

LITERACY PRACTICES AS PREDICTORS
OF READING ACHIEVEMENT

by

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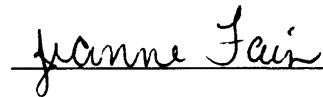


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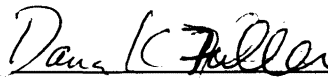
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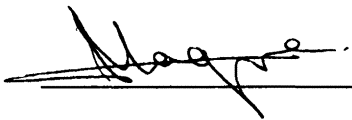
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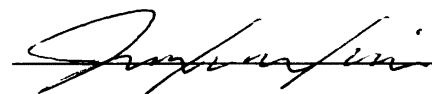
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ABSTRACT

Research on educational administration from the past 40 years emphasizes the principal as an instructional leader. However, the research community has done little to specifically examine what literacy knowledge and practices elementary principals need to possess or do regarding literacy teaching and learning. Because federal legislation has increased scrutiny on literacy, the role of the elementary school principal as the instructional leader has intensified. In an era of increased accountability, effective literacy leadership is essential to the development and continued improvement of an elementary school. There is a dearth of research regarding what constitutes necessary literacy knowledge for elementary principals, what skills are needed to assume the role of literacy leader, and which literacy practices are linked to improved student achievement. This study focused on identifying common literacy practices of elementary principals and then determining if those practices impacted student achievement in reading. Survey data were collected to identify the literacy practices and correlated with student achievement data on the 2011 TCAP Achievement Reading Language Arts Test. Initial analyses found no significant relationship between the literacy practices of elementary principals and the reading proficiency of students in grades three through five in their buildings. Further analyses discovered a direct link between school setting and reading proficiency.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Teachers, that are less than effective, represent a common feature in underperforming elementary schools (Papa & Baxter, 2008). The responsibility lies with the elementary principal to employ skilled teachers and to make certain that existing teachers ascertain the appropriate professional development if they are in need of additional skills and content knowledge to achieve maximum effectiveness in an instructional environment. In a study by Papa and Baxter (2008), the researchers found that effective principals that invoke the managerial principles of leadership within their schools show an increased volume in obtaining and retaining proficient teachers..

The power of leadership to shape positive school improvement has focused on expansive expectations. Lezotte's (1991) effective schools research, Cawalti's (1999) case studies of six high-performing schools, and Carter's (2001) profiles of 21 high-performing, high-poverty schools are a sampling of some of the studies conducted that associate school leadership as a key factor in schools' instructional performance and enhancement. Harris (2005) summarizes professional research literature as an indicator expressing leadership as a fundamental part of school improvement, whereas, Gronn (1997) depicts this scenario as "the romance of leadership" (p. 277) and warns about the "raising false expectations about leader accomplishments with followers" (p. 281).

A few large-scale research studies, conducted on a quantitative level, echo the cautions made by Gronn (1997). These studies have only depicted leadership as having a direct effect on a limited basis. Ogawa and Hart (1985) report that student performance has a minimum deviation of 2% and a maximum of 8% resulting from principal

leadership. Hallinger and Heck (1996) conclude that leadership has narrow but significant effects in schools, but there are many areas that command further research in the field of leadership. “An important blank spot focuses on exactly what form or forms of leadership practice contribute to sustained school improvement” (p. 256) as stated by Harris (2005) he further narrows this focus. The majority of the professional literature thus far has concentrated on leadership more as style and behavior rather than examining explicit content knowledge of leadership. This study will examine the literacy practices of elementary principals and how those practices affect school performance.

Chapter one includes a description of the research questions. A description of the nature of the study is made, which includes the selected research methodology. The theoretical framework for the study is provided to contextualize the concepts within a set of related theories. The significance of the study is also provided in this chapter. To have a better understanding of the methodological decisions made by the researcher, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations are discussed. Chapter one ends with a summation.

Problem Statement

The problem is that previous studies on the effect of principal leadership on school achievement are primarily based on different leadership styles (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). It is necessary to examine factors that are more precise than leadership styles to fully comprehend the nature of the impact of principal leadership on school success (Harris, 2005). By examining data beyond leadership styles, researchers are able to expand the literature on principal leadership as related to literacy.

