Title I Schools and Strategies That Work

Michelle Manriquez

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Title I Schools and Strategies That Work

A Dissertation by

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The demands of writing a dissertation are extensive. The thought process and different way of writing made me stretch my learning and increase expectations for myself. I am inspired to continue researching and understanding how I can be part of a solution in the educational field.
ABSTRACT

Title I Schools and Strategies That Work

by Michelle Manriquez

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study was to identify and describe the strategies principals of Title I schools perceived as most effective in improving English language arts (ELA) scores by at least 10 points, through the lens of WestEd’s Four Domains of Rapid School Improvement.

**Methodology:** This study utilized a qualitative methodology to gather data via the California Dashboard and semi-structured interviews of 11 principals from 11 different sites in northern California that showed at least 10-point growth on the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) standardized test. The interview questions were based on the *Four Domains for Rapid School Improvement: A Systems Framework* from WestEd (2018). Interview responses were recorded and reviewed. In addition, artifacts were used to attain triangulation.

**Findings:** Examination of the qualitative data from the 11 elementary school principals participating in this study resulted in five key findings and 16 themes. First was that implementation of professional learning communities (PLCs) and support through a teacher on special assignment (TOSA) support positive change in struggling schools. Second, collaboration among administrators, TOSAs, and teachers in professional development and classroom support directly impacted change and led to success in struggling schools. Third was that ongoing data review with the support of a TOSA in the classroom and for intervention helped
teachers increase student outcomes in struggling schools. The fourth finding was implementation of a new curriculum and common schedules brough consistency to the site and reinforced collaboration between teachers and administrators in struggling schools. Finally, principals recommended goals for students be set and monitored to promote student achievement in struggling schools.

**Conclusions:** The study supported the conclusion that implementation and practice of the key findings could result in an increase of at least a 10-point growth on the California state assessment in ELA.

**Recommendations:** Further research is recommended to apply this study for other curricular areas in Title I schools, as well as non-Title I schools.
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

For many decades, the government and public schools have been looking for ways to improve student achievement. The focus started in the 1970s with school reform being a topic of interest. In the 1980s, policies were initiated by the federal government to hold states accountable for students performing at predetermined grade level proficiency on state standardized tests. The issue of school reform and accountability has remained a critical part of education policy-making since the early days (Elmore, 2004).

When President George W. Bush announced No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2001, there was a push for every child to succeed on a single assessment testing student performance relative to standards adopted state-by-state. Scores were disaggregated showing minority students were underperforming in comparison to their peers (Muhammad & Hollie, 2012). Despite efforts of policymakers, school districts, administrators, and teachers, schools still struggle to produce more significant numbers of minorities and socioeconomically disadvantaged students that excel on state assessments. The focus of reform efforts has been on districts, principal leadership and management, and teacher professional development (Waldron & McLeskey, 2010).

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES; 1996), U.S. 4th and 9th grade students are competitive with most other countries, but according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), U.S. students are significantly lower in terms of their performance on state standardized assessments. The statistics showed the numbers drastically decrease for Hispanic and Black students, and even more so if the parents did not attend college (Muhammad & Hollie, 2012). These students are often classified as Title 1 students, which means they are at-risk or low income. Federal
money has been given to schools with these populations to help students meet state standards since 1965 when the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was enacted into law. According to the U.S. Department of Education (ED; 2018), the gap between White and Hispanic students is closing slowly but still exists. Despite extra effort and money, the nation still struggles to close the achievement gap.

**Background**

**Title I**

ESEA was established in 1965 to ensure students with disabilities or otherwise disadvantaged would be able to accelerate their academic achievement and increase their performance on standardized tests (ED, 2004). ESEA allowed federal money to be given to states to provide individual schools with students that met the criteria of disadvantaged allocated funds to support such students. They called this initiative and distribution of money Title I.

With the initiative came increased awareness of student achievement in public schools. Traditionally, Title I schools had a large number of students who meet the criteria of being at risk of not performing at grade level and living at or close to the poverty line. The result was schools received more money to assist them in their efforts to increase student achievement and help Title I students reach grade-level standards. Between 2009-10, the federal government assisted 56,000 public schools. Annually, the government spends over $14 billion to assist Title I schools (Malburg, n.d.).

**Local Control Funding Formula and Local Control Accountability Plan**

On July 1, 2013, Governor Jerry Brown signed into law the Local Control Accountability Act. This Act initiated the implementation of the Local Control Funding
Formula (LCFF), which represented a new way of distributing state and federal money and funding schools. LCFF changed the 40-year practice of money distribution and school accountability, which previously focused on the Academic Performance Index (API). LCFF includes parents and community members in the planning process and requires a focus on eight areas for student success.

From LCFF came the Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP). Districts submit each school’s LCAP to the state. These plans follow a state template to indicate how money given to them using the LCFF will be spent and how use of funds will be measured. According to the California Department of Education (CDE; 2017) plans needed to measure five areas beginning in the 2017-18 school year:

- Achievement as measured by proficiency based on annual state assessments
- Four-year cohort graduation rates for high schools
- Another academic indicator for elementary and middle schools (e.g., growth)
- Progress in English language proficiency for English language learners
- At least one other statewide indicator of school quality or student success that is valid, reliable, and comparable, such as postsecondary readiness or student engagement

**The California Dashboard**

In 2017, the California Dashboard was released to report the results of the measures. Five status levels are reported on the California Dashboard as determined by using the following process:

- The current year data (or results) for each indicator are collected for all LEAs and charter schools statewide
• These results are ordered from highest to lowest

• Four cut scores are established based on the percentile distributions to create five status levels (CDE, 2017)

The five status levels are very high, high, medium, low, and very low. In addition to measuring the status level of the schools, the Dashboard calculates a change level. The five change levels are increased significantly, increased, maintained, declined, and declined significantly. These levels are established through the following process:

• The difference in performance is calculated for all LEAs and charter schools statewide using prior year and current year data

• The calculated results are grouped into two separate distributions:
  o Positive change (arranged from highest to lowest)
  o Negative change (arranged from highest to lowest)

• The two distributions, both positive and negative are combined

• Four cut scores are established to create five change levels based on percentile distributions (CDE, 2017)

The Dashboard is accessible to the general population. It is a public website where people can research school performance, much like the public exposure of the API for individual schools was during the era of API rankings.

**Smarter Balanced Assessment and Assessment of Student Performance and Progress**

In 2015, California implemented the use of the Smarter Balance Assessment Consortium (SBAC) standardized test (CDE, n.d.). SBAC consists of adaptive English language arts (ELA) and math tests, and ELA and math performance tasks. The tasks
require students to explain their problem-solving thinking processes. Tests are administered to 3rd through 5th grade and 11th grade students. The assessments are based on the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), which California adopted in 2010. The SBAC scores are reported on the California Dashboard, indicating status levels and changes over time (CDE, n.d.).

**Statement of the Research Problem**

Traditionally, schools with high populations of English language learners and high poverty underperformed compared to other schools in the same districts (Dynarski & Kainz, 2015). California tried multiple ways to intervene to change the outcomes of standardized test scores for these populations. Implementation of the LCAP has been in place for six years as of now. Multiple articles report difficulties regarding county offices and stakeholder involvement; results showed implementation was difficult for some districts with regard to the process (Blum & Knudson 2016; Garcia, 2015; Knudson, 2014, 2016; Koppich, Humphrey, & Marsh, 2015). Parents and other community members are to be a part of the goal-setting process, but many districts found it difficult to involve more community members. Another finding was some districts had a difficult time interpreting the procedure itself as some goals were not clear in the beginning (Knudson, 2014; Koppich et al., 2015; Warren & Carrillo, 2015). No studies examined the impact of changes made because 2016-17 was the first school year data were analyzed to calculate change. One goal the LCAP intended was to positively impact target populations, such as socioeconomically disadvantaged and English language learners. California has focused on improving the success on statewide standards for underserved population since 1996. According to the CDE (2018), schools
must do more with less because of cuts to funding; despite this challenge, public schools are expected to increase student performance on standardized tests.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this descriptive qualitative study was to identify and describe the strategies principals of Title I schools perceive as most effective in improving ELA scores by at least 10-point growth, through the lens of WestEd’s Four Domains of Rapid School Improvement.

**Research Questions**

The central research question guiding this study was: What strategies do principals of Title I schools perceive as most effective in improving ELA scores by at least 10 points, through the lens of WestEd’s Four Domains of Rapid Improvement?

**Research Sub-Questions**

1. What strategies do principals in schools with 75% or higher Title I populations perceive are most effective in rapid improvement, based on WestEd’s Domain I – Turnaround Leadership?
2. What strategies do principals in schools with 75% or higher Title I populations perceive are most effective in rapid improvement, based on WestEd’s Domain II – Talent Development?
3. What strategies do principals in schools with 75% or higher Title I populations perceive are most effective in rapid improvement, based on WestEd’s Domain III – Instructional Transformation?
4. What strategies do principals in schools with 75% or higher Title I populations perceive are most effective in rapid improvement, based on WestEd’s Domain IV – Cultural Shift?

**Significance of the Study**

This study was significant because the success of English language learners, foster youth, and low-socioeconomic students has been a topic of concern for the United States (Heilig, Romero, & Hopkins, 2017; Heilig, Ward, Wiseman, & Cole, 2014; Rose & Weston, 2013). The top-down approach to school reform has not worked in the past. The government put policies into place and allocated money to ensure students had every opportunity to succeed (Malburg, n.d.). One such area was Title I. Title I funding in California is now distributed based on the LCFF. Because of local control, school districts are given the ability to implement more diverse strategies to meet the needs of their students.

LCFF began in the 2013-14 school year; therefore, it has been six years since its implementation. According to Fullan (2017), it takes two to three years to implement innovations. Because LCFF and SBAC are relatively recent initiatives, few studies were conducted on the topic of SBAC scores in relation to LCFF as implemented in schools with a high Title I population. The Dashboard was established in 2017; therefore, student SBAC scores and score changes over time became available after implementation of LCFF. Implementation of these new processes is the latest effort for California to affect change in public schools.

With implementation of the LCFF and California Dashboard, limited research examined whether this process is effective for Title I schools. In the past, there was a
lack of accountability for the effectiveness of school plans coupled with a lack of increase in test scores. Title I students consistently underperformed in comparison to other students on standardized tests. Millions of dollars were infused into school budgets to address the needs of English language learners, socioeconomically disadvantaged students, and foster youth with the intent of providing more interventions and resources for qualified students. In the past, these methods were ineffective. LCAP was put into place to hold all local educational agencies (LEAs) accountable for meeting the goals set in their plans and execution of those plans for their districts.

This study focused on elementary schools in which 75% of the school’s demographic includes students who qualify for Title I assistance. Looking at the LCAP implementation specifically on this population gave a clear picture of whether changes executed by the state affected the outcomes of these students in comparison to previous years, as measured by SBAC results available on the California Dashboard. This study was significant because the generated data were important for Title I recipients. Because the Dashboard became easier to navigate, many more schools are using it to identify the successes and gaps in their instruction. Using the Dashboard as a tool for this study, the research highlighted the strategies implemented by consistently lower-performing schools to allow for other low performing schools to duplicate.

**Definitions**

**Achievement Gap.** The gap between Caucasian students on the state test as compared to those of another race.

**Culture Shift.** Engaging teachers, parents, and students in student learning by focusing on learning and goals established to show academic growth.
Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). A law signed by President Obama in 2015 to ensure equal opportunity education to all students for success in college and career.

Instructional Transformation. Stakeholders create the best learning opportunities for students through curriculum, differentiation, and removing barriers.

Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP). A tool for LEAs to set goals, plan actions, and leverage resources to improve student outcomes.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB). A law signed in 2002 bringing accountability to the nation’s schools and exposing the achievement gap.

Smarter Balanced Assessment System (SBAC). A system of computer-based tests and performance tasks allowing students to show what they know and can to do. It is based on the CCSS for ELA and mathematics and has three components designed to support teaching and learning throughout the year: summative assessments, interim assessments, and the digital library of formative assessment tools.

Strategies. Actions implemented in a school setting involving administrators, teachers, students, and stakeholders to help all students be successful in school.

Student Success. The overall performance of students based on the SBAC assessment given to 3-5th grade students; success is based on the average scores as determined by the CDE.

Talent Development. Supporting and training teachers on the best ways to instruct students.

Title I. Established in 1965, this Act placed federal focus and funds for closing the achievement gap.
**Turnaround Leadership.** Leaders who creates change in their sites by implementing strategies that support learning.

**Delimitations**

The study was delimited to principals of K-5 public schools in northern California with schoolwide Title I programs that experienced a gain of at least 10 points on the SBAC standardized test.

**Organization of the Study**

Chapter I introduced the overall topic of the study and its intended framework. Chapter II takes an in-depth look at literature regarding the implementation of LCFF, LCAP, and SBAC. Chapter II also investigates the population of Title I students who comprise at least 75% of the school’s population. The review of literature was used to discuss student performance trends on the California ELA SBAC assessment among Title I schools and preparation strategies impacting improvement. Chapter III encompasses the methodology of the study. It includes the research design, data collection process, population, sample, and data analysis procedures. It also exposes the limitations of the study. In Chapters IV and V, the researcher reports data found during the study. After collecting the data, they were analyzed conclusions were drawn. The results determined final summaries, conclusions, and recommendations for future research. References and appendices are provided at the end.
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the literature related to this study. This section discusses eight different areas. The first section examines the history of public education, including the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), and Title I, which was put into place to ensure equal education for all students. The second section discusses the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), which is the formula California uses to determine the funding given to districts, and the Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP), which school districts are required to complete with the input of several stakeholders. The third section examines three populations upon which the study is based and their performance; these are qualified Title I students classified as English language learners, foster youth, and/or socioeconomically disadvantaged students. The fourth section lists some of the strategies often implemented in a district’s LCAP. The fifth section discusses the history of educational funding in California public schools and the State’s contributions. The sixth section explores the California standards assessments and implementation of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) standardized test. The seventh section introduces the new California Dashboard as a way of reporting and analyzing data based on district administration of the SBAC. The last section discusses the theoretical framework used for the study. The selected framework for this study, Four Domains for Rapid School Improvement, is a product of researchers at WestEd (2018).

History of Funding for Public Schools

The U.S. public school system is in crisis (Friedman & Mandelbaum, 2011). Students are performing far below the national average, yet more money is being spent
on education (Lips, n.d.). Low performance and an increasing gap between Caucasians and ethnic minorities added to America’s education crisis (Friedman & Mandelbaum, 2011). The U.S. needs a new vision for success to overcome its lagging performance (Freidman & Mandelbaum, 2011).

The beginning of public education started in the 1600s as religious institutions aimed to indoctrinate children to the ways of the church. However, during the 1700s, Thomas Jefferson and other education reformers pushed for a more secular model of education. Jefferson suggested two educational tracks, one for scholars and one for laborers. Under these two tracks, those who showed academic potential were educated formally in schools, whereas the less academically inclined received a different kind of education focused on factory work and vocational education (Bosse, 2013; Goldsmith, & Speckart, 2017). In the 1800s, the prominent citizens of the time (e.g., Guggenheim, Rockefeller, Morgan) started to realize they needed to educate the masses to instill a proper work ethic and sense of civil loyalty that would ultimately benefit their companies (Goldsmith & Speckart, 2017). Schools during this time were called charity schools and sponsored by the elite (Goldsmith & Speckart, 2017). Some of the influential educational reformers of the times had hopes of creating a place whereby the diverse population could understand each other and communicate better with each other (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction [DPI], 2017). By the 1900s, rural areas had little money to fund schools and private schools were being maintained by the tuitions provided by wealthy parents (DPI, 2017). The general population went to school to show they could get through the mundane, rote recitation of facts and would be able to work in factories or perform other types of repetitive manual labor (Goldsmith & Speckart, 2017).
Since the advent of organized schooling, teachers continuously tested students in both formal and informal ways (Goldsmith & Speckart, 2017). Teachers designed opportunities for students to meet expectations set by parents and the community. In addition to providing teacher feedback about student performance, tests also served a broader managerial purpose. From the perspective of school reformers, tests helped hold all schoolmasters accountable for the learning of their students; they provided a way to ensure appropriate learning was happening in the schools (Goldsmith & Speckart, 2017).

