelve step principles proposed by Harvey, Drolet, and DeVore (2014) to create a K-12 school environment that fosters high student achievement as perceived by public school elementary principals?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. <strong>Strong Leadership</strong></td>
<td>How do you establish a clear and effective vision for your organization that is focused on increased student achievement and encouraging the good ideas of others? If possible, can you share examples of situations when you exhibited one or more of the above characteristics of strong leadership?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. <strong>Culture of High Achievement</strong></td>
<td>How do you establish with members of your organization that high student achievement should be a priority?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. <strong>Vision and Values</strong></td>
<td>Please share with me how you worked with you team to develop an organizational vision and common values that foster student achievement?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. <strong>High Expectations</strong></td>
<td>What does “high expectations” look like in a successful school, and how do you establish and maintain them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. <strong>Love and Passion</strong></td>
<td>Can you please share with me how you stay intentionally committed to connecting and relating to your team?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6. Focus on Learning and Academic Rigor</strong></td>
<td>Focus on learning and academic rigor is a way to establish a set of defined standards for increased student achievement. Can you please share what you do to promote student achievement?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7. Embedded Professional Development</strong></td>
<td>There is research to support that embedding professional development into the teacher’s day-to-day teaching practice can enhance teachers’ content-specific instructional practices with the intent of improving student learning. How do you ensure the professional development provided to teachers aligns to the goal of increasing student achievement?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8. Academic Achievement and Assessment for the 21st Century</strong></td>
<td>There is evidence that data driven decision-making can support greater student achievement. What data do you use to support your decision-making focused on academic achievement?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9. The Strength of Teams</strong></td>
<td>Teams of individuals who work cohesively have the ability to achieve a common goal. As the leader in your organization, what are some practices you have used to strengthen teams?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10. Collaboration and Shared Decision-Making</strong></td>
<td>School leaders who involve the school community in shared decision-making are able to impact student achievement. How do you foster collaboration with staff, families, and other key stakeholders in the school’s decision-making processes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>11. Communication</strong></td>
<td>School Leaders who have open conversations with teachers and other stakeholders can have a positive impact on student achievement. Can you share some examples of how you engage your stakeholders to help increase student academic outcomes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12. Flexibility and Resilience</strong></td>
<td>Having an open mind helps leaders solve problems effectively. However, one must also know when to stay the course. Can you give some examples when you needed to adapt your leadership style to support changing school or district goals?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX G

Quantitative Field-Testing Feedback Form

Field-Test Interviewee Feedback Questions

1. How did you feel about the interview? Do you think you had ample opportunities to describe what you do as a leader when working to develop a high-achieving school?

2. Did you feel the amount of time for the interview was ok?

3. Were the questions by and large clear or were there places where you were uncertain what was being asked?

4. Can you recall any words or terms being asked about during the interview that were confusing?

5. And finally, did I appear comfortable during the interview… (I’m pretty new at this)?
APPENDIX H

Qualitative Field-Test Feedback Form

Survey Feedback by Field-Test Participant

We students at Brandman University so appreciate your help in our designing the best survey we can. Your participation is crucial to the effort. Below are some questions that I would appreciate you answering after completing the survey. Your answers will assist me in refining both the directions and the survey items. This will allow me to make edits to improve the survey prior to administering to all of the potential study participants.

You have been provided with a paper copy of the survey, just to jog your memory if you need it. Thanks so much.

1. How many minutes did it take you to complete the survey, from the moment you opened it on the computer until the time you completed it? ______________

2. Did the portion up front that asked you to read the consent information and click the agree box before the survey opened concern you at all? ______________

3. If so, would you briefly state your concern __________________________ __________________________

4. Did the Information About section help clarify for you the purpose of this research? ______

5. Was the Introduction sufficiently clear (and not too long) to inform you what the research was about? _____ If not, what would you recommend that would make it better?

_____________________________________________________________

6. Were the directions in the leadership principle survey clear, and you understood what to do? _____

7. If not, would you briefly state the problem __________________________ __________________________

8. Were the brief descriptions of the 6 choices prior to your completing the items clear, and did they provide sufficient differences among them for you to make a selection? _____ If not, briefly describe the problem __________________________

_____________________________________________________________

9. As you progressed through the Do I statements in which you gave a rating of 1 through 6, if there were any items that caused you say something like, “What does this mean?” Which item(s) were they? Or if not, please check here:____
Dear Amy P. Parana,

Congratulations, your IRB application to conduct research has been approved by the Brandman University Institutional Review Board. This approval grants permission for you to proceed with data collection for your research. Please keep this email for your records, as it will need to be included in your research appendix.