The gaps in the professional literature addressed in this study focus on two areas that have not been empirically supported by previous researchers. This study adds to the professional literature on the relatively unexamined literacy practices of elementary principals. Another gap that was addressed is the unexamined relationship of literacy practices of principals and the reading achievement of students.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this correlational study was two-fold: to examine the current literacy practices of elementary principals and the relationship of those practices on the academic achievement of students in reading. Principals from Tennessee public schools with grade structures of either PreKindergarten through fifth grade or Kindergarten through fifth grade comprised the sample for the study. Data were collected through survey questionnaires and public record.

Research Questions

The research study focused on answering the following research questions:

1. What are the current literacy practices of elementary principals?
2. What is the relationship of elementary school principals' literacy practices on the academic achievement of students in reading?

Nature of the Study

A quantitative correlational research design was used in the study to examine the current literacy practices of elementary principals and the relationship of those practices on the academic achievement of students in reading. The researcher developed and utilized data from the Elementary Principal Literacy Survey. Quantitative analyses of the

data from the survey provided information on whether the literacy practices of elementary principals and academic performance of students in reading are positively correlated, negatively correlated, or have no relationship.

Other research designs were considered; however, a correlation research design was found to be the most appropriate research design to achieve the goals of the study. According to Creswell (2005), correlational designs are used to test if a significant relationship exists between variables. The relationship between variables is represented numerically and indicates whether the relationship is positive, negative, or none. An experimental research design would not be appropriate because it is impractical to randomly assign principals to literacy conditions.

Theoretical Framework

Transformational leadership served as the main theory in which the problem, purpose, and research questions were based. Transformational leadership involves the aptitude to inspire other people to perform better in their jobs. Transformational leaders are involved and proactive in bringing about positive change to the organizations for which they serve.

Adopting a transformational leadership style gives leaders the ability to influence the behaviors of their faction (Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006). Blasé and Blasé (2000) argue in the school setting, teachers are considered collaborators, and in the course of transformational leadership, principals are able to influence the behaviors and viewpoints of teachers. Only when teachers are able to recognize the motivational role of school principals, can principals have an influential role (Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006).

Transformational leadership is an appropriate framework for the study because of its application in the instructional type of principal leadership (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). Instructional leadership is often adopted by principals who affect affirmative change in school outcomes (Blasé & Blasé, 2000). Instructional leaders offer feedback, participate in collaboration, support professional development activities, and take a hands-on role in the achievement of students. Considering the use of these practices, instructional leadership is often related to positive school outcomes (Barringer, 2006).

Significance of the Study

The results of the study aimed at expanding the literature on the relationship of principal leadership and academic achievement in reading. Most studies on principal leadership focus on leadership styles, but this study focused on a research area that is relatively unexamined, such as the literacy practices of principals with regard to influencing student achievement in schools.

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

The researcher believes that the survey instrument, Elementary Principal Literacy Survey, is somewhat valid and reliable. The survey instrument was not piloted. An assumption exists that the responses of the participants are accurate and honest. The researcher also believes that the survey instrument provided sufficient quantitative data to answer the research questions.

The study could be limited because of the relative novelty of the survey instrument that was used to measure the literacy practices of principals. The instrument

was developed by the researcher and may lack the required validity and reliability that other more established instruments have. The study was only concerned with soliciting the participation of public school elementary principals in Tennessee. The study intended to focus on making correlational conclusions.

Summary

Most research is conducted on the influence of principals in affecting positive school outcomes because of the expectations placed upon principals (Carter, 2001; Cawalti, 1999; Lezotte, 1991). The problem is that previous studies on the effect of principal leadership on school achievement are primarily based on different leadership styles (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). This study focused on the literacy practices of elementary principals and their relationship with positive school outcomes as measured by the academic achievement of students in reading.

The purpose of this correlational study is to examine the relationship of elementary school principals' literacy practices on the academic achievement of students in reading. The specific questions of this study are:

1. What are the current literacy practices of elementary principals?
2. What is the relationship of elementary school principals' literacy practices on the academic achievement of students in reading?