One early school reformer who significantly influenced the phenomenon of standardized testing within the American school system was Horace Mann (DPI, 2017). He got the idea for implementing a standardized testing system by visiting Europe. Mann proposed to train and hire more female teachers, hire a superintendent to monitor the schools, and use the results from the standardized assessments to promote and retain teachers (DPI, 2017). The first tests were paper- and pencil-based and intended to show the performance of students in public schools (Kaestle, n.d.). When the population started to change and more immigrants entered the United States, the focus on testing increased. In the military, IQ tests were used to inform recruiters about which men would be good soldiers. Many of the officers in the military were against this type of testing because they feared the tests would reflect negatively on their intelligence (Kaestle, n.d.).

Eventually, the military stopped using the IQ test in favor of other forms of testing aligned with the targeted needs of the military (Kaestle, n.d.). However, the public school system continued to use IQ tests to categorize and classify students. A heavy influx of immigrants began attending schools and officials wanted to ensure
students met at least minimum requirements for learning. At higher levels, IQ tests were administered by colleges that wanted to extract highly intelligent students from the general population to educate a cadre of elite minds. In 1908, the first standardized achievement test was created. This achievement test assessed math performance skills. Shortly after this math test was developed, a handwriting test and spelling test were developed. Then, many more achievement tests followed. Each subject had its own instrument by which to measure whether students were meeting performance expectations. Because of the diverse range of criteria tested and many data points subject area assessments offered, IQ tests quickly lost traction in the educational setting. By the 1920s, the achievements tests, which were multiple choice and could quickly be analyzed by experts, were the preferred instrument for measuring learning (Kaestle, n.d.). In the 1940s, after World War II, many more students enrolled in high schools across the nation, and by the 1950s, an increase in demand for a more rigorous education was called for by government leaders due to the launch of Sputnik, a Soviet feat many attributed to a superior education system, especially in the area of math and science (Herpin, 2014).

During the Civil Rights Movement in the United States in the 1950s, assessments were critiqued because of the poor results of oppressed classes of students, especially students of color. Initially, the tests were used to place students with poor scores into a track, including a track for mentally retarded students developed for those who scored poorly. Soon after, Public Law 94-142, the Education of All Handicapped Children Act, was adopted, which focused on assessment outcomes. A distinct gap was apparent between Caucasian students and students of color. A primary focus of the education system during the 1960s was closing the achievement gap between upper-socioeconomic
Caucasian students and lower-socioeconomic ethnic minorities. In 1965, ESEA and Title I were passed. The educational focus on closing the achievement gap coincided with the push for integration on the social front.

**The Elementary and Secondary Education Act**

ESEA was passed for federal money to be given to schools to address disparities of the achievement gap so low socioeconomic and minority students would perform at the same level as their peers (Standerfer, 2006). During the 1960s, the country was in transition with the sociopolitical focus being on civil rights and equality for all backgrounds. The country fought for the end of segregation, especially for African American students, and for equal rights for children with differing abilities. The political environment of the time added pressure for policymakers to enact changes in society and education. During Lyndon Johnson’s presidency, several initiatives were developed, including Head Start, Medicare, and Medicaid. Education was included in the civil rights law (McClure, 2008). Workforce training and low-income neighborhoods were beneficiaries of the new legislation, as well as students who did not speak English at home. ESEA directed Title I funding toward these targeted populations.

**Title I**

The policy of Title I, Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged, was implemented in 1965 (McClure, 2008). The purpose of Title I remains to provide students a fair and equal opportunity a high-quality education (ED, 2004). Title I schools are those with many students at risk of not performing at grade level and/or living close to the poverty line. Schools in which most students meet this description are given federal money to help provide the means to influence academic
success. The federal government started to recognize public schools needed financial support in 1965 when they established ESEA. This Act intended to ensure disabled and disadvantaged students would be able to meet the requirements of all other students. Title I funding is one of the longest-lasting interests of the federal government. Title I was passed with the following purposes:

- Ensuring high-quality academic assessments, accountability systems, teacher preparation and training, curriculum, and instructional materials are aligned with challenging academic standards so students, teachers, parents, and administrators can measure progress against common expectations for student academic achievement
- Meeting the educational needs of low-achieving children in high-poverty schools, limited English proficient children, migratory children, children with disabilities, Indian children, neglected or delinquent children, and young children in need of reading assistance
- Closing the achievement gap between high- and low-performing children, especially the achievement gaps between minority and non-minority students and between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers
- Holding schools, local educational agencies (LEAs), and states accountable for improving the academic achievement of all students and identifying and turning around low-performing schools that failed to provide a high-quality education to their students, while providing alternatives to students in such schools to enable the students to receive a high-quality education
• Distributing and targeting resources sufficiently to make a difference to LEAs and schools where needs are greatest

• Improving and strengthening accountability, teaching, and learning by using assessment systems designed to ensure students are meeting challenging academic achievement and content standards, and increasing achievement overall, but especially for the disadvantaged

• Providing greater decision-making authority and flexibility to schools and teachers in exchange for greater responsibility for student performance

• Providing children an enriched and accelerated educational program, including the use of schoolwide programs or additional services that increase the amount and quality of instructional time

• Promoting schoolwide reform and ensuring children have access to effective, scientifically based instructional strategies and challenging academic content

• Elevating the quality of instruction by providing staff in participating schools with substantial opportunities for professional development

• Coordinating services under all parts of this Title with each other, with other educational services, and to the extent feasible, with other agencies providing services to youth, children, and families

• Affording parents substantial and meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children (ED, 2004)

Despite the continued investment in California schools, schools with high populations of English language learners, low socio-economic students, and foster youth continue to underperform in comparison to the mainstream students. According to the
Lansner (2018), California is just under the per-pupil spending average for the Nation at $11,495 per student and is ranked 30th for reading abilities overall.

In 1968, Kappel launched the first national assessment sponsored by the Office of Education. It was called the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The assessment was first implemented during the 1969-70 school year. New versions of the test were developed as the government adjusted and reevaluated the test to help with standardization (Kaestle, n.d.). In 1988, NAEP was used to look at student progress across states, which gave the government a picture of how the nation was progressing.

During the 1970s, groups advocating for equality for children and adults with different abilities demanded closure of government institutions housing these populations so they could be closer to home and attend comprehensive schools. The institutions were known to be warehouses for the mentally and physically challenged. In 1975, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act was passed, which required Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) to be written and implemented for students who qualified for special education services. This Act was reauthorized as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1997 and again in 2004 (CDE, 2017). For the specific services to be carried out, teachers in both general and special education needed support.

Simultaneous to the focus on U.S. education, its assessment outcomes, and national diversity, A Nation at Risk was published in 1983; it stated, “If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war” (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 1). This era produced other publications focused on the American education system.
Despite discussions for schools to teach beyond what is measurable on standardized tests, the 1980s and 1990s placed more emphasis on accountability and standardized testing. President George H. Bush was elected into office in 1989 and placed a heavy emphasis on education reform based on assessment data. By the 1990s, content standards and performance standards were a common theme for public education. Although some advocated for a portfolio style or authentic assessment, the common multiple-choice, content standards-based assessments received state support.

In 1993, President Bill Clinton was elected and enacted the Goals 2000 legislation, which continued the involvement of the federal government in public education. This initiative required all states to write standards and submit them for approval. The development and implementation of this legislation was a slow-going process for the administration. In 2002, President George W. Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). With this act, scores were disaggregated by class and race. The implementation of this legislation helped to expose where students were falling short of meeting standards. During this time, data were analyzed to help evaluate schools in terms of student improvement on the assessment, with threats of reconstitution if schools could not show they were making improvements or adequate yearly progress. A lack of adequate yearly progress indicated a school was failing and in need of improvement. The schools in the *program improvement* category could receive more money and resources to advance toward expected outcomes.

The high expectations demanded by the legislation rendered NCLB unmanageable with regard to all students meeting the requirements the Act proposed. In 2010, President Obama recognized and responded to the need for new law to ensure the
readiness of students for college and career. In 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed into law, replacing NCLB (CDE, 2017).

**Local Control Funding Formula and Local Control Accountability Plan**

LCFF was enacted in 2014 to enable school districts to provide more resources to support students in low socio-economic schools. LCFF is intended to provide extra funds for services to “support students who face the biggest obstacles in achieving academic proficiency, graduating, and being college and career ready” (Fix School Discipline, n.d., para. 1). The measures include academic performance and culture and school climate factors. With the implementation of LCFF, districts have more flexibility to decide how to spend money to ensure students have the resources to achieve academic success (California State Parent Teacher Association [PTA], 2018). The previous system based funding on the number of students in attendance, also known as average daily attendance. With the new formula, funds are augmented per qualified student with extra funding to support low socioeconomic students, foster youth, and English language learners (PTA, 2018).

LCAP is a plan developed and turned into the state to hold schools, districts, and county offices accountable for the students they serve. The plan documents state and federal spending of funds given to LEAs based on the LCFF. This formula allows for counties to distribute designated money to districts to provide extra supports to schools with a high number of Title I students. In the past, the changes and interventions districts implemented for struggling schools were top-down. With LCAP, all stakeholders can participate in a conversation about what changes need to be made to improve student success in school, which includes parents and community members.
The LCAP follows a template school districts are required to submit to their local school boards and jurisdictional county office of education for approval. Per the CDE (2017) requirements, the LCAP focuses on five areas:

- Achievement as measured by proficiency based on annual state assessments
- Four-year cohort graduation rates for high schools
- Another academic indicator for elementary and middle schools (e.g., growth)
- Progress in English language proficiency for English language learners
- At least one other indicator of school quality or student success that is valid, reliable, comparable, and statewide (e.g., postsecondary readiness, student engagement)

Critics of the LCAP say it falls short of impacting the populations it was intended to support. After reviewing 50 school districts, the Legislative Analyst Office found there was not a specific amount of money directed to the designated populations. They also observed the wording in the document was vague and did not specifically name the individual populations. It grouped all students into one category (Garcia, 2015). The strategies assigned to schools implied they would benefit all students. Another criticism exposed was that despite requiring stakeholders to be a part of the changes, groups representing designated populations of English language learners, foster youth, and low socioeconomic students were not necessarily represented in the conversations.

**Populations Focused on for LCFF/LCAP**

The populations focused on in the LCFF and LCAP are those meeting the criteria for Title I. They include English language learners, foster youth, and low socioeconomic students.
**English language learners.** English language learners are a group of students who qualify for Title I funds. The United States experienced an influx of immigrants during the establishment of the school system. Increasingly, immigrants in California come from Latin American countries, continuously adding to California’s already diverse population. Families migrating to California were establishing homes and needed their children enrolled in the public school system. With increased accountability and a shortage of teachers, ESSA made policymakers and administrators look for new ways to improve student learning in schools and provide support for teachers. However, immigrants are not the only population comprising English learners in the United States. As of 2014, 76% of elementary school and 56% of secondary school English language learners were born in the United States and more than half of those in secondary school are second- and third-generation U.S. citizens (National Education Association, 2010).

Teachers found it difficult to relate to the minority groups of children and their families (McClure, 2008). In current times, bilingualism and biculturalism are important to the California school system. Although most schools embraced the need of family involvement in their child’s education and began implementing programs encouraging bilingual education, where students are instructed in English and another language, others prioritized learning English first. In California, students who attend bilingual immersion schools often already had a multi-lingual background. For example, if a child from Ethiopia speaks Amharic at home, his parents may enroll him in a Spanish bilingual program where he is learning Spanish and English in addition to his home language of Amharic.
After it was implemented, the LCAP offered districts within the California public school system another way to exhibit English language learner growth. LCAPs allowed California to report English language learner status regarding specific assessments that analyze student progress specifically in learning English. When NCLB was initiated, English language learners status was based on how this specific group of students performed on the state standards assessment. Now, they are rated on how they do on the California English Language Development Test (CELT) or English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC) initiated in 2018.

**Foster youth.** Foster youth are another group described under the Title I umbrella. Foster youth in the California public school system faced many obstacles preventing them from showing as much success as the general population. This population underperformed on state standards because of the amount of movement typical for foster youth. On February 11, 2014, CDE publicized a letter written by Will Lightbourne, Director of the California Department of Social Services, informing the education system it would now be easier to exchange information between schools to ensure student educational experiences remained as continuous as possible, as mandated by the Uninterrupted Scholars Act (Public Law 112-278).

With the implementation of LCAP, foster youth are reported separately to analyze how schools and districts are specifically accommodating the needs of this population (CDE, 2017). The amount of money districts receive under LCFF is evaluated based on the performance of these students.

**Low socioeconomic students.** Students of poverty are classified as Title I students. These students are also a subgroup represented in the Dashboard. Typically,
this group of students is targeted because they underperform as compared to non-poverty students. They face unique situations middle-class students may not. According to the CDE (2018), some of these experiences include:

- Low birth weight, lead poisoning, hunger, lack of healthcare, and poor nutrition
- Parent unavailability as a role model or active participant in a child’s education
- High mobility as parents seek work or affordable housing

Children from low socioeconomic backgrounds also experience situations where their houses are overcrowded and do not offer a quiet place to do their homework, study, or sleep. Studies also showed children in low-income homes experienced a conversation gap. Parents of middle-class families tended to reason with their children and teach them negotiating skills they use in school. Low-income children are typically ordered to do things, which is what they may experience in their own work world (CDE, 2018).

When President Trump was elected, he stated, “Millions of poor, disadvantaged students are trapped in failing schools” (Brown, 2017, p. 1). Some believe the integration of schools is the way to address the problems of low-income students. Vouchers and private schools were also suggested. California’s current approach to the problem of income disparity and low student performance is through the LCFF and LCAPs.

**Funding for California Schools**

Before 1965, California spent more money per student than the national average. After 1965, even more money was allocated to California public schools and this money was intended to support the needs of underachieving students. The legislation helping turn the reform focus toward assisting underperforming students was ESEA in 1965. It
was from this legislation Title I funding found its origin. Title I funding forced the states to reallocate money to provide for students who were traditionally underrepresented.

The funding for California schools relied heavily on local taxes. State and local property taxes comprised most of the funding for public schools. In 1978, Proposition 13 was passed. Proposition 13 cut property taxes, which was the significant resource of funding for the education system. Under Proposition 13, property owners paid 60% less in property taxes. The law also limited tax increases and restricted districts from increasing rates. After the introduction of Proposition 13, California per-student funding fell below the national average.

In 1988, Proposition 98 was passed (California Budget Project, 2006). This allowed the state to adjust the budget for schools based on the economy of the state. The funding came from a formula calculated from the state general funds, which could be adjusted based on inflation and enrollment. Despite the new formula, it was debated as to whether Proposition 98 was significant enough to provide for the needs of the students. Proposition 111 modified Proposition 98 in 1990. This proposition put a cap on the percent of spending of general fund revenues. Therefore, the amount of money spent on each student continued to stay below the national average (California Budget Project; 2006).