If any issues should arise that are pertinent to your IRB approval, please contact the IRB immediately at BUIRB@brandman.edu. If you need to modify your BUIRB application for any reason, please fill out the “Application Modification Form” before proceeding with your research. The Modification form can be found at the following link:

https://irb.brandman.edu/Applications/Modification.pdf

Best wishes for a successful completion of your study.

Thank you,
Doug DeVore, Ed.D.
Professor
Organizational Leadership
BUIRB Chair
ddevore@brandman.edu
www.brandman.edu
APPENDIX J

Invitation to Participate

Dear Potential Study Participant:

I am a doctoral candidate at Brandman University researching towards the doctorate in Organizational Leadership. I am conducting a study on the degree of importance for twelve leadership principles to create a K12 school environment that fosters high student achievement as perceived by public school elementary principals in Northern California. A secondary component of this study is to explore and describe the leadership strategies for implementing the leadership principles proposed as perceived by public school elementary principals in Northern California.

I am requesting your assistance in the study by participating in a survey and an interview. The survey will be completed through an online survey application, Survey Monkey, and will take approximately 15 minutes. The interview will take about 45-60 minutes to complete and will be set up at a time that is convenient for you. If you agree to participate in this study, you will be assured that your responses will be completely confidential. No names will be attached to any notes or records from the survey and interview. All information will remain in locked files accessible only to the researcher. No one from your school district will have access to the information obtained during the interview. You will be free to stop the interview and withdraw from the study at any time. Further, you may be assured that the researchers are not in any way affiliated with your school district.

I am available to answer questions via telephone __________ or via email at _____, to answer any questions you may have.

Please email or call me if you are willing to consider being a part of this study. Your participation would be greatly valued.

Sincerely,

Amy P. Parangan
Doctoral Candidate, Brandman University in Organizational Leadership
Dear Potential Study Participant:

Thank you for your interest in participating in the Leading for Excellence Survey. I have attached several forms to provide additional information about the study and procedural safeguards. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me at (xxx)xxx-xxxx or via e-mail.

Sincerely,

Amy P. Parangan
Doctoral Candidate, Brandman University in Organizational Leadership
APPENDIX L

Informed Consent Form - Survey

INFORMED CONSENT

INFORMATION ABOUT: Leading for Excellence: Leadership Behaviors That Support A High Achieving School Climate

RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR: Amy Parangon

The purpose of this explanatory mixed method study was to determine the degree of importance for the twelve step principles proposed by Harvey, Drolet and DeVore (2014) to create a K-12 school environment that fosters high student achievement as perceived by K-12 educational leaders in California. In addition, a secondary purpose was to explore and describe the leadership strategies for implementing the twelve step principles proposed by Harvey, Drolet and DeVore (2014) to create a K-12 school environment that fosters high student achievement as perceived by K-12 educational leaders in California.

Your participation in this survey is voluntary. You may choose not to participate. If you decide to participate in this electronic survey, you can withdraw at any time.

The survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Your responses will be confidential. The survey questions will pertain to your perceptions regarding the impact of the specific leadership principles that may create a high achieving school.

Each participant will use a three-digit code for identification purposes. The researcher will keep the identifying codes safe-guarded in a locked file drawer to which the researcher will have sole access. The results of this study will be used for scholarly purposes only.

No information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent and that all identifiable information will be protected to the limits allowed by law. If the study design or the use of the data is to be changed, I will be so informed and my consent re-obtained.

There are minimal risks associated with participating in this research. I understand that the investigator will protect my confidentiality by keeping the identifying codes and research materials in a locked file drawer that is available only to the researcher. I understand that I may refuse to participate in or may withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences. Also, the investigator may stop the study at any time. I understand that if I have any questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may write or call the Office of the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, at 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92638, (949) 541-7641.

If you have any questions about completing this survey or any aspects of this research, please contact Amy Parangon at mparanga@mail.brandman.edu or by phone at 402-568-0648; or Dr. Doug DeVore, Advisor, at ddevore@mail.brandman.edu.

Clicking on the “agree” button indicates that you have read the informed consent form and the information in this document and that you voluntarily agree to participate.

If you do not wish to participate in this electronic survey, you may decline participation by clicking on the “disagree” button.

* The survey will not open for responses unless you agree to participate.

☐ AGREE: I acknowledge receipt of the complete Informed Consent packet and “Bill of Rights.” I have read the materials and give my consent to participate in the study.

☐ DISAGREE: I do not wish to participate in this electronic survey
Informed Consent Form - Interviews

INFORMATION ABOUT: Leading for Excellence: Leadership Behaviors That Support A High-Achieving School Climate

RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR: Amy P. Parangan, M.A.