Elementary school principals from Tennessee comprised the sample for the study. Data results from a survey questionnaire and archived 2011 TCAP Achievement Test data available from the Tennessee Department of Education website were used.

Chapter one contains the main points of the study, including the research questions and the purpose of the study. Chapter two includes a review of literature of the main concepts and theories involved in the study. Some of these concepts include transformational leadership, literacy knowledge, and student achievement. Chapter three contains the methodological design of the study, specifically the research design and the steps involved in the data collection and analysis phases of the study. Chapter four comprises the results of the study based on the data analysis. The final chapter includes the recommendations and conclusions of the study, based on the study results.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this correlational study is to examine the relationship of elementary school principals' literacy practices on the academic achievement of students in reading. In this chapter, a literature review is presented of the pertinent studies focusing on the literacy practices of school principals and academic achievement performance of students. The chapter is organized based on the following topics: (a) documentation of the sources for the professional literature reviews; (b) principal leadership, including the different types of leadership; (c) the different factors affecting student leadership, with a focus on reading achievement; and (d) literacy knowledge including studies on literacy knowledge and student achievement. The chapter concludes with the identification of the gap in the literature and a summation of the main points discussed in the literature review.

Documentation

Lindle (2006) identified four features of leadership that are distinctive to the educational setting. A focus on student learning is the first of the features. Second, shared decision making about curriculum and instruction occurs regularly among the stakeholders. Continually monitoring the teaching and learning in the school building by the leader is the third feature. Finally, educational leadership leads to an *instructional leader*. Despite having identified these features and having an opportunity to focus on a uniquely educational aspect of leadership, the intangible landscape of instructional leadership is still ambiguous. The first *Handbook of Research on Educational Administration* (Boyan, 1988) scarcely references school leaders' instructional

responsibilities. Immegart's (1988) chapter on leadership identifies the need for increased attention to leading as opposed to managing, but only Bossert's (1988) chapter on school effects refers to instruction, but the term used is "instructional management" (pp. 348-349). Bossert's (1988) explanation of instructional management focuses on two leader practices: (1) the safeguard of instructional time, and (2) the articulation and pacing of the curriculum. The second edition of the *Handbook of Research on Educational Administration* (Murphy & Louis, 1999) devotes three chapters to features of teaching and learning in one section (Louis, Toole, & Hargreaves, 1999; Prawat & Peterson, 1999; Sykes, 1999) and later revisits topics of school leadership associated with transformation and instruction (Smylie & Hart, 1999).

Based on a Hallinger and Heck (1996) meta-analysis, the following conclusions about instructional leadership are offered. Principals make a difference indirectly on teaching and learning. Context matters in a study of instructional leadership due to the mediating effects that encircle teaching and learning. Principals affect school goals by creating a decisive focus, which influences classrooms and student learning. Principals reconcile organizational structures in ways that augment the school community's social networks to sustain effective teaching and learning (Hallinger & Heck, 1998). They conclude by addressing the further need for theoretical and practical advancement of specific answers to the query of how principals influence school outcomes and how their practices are mediated by school milieu (Hallinger & Heck, 1998, p. 186).

There is no apparent empirical substantiation regarding the relationship of the levels of literacy knowledge of school principals and the academic achievement of

students. This literature review includes sources pertaining to the problem statement, purpose, and the selected variables of the study. This chapter provides insights regarding the discourse on the relationship of the levels of literacy knowledge of school principals and the academic achievement of students.

The keywords, terms, and phrases used to create the literature review include principal leadership, types of leadership, factors affecting student achievement, relationship of principal leadership and school achievement, literacy knowledge of principals, factors affecting school achievement, achievement of students in reading, the relationship of literacy knowledge and academic achievement of students.

Principal Leadership

Since the 1960's principals have traditionally been tasked with the implementing and facilitating daily operations of schools (Bottoms & O'Neill, 2001). Some of the principal's tasks include ensuring the availability of textbooks, maintaining an appropriate sized faculty to handle the needs of the entire student body, and monitoring student progress to ensure students are able to promote from grade level to the next. The role of principals has shifted from a managerial role to a transformational leadership role, wherein principals are aggressively involved in the academic achievement of students (Hallinger & Heck, 1996).