In 2012, the California Teachers Association and Governor Jerry Brown pushed for Proposition 80, The Schools and Public Safety Protection Act. This proposition increased sales taxes and income taxes for people who earned enough to classify them as higher earners. Despite all the changes, California still provides less money to students compared to the national average.
In 1997, the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) program was used for grades 2-11 to determine progress. All students in grades 2-11 were tested in English, reading, writing, spelling, and math. These tests were norm-referenced and approved by the California State Board of Education. In 1999, California used these assessments to rank schools based on the calculations using the Academic Performance Index (API). This system of measurement was enacted to hold schools accountable for the results of the STAR test. In 2001, ESEA was reauthorized by President Bush as NCLB. With this change came a new accountably action, Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). The STAR results from 2001 were used to establish the baseline year. About 50% of schools were able to make growth each year (CDE, 2017). Schools unable to meet their growth targets from year to year were placed into program improvement status. These schools were closely monitored and provided interventions by way of a School Assistance Intervention Team (SAIT). This team monitored student progress and interventions throughout the school year. They ensured the implementation of essential program components:

- Use of state-adopted (K-8) or standards-aligned (9-12) English language arts (ELA) and math instructional materials, including intervention materials
- Instructional time adhering to prescribed instructional minutes for ELA and math (K-8) or access to standards-aligned core courses (9-12)
- Participation of principals in the School Administrator Training Program, as adopted in Assembly Bill (AB) 430 (Chapter 364, Statutes 2005) on state-adopted instructional materials
Engagement of fully credentialed, highly qualified teachers and universal participation of ELA and math teachers in the Senate Bill (SB) 472 professional development program on state-adopted instructional materials

Implementation of a student achievement monitoring system that uses data to monitor student progress on curriculum-embedded assessments and to modify instruction

Ongoing instructional assistance and support for teachers via content experts and instructional coaches

Monthly teacher collaboration by grade level (K-8) and department (9-12) facilitated by the principal

Use of lesson and course pacing schedules (K-8) and a master schedule flexibility for a sufficient number of intervention courses (9-12)

District alignment of state categorical flex funds and federal School Improvement Grants funds awarded to schools needing additional resources to meet the demands of changes in state requirements (Sigman, 2008)

In 2008, the Obama administration initiated a new school reform known as Race to the Top (RTT). RTT, although significantly different from NCLB, was still founded on the results of standards-based assessments and reflected on the results to rank schools. More money was used to develop professional development opportunities for teachers. Under RTT, the instructional focus became the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), which aimed at getting students to practice more meta-cognition by analyzing and articulating their thought processes while solving problems. This new way of teaching
required a new way of assessing students that reflected the depth of knowledge standards teachers were attempting to inculcate in their students.

**Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium**

In 2010, California adopted the CCSS. A need surfaced for a new assessment to reflect the style of teaching expected in the schools. The SBAC standardized test was implemented as a way to assess student progress based on the new CCSS, which were focused on student preparedness for college and career. The SBAC given to grades 3-8 and 11. The assessment involves an adaptive computer-based test and a performance task; both the adaptive test and performance task use the CCSS for criterion referencing. The performance tasks include open-ended questions requiring students to demonstrate their thought process using words or pictures. The questions are designed to assess critical thinking, writing, and problem-solving. The test was first administered in 2013 as a pilot with level sets determined in 2014.

**The California Dashboard**

Since 1997, California implemented different systems to monitor performance on standardized tests. They created ways to track how students who meet the qualifications of Title I are performing on these tests over time. The newest method is with the California Dashboard. It is a public reporting system about the achievements of schools in varying subcategories. In 2017, CDE replaced the API and AYP with the California School Dashboard Report, which was a way to indicate the performance of individual schools. The information “is calculated based on the combination of current performance (Status) and improvement over time (Change)” (CDE, 2017, p. 15). This indicator allows
the public to access county, district, and schoolwide data overall and as individual subgroups, including those classified as socioeconomically disadvantaged.

Additionally, California provides a performance level, organized by color and divided into five segments. The colors denote the level to which the students and schools are performing. These levels are disaggregated both by individual groups and overall measures with indicators based on LCFF criteria. The reports provide both state and local indicators to include a broader picture of schools’ individual progress. These indicators include basic services or basic conditions at schools, implementation of state academic standards, parent engagement, student achievement, student engagement, school climate, access to a broad course of study, and outcomes in a broad course of study. The county offices are responsible for two other local indicators: coordination of services for expelled students and coordination of services for foster youth (Appendix A). The performance of each of these areas determines if the organizations are eligible for further assistance or in need of intensive support and intervention. Schools are rated on a color system in which blue signifies the highest level of performance, followed by green, yellow, orange, and red.

Another report available on the Dashboard is the status and change report. This report indicates the change of performance over time. LCFF and LCAP have now been implemented for six years and, therefore, data are available for analysis and comparison. The changes in the data are reported on the status/change report. The change portion of the report indicates the change over the last two years.

The scores are calculated based on five levels. Colors represent the five levels, red being the lowest performing (1), followed by orange (2), yellow (3), green (4), and
blue being the highest performing (5). Level 3 indicates the standard of the appropriate grade level is met. “Once all students’ scores are compared to the fixed point on the scale (Level 3), the distance results would be averaged to produce LEA, school, and student group results” (CDE, 2017, p. 45). SBAC is only given to those students in grades three through five in addition to 11th grade. For this study, only the elementary schools were used. The assessment scores reflect grades three through five. These scores could reflect the implementation of the LCAP strategies within the entire school setting and specifically for the Title I population. These scores were recorded and then organized in an ordinal measurement scale. Ordinal measurement is a way of organizing groups in which the order or ranking in which they are presented is meaningful (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). California established the Dashboard as its primary reporting system. The Dashboard is based on the California Model, which includes the status report and change report. The Dashboard allows an at-a-glance view of how schools are progressing over time with their respective implementations of the LCFF and LCAP.

**Theoretical Framework**

Fullan (2006) discussed the fact that many change models implemented in the school systems are missing an important component, motivation. Fullan (2006) posited that, on their own, so many models fall short without the necessary ingredient of motivation. Anderson and Ackerman-Anderson (2010) promoted a change model with quadrants: mindset, behavior, culture, and systems. Although this model addresses many of the same topics, the framework chosen for this study was taken from WestEd studies. WestEd is a nonprofit agency focused on research, service, and development to help every child attain academic success. Members of the Center on School Turnaround at
WestEd and members of the Network of State Turnaround and Improvement Leaders Advisory Council created this framework. It is released in the document *Four Domains for Rapid School Improvement* (WestEd, 2018). The four domains are turnaround leadership, talent development, instructional transformation, and culture shift. Within the four domains, examples of success are stated to help schools implement the framework. These examples are not sequential and therefore, principals can evaluate which examples they want to implement and moderate the degree of focus given to each (Figure 1).

*Figure 1. Four domains of rapid school turnaround. Source: WestEd, 2018*

Evidence of a turnaround in leadership is reflected by improved communication, goal setting, and targeted support systems being established (Day, 2009; WestEd, 2018).
According to Anrig (2015), research was done to observe the commonalities of a successful turnaround leader. One of the five areas indicated was teacher lead collaboration about data and classroom instruction. According to the model described by Anrig (2015), collaboration should be teacher led with principal support. Other areas Anrig (2015) discussed were creating a safe environment, offering in-class and out-of-class support for students with things like tutoring for specific subjects, ensuring all parents and community stakeholders are involved in the culture of the school, and bringing in outside consultants for a limited amount of time. These outside agencies should be showing teachers how to maintain the change on their own. A turnaround leader must have self-confidence and believe change can happen. A turnaround leader can take the strongest competencies and create a climate in which others will follow and implement the vision (WestEd, 2018).

Evidence of talent development is reflected by an organization’s ability to recruit, develop, and retain talent; target professional learning opportunities; and set clear expectations (WestEd, 2018). According to the California Teachers Association (CTA; 2018), 20% of all new teachers hired in California leave the profession within three years. In urban sites, the number increases to 50% in five years (CTA, 2018). Studies completed related to teacher retention also showed the effects on students. Effective teachers who left the profession created a decline in student performance at that school whereas when ineffective teachers, there was no change (Papay, Bacher-Hicks, Page, & Marinell, 2017).

Brown and Wynn (2007) studied new teachers and principals to identify the key to retaining teachers. They found three leadership factors in which teachers were more
likely to stay at their school. First, principals had a proactive approach to situations rather than reactive. Second, principals understood the challenges new teachers had to face and responded in a way to support them. Third, principals looked for ways to improve their leadership and promoted growth and excellence for their teachers and students (Brown & Wynn, 2007).

Another way found to be a strong factor was teacher support in via Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA), and professional learning communities (PLCs; Brown & Wynn, 2007; Papay et al., 2017). New teachers stayed when given the right support for them to be successful in the classroom. By using mentor teachers, coaches, and other faculty to support new teachers, principals can learn and mentor side-by-side to create effective learning environments. This mentoring should include: “learning experiences that are differentiated, purposeful, targeted, employed in rapid response to identified needs, reflective of what is known about effective adult learning, and clearly connected to the school’s turnaround priorities” (WestEd, 2018, p. 14).

Implementation of PLCs was one way some districts found they could address these concerns. Many districts opted to implement PLCs to improve student scores. To begin the process of implementing change in a school, teachers first must be motivated and put into action the steps that transform the idea of change into reality (Hord, 1997). Effective PLCs are built upon three main pillars: ensuring students learn, having a culture of collaboration, and focusing on results (DuFour, 2004).

The first pillar is ensuring students learn (DuFour, 2004). This requires staff change the mindset of being in front of students to teach them, to helping students learn what they are instructing. This means re-teaching for students who did not master the
lesson the first time. Often, teachers are forced to move forward with content because of a pacing guide or expectations of finishing the content in the time allotted. When pacing is too fast, students who did not understand are left behind. DuFour’s (2004) solution to this problem is to expect the staff to focus on ensuring all students learn by implementing strategies aligned with standards, offered in a timely manner, and based on intervention rather than remediation and directive.

The second big idea from DuFour (2004) was creating a culture of collaboration. He emphasized collaboration should not be confused with camaraderie; it does not involve groups coming together to make logistical decisions, such as determining yard duty schedules. Collaboration refers to being able to provide teachers with time to strategically analyze data and create deep meaning as to how to make their teaching better (DuFour, 2004). Senge (1990) discussed the idea of a learning organization in his book *The Fifth Discipline*. A learning organization is defined as an organization “where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together” (Senge, 1990, p. 3). The belief students can learn and teachers can work effectively together is reciprocal. When teachers feel good about what they are doing, students succeed. When students succeed, teachers’ self-efficacy increases; this dynamic creates success (Lee, Smith, & Croninger, 1995; Lieberman, 1995). Hattie (2008) stated teachers need to recognize when students are successful, should take credit, and should be confident in defending they caused learning.
DuFour’s (2004) last big idea was to focus on results. For this idea, teachers use data to focus on the improvement of student results. They come together to analyze predetermined formative assessments and discuss the results specific to each classroom. However, PLCs may be watered down and implementation would not have all that was intended. In this case, like so many others in education, implementation would be dropped because it did not work (DuFour, 2004).

The third domain of the Rapid School Improvement framework was instructional transformation (WestEd, 2018). Evidence of instructional transformation is reflected by student needs being addressed, evidence-based instruction being utilized, and opportunities being created. With implementation of NCLB, schools felt the pressure of trying to meet the needs of all students. Populations were separated so they could be analyzed by the schools, districts, and governing bodies involved with education. In addition to academic instruction, attention was paid to the environment in which the students were learning (DuFour, 2004). “Young people need more connections, more support, more opportunities, and more learning time to be successful” (Blank, Jacobson, & Pearson, 2009, p. 1). Relationships between students, parents, staff, and the community begin to be addressed to support the whole child.

Districts look for a standards-based curriculum addressing the individual needs of students (Gustafson & Branch, 1997). A new curriculum is developed to integrate teaching content with ongoing assessments to incorporate individual interventions for every student. Along with the new curriculum and the emphasis on student performance comes the importance of creating time for teachers to plan together. This planning time usually includes data analysis and the plan to address the needs of the students who do
not make the grade. Another factor increasing the effect of instructional transformation is having leadership and staff share the vision and understand why the changes need to happen; this mindset provides opportunities for the staff to evolve with the changes in the organization (Dweck, 2006).

One way some schools in California addressed the need to individualize instruction was to implement response to intervention (RTI) programs. RTI emerged from the reauthorization of the IDEA in 2004 (Preston, Wood, & Stecker, 2016). According to the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (2005), “RTI is the practice of providing high-quality instruction/intervention matched to student needs and using learning rate over time and level of performance to make important educational decisions” (p. 3). There is no one way to implement RTI and it varies depending on the resources and educational setting (Kratochwill, Clements, & Kalymon, 2007). The purpose of RTI is to help students improve academically and behaviorally. Data are used to identify and plan for students who are struggling. The Center on Response to Intervention (2010) identified three areas of RTI: primary (students who receive core instruction and curriculum), secondary (students participate in intensive supports), and targeted (students receive individualized and customized supports to address their needs). Hattie (2015) stated RTI can be used for all students, not just those struggling. Using the RTI model, all students fall into one of the three categories of implementation.

The last domain of the framework for rapid school improvement is to create a cultural shift (WestEd, 2018). Evidence of a culture shift is reflected by the creation of a community focused on student learning, one that includes all stakeholders and involves
students and parents in creating and pursuing educational goals. In this domain, the discussion of the whole community is emphasized. One indicator of a successful cultural shift is community involvement in creating and meeting the goals set forth in the LCAP. This document requires the school to include all stakeholders in the community to help make decisions affecting the schools. Epstein (2000) stated researchers looked at support programs for lower-income students such as Head Start since the 1960s, but were yet to study the effects of home life on school and vice versa. The research was usually on how home life or school impacted the student. In the 2000s, the focus shifted toward trying to bridge the two to include the families in the education of the students.

Another reflection of California viewing the cultural shift being of great importance is the fact attendance and suspension rates are now recorded and reported on the California Dashboard. According to Chang and Romero (2008), if a student from a lower-income family is chronically absent in kindergarten, it is predictable he will struggle in fifth grade. They suggested if a student misses 2-4 days in September, he is more likely to miss an entire month of school. For schools to have great attendance, they need to provide an engaging experience for both students and parents. Chang and Romero (2008) emphasized the need for parents and students to become part of the learning community and encourages leadership and staff to provide engaging activities that include all stakeholders.

All the four domains working together in an organization are needed to make a transformation. The four domains (turnaround leadership, talent development, instructional transformation, and cultural shift) need to be considered to create effective, sustainable change.
Summary

Many public schools with a high percentage of socioeconomically disadvantaged students are struggling to perform equally in relation to their non-Title I counterparts. For over 40 years, the federal government has been implementing different methods to try to address the needs of these students. In 2013, California initiated the LCFF and the LCAP to give schools, districts, and counties more control of the extra money allotted to them to provide interventions for their underserved students. The idea behind local control of funding is that decisions regarding how to determine the best strategies to impact students should be made at the community level. By documenting these processes and the strategies agreed upon, districts can track their own accountability measures and efforts. In effect, the state can monitor and analyze the best practices by using the data available on the California Dashboard.
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

This chapter explains the methodology of the study, including the purpose statement, research questions, research design, population, target, sample, instrumentation, data collection, data analysis, and limitations. The study is a descriptive qualitative study. Qualitative data were gathered after archival data were compiled from the California Dashboard. After identifying possible schools using the Dashboard data, the researcher interviewed the school principals and collected artifacts to quantify actions and strategies implemented by individual school districts. Eleven principals were interviewed from northern California K-5 elementary schools with at least 75% Title I students that experience at least a 10-point increase in their SBAC ELA scores.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this descriptive qualitative study was to identify and describe the strategies principals of Title I schools perceive as most effective in improving ELA scores by at least 10-point growth, through the lens of WestEd’s Four Domains of Rapid School Improvement.