PURPOSE OF STUDY: You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Amy Parangan, a doctoral student from the School of Education at Brandman University. The purpose of this explanatory mixed methods study is to determine the degree of importance for the twelve step principles proposed by Harvey, Drolet, and DeVore (2014) to create a K-12 school environment that fosters high student achievement as perceived by public school elementary principals. A secondary purpose is to explore and describe the leadership strategies for implementing the twelve step principles proposed by Harvey, Drolet, and DeVore (2014) to create a K-12 school environment that fosters high student achievement as perceived by public school elementary principals.

The interview(s) will last approximately 45 – 60 minutes and will be conducted in person. In addition, participants will complete an electronic survey using Survey Monkey. The survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

I understand that:

a) There are minimal risks associated with participating in this research. I understand that the Investigator will protect my confidentiality by keeping the identifying codes and research materials in a locked file drawer that is available only to the researcher.

b) I understand that the interview will be audio recorded. The recordings will be available only to the researcher and the professional transcriptionist. The audio recordings will be used to capture the interview dialogue and to ensure the accuracy of the information collected during the interview. All information will be identifier-redacted and my confidentiality will be maintained. Upon completion of the study all recordings will be destroyed. All other data and consents will be securely stored for three years after completion of data collection and confidentially shredded or fully deleted.

c) The possible benefit of this study to me is that my input may help add to the research regarding coaching programs and the impact coaching programs have on developing future school leaders. The findings will be available to me at the conclusion of the study and will provide new insights about the coaching experience in which I participated. I understand that I will not be compensated for my participation.

d) If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact xxxxx@xxxxx.xxx or by phone at (xxx)xxx-xxxx or Dr. Doug DeVore (Advisor) at xxxxx@xxxxx.xxx.
e) My participation in this research study is voluntary. I may decide to not participate in the study and I can withdraw at any time. I can also decide not to answer particular questions during the interview if I so choose. I understand that I may refuse to participate or may withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences. Also, the Investigator may stop the study at any time.

f) No information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent and that all identifiable information will be protected to the limits allowed by law. If the study design or the use of the data is to be changed, I will be so informed and my consent re-obtained. I understand that if I have any questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may write or call the Office of the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, at 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641.

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this form and the “Research Participant’s Bill of Rights.” I have read the above and understand it and hereby consent to the procedure(s) set forth.

____________________________________
Signature of Participant

____________________________________
Signature of Principal Investigator

____________________________________
Date
APPENDIX M

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to determine the degree of importance for the 12-step principles proposed by Harvey, Drolet, and DeVore (2014) to create a K-12 school environment that fosters high student achievement as perceived by public school elementary principals in Northern California.

A secondary purpose was to explore and describe the leadership strategies for implementing the 12-step principles proposed by Harvey et al. (2014) to create a K-12 school environment that fosters high student achievement as perceived by public school elementary principals in Northern California.
APPENDIX N

BUIRB Participant’s Bill of Rights

BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Research Participant’s Bill of Rights

Any person who is requested to consent to participate as a subject in an experiment, or who is requested to consent on behalf of another, has the following rights:

1. To be told what the study is attempting to discover.
2. To be told what will happen in the study and whether any of the procedures, drugs or devices are different from what would be used in standard practice.
3. To be told about the risks, side effects or discomforts of the things that may happen to him/her.
4. To be told if he/she can expect any benefit from participating and, if so, what the benefits might be.
5. To be told what other choices he/she has and how they may be better or worse than being in the study.
6. To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study.
7. To be told what sort of medical treatment is available if any complications arise.
8. To refuse to participate at all before or after the study is started without any adverse effects.
9. To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form.
10. To be free of pressures when considering whether he/she wishes to agree to be in the study.

If at any time you have questions regarding a research study, you should ask the researchers to answer them. You also may contact the Brandman University Institutional Review Board, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. The Brandman University Institutional Review Board may be contacted either by telephoning the Office of Academic Affairs at (949) 341-9937 or by writing to the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA, 92618.

Brandman University IRB Adopted November 2013
Dear

I would like to express my sincere gratitude for your participation in my study. Thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule for our interview and for completing the Leading for Excellence Survey. Your school community is extremely fortunate to have you as a leader. I truly enjoyed hearing about the amazing strategies you’ve implemented to create such a positive and high achieving culture.

Please see the attached transcripts and contact me if you have any questions. As mentioned earlier, all information will be kept confidential. Thank you again and have a wonderful rest of your school year.

Best Regards,

Amy P. Parangan