According to Bottoms and O'Neill (2001), accountability in terms of being responsible in the success of the academic achievement of students is the main force for the evolution of the role of principals in the United States. As a result of the accountability placed upon school principals, they are more proactive in affecting

positive school outcomes (Bottoms & O'Neill, 2001; Wildy & Louden, 2000). In the context of No Child Left Behind, stakeholders such as policymakers, publishers, and educators are obligated to devise, test, and implement an integrated system of teaching, learning, and assessment while also ensuring that such a system does not spawn insidious incentives to "teach to the test" (Haertel & Herman, 2005). Principals today are expected to juggle successfully their roles as managers, instructional leaders, and political advocates of their schools (Abelmann & Elmore, 1999).

The ever-expanding role of school principals has led to a deficiency in qualified school leaders. Tirozzi (2001) contends that the increasing scope of the job of principals led to fewer applicants in leadership positions in schools, especially without a corresponding increase salary remuneration. Tirozzi (2001) also cites a shortage of professional development support for principals and principals' lack of vision as contributing to the scarcity of qualified principals.

In the United States, the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium standards framework is used as a framework for school principals (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996). Within this model, principals are required to cultivate a school culture that is favorable for the augmentation and development of students and teachers (Wildy & Louden, 2000). The implication of the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium standards is that principals have the responsibility toward themselves, the students, and the teachers. Understanding how learning is developed through research-based practices is not enough for principals, student outcomes should reflect this understanding (Wildy & Louden, 2000).

As for teachers, principals should endeavor to amass and preserve a stable teaching body that is successful and employs current research-based teaching practices that are effective. Leadership in schools is important because it develops teaching practices, ideas, and structures that support positive school outcomes. Positive school culture, promoted by effective leadership, encourages learning and innovative teaching (Hargreaves & Fink, 2004). Dinham and Scott (2000) also found that effective leadership can influence teacher satisfaction. Teachers who are satisfied with their job tend to be more involved in the learning of their students.

Through state legislations, national standards were adopted in which students were expected to meet on measures such as nationwide high-stakes testing (Bottoms & O'Neill, 2001). The effectiveness of principals has become a focus as a result of the increased responsibility placed on school principals (Wildy & Loudon, 2000). Principal leadership has been found by previous researchers to be significant in influencing positive school outcomes (e.g., Dinham, 2005; Lingard, 2010; Owens, 2004). School outcomes are usually measured through student achievement scores such as the proficiency levels of students on high-stakes testing measures (Lingard, 2010).

Dinham (2005) explored the practices of principals in Australian government schools that produced positive educational outcomes. Thirty-eight secondary schools demonstrating outstanding academic outcomes based on standardized test scores and value added measures were examined in the study regarding the practices of principals. Qualitative data was collected in the form of site notes from lesson observations, teacher interviews, principal interviews, faculty forums, and parent forums. The results indicate

that leadership of principals was significant in influencing positive educational outcomes; however, Dinham's results demonstrate that other people's involvement is also important in the success of school. The role of teachers and heads of faculties as the main instructors in classrooms also contribute to positive educational outcomes in public schools, such as increasing the academic achievement of students.

Principals know that other people and departments have an influence on what happens in schools (Bennett, 1999; Busher & Harris, 1999). Principals must be interactive and collaborate with others. Principals also need support, teamwork, and communication with other individuals or groups of individuals responsible for running a school.

According to Leithwood and Riehl (2005), several characteristics of successful leadership practices are pertinent across various contexts. These practices serve as a fundamental course of action that leaders can implement to be effective. Successful practices of leaders include the ability to provide direction, the ability to develop and motivate people, and the ability to develop a culture of collaboration and participation among the subordinates.

For the context of principalship, "on-the-job learning, professional development experiences, socialization processes and individual traits" (Leithwood, 2005, p. 621) are a few of the factors considered in successful principalship. These factors can be classified as internal and external factors (Gurr, Drysdale, & Mulford, 2006). Internal factors refer to personal characteristics of leaders. Internal factors could consist of passion, enthusiasm, the ability to communicate effectively with other people, and emotional

sensitivity. External factors refer to the context where leadership occurs. Examples of external factors relevant to principal leadership include national or district policies, size of the school, location, and school policies.