Research Questions

The central research question guiding this study was: What strategies do principals of Title I schools perceive as most effective in improving ELA scores by at least 10 points, through the lens of WestEd's Four Domains of Rapid Improvement?

Research Sub-Questions

1. What strategies do principals in schools with 75% or higher Title I populations perceive are most effective in rapid improvement, based on WestEd’s Domain I – Turnaround Leadership?
2. What strategies do principals in schools with 75% or higher Title I populations perceive are most effective in rapid improvement, based on WestEd’s Domain II – Talent Development?

3. What strategies do principals in schools with 75% or higher Title I populations perceive are most effective in rapid improvement, based on WestEd’s Domain III – Instructional Transformation?

4. What strategies do principals in schools with 75% or higher Title I populations perceive are most effective in rapid improvement, based on WestEd’s Domain IV – Cultural Shift?

**Research Design**

This study utilized a descriptive qualitative research design. This was the best design to address the strategies used in Title I schools that showed at least a 10-point gain on the ELA SBAC assessment in the 2016-17 school year. Qualitative research does not aim to generalize findings (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2015). Rather, qualitative research tries to deepen understanding about an issue by “going into the field” and gathering contextual data and inner-perspectives (Patton, 2015, p. 56). Thus, qualitative research aims to generalize findings only in the sense of limiting researcher bias and deductive reasoning to arrive at conclusions (Creswell, 1998; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2015). A qualitative study was selected as a means of examining the implementation of actions and strategies and their perceived impact on SBAC scores. First, ELA scores were collected from the California Department of Education (CDE) Dashboard individually and analyzed to determine schools with the
most growth. These scores were recorded and analyzed to identify their impact. Schools
with at least a 10-point gain were eligible to participate in the study.

The California School Dashboard data were used to establish which schools met
the qualifications of a minimum of 75% Title I students and at least a 10-point gain in
ELA SBAC scores. In addition, this study analyzed the secondary data available on the
2017 California Dashboard report. The researcher had no influence on actions and
implementation strategies taken in districts where this study’s participants had an
influence on scores produced on the SBAC assessment.

Qualitative data were also gathered to answer the research question: What
strategies do principals of Title I schools perceive as most effective in improving ELA
scores by at least 10-points, through the lens of WestEd’s Four Domains of Rapid
Improvement? The researcher incorporated a descriptive, qualitative approach. This
commonly used approach of qualitative research does not aim to generalize findings
(McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2015). In a descriptive design, the questions
asked are “What is? or What was? It reports the way things are or were” (McMillan &
Schumacher, 2010, p. 23). Additionally, a descriptive design was chosen for this study to
investigate the participants’ perspectives on strategies affecting students’ overall SBAC
growth.

**Population**

A population was defined by McMillan and Schumacher (2010) as “a group of
individuals or events from which a sample is drawn into which results can be
generalized” (p. 129). The population of this study was California school administrators.
According to the CDE website, there were 26,893 administrators in California. An
administrator is as a person with a certificate and credential who does not work directly with students, such as a superintendent, director, coordinator, manager, principal, or assistant principal. This study addressed the school principal. The principal is an onsite administrator in charge of a school site. California is home to 1,024 districts and 10,477 schools, thus the population was estimated at 10,477 school principals.

**Target Population**

According to Asiamah, Mensah, and Oteng-Abayie (2017), a study’s target population is decided upon by using a refinement of the representation of the general population. Asiamah et al. (2017) explained, “The specification of the target and accessible populations is necessary if the study population is large” (p. 1612). The target population for this study was principals from schools that met specific criteria. Of the 10,477 schools reported by the CDE website, only 2,562 were classified as Title I elementary schools. By disaggregating data further, the researcher determined 987 schools met the following criteria:

- Public elementary school with at least 75% of students qualifying for Title I funding
- Public elementary school serving kindergarten through fifth grade
- Public elementary school with a population of 200 or more students

The target population was narrowed further to include only elementary schools in northern California using the CDE Regional Assessment Network Map (2018) from regions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 (Figure 2). The target population was determined as 266 public elementary K-5 schools meeting all the outlined criteria. From the 266, the researcher continued to refine the criteria by using the California Dashboard to identify
34 schools that improved their ELA SBAC assessment test scores by at least 10 points, which narrowed the target population to 34 schools.

**Figure 2.** California Department of Education Regional Assessment Network

**Sample**

Because studying all members of a large population would be nearly impossible to accomplish in a reasonable time, the researcher selected a sample population in which inferences and generalizations can be made about the entire population (Patten, 2012). By using a sample, the researcher can engage with a smaller group to assist in answering the study’s research questions. The sample size should represent all the perceptions that may occur if a more significant sample is used. However, in nonprobability purposive sampling, the researcher elects to use a sample of members with the knowledge and experience to address the research questions (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).
Nonprobability sampling does not provide the potential for every member of the population to be part of the study. Creswell (1998) suggested 5-25 participants be sampled for a qualitative study. For this study, 11 participants responded and were included based on meeting the following criteria:

- Principal of California Title I K-5 public schools
- Principal of an elementary school with over 200 students
- Students in grades 3-5 were assessed using the ELA SBAC
- The school showed a minimum of a 10-point gain on the SBAC
- Principal of schools located in northern California

The number of schools that fit the criteria was 34. Principals from 11 of those schools participated in an interview for this study.

**Instrumentation**

In this qualitative study, the researcher used semi-structured interviews and collected artifacts. Semi-structured interviews allow the respondent to answer independently and do not provide answers from which the respondent can choose (McMillan & Schumacher; 2010). Semi-structured interviews were used for the respondent to share the strategies implemented in their school sites. In addition to interviews and artifacts, the researcher was also one of the primary instruments in this study.

**Interview Questions**

As part of the data collection design, participants for this study were interviewed either face-to-face or digitally using a one-on-one interview protocol. Participants were questioned about their school’s strategies and implementations. The researcher arranged
to meet with principals, either in person or virtually. Meetings with principals were scheduled based on the availability of each principal. For both in-person and virtual meetings, the researcher appeared early to prepare paperwork and ensure the digital format was working correctly. The researcher also anticipated an early or late start as principals are on call 100% of their time. For the digital interviews, the researcher logged on early and made sure everything was working correctly. The researcher then waited for principals to ready themselves for the interview session. The researcher helped ease principals into the process by ensuring the time principals offered was the same amount of time allotted to the interview process. The interviews ranged from 30-60 minutes. Introductions were made, and principals were thanked for their time. Each of the participants were given five documents to review and complete:

- Interview script and questions
- Participants Bill of Rights
- Informed Consent Letter with Consent Agreement for Video Recording
- Privacy Act Statement
- Demographic questionnaire

The interview was conducted allowing for elaborations and follow up questions. The researcher took notes in addition to recording the interviews. Principals were thanked for their willingness to participate in the study and share effective strategies for their Title I students. After thanking principals for their participation, each meeting ended on time.

The interview process was informal and interactive between the researcher and the participants, which allowed the researcher to request clarification whenever
necessary. The researcher was careful to ask the semi-structured questions using the same tone of voice to avoid any possible implications for expected or anticipated responses. With permission from the participants, the interviewer used a digital recording device to record both face-to-face interviews and interviews conducted using Zoom. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) stated the interviewer needs to record the answers. Recording can be achieved by tape recorder, digital devices, or by note-taking. The researcher transcribed the interviews within one week.

The researcher used the four domains and 12 strategies from the Four Domains for Rapid School Improvement framework from WestEd (2018) to develop the interview questions. Each of the 12 strategies were used to formulate questions about specific strategies within each domain. The interview questions were created to answer the research question: What strategies do principals of Title I schools perceive as most effective in improving ELA scores by at least 10 points, through the lens of WestEd’s Four Domains of Rapid Improvement?

**Researcher as an Instrument**

According to Patten (2012, 2015), when conducting qualitative research the researcher is considered the primary instrument. When the researcher is the primary instrument, three areas may influence the interview process and how data are collected: unique personalities, characteristics, and interview techniques of the researcher (Pezalla, Pettigrew, & Miller-Day, 2012). As a result, the study may contain bias based on how the researcher influenced the interviewee during the interview. In this study, the interviewer is employed as a manager in a migrant education program and was previously employed as an intervention specialist at a two-way immersion, Title I elementary school.
As a result, the researcher brought potential biases to the study based on personal experiences in similar settings in which the study took place.

To mitigate bias, the interviewer maintained strict protocols during the interview process, data collection process, and subsequent analysis. To further assure attention to bias, the interviewer contracted and arranged for an expert adviser.

**Expert Adviser**

The researcher recognized the need to improve the validity of this descriptive, qualitative study and did so by selecting an expert advisor. To qualify, the expert met the following criteria:

- Working knowledge of SBAC assessment administration and analysis
- Employed in a northern California public school
- Ten years of more experience as a certificated staff member
- Working knowledge of research-based coding and theme development

The role of the expert was to include reviewing the interview process and reviewing the questions associated with it. The expert also examined the interview protocols and asked clarifying questions.

**Credibility**

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), credibility is “the extent to which the results approximate reality and are judged to be accurate, trustworthy, and reasonable” (p. 102). To ensure clarity when necessary, and by doing so increasing the data’s overall credibility, the interviewer used the suggestions given by the WestEd Four Domains of Rapid School Improvement to sort the results of the interviews and artifacts. The researcher used NVivo qualitative coding software to enhance credibility, extract
respondent statements, and easily organize the responses into categories. Using the software allowed the research to view the responses and code them into categories or themes to report the data accurately, adding further credibility to the study’s findings.

**Validity and Reliability**

**Validity**

Validity was defined as “the degree to which scientific explanations of phenomena match reality” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 104). A study is deemed valid if the instrument used is exact to “ensure that the instrument measures what it is supposed to measure” (Patton, 2015, p. 22). The validity of the scores is evident in the way the test is administered.

The first part of this study required the analysis of the data provided by the California Dashboard and its reporting of the SBAC scores. To further indicate the data’s validity, it should be noted there is a strict protocol for the SBAC administration. CDE test administration affidavits are signed and specific directions followed. If there are breaches in these protocols, those breaches must be reported to the state immediately.

According to Creswell (1998), the researcher should borrow procedures to ensure qualitative validity by continually checking for accuracy of the findings throughout the study. In the case of this study, the researcher consistently checked for accuracy in both the quantitative data provided by CDE and when designing the interview questions.

**Content validity.** To further validate the data used for this study, the researcher used a professional expert to review the content of the interview questions to validate their effectiveness. The expert examined and validated the questions in their role as part of the framework. The expert also reviewed the amount of time allotted for the
interviews as it related to the depth of the responses expected. The expert was able to advise the researcher as to possible probing and follow up questions that could be used. To further validate the data collected during interviews, the researcher conducted a pilot interview with a qualified participant who was not part of the actual study. During that time, the researcher practiced the interview procedures and process to ensure fluidity, probing skills, and depth of responses.

**Researcher validity.** When considering validity, it is essential to include the researcher’s background. The researcher is a 50-year-old female with 25 years of experience in intervention at Title I elementary schools in northern California. The researcher is familiar with the AYP measures established in California as a way of measuring student growth on the state assessment and was interested in the aspects of the new way of calculating the growth on the SBAC assessment. Additionally, the researcher had seen many changes in education to address the gap in scores for Title I schools compared to non-Title I schools. This study was intended to inform principals of Title I schools what their peers perceived as the most important strategies to implement to show growth on ELA SBAC assessments for their particular population.

**Reliability**

Reliability in research refers to the process of the study that yields consistency by way of standardizing the process of data collection (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2015). A set of standard questions was used to increase reliability. Testing the questions multiple times or in multiple ways allows testing of an instrument’s reliability (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2015). The researcher triangulated data by using artifacts in addition to interviews.
**Internal reliability.** Internal reliability is the consistency of people’s responses given the same items or in this case, questions (Price, Chiang, & Jhangiani, 2016). The researcher conducted a face-to-face interview with an interviewee who was not a participant in the study but met the study criteria to strengthen the internal reliability. The identical protocol was used whereby the interviewee was given the same questions designed for the study. The interview was recorded and transcribed using a digital device for accuracy. During interviews with the study’s participants, questions were reviewed ahead of time to avoid any confusion, a procedure intended to allow participants to prepare their answers in advance and ask clarifying questions if they were uncertain after reading the questions.

To further ensure internal reliability, triangulation methods of analyzing data were employed. Triangulation refers to methods in research in which data are collected to provide credibility and trustworthiness in the collection of data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2015). Multiple data sources were used in this study, such as interviews and the review of artifacts. Each of the data points was used to triangulate the collected data.

**External reliability.** External reliability refers to the possibility of the study being replicated (McLeod, 2013). The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of the strategies used at the individual sites by the sample group interviewed. Because of the nature of the interview, exact answers cannot be replicated. However, to ensure reliability, the same questions were used in the same order during face-to-face and virtual interviews at all sites. Although in a qualitative study the interview question design and subsequent answers are not intended for replication, the
process is geared more toward understanding the experiences and perceptions of the participants.

**Inter-coder reliability.** Inter-coder and inter-rater reliability are one in the same. Inter-coder reliability refers to the rate that different coders give consistent assessments of the same information (McLeod, 2013). To ensure inter-coder reliability, a second coder was enlisted. The coder’s qualifications included earning a doctoral degree, more than 20 years’ experience in education, and previous experience in qualitative research and coding data for theme development.

The second coder checked the themes identified by the researcher and checked the organization and data of those themes. Reliability is indicated by agreement between researchers who have different personalities, come from different environments, and rely on different but similar measuring devices (Mouter & Noordegraaf, 2012). Inter-coding is used to compute results using a percentage agreement calculation. By adding the number of cases that received the same rating from both judges and dividing that number by the total number of cases rated by the two judges, reliability is addressed (Stemler, 2001). For this study, an inter-coder reliability percentage agreement was used because of its simplicity. The 70% agreement factor was used as the minimum agreement target for this study.

**Data Collection**

The study was reviewed and approved by the Brandman University Institutional Review Board (BUIRB) to ensure the proposed study procedures met the standards for ethical research. This process is in place to ensure the protections of human participants in a study.
Careful planning and attention to detail are important for successful data collection. For the first portion of the study, the researcher used a spreadsheet provided by the CDE that listed all of the Title I schools in California then located the schools north of Fresno in northern California with K-5 Title I students that were at or above 75% and public schools that had more than 200 students.

The California Dashboard was used to evaluate placement of overall students on a five by five grid as they related to their performance on the SBAC assessment. The researcher used the data to indicate the top schools in the area of growth in ELA. Of the 34 schools meeting the criteria of growing 10 or more points, 22 were asked to participate and 11 principals agreed to participate in an interview. The scores examined were those of the number of students, status, and change. SBAC scores is the new way of examining growth in performance as it replaced AYP formulas.

Each participant was asked a series of questions to address the research questions. See Appendix C for a copy of the interview protocol. All participants were asked the same questions to provide more accurate responses to the study. A demographic questionnaire (Appendix E) was distributed to learn the background of each participant.

**Interview protocol.** The qualitative study focused on interviews and artifacts. Eleven principals were interviewed using semi-structured interview questions. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), semi-structured interviews use open-ended questions in which the participant is not given a list of choices to select an answer. By using semi-structured interviews, the researcher can ask tailored follow-up questions encouraging the participant to share more deeply than if using a structured interview format. Each participant was asked a series of questions to address the research
questions. The interview protocol is presented in Appendix C. All participants were asked the same questions to provide more accurate responses for the study. This enabled the researcher to code more accurately. In preparation for the data collection, the researcher took the following steps:

- Principals were contacted by phone to elicit interest in the study and discuss the interview possibility
- Participants agreed on dates and times for the interview
- Participants were advised as to the benefits and minimal risk of the study
- Participants were emailed the informed consent form (Appendix D)
- The researcher provided participants with a copy of the questions (Appendix C) before the interviews commenced

On the day of the interview, the following steps were taken:

- The researcher went to the participant’s place of business, used a virtual face-to-face option, or used the phone to conduct the interview
- The researcher confirmed signatures on each required document
- The researcher reviewed the purpose of the study and confirmed the participant consented to the interview being recorded
- The researcher conducted the interview

After the interviews were completed, the following steps were followed:

- The researcher thanked each principal for his or her time
- The researcher spot tested to confirm the interview was recorded
- The researcher transcribed each interview
• The researcher filed all transcribed interviews on a secured computer under pseudonyms
• The researcher stored the signatures and notes in a locked cabinet

Field Test

As discussed by McMillan and Schumacher (2010), to ensure the trustworthiness of data collection, a pilot test can be done. After analyzing the archival data from the Dashboard, the researcher conducted a pilot test to establish the validity of the interview instrument. A colleague familiar with the components of the study and the framework agreed to participate in a pilot study. This person was asked to review the content of the interview questions to validate their effectiveness. The expert validated the questions aligned with the framework. With the agreement of the interviewee, the pilot interview commenced. The researcher then solicited feedback from the participant expert. The expert’s feedback helped the researcher ensure the research questions were clear and in alignment with the purpose of the study. The expert also offered input regarding intonation and wait time in relation to the question-response exchange. The expert confirmed the one-hour timeframe allotted for questioning was appropriate for subjects to thoroughly provide answers without rushing.

The researcher used low-inference descriptors in addition to recording the interviews. Low-inference descriptors are those as close to real accounts without underlying assumptions (Seale, 1999). The researcher took notes consistent with the participant responses. The researcher included member checking in the interview process. Member checking is providing the participant copies of notes or transcripts for
accuracy (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The researcher made suggested changes to the interview transcript notes.

Eleven qualified participants who met the study’s criteria participated in the semi-structured interviews. The researcher took steps to enhance validity by recording the interviews and subsequently transcribing all participant responses. All participants responded to the same set of questions to ensure data consistency and limit bias.

Artifact Protocol

The artifacts used for this study required the researcher to go into the individual websites of the school districts and look for their school LCAP. These plans revealed the strategies districts put into place to ensure students performed in their academic studies. The following is a sample of the artifacts used.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Artifacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LCAP</td>
<td>Example: Schools will implement supplemental actions and services to provide pathway programs that prepare low-income students and other target student groups for college and career. Actions and services include certificated staff, services, and operational expenditures.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* This is a sample and not a list.

Data Analysis

Qualitative analysis of data is primarily a process of “organizing data into categories and identifying patterns and relationships among the categories” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 367). Data were collected and organized based on McMillan and Schumacher’s (2010) general process of inductive data analysis. Data were coded,
categorized, and interpreted. The coding process included systematically analyzing the data without interpreting responses.

For this study, the data were collected via interviews and review of artifacts. The data were then transcribed from the audio or video interviews. The data were then organized and uploaded into NVivo for coding. The researcher used NVivo, a qualitative data analysis program, to facilitate the coding process. The program provides a central place to store data and categorize it using common themes. The data from interviews were coded using NVivo. The coding process breaks apart information into pieces that can then be categorized and given specific names or titles (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patten, 2012). Patterns and themes were identified and logged in such a way they could easily be categorized based on segments of the responses. This process continued until all data were documented and analyzed. Tables are represented in Chapter IV representing the results of the interview responses and coding process.

**Limitations**

As with many studies, this study encountered limitations. The researcher is the primary instrument in a qualitative study and, therefore, can introduce instances where personality, experiences, and interview techniques can influence what is collected. Thus, researcher bias is a potential limitation of the study. Another limitation is the strategies found were those in use at only northern California schools. Schools in other regions of the California or in other parts of the country may use different approaches yet get the same results. Given the limited geography of the study, findings may not be generalized beyond the schools that participated in the study. A third limitation is this study focused on the 34 schools that showed at least a 10-point gain in their SBAC results from one
year to the next. Although the researcher reached out to 22 principals, only 11 agreed to participate. It is possible those who agreed differed from or used different strategies than those who did not participate. Additionally, the sample size of 11 principals may be too small to generalize the results.

**Summary**

This chapter provided a detailed explanation of the methodology used to conduct the study. It described the research design, population, sample, data collection procedures, analysis techniques, and limitations of the study. Chapter IV presents the findings from the qualitative analysis. Chapter V presents a summary of key findings, conclusions, implications for action, recommendations for future research, and concluding remarks.
CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS

The findings in this chapter are an outcome of interviews conducted and artifacts reviewed. After analyzing data collected, the findings attempted to answer the central research question: What strategies do principals of Title I schools perceive as most effective in improving English language arts ELA scores by at least 10 points, through the lens of WestEd’s Four Domains of Rapid School Improvement? Sixteen themes emerged as a result of the analysis.

**Purpose Statement and Research Questions**

The purpose of this descriptive qualitative study was to identify and describe the impact of the strategies principals of Title I schools perceived as most effective in improving ELA scores by at least 10 points, through the lens of WestEd’s Four Domains of Rapid School Improvement. The central research question guiding this study was:

What strategies do principals of Title I schools perceive as most effective in improving ELA scores by at least ten points, through the lens of WestEd’s Four Domains of Rapid School Improvement? The research sub-questions were:

1. What strategies do principals in schools with 75% or higher Title I populations perceive are most effective in rapid improvement, based on WestEd’s Domain I – Turnaround Leadership?
2. What strategies do principals in schools with 75% or higher Title I populations perceive are most effective in rapid improvement, based on WestEd’s Domain II – Talent Development?
3. What strategies do principals in schools with 75% or higher Title I populations perceive are most effective in rapid improvement, based on WestEd’s Domain III – Instructional Transformation?

4. What strategies do principals in schools with 75% or higher Title I populations perceive are most effective in rapid improvement, based on WestEd’s Domain IV – Cultural Shift?

**Research Methods and Data Collection Procedures**

The researcher used a spreadsheet provided by the California Department of Education (CDE) that listed all the Title I schools in California, then located the schools north of Fresno in northern California that served students in grades K-5 and had at least 200 students. The researcher used the data to identify the top schools in the area of growth in ELA. Of the 34 schools meeting the criteria of gaining at least 10 points on the SBAC ELA assessment, 22 were asked to participate in the study and 11 principals participated in the interviews. After identifying the sample of 11 principals, the researcher began the interview process.

This qualitative study focused on date collected via interviews and a review of artifacts. Each participant was asked a series of questions to address the four research sub-questions. All participants were asked the same questions (Appendix C) to provide more accurate responses to the study. A demographic questionnaire (Appendix E) was also distributed so the researcher could better understand each participant’s background.

**Population**

The population of this study consisted of California school administrators. According to the CDE website, there were 26,893 administrators in California. This
study addressed the administrative role of school principal. In 2017, there were 10,477 elementary schools across 1,024 districts in California. Therefore, the population was estimated at 10,477 school principals. After narrowing the target population to northern California and K-5 Title I elementary schools that experienced at least a 10-point gain on the SBAC ELA assessment, 34 schools were identified as meeting the criteria to participate in this study.

**Sample**

The sample for this study consisted of 11 principals from the 34 schools in the target population. Participants all met the following criteria:

- Principals of California Title I K-5 public schools with over 200 students
- Principals of K-5 public schools that assessed 3-5th grade students using the SBAC ELA assessment
- Principals of K-5 schools located in northern California

**Demographic Data**

This study involved 11 participants. All participants were principals at sites that meet the criteria of being northern California schools with a minimum of 75% of students who meet Title I criteria and schools that gained at least 10 points on the SBAC ELA assessment. Table 2 represents the demographic data collection from the participants.
Table 2

**Participants Demographics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Years in Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant 1</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 2</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 3</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 4</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 5</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 6</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 7</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 8</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 9</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 10</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 11</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Presentation and Analysis of Data**

The following section contains the data collected from the interviews and artifacts that were analyzed to answer the two research questions about the strategies used to support the gain on the ELA SBAC assessment. The 11 principals interviewed were from northern California. A question on the demographic questionnaire asked about the number of years in their current position to understand their responsibility for the changes in test scores.

**Data Preparation**

The data collected for this study emanated from interviews and artifacts. The data were then transcribed from the recordings and subsequently coded. The data were organized based on the study’s theoretical framework, WestEd’s Four Domains for Rapid School Improvement: turnaround leadership, talent development, instructional transformation, and cultural shift.
The following section presents the data collected and analyzed from the interviews to answer each sub-question about the strategies used to make the growth on the ELA SBAC assessment. Table 3 summarizes the themes and frequency from highest to lowest of the responses from the principals.

Table 3

*Overall Themes, Participants, and Frequency of Responses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Question</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Artifacts</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SB-3</td>
<td>Adopting an aligned curriculum for all grade levels</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB-4</td>
<td>Setting student goals for teachers, students, and parents</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB-2</td>
<td>Creating professional development focused on goals</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB-2</td>
<td>Implementing PLCs</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB-2</td>
<td>Hiring at least 1 TOSA for literacy support</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB-3</td>
<td>Creating and administering common assessments</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB-3</td>
<td>Providing intervention for students not meeting goals</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB-3</td>
<td>Regularly analyzing data by the teachers</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB-4</td>
<td>Communicating and collaborating with parents</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB-1</td>
<td>Providing administrative support with accountability</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB-2</td>
<td>Teachers collaborating about goals</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB-1</td>
<td>Delivering consistent feedback from administration to teachers and teachers to students</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB-2</td>
<td>Teachers participating in decision-making</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB-3</td>
<td>Implementing an aligned schedule for all grade levels</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB-4</td>
<td>Providing workshops to parents to link them to the school</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB-2</td>
<td>Continuously reviewing standards</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Central research question. The central research question was: What strategies do principals of Title I schools perceive as most effective in improving ELA scores by at least 10 points, through the lens of WestEd’s (2018) Four Domains of Rapid School Improvement? The researcher coded principal responses and then categorized them into framework areas using the Four Domains of turnaround leadership, talent development, instructional transformation, and culture shift. Each domain was separated and analyzed in order of importance of strategies listed in the sections.

Findings for Research Sub-Question 1

Research Sub-Question 1 was: What strategies do principals in schools with 75% or higher Title I populations perceive are most effective in rapid improvement, based on WestEd’s Domain I – Turnaround Leadership?

The first Domain is turnaround leadership. Evidence of turnaround leadership is when communication is improved, goals are set, and support is targeted to the students’ needs (Day, 2009; WestEd, 2018). Table 4 presents the themes associated with the turnaround leadership domain.

Table 4

Frequency of Responses for Research Sub-Question 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Question</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Artifacts</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SB-1</td>
<td>Providing administrative support with accountability</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB-1</td>
<td>Delivering consistent feedback from administrators to teachers and teachers to students</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Providing administrative support with accountability. Administrative support was mentioned 14 times by five principals. The principals described being able to hold teachers accountable while supporting them through observations and participation in training was valuable.

Administrative support with accountability was the 10th ranked strategy out of the 16 noted by the principals, yet the most common for Sub-Question 1. Four of the five principals who supported their staff with accountability stated they were learning along with their teachers. Participant 9 stated the leadership team sat in on professional development opportunities with the teachers to understand what they were expected to implement. Participant 10 described really listening to the teachers during staff meetings and adjusting to their needs. These principals reported walking through the classrooms regularly and providing immediate, meaningful feedback. All five of these administrators emphasized they were part of the staff as opposed to being leader who was uninvolved with what was happening in the classrooms.

Delivering consistent feedback from administrators to teachers and teachers to students. Feedback was mentioned eight times by four principals. The elementary school principals explained the importance of actionable feedback given from them or the administrative team to the teachers, as well as from the teachers to students. This strategy was ranked 13th out of 16.

Feedback was given to teachers after planned and unplanned walkthroughs the principals performed regularly. Administrators provided immediate feedback to the teachers intended to improve instruction. Participant 1 stated, “I’m also a teacher at heart, like, first and foremost, I’m a teacher and I will be able to observe and give
actionable feedback.” Feedback was an important part of both evaluative and non-evaluative strategies the administrators found valuable. After setting goals and based on the modelling and feedback from the principals, teachers also give continuous feedback to students. Students were aware of where they were and what they need to do to get to the next level. Participant 4 explained,

I think also the students, the teachers really going through the classes and you know when they’re teaching say okay, this is going to be on a test. This is what you’re going to have to do to really make sure they taught to students the skills they needed to learn to be successful.

**Findings for Research Sub-Question 2**

Research Sub-Question 2 was: What strategies do principals in schools with 75% or higher Title I populations perceive are most effective in rapid improvement, based on WestEd’s Domain II – Talent Development?

The second Domain is talent development. Evidence of talent development stems from the organization’s ability to recruit, develop, and retain talent; target professional learning opportunities; and set clear expectations (WestEd, 2018). Six of the 16 themes were associated with this domain. Table 5 presents the themes associated with Research Sub-Question 2 and talent development.
Table 5

*Frequency of Responses for Research Sub-Question 2*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Question</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Artifacts</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SB-2</td>
<td>Creating professional development focused on goals</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB-2</td>
<td>Implementing PLCs</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB-2</td>
<td>Hiring at least one TOSA for literacy support</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB-2</td>
<td>Teachers collaborating around goals</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB-2</td>
<td>Teachers participating in decision making</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB-2</td>
<td>Continuously reviewing standards</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Creating professional development focused on goals.** Professional development was mentioned 21 times by 10 principals and appeared in six artifacts for a total of 27 references indicating professional development had a big impact on their scores. Professional development was 3rd ranked strategy of the 16 documented.

Some of the professional development focused on student engagement, some on ELA, and others on English language development. Principals wanted to ensure teachers understood the goal and could adjust based on what teachers at each site needed. Participant 10 mentioned following up with teachers later in the day to “keep the conversation fresh” and reported listening to teacher needs to “create our own flash PD sessions on-site based on their suggestions.” Participant 11 said, “I guess it just kind of just goes all back to the professional development that we did. It was all aligned to, you know, higher-order thinking.” Similarly, Participant 1 stated, “Professional development for us has been two-fold, what does it mean to teach reading, but what does it mean to know the kids that are in front of you.” Participant 2 said the school’s professional
development was related to the district’s initiative. Each site had different topics of professional development but a common theme was that they all focused on what teachers needed.