Types of Principal Leadership

Bredesen (1985) describes four types of principal leadership. These four types of principal leadership include: (a) instructional leader, (b) custodial manager, (c) missionary principal, and (d) gamesman or politician. All four leadership styles pertain to the administration style of schools.

Instructional leaders are “concerned with the technical core of operations, namely, well designed and managed classroom instruction” (Barringer, 2006, p. 38). Instructional leadership is the type of principal leadership often associated with positive school outcomes (Blasé & Blasé, 2000). Instructional leaders are expected to provide feedback, engage in collaboration, support professional development activities, and take a proactive role in the achievement of students.

Instructional leaders affect student learning because of their involvement in classroom instruction (Barringer, 2006). According to Stiggins and Duke (2008), assessment is one of the vital roles of principal leaders who adopt an approach of instructional leadership because assessment gives leaders the information to make well-versed decisions. Assessment can be categorized into three levels: (a) classroom, (b) program evaluation, and (c) institutional accountability. Instructional leaders are involved in the assessment of the three levels to ensure high quality decision-making is utilized.

The style of the transformational leader gives a strong foundation for instructional leadership in school principals (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). Transformational leadership involves the talent to stimulate others to perform better in their jobs. Transformational leaders are proactive in bringing about positive change to the organizations that they are serving as leaders.

Academic accountability set by the government through high-stakes testing leads to the pervasiveness of instructional leadership among principals (Bottoms & O'Neill, 2001; Wildy & Loudon, 2000). Principals must take a more proactive approach in ensuring that students progress academically (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). Development and growth of students are usually measured through high-stakes testing, which include standardized exams intended to determine the academic accomplishments of students as compared to the performance of other children within the country.

A more conventional role that principals assume is a custodian type of leadership. Custodian managers are “concerned with well-designed and operating school support functions, such as program planning and budgeting, business operations, and differentiated job tasks and position” (Barringer, 2006, p. 38). Custodial leaders are mainly concerned with the day-to-day operations of the school. Custodial principals utilize the greater part of their time to ensure that the school is operating properly and efficiently.

Missionary principals focus on the social needs of the school, particularly the needs of the students, teachers, and parents (Barringer, 2006). The objective of missionary principals is to build a positive school environment where all the needs of all

relevant groups in the school are satisfied. The social needs of the school take priority over participation in instruction and other administrative actions.

Principals who act as politicians are chiefly concerned with negotiating the requirements of the school from outside groups or entities (Griffith, 1999). Leaders who adopt a politician type of leadership engage in bargaining and negotiations (Barringer, 2006).

The extended role of principals as a result of accountability led to the combination of different leadership styles (Abelmann & Elmore, 1999; Tirozzi, 2001). School leaders do not have the opportunity to make use of only one leadership style because the job requires various responsibilities that merge the roles of managers, instructional leaders, and political advocates (Abelmann & Elmore, 1999).

Factors Affecting Student Achievement

In addition to principal leadership, different factors affect student achievement (e.g., Anobi, 2006; Atkins, 2008; Baker, Kana, & Al-Misnad, 2008; Doane, 2008; Leone, 2009; Lewis, 2005). These factors include, but are not limited to, teacher characteristics, student motivation, school culture, and classroom characteristics. Some of these factors will be discussed in this section.

Motivation is a significant factor in the research because of its influential function in the contexts of teaching and learning (Baker et al., 2008; Pintrich, 2003). Pintrich maintained that research on motivation is disjointed and lacked focus. In response, Pintrich proposed a motivational science model “that can help to integrate diverse research findings as well as help to organize and unify future research efforts” (p. 667).

The suggested framework emphasized the empirical approach in studying student motivation, the need for a multi-dimensional approach to motivation, and applied research on motivation.

Student motivation can be one factor that affects student achievement. Baker et al. (2008) discriminate the profile of students who are expected to be motivated and students who are likely to be unmotivated with regard to school achievement. Baker et al. (2008) contend that “family affluence, parental involvement in the school, the number of culturally enriching items found in the home, and school milieu” (p. 128) are factors that distinguish motivated from unmotivated students.

Doane (2008) focused on the association between school facilities and academic achievement of students by interviewing the teaching staff in three different rural public high schools. Results were inconclusive because no clear attitude among the participants regarding academic achievement was gleaned from the responses. Due to the fact that so many factors influence student achievement, it is difficult to pinpoint the impact solely of the facility. Some participants indicated that school facilities do influence academic achievement, whereas other participants believe that school facilities do not affect academic achievement. This finding is not consistent with Glenn, Picus, Marion, and Calvo’s (2006) findings, which argued that they were able to conclusively pinpoint the fact that school facilities in Wyoming did not affect academic achievement.

School practices such as free or reduced-price lunch were found by Atkins (2008) to be influential in the achievement of students. Atkins (2008) used the school pass rate on the 2005 SOL 3rd grade read testing to measure student achievement. No relationship

was found between factors such as curriculum alignment, time and scheduling, use of data, professional development, and leadership with student achievement.

Goal structure in classrooms is the focus in Roseth, Johnson, and Johnson's (2008) study. Roseth et al. suggest, "higher achievement and more positive peer relationships are associated with cooperative rather than competitive or individualistic goal structures" (p. 228). Results from this study indicate that cooperative goal structures are related to a positive correlation between achievement and positive peer relationships. Leone (2009) focuses on classroom variables that influence student achievement. Using a mixed-method research design, Leone reports that teacher effectiveness can influence student achievement. Data from Progress Book, such as class point average, provide information regarding student achievement for the quantitative portion of the study (Leone, 2009).

The qualitative data includes observations and interviews of four teachers deemed effective after analyzing the quantitative data. The intent was to establish the instructional strategies used to engage student learners and augment student achievement. Significant negative correlations of class average with postings on Progress Book, number of assignments, and percent of students on an IEP are shown within the data (Leone, 2009). A significant positive correlation between class average and class size was also found. Within the teacher data set, a significant negative correlation between Class Grade Average and the Percent of Students on an IEP was established. The qualitative analysis supports the finding that while the quantitative data showed all four participants to be

effective, some are more effective than others based on the instructional techniques used within their classrooms (Leone, 2009).

The performance, experiences, and qualifications of teachers remain a significant factor in the academic achievement of students (Darling-Hammond, 1997). Previous studies already established the effect of teachers on student achievement (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996; National Education Goals Panel, 1998). Researchers such as Lewis (2005), Khurshid (2008), and McNeill and Krajcik (2007) examined various teacher characteristics and their effects on student achievement. Some of the factors that are discussed include quality of teaching, exposure to professional development, classroom practices of teachers, and professional qualifications.

According to a qualitative study by Lewis (2005), quality teachers are characterized by most students as teachers who make sure that lessons are easily understood and manageable. In contrast, unqualified teachers are defined as teachers who are lackluster and are unable to connect with their students. For Anobi (2006), quality teachers are teachers who do their jobs beyond what is asked of them by law or policy. Quality teachers strive for superiority in learning and professional growth. In a study by Sanders and Rivers (1996), the researchers report that students who are assigned to ineffective teachers perform significantly lower in their academics compared to students who are assigned to teachers rated as effective.

Quality teachers may also be classified in terms of professional credentials such as degrees or licenses. A quantitative study by Khurshid (2008) examines the

relationship between the professional qualifications of teachers and the academic achievement of secondary students. The results of the study indicate that professional qualifications do not automatically influence the academic achievement of students.

The types of instructional practices utilized by teachers can influence student learning. McNeill and Krajcik (2007) studied how teachers influence student learning while giving scientific explanations. McNeill and Krajcik (2007) suggest “teachers’ use of instructional practices can influence student learning of scientific explanation and that the effect of these instructional practices depends on the context in terms of what other instructional practices the teacher uses” (p. 53).

One way in which teachers can improve teaching is through professional development. School principals are encouraged to expose teachers to relevant professional development seminars (Wildy & Loudon, 2000). Using a sample of 1,027 teachers, Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, and Yoon (2001) assessed the effects of professional development in improving teacher performance. The results