**Implementing professional learning communities.** PLCs were mentioned 22 times by eight principals and appeared in three artifacts for a total of 25 references. Implementing PLCs was ranked 4\(^{th}\) of the 16 strategies principals stated was the reason for the increase in student performance.

DuFour (2004) stated executing PLCs was critical for creating a culture of collaboration. This went beyond the idea of camaraderie. Rather, PLCs needed to be involved in making logistical decisions as to how to run the school. Effective PLCs provide teachers with time to strategically analyze data and create deep meaning as to how to make their teaching better (DuFour, 2004). Eight of the 11 principals seemed to embrace the notion that PLCs were more than just teachers getting together to chat. Each of these principals expressed there was purpose in their school’s PLC meetings. Participant 2 stated when discussing PLCs,

> [It] is not just meeting together as a professional learning community; it’s a way of being. It’s not a program and it’s about students first, results, not intentions. It’s kind of a mantra and so every decision we make, are we leaning this way because it is easier for us or because it’s more effective for students’ needs.

Eight principals stated there was a designated time to implement the PLC process. They emphasized the need to give teachers the structure to discuss students and progress. PLCs provide the structure to help teachers plan together and help address questions.
Hiring at least one TOSA for literacy support. Teachers on special assignment (TOSAs) were mentioned 21 times by seven principals and appeared in four artifacts for a total of 25 references. Literacy support from TOSAs was ranks 5th out of the 16 strategies. Seven of the 11 principals stated TOSAs were a great support for the teachers, students, and administrators.

Some of the jobs of the TOSA included administering assessments, providing interventions, delivering professional development, setting goals with students, and supporting teachers with coaching and one-on-one support. The TOSAs all worked fulltime at the school. Each school had one or two of these TOSAs on-site who specialized in literacy and/or beginning reading skills. TOSAs helped guide the planning time and the PLC time for the teachers. They gave feedback to teachers and at times, modeled lessons with students. Participant 4 said, “I did have a good instructional coach and she also worked with teachers and supported teachers.” Sometimes TOSAs supported teachers and sometimes they supported students. Participant 11 stated, “We also provided a TOSA in focusing on ELA across the board.” Principals stated their teachers needed additional help and coaching to focus on ELA, and they appreciated the supports provided by the TOSAs.

Teachers collaborating about goals. Teacher collaboration was mentioned 10 times by six principals and appeared in two artifacts for a total of 12 references. Teacher collaboration was ranked 11th of the 16 strategies. Six out of the 11 principals interviewed described the importance of teacher collaboration.

Either through the PLC structure or just giving teachers the time needed to plan, collaboration was an important strategy mentioned by the principals. One principal
stated, “Teachers meet once a week for two hours in addition to two days of prep/PE days that they can collaborate.” Whether collaboration was for planning, understanding CCSS, or looking at individual student needs, principals felt the need to provide teachers ample opportunity for structured collaboration.

**Teachers participating in decision-making.** Teacher participation in decision-making was mentioned seven times by seven principals. This theme was ranked 12th of the 16 strategies. Participation in decision-making means the teachers had a say in the curriculum they would be teaching. These seven principals believed teachers being involved in the discussion and participating in the decisions had a positive impact on the student scores.

Teachers believed students could be successful if they were able to plan according to what they knew would benefit their students. In one school, teachers also had a say into how money would be spent to better support their efforts in the classroom. Teachers were the ones who emphasized parent involvement. For example, Participant 8 said, “That was the way that students and families were engaged and really what came from that, a majority of staff members and all families wanted [the best] for their kids.” These seven principals believed that for the change in scores to happen, teachers had to have buy-in for the curriculum and understand the budget for the school year so they could best support their students.

**Continuously reviewing standards.** Teachers continuously reviewing standards was mentioned six times by four principals. This theme was ranked last of the 16 strategies. All four of the principals that addressed this strategy identified a focus on standards with their teachers as important.
Participant 4 stated, “You use the curriculum to teach the standards and instead of just following it kind of like, with everything blindly, you do go through and pick out the parts of the curriculum.” Participant 1 stated, “It’s not hard. It’s the learning and the practice…You practice it until it’s like a part of you.” Ensuring teachers understand student needs, specific standards, and what was needed for students to meet the standards was a practice these four principals used to improve student ELA scores.

Findings for Research Sub-Question 3

Research Sub-Question 3 was: What strategies do principals in schools with 75% or higher Title I populations perceive are most effective in rapid improvement, based on WestEd’s Domain III – Instructional Transformation?

The third domain is instructional transformation. Evidence of instructional transformation stemmed from schools addressing student needs, providing evidence-based instruction, and creating opportunities for learning. Table 6 illustrates the frequency with which the principals responded related to the instructional transformation domain.

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Question</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Artifacts</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SB-3</td>
<td>Adopting aligned curriculum for all grade levels</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB-3</td>
<td>Creating and administering common assessments</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB-3</td>
<td>Providing intervention for students not meeting goals</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB-3</td>
<td>Regularly analyzing data by teachers</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB-3</td>
<td>Implementing an aligned schedule for all grade levels</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Adopting an aligned curriculum for all grade levels. Adopting an aligned curriculum for all grade levels was mentioned 28 times by 10 principals and appeared in three artifacts for a total of 31 references. This theme was ranked number one of the sixteen strategies. Ten of the 11 principals attributed their school’s increased ELA scores to the aligned curriculum.

Of the 10 principals who mentioned this theme, seven reported their schools had a new curriculum teachers were implementing. In addition to implementing the new curriculum, these principals also mentioned implementing supports and accountability practices to ensure fidelity of program implementation. Participant 1 discussed the importance of “teaching and supporting teachers to teach it, and not just giving it to them.” Nine of the principals emphasized the importance of supporting the current curriculum, whether it was new or already being used by the school. They did not want to give teachers a new curriculum or even the current curriculum without implementation support. Whether the principals discussed a new or increased focus on the CCSS, English language development, or an integrated science curriculum, they emphasized the importance of teacher training and accountability for the new programs.

Creating and administering common assessments. Having common assessments was mentioned 20 times and by all 11 principals, and appeared in two artifacts for a total of 22 references. Use of common assessments was ranked 6th among the 16 strategies. All 11 principals revealed assessments were another way they were able to increase SBAC scores.

By using the assessments and keeping them in the forefront, they could identify gaps in student learning and address the needs of individual students. Principals used
formative and summative assessments on a regular basis to inform instruction.

Participant 3 stated, “Our teachers meet in grade-level teams to collaborate and look at the essential standards and they break it down into skinny targets and write common formative assessments and so they are looking at that constantly.” Teachers used district benchmark assessments and formative assessments that came with the curriculum. They also used teacher-developed assessments to monitor student needs on a predetermined basis. Most principals stated a six-week interval was their target for assessing and reteaching. Using the common assessments allowed teachers to use common language about monitoring student progress.

**Providing interventions for students not meeting goals.** Interventions for students not meeting goals was mentioned 17 times by nine principals and appeared in three artifacts for a total of 20 references. Providing intervention was ranked 7th of the 16 strategies. Nine of the 11 principals expressed the importance of interventions.

Interventions happened before, during, and after school. The interventions were typically provided by a TOSA who specialized in literacy and/or intervention strategies to support struggling readers. These interventions were structured as both push-in and pull-out models. In all cases, students were grouped by ability with the intention of addressing their needs. The groups were smaller and specialized for the interventions. Participant 3 reflected, “Once we started that, we have 30% of our students move from Tier 3 to Tier 2 for reading intervention.” Participant 1 called interventions “individual educational support,” going on to say, “It’s not an intervention thing for us, it’s what you need.”
Regularly analyzing data by the teachers. Data analysis was mentioned 16 times by 11 principals and appeared in two artifacts for a total of 18 references. Ongoing data analysis was ranked 8th of the 16 strategies. In addition to administering common assessments, all 11 principals saw the value in analyzing the data collected from the assessments.

Data analysis was mentioned 16 times throughout the interviews. Participant 11 said, “Data analysis was also another key piece that we not only do, we not only train staff on, but they were coached through it and how to look at data.” Teachers used data to inform their instruction. Data analysis was planned and the results were used to inform future instruction. The teachers administered the pre-determined assessment and then were guided as to how to analyze and use the results. The teachers participated in the analysis of the data and they planned for next steps. Many of the schools had a minimum day during the week for teachers to come together to analyze and use the assessment data and then plan together. Along with the data analysis, teachers set goals for themselves and student. Participant 2 stated, “Our other focus here is the use of data. And again, that’s not specific to language arts, but all subject areas.”

Implementing aligned schedules for all grade levels. Aligned schedules were mentioned seven times by five principals. Aligned schedules were ranked 14th of the 16 strategies. Five of the 11 principals believed aligning schedules was important for improvement in scores.

The elementary school principals mentioned implementing aligned schedules seven times. Principals also discussed the advantages of having a block schedule. Teachers could plan together, intervention specialists could work with students when
teachers knew they would be pulling students or pushing in to offer support, and administrators could conduct observations more easily. As stated by Participant 8, “If a coach is going in, or we are doing instructional learning walks as an admin and coach’s team, we’re able to go into classrooms and see alignment across the grade level.” The principals knew if they wanted to see teachers providing ELA or English language development instruction, such instruction would be occurring at the same time every day and thus could plan their walkthroughs and observations accordingly. Similarly, one participant stated, “If peers want to observe each other, it’s easier when we know what time everyone’s teaching ELA.” Although they may have initially received pushback from staff members, principals felt aligned schedules was an important change to achieve improved SBAC scores.

**Findings for Research Sub-Question 4**

Research Sub-Question 4 was: What strategies do principals in schools with 75% or higher Title I populations perceive are most effective in rapid improvement, based on WestEd’s Domain IV – Cultural Shift?

The fourth domain is cultural shift. Evidence of a culture shift is demonstrated by a community focused on student learning, one that involves all stakeholders, including students and parents, in creating and pursuing educational goals. The following section discusses the frequency with which the principals responded to areas the researcher identified as within the domain of cultural shift. Table 7 illustrates the frequency with which the principals responded related to the cultural shift domain.
### Table 7

**Frequency of Responses for Research Sub-Question 4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Question</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Artifacts</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SB-4</td>
<td>Setting student goals for teachers, students, and parents</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB-4</td>
<td>Communicating and collaborating with parents</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB-4</td>
<td>Providing workshops to parents to link them to the school</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Setting goals for teachers, students, and parents.** Setting goals for teachers, students, and parents was mentioned 30 times by nine principals for a total of 30 references. Setting goals was ranked 2nd of all 16 strategies principals found made a difference for student SBAC scores.

The process of setting goals for teachers, students, and parents varied greatly. For students, long- and short-term goals were set to show growth on standardized assessments. Participant 1 summarized this by stating,

> Short-term, we can set goals for like small, small group instruction, which were really like by semester, or in our case by trimester. And then long-term, we had a three-year vision of what the reading instruction would look like – the year one goal was to adopt aligned curriculum in third through fifth grade.

Staff set goals and in all the cases, continued to monitor and adjust activities as needed to achieve their targets. Participant 2 described a distinct system as to how they held students accountable for their learning. This principal stated,
Every student has a goal binder and so they set their own goals for every assessment. Prior to an assessment or a unit, they talk about what they wanted to be able to gain from it and what do they want to score on the assessment and then they get feedback on that and that goes also in their goal binder. We use those goal binders at parent conferences, back to school night, open house so the parents also see what is happening with each child and also have a goal minded mentality.

Principals and teachers embraced the idea of ensuring first that teachers set goals and then second that the students were able to meet those goals and rise to the expectations. These goals and expectations were articulated to the parents as well, which helped gain buy in and build a culture of high expectations for students.

**Communicating and collaborating with parents.** Parent communication was mentioned 17 times by eight principals and appeared in one artifact for a total of 18 references. Parent communication was ranked 9th out of the 16 strategies. Eight of the principals suggested parent involvement played an important part in their school’s increased SBAC scores.

It was important to principals that parents understand the school system and how the system works. Communication to parents was mentioned 17 times throughout the interviews with the emphasis on ensuring parents were involved in their child’s education. Parents were given school tours. They were shown on a one-to-one basis as to how to help their child. Participant 9 stated,

We constantly meet with our parents, we have parent-teacher conferences where teachers share with parents to let them know how their child is

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doing with grade-level standards. What they are meeting and what they still need to work on. And that is ongoing throughout the year. We send report cards home every trimester and parents know that they are always welcome to come in to see the teacher personally. Parents have access to their child’s grades through the portal. To see how the students are doing and actually communicate with the teacher which is a special tool that we use to where parents can then send messages in their language and it’s going to translate in English for the teacher and the teacher can send messages in English and it will translate for the parent.

Sometimes the communication was initiated through district- or school-level initiatives, and in some cases from the parents. All eight principals who shared information relevant to this theme wanted parents to play a part in their child’s academic success.

**Providing workshops to parents to link them to the school.** Workshops were mentioned six times by four principals and appeared in two artifacts for a total of eight references. Workshops for parents was ranked 15th of the 16 strategies. Four principals suggested workshops for parents made a difference in student performance.

Workshops for parents included helping their student at home with literacy nights, analyzing data in individualized meetings, and showing families how to infuse educational activities into everyday activities, such as “cooking with them and doing gardening” said Participant 4. Principals indicated family involvement was important to student academic performance. Workshops were used to encourage the parents to be a
part of the learning process by valuing what they brought with them. Sometimes the workshops were also provided in another language to accommodate family needs.

**Summary of Major Themes and Patterns**

Chapter IV presented the qualitative findings from the 11 principals interviewed. The data were used to answer the research questions about strategies implemented by Title I schools that helped improved student ELA test scores as perceived by principals. The data were rich, shared by principals who saw at least a 10-point gain in their school’s ELA SBAC scores. Specifically, principals shared about the strategies they perceived contributed to their school’s academic gains.

After a thorough analysis of the data, major themes were identified and classified into four themes of the framework: turnaround leadership, instructional transformation, talent development, and culture shift. Sixteen strategies emerged that principals believed made a major difference in student improvement on the ELA SBAC assessment. These strategies were mentioned 10-43 times by the 11 principals interviewed. Frequency of reference to each of the Four Domains is shown in Figure 3.

![Figure 3](image)

*Figure 3*. Proportion of responses aligned with the Four Domains.
Two Domains were mentioned with a greater frequency than the other two. Talent development was referenced 102 times, followed closely by instructional transformation, which was referenced 98 times. Cultural shift was referenced 56 times in the data. The Domain mentioned least often was turnaround leadership, which was only referenced 22 times.

In the next chapter, major findings are further explored along with conclusions, implications for action, and recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER V: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings, conclusions, and recommendations are presented in the final chapter of the research study. Following the reporting of the key and unexpected findings, conclusions drawn from those findings are presented. Next is a discussion of implications for action based on the findings and conclusions. This is followed by recommendations for future research and this chapter concludes with the researcher’s reflections and final remarks.

Methodology Review

A qualitative study was conducted to describe the strategies Title I principals perceived as most effective in improving ELA scores by at least 10 points, through the lens of WestEd’s (2018) Four Domains of Rapid Improvement. The methodology was designed to answer each of the sub-questions:

5. What strategies do principals in schools with 75% or higher Title I populations perceive are most effective in rapid improvement, based on WestEd’s Domain I – Turnaround Leadership?

6. What strategies do principals in schools with 75% or higher Title I populations perceive are most effective in rapid improvement, based on WestEd’s Domain II – Talent Development?

7. What strategies do principals in schools with 75% or higher Title I populations perceive are most effective in rapid improvement, based on WestEd’s Domain III – Instructional Transformation?
8. What strategies do principals in schools with 75% or higher Title I populations perceive are most effective in rapid improvement, based on WestEd’s Domain IV – Cultural Shift?

This qualitative study collected data through interviews and a review of artifacts. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with 11 principals from K-5 elementary schools with a population of 75% or higher of Title I students, and the school was recognized for at least a 10-point gain on the SBAC ELA assessment.

Key Findings

To identify the key findings for this study on the strategies principals perceived as most effective in improving ELA scores by at least 10 points, through the lens of WestEd’s (2018) Four Domains of Rapid School Improvement, the qualitative data were analyzed and sorted into themes. The qualitative data included in-depth interviews with 11 principals either in-person or virtually, and a review of the artifacts. The researcher identified 16 themes providing evidence of strategies the principals believed impacted their students’ scores on the ELA SBAC assessments. The researcher established that if a strategy was referenced six or more times, it would be included and considered a key finding. Principals perceived the following strategies most impacted their scores:

Key Finding 1. Implementation of professional learning communities, the addition of a teacher on special assignment, and professional development support positive change in struggling schools

Participants reported the implementation of professional learning communities (PLCs) with a frequency of 33 and teachers on special assignment (TOSAs) with a frequency of 32 as valid strategies to turnaround schools. Similarly, professional
development for teachers was referenced 37 times. Participants emphasized giving teachers the support they needed to influence their teaching strategies was most important. Regarding PLCs, Participant 1 explained how the teachers met up to four times a week to plan together and coaches were involved with the planning process to ensure the lessons would meet student needs. Participants believed PLCs were not just another program, but something that needed to be implemented with fidelity and supported for teachers to benefit from the meetings. Participant 2 emphasized how professional learning was a way of being at the school and teachers focused on student results. To make PLCs work for the teachers, TOSAs were trained and expected to support teachers in their planning and teaching. TOSAs sat with teachers during planning time, both within and outside of PLCs. TOSAs created professional development sessions based on meeting the needs of the students and what they observed in the classroom. TOSAs were also able to go into classrooms and model lessons, which helped ensure all students could access the curriculum and meet standards.

**Key Finding 2. Collaboration among administrators, TOSAs, and teachers, and focused professional development and classroom support, directly impact change in SBAC ELA scores and lead to success in struggling schools**

The administrators did not specifically say they were the ones responsible for the change in SBAC ELA scores, yet two themes specifically addressed the domain of turnaround leadership and the overall impact of the leader. Providing administrative guidance and resources led to purposeful feedback, collaboration, and teacher accountability. As a result, both administrators and TOSAs influenced changes in teacher practice. Eight of the 11 principals addressed the need to be present and give immediate
feedback. They discussed their routines and their expectations of observing classrooms to provide meaningful feedback and/or decide on necessary professional development topics. One participant said, “We have lots and lots of walkthroughs with specific feedback for teachers and then you know, follow up with professional developed based on our needs.” When leadership focused on changing practices to improve student outcomes, immediate feedback coupled, and continuous and focused support, Title I students improved their ELA test scores.

Key Finding 3. Ongoing TOSA-supported data review and intervention plan development support teachers to increase student performance in struggling schools

All 11 principals stated data analysis was a key strategy for student success. Ongoing data analysis was referenced 29 times. DuFour (2004) stated, “The crucial first step in that transformation comes when staff began to honestly confront data on student achievement and to work together to improve results rather than make excuses for them.” Teachers were given time to meet and review data from common assessments. They met in grade-level groups to review assessment data and plan for their next steps in teaching. Participant 5 commented, “I mean we look at data all the time. Our minimum days [are spent] looking at data…it’s an 81% Title I school, so all we do is data, plan, analyze, and repeat.” TOSAs were present in the meetings and provided support to the students who did not meet the goal of mastering a standard. TOSAs provided interventions and continuously supported teachers so they could implement the next steps as described in the intervention plan.
Key Finding 4. Implementing a new curriculum and common schedules brings consistency to sites and reinforces collaboration between teachers and administrators in struggling schools

Implementing an aligned curriculum was the most often referenced theme across the 16 themes that emerged. Ten principals referenced curriculum alignment as a strategy they were implementing to improve ELA scores. Districts looked for a curriculum that was standards-based and addressed the individual needs of students. New curriculum was designed to integrate teaching content with ongoing assessments to incorporate individual interventions for every student. For some schools, the curriculum was moving to something addressing the CCSS and for others it was implementing a new reading curriculum. The curriculum was supported by administrators and TOSAs. In addition to implementing a new curriculum, five principals referenced having common schedules was a way to facilitate observations to confirm the curriculum was being implemented with fidelity. Common schedules also provided additional time for teacher planning and helped teachers, TOSAs, and administrators stay in sync.

Key Finding 5. Academic performance goals should be set and monitored with students in Title I schools to promote improved achievement in struggling schools

In this study, setting student academic performance goals was referenced 39 times. Nine principals emphasized the need to set academic performance and overall goals with the students and their parents. For example, Participant 3 stated, “We have high expectations for learning and really working with kids on a growth mindset and perseverance and grit, and that has changed everything. I mean kids understand what they’re reading and what their goals are.” To help monitor progress, one school used a
data wall whereas another used goals binders. For Participants 2, 4, 8, and 9, it was important to share the goals with the families so parents understood how to help their children at home. In one school, students created their learning goals and during parent conferences, used their goals to explain to their parents where they were and where they needed to go.

**Unexpected Findings**

After the analysis of the qualitative data, two unexpected findings emerged from the study. First, RTI models were not mentioned as a strategy. According to Brown-Chidsey and Steege (2010), RTI is not a new concept, but represents years of research to improve education for all students with a focus on identifying root causes, designing and implementing intervention plans, and monitoring results. Although all 11 participants were implementing pieces of the RTI model, the term was never mentioned. It seemed the pieces of the model were valued, but not identified as being RTI.

The second unexpected finding was the limited support for and involvement of parents. Parent involvement, communication, and collaboration was referenced 26 times. In the LCAP, parents are required to have input in the plan for the school district. Only eight principals and one artifact mentioned parent involvement. ESSA suggested Title I schools provide families information to make informed decisions and be involved in their child’s success. According to CDE, outreach should also be happening for parents. In the case of this study, parents were invited to parent-teacher meetings, principal coffees, and other school-level events. They were also provided with workshops provided by participants from four school. Workshops for parents was referenced 12 times, but
principals did not indicate parents were involved in the decision-making process for their student.

Conclusions

The key findings resulted in five conclusions. These conclusions were based on the qualitative data produced by the principals and artifacts at the Title I schools as well as from the literature.

Conclusion 1. Principals must provide training, implement PLCs, and hire TOSAs to support teachers in improving ELA test score goals

For these schools, implementing PLCs, creating professional development focused on improving student performance goals, and hiring at least one TOSA per school site created positive change. To support teachers with their instructional planning and pedagogical efficacy to ensure improved student achievement, PLCs must be implemented with fidelity and overseen by administrators and TOSA partners. Time and support must be given to teachers so they can create effective lesson plans that are meaningful for students. Like other reforms, PLCs can be misguided or forgotten altogether. According to DuFour (2004), this can be avoided if educators reflect critically on the merits of commitment and persistence of improvement in the school. Teachers and administrators need to remember the three ideas and core principles of PLCs. Additionally, a shared mission, vision, values, and goals must become part of a site’s culture so the model can be maintained and supported for student success. Further, part of that focus must be supported through having a TOSA who is attentive to teacher needs and guides them to ensure the focus is on student achievement. TOSAs must also be responsible for working in the classroom with the teacher to model lessons, help
students not making the goal, and decide what professional development is needed to help teachers go to the next level. This conclusion was based on the following:

- Eight of 11 principals implemented PLCs that included the support of a TOSA. PLCs were referenced 25 times in this study. To demonstrate that PLCs are implemented correctly, a focus must be on the model; the more support for the teachers, the better the results.
- Seven of the 11 principals believed having a TOSA was important to their school’s growth on the SBAC because TOSAs offered support to the staff when implementing new programs. TOSAs were mentioned 21 times and found in four artifacts for a total of 25 references. The TOSA supported teachers with their lessons and their students. They were also instrumental in supporting the professional development offered to the teachers.

**Conclusion 2. Principals must actively engage with teachers and provide them with direct feedback and TOSA support to improve student academic achievement**

Providing administrative and TOSA support, direct feedback, and professional development helped lead to higher levels of teacher accountability. Having involved leaders who listen, guide, and support their teachers in improving pedagogical practices will have a direct influence on meeting student performance goals and, in general, positively impact struggling schools’ academic standings. In addition to the administrator, a TOSA is also a partner and instructional leader on campus. Evidence of turnaround leadership includes improved communication, goal setting, and targeted support to meet students’ needs (Day, 2009; WestEd, 2018). According to Anrig (2015), research was done to observe the commonalities of a successful turnaround leader; one of
the five areas noted that impacted success was teacher-led data analysis and sharing classroom instructional practices. Additionally, principals reported conducting walkthroughs and providing immediate feedback helped impact student achievement. This conclusion was based on the following:

- Administrator support with accountability was referenced 14 times, including involvement through observations. Providing immediate feedback was discussed eight times by four principals. Their combined impact was important for student growth.

**Conclusion 3. Principals must provide teachers support in data review and intervention planning to improve student performance outcomes**

Providing interventions for students not meeting goals and regularly analyzing data with TOSA support was essential for improving Title I schools’ performance standings. Students enrolled in Title I schools provided with targeted interventions designed by their teachers in collaboration with TOSAs are more likely to experience improvement toward reaching their academic performance goals. Routine data reviews by all stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, and TOSAs, is vital for student growth. To increase student achievement, staff need to be trained on how to look at data and coached and supported through the analysis process. For example, Participant 11 stated, “The first data point is the SBAC assessments and how students perform overall on the state assessment. Teachers then review the expectations and can visualize the steps they need to take to help their students improve their performance.” With TOSA support in analyzing and planning, teachers can review the data and think about creating attainable student performance goals. When teachers feel good about what they are
doing, students succeed. When students succeed, teachers’ self-efficacy increases. This
dynamic, when executed, creates success (Lee et al., 1995; Lieberman, 1995). This
conclusion was based on the following:

- The qualitative data showed the importance of ongoing data analysis. All 11
  principals interviewed valued data analysis. Data analysis was also referenced
  in two artifacts. The 11 principals reported data analysis was a shared practice
  that contributed to their school’s growth of 10 or more points on the ELA
  SBAC.

**Conclusion 4. Principals and staff must adopt new curriculum and implement
common schedules that support collaboration and data analysis**

Adopting new curriculum and aligning schedules for all grade levels reinforced
collaboration among teachers, TOSAs, and administrators. Additionally, a common
curriculum and schoolwide schedule alignment allowed teachers, TOSAs, and
administrators more opportunities for collaboration, data analysis, and intervention
planning necessary to support struggling students. To meet new expectations and help
students retain necessary content, districts looked for standards-based curriculum that
addressed students’ individual needs (Gustafson & Branch, 1997). To implement a new
curriculum, principals must have teacher consensus for the new curriculum. In some
cases, teachers picked the curriculum; in other cases, the principals made sure they hired
staff who believed in the systems that would be implemented. In addition to new
curriculum, it was concluded having common schedules when teachers implemented the
new curriculum was important. According to evidence collected, having common
schedules helped teachers plan and administrators and TOSAs support the implementation. This conclusion was based on the following:

- All 11 participants emphasized the need for a new curriculum. It was mentioned 28 times during interviews and appeared in three artifacts for a total of 31 references. New curriculum requires support, which is necessary to make anticipated student academic performance changes on the California assessments.

**Conclusion 5. Teachers must guide students and their parents in setting and understanding short- and long-term academic performance goals to support students in monitoring and achieving them**

Setting and monitoring goals with teachers and parents help students improve their academic progress. Students in struggling schools who are supported by teachers and parents to keep track of their academic performance and understand the requirements and expectations for improvement are more likely to increase their scores on the ELA SBAC assessments. With students as partners, teachers and parents can articulate each student’s goals and plan for necessary cognitive growth together. In addition to teachers knowing the plan for improvement according to each student’s goals, students must understand the plan and track their progress. When students can create and articulate their goals, success happens. Hattie (2012) took this idea a step further recommending *self-reported grades* as number two in his list of factors related to student achievement. In his study, students could accurately report how they would do on an assessment and it was the teachers’ job to encourage students to do more (Hattie, 2012). In the current
qualitative study, it was found teachers set goals for students and involved students at every level in meeting those goals. This conclusion was based on the following:

- Nine of the 11 principals discussed the importance of setting goals for students with teachers and students, which was referenced 30 times.

  Administrators realized the importance of setting clear goals and providing support to both teachers and students.

**Implications for Action**

The conclusions of this study showed actions can be taken by leaders in California elementary Title I schools to improve SBAC ELA scores. Based on the review of the literature and research findings, the following actions are recommended.

**Implication 1. Schools should implement PLCs and hire a TOSA to support teachers to improve student achievement on the ELA part of the SBAC**

Based on the conclusion implementation of PLCs and support and professional development from a TOSA can improve student achievement on the ELA part of the SBAC, it is recommended schools implement PLCs and hire TOSAs. Principals perceived the strategies exemplified in PLCs can increase teacher efficacy and result in student gains. By providing time to collaborate and a TOSA for support, administrators are able to ensure PLCs are implemented with fidelity. By creating PLCs, teachers -have time to review all aspects of their instruction and analyze student data with their colleagues.

District administrators can examine the results of model schools implementing PLCs successfully and replicate their practices in Title I schools. At model schools, teachers learn the value of following the PLC framework strategies. It is worth the extra
effort for TOSAs to support teachers, students, and administrators. TOSAs are given the

task of focusing professional development on teacher needs. By having an extra staff

member who concentrates on teacher needs, districts can show support for staff members,

creating meaningful relationships with them.

Support is provided through purposeful professional development. It must be
designed to impact teacher performance immediately. Professional development should
be based on what administrators observe and what teachers request. A culture of teacher
suggestions and feedback must be established to ensure success for the Title I student
population.

**Implication 2: Leader must listen and participate in the change**

Based on the conclusion having an involved leader who listens to teachers and
participates in implementing changes is necessary to ensure their design and
implementation, the site leader must be honest about making and sustaining change.
Effective leaders must listen to their staff when they have concerns. Relationships are
also an important part of being an effective leader. For leaders to provide teachers with
constructive feedback, they must be an intricate member of the team.

**Implication 3: Data need to be in the forefront to make changes for Title I schools**

Ongoing data review coupled with interventions and TOSA support in the
classrooms are important for Title I schools. Teachers require training on effective data-
driven instructional strategies. With TOSAs, teachers can gradually learn analysis
strategies by having TOSAs first do the heavy lifting then taking on more responsibilities.
Teachers can use their energy to focus on groups of students and drill down to individual
students and their needs. TOSAs can provide support so teachers can implement new
lessons, receive constructive feedback, and make on-the-spot changes as needed. As a result, the role of the TOSA on a Title I campus was confirmed.

Implication 4: Title I schools must implement a new curriculum and common schedule with fidelity

Implementation of a new curriculum and common schedules were identified as effective strategies to improve ELA scores. Having teachers and parents participate in reviewing and selecting a new curriculum helps to gain buy-in when implementing change. When the new curriculum is implemented, administrators and TOSAs must support teachers. The staff must be willing to change the curriculum and sometimes instructional strategies. Teamwork is the foundation for change to happen.

Administrators must support their teachers’ growth. By creating common schedules, the school culture shifts to be more collaborative. Changing teaching strategies is difficult enough, but when staff can change together and rely on support, the students ultimately benefit.

Implication 5: Students and teachers must have time to create, articulate, and achieve student goals

Student goals must be set and monitored to improve academic outcomes. Time must be scheduled for teachers and students to create goals and articulate expectations allowing students to reach them. Creating both short- and long-term goals can impact the way students approach learning. When they know exactly where they stand in their class, students relate better to the instruction. Taking ownership of their learning is an important strategy affecting results in Title I schools. Teachers with high expectations can push students to rise to their potential and as a result, students can exceed those
expectations. For teachers to engage effectively in this work, they must be given time and support to set their own goals and plan a path toward achieving them. By using data, teachers set expectations for final outcomes and then identify individual students, their learning styles, and levels of accomplishment. This process requires the administrators to provide teachers with time to reflect and plan together. With structured collaboration and planning, students and teachers will achieve their potential.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

The current study revealed effective strategies that work for Title I schools with a 75% or higher population of Title I students. Although the current study focused on principals from schools that demonstrated at least 10-point growth on the SBAC ELA assessment, there is potential for researchers to explore additional effective strategies that also work. Based on data from the current study, the following are recommended for further research:

- This qualitative study was focused on strategies that worked for ELA. A similar study could be conducted to explore strategies effective in other subject areas based on assessment improvement. Studies could be conducted for math and science with the same population. Data would attest to which strategies would show growth in each of the areas assessed.

- This qualitative study focused on principal effectiveness and impact on advancing SBAC assessment scores at the chosen sites. A future study could be conducted with principals and teachers at Title I schools. Such as study could compare the similarities and differences as perceived from the two groups.
This qualitative study focused on Title I schools with 75% or higher Title I student populations. Another study could be conducted on schools with fewer Title I students to determine the similarities and differences in the strategies other principals thought were impactful for student growth on the SBAC assessment.

This qualitative study was limited to schools in northern California. Another qualitative study could be conducted in other sections of the state to provide further information on implementing strategies that principals thought were important to show academic growth for Title I schools.

**Concluding Remarks and Reflections**

The current qualitative study closes with my reflections and concluding remarks about the research process and results. This dissertation journey exposed me to the different abilities and passions regarding the success of students in California’s educational system related to Title I students. The time and effort dedicated to this study helped me understand there is a need in education to continuously support educators because each site and each educator approaches instruction differently. Many strategies must be working effectively and simultaneously to make changes for Title I populations to support educators and students. Administrators are key to teacher buy-in and staff efficacy. The administrator must listen and respond to people on their campus who impact students daily. It is important to consider each teacher as an integral part of a team. Overall, each person must have a sense of belonging when building programs that work for all students. Although relationships were not mentioned as a strategy, they are implied as critical components for the implementation of successful strategies. Having a
TOSA on every Title I school campus to support administrators, guide teachers, and most importantly, share a common vision with stakeholders assures positive student achievement outcomes.

I appreciate the principals who took time away from their busy schedules to participate in this study. Working at Title I schools is unique to other school dynamics. Speaking with their principals reminds me of the dedication it takes to make a significant difference for students who may not have the external support other students experience. Continuing to support and guide each other will ensure meaningful change and improvement for our most vulnerable students.
REFERENCES


Muhammad, A., & Hollie, S. (2012). *The will to lead, the skill to teach.* Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.


Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. (2017, November 15). *How our public school system came to be* [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AyHy71_tkcY
APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

The state and local indicators are drawn from the ten priority areas of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF). Table 1 lists each priority area and its corresponding state and/or local indicator:

Table 1: The State and Local Indicators for Each Local Control Funding Formula Priority Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority Areas</th>
<th>State Indicator</th>
<th>Local Indicator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Priority 1: Basic Services and</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Text books availability, adequate facilities, and correctly assigned teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditions at schools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority 2: Implementation of State</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Annually report on progress in implementing the standards for all content areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Standards)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority 3: Parent Engagement</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Annually report progress toward: (1) seeking input from parents/guardians in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>decision making; and (2) promoting parental participation in programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority 4: Student Achievement</td>
<td>Academic Indicator (Grades 3–8)</td>
<td>Grade 11 Distance from Level 3 Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English Learner Progress Indicator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority 5: Student Engagement</td>
<td>Graduation Rate Indicator</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chronic Absenteeism Indicator (Status will be reported in March 2018)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority 6: School Climate</td>
<td>Suspension Rate Indicator</td>
<td>Administer a Local Climate Survey every other year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority 7: Access to a Broad Course</td>
<td>College/Career Indicator (Status only)</td>
<td>Pending SBE Action for Inclusion in Fall 2018 Dashboard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of Study</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority 8: Outcomes in a Broad</td>
<td>College/Career Indicator (Status only)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course of Study</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These priority areas form the basis for California’s integrated accountability system, which meets both state and federal requirements. Unlike the former Academic Performance Index (API), which was based solely on testing results, this new accountability system uses multiple measures to determine performance and progress and emphasizes equity by focusing on student group performance.
## APPENDIX B

### Requirements of the Test Environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>BEFORE TESTING</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional materials removed or covered</td>
<td>Instructional materials must be removed or covered, including but not limited to information that might assist students in answering questions that is displayed on bulletin boards, chalkboards or dry-erase boards, or on charts (e.g., wall charts that contain literary definitions, maps, mathematics formulas, etc.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student seating</td>
<td>Students must be seated so there is enough space between them to minimize opportunities to look at each other’s work—for example, students may be assigned staggered seating or be seated in every other chair or workstation position—or they should be provided with table-top partitions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signage</td>
<td>If helpful, place a “TESTING—DO NOT DISTURB” sign on the door or post signs in halls and entrances rerouting hallway traffic in order to promote optimum testing conditions. CAASPP test site coordinators or test administrators should post the “Unauthorized Electronic Devices May Not Be Used at Any Time During the Testing Session” signs so that they are clearly visible to all students. A master of this sign can be downloaded from the Manuals and Instructions Web page on the CAASPP Portal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DURING TESTING</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiet environment</td>
<td>Provide a quiet environment void of talking or other distractions that might interfere with a student’s ability to concentrate or might compromise the testing situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student supervision</td>
<td>Students are actively supervised and are prohibited from access to unauthorized electronic devices that allow availability to outside information, communication among students, or photographing or copying test content. This includes any device with cellular, messaging, or wireless capabilities, but is not limited to cell phones, personal digital assistants (PDAs), iPods, cameras, and electronic translation devices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requirement</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to allowable resources only</td>
<td>Students must only have access to and use of those allowable resources identified by Smarter Balanced (see the subsection Establishing Appropriate Testing Conditions for examples) that are permitted for each specific test (or portion of a test).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to assessments</td>
<td>Unauthorized staff or other adults must not be in the room during testing. Only students who are testing can view items. Students who are not being tested must not have access to secure testing materials including test items. Based on the item type (i.e., performance tasks [PTs]), trained test administrators may also have limited exposure to items in the course of properly administering the assessments; however, even test administrators and other trained staff may not actively review or analyze any test items.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testing through secure browser</td>
<td>Administration of the Smarter Balanced assessments, CAAs, and California Science Tests (CAST) is permitted only through the student interface via a secure browser or a method of securing the student device.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DURING AND AFTER TESTING</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No access to responses</td>
<td>LEA CAASPP coordinators, CAASPP test site coordinators, test administrators, and other staff are not permitted to review student responses to the Smarter Balanced or CAST assessments in the testing interface or students’ notes on scratch paper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No copies of test materials</td>
<td>Unless needed as a print-on-demand or braille accommodation, no copies of the test items, stimuli, reading passages, PT materials (with the exception of the CAA for Science embedded performance tasks), or writing prompts may be made or otherwise retained.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No access to digital, electronic, or manual devices</td>
<td>No digital, electronic, or manual device may be used to record or retain test items, reading passages, or writing prompts. Similarly, these materials must not be discussed with or released to anyone via any media, including fax, e-mail, social media Web sites, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No retaining, discussing, or releasing test materials</td>
<td>Descriptions of test items, stimuli, printed reading passages, or writing prompts must not be retained, discussed, or released to anyone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No reviewing, discussing, or analyzing test materials</td>
<td>LEA CAASPP coordinators, CAASPP test site coordinators, test administrators, and other staff may not review, discuss, or analyze test items, stimuli, reading passages, or writing prompts at any time, including before, during, or after testing. Student interaction during a test is limited to what is necessary for the purpose of a PT or to respond during any CAA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All test materials must remain secure at all times</td>
<td>Printed materials from the print-on-demand accommodation, scratch paper, the CAA for Science embedded PTs (both with and without student responses) and documents with student information must be kept in a securely locked room or locked cabinet that can be opened only with a key or keycard by staff responsible for test administration.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C

Interview Script and Questions

Opening
I appreciate your willingness to participate in the interview today. The purpose of this study is to identify and describe the impact of the LCAP on the 3rd – 5th grade student SBAC ELA scores in Northern California public elementary schools that have a 75% or higher Title I student population. An additional purpose of this mixed method study is to identify the LCAP strategies that principals and district staff perceive as most effective in improving student achievement in language arts. All information shared in this interview is confidential. A pseudonym for all participants will be used in this study. If you do not feel comfortable answering a question, you may skip it. I will be recording this interview as well as taking notes. It should only take about 45-60 minutes. There are no foreseeable physical, psychological, or social risks involved with your participation. The researcher will protect confidentiality by keeping identifying letter codes, audio recordings, and transcribed documents in a locked file. Both the documents and audio recording will later be destroyed. You will not be compensated for your participation. However, your participation will benefit the research regarding Title I schools and the LCAP strategies that are used. Any questions you have, may be answered by the researcher, myself, Michelle Manriquez. I can be reached by email at [email protected] or by phone at [redacted].

Is this process still okay with you? Do you have any questions or concerns before we start? Please verbally say “yes” to indicate that you understand your rights and consent to being interviewed. I would like to begin by asking you a few background questions about your experience.

How long have you worked in education?
How long have you worked in this district?

Turnaround Leadership

1. In what way, if any, was improvement prioritized and its urgency communicated in the area of ELA?
2. In what way, if any, were short term and long-term goals monitored in the area of ELA?
3. In what way, if any, were needs customized and supported in the area of ELA?

Talent Development

1. In what ways, if any, was talent recruited, developed, retained, and sustained in the area of ELA?
2. In what ways, if any, were opportunities for professional learning targeted in the area of English Language Arts?
3. In what ways, if any, were performance expectations clearly set in the area of English Language Arts?

**Instructional Transformation**

1. In what ways, if any, were student-learning needs diagnosed and responded to in the area of English Language Arts?
2. In what ways, if any, was rigorous evidence-based instruction provided in the area of English Language Arts?
3. In what ways, if any, were barriers removed and opportunities provided in the area of English Language Arts?

**Culture Shift**

1. In what ways, if any, was culture built to focus on student learning and effort in the area of English Language Arts?
2. In what ways, if any, was stakeholder input solicited and acted upon in the area of English Language Arts?
3. In what ways, if any, were students and families engaged in pursuing educational goals in the area of English Language Arts?

**Probing questions**

1. Can you tell me more about…?
2. Can you give a specific example of…?
3. Do you have more to add…?
4. Why do you think that was the case…?

**Closing**

*Thank you for taking the time to meet with me and be interviewed regarding your thoughts about LCAP strategies and what you have implemented in the area of English Language Arts. Your opinion is very valuable to me as a researcher. If you would like a copy of the transcription, it may be made available to you by sending an email to Michelle Manriquez at [mmanriqu@mail.brandman.edu]. Thank you again.*
APPENDIX D

Informed Consent Letter

Dear (insert name)

Thank you for agreeing to be a participant in my research study. The goal of this study is to analyze the strategies that were used in the 2016-2017 school year that the principal or director viewed as being the most impactful to create growth in the SBAC scores. This study asks 5 principals or directors to provide their insights and opinions regarding the strategies that were implemented over the last years to impact the growth.

There are four domains of rapid improvement according to WestEd: Turnaround Leadership, Talent Development, Instructional Transformation, and Culture Shift. It is these four domains that will drive the conversation for this research study. Evidence of a turnaround leadership is that communication is improved, goals are set, and support is targeted to the needs. Evidence of talent development is the organization can recruit, develop and retain talent, target professional learning opportunities, and set clear expectations. Evidence of instructional transformation is to address student needs, provide evidence-based instruction, and created opportunities. Evidence of a culture shift is to create a community that is focused on student learning, include all stakeholders, and include students and parents in creating and pursuing educational goals. According to the framework, all the four domains need to be considered in creating effective, sustainable change.

Study Process and Dates of the Study

There are three parts to your participation:

1. Online demographic questionnaire-this will include your name, contact information, position, and number of years in that position. This questionnaire will take not more than 10 minutes.

2. Online preliminary questions-this will include four open ended questions around the four quadrants mentioned above. These questions could be as short as five minutes to fifteen, depending on how much you have to share.

3. Interview-ideally this would be in person but could be a phone interview.

The study will be conducted over a period of three weeks in August. With this letter, you are receiving the link to both the questionnaire and the survey.

Demographic Questionnaire link:

Questions link:
Please complete these in the next week. Once both have been completed, I will be contacting you by email and/or phone to set up the interview. Again, the interview will take no more than 30 minutes.

Requirements of the Study

In order to guarantee the validity and timely completion of this study, participants are asked to review these requirements and confirm your willingness and ability to complete the study.

One key element of any research study is anonymity. Neither your name nor your answers will be shared with other participants. Please do not discuss your answers to the preliminary with others throughout the process.

Participants are chosen by their test score growth on the SBAC and their willingness to participate.

During the period of the study, participants must complete the demographic and preliminary interview questions through an online form. Interviews will be scheduled as participants complete the form.

Informed Consent (included in the demographic online questionnaire)

Please read the following and sign below:

I understand that I may refuse to participate in or I may withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences. Also, the investigator may stop the study at any time. I also understand that 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 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 Academic Affairs, Brandman University, 16355 Laguna Canyon road, Irvine, CA 92618 telephone (949) 341-7641. I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this form.

Signed: __________________________________________

Please return the informed consent as a scanned pdf.

Michelle Manriquez
APPENDIX E

Demographic Questionnaire

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study. This will be the only written questionnaire to be filled out for this study. By filling it out, you agree to participate and you have been given informed consent.

Informed Consent:
I understand that I may refuse to participate in or I may withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences. Also, the investigator may stop the study at any time. I also understand that 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 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 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618 Telephone (949) 341-7641. I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this form.

1. Full Name:
2. Best email address:
3. Phone number:
4. Position:
5. District:
6. Number of years in current position:

- Appendix F
- Note Requesting Expert
- This is taken from a phone call requesting the professional expert to be part of analyzing the coding for the study.
- 
- Researcher: Good morning, I am writing my dissertation and am in the process of coding my data. My dissertation is on what strategies principals perceived were effective in improving ELA SBAC scores for their school site. I was wondering if you would be interested in reviewing the data and themes that I have been able to develop using NVivo for my study?
- 
- Expert: Yes, I would love to help you to review and analyze the data. I will be available this week to go over it.
- 
- Researcher: Thank you. I will give you a text with some times that I have available and see if any of them work for you. Thank you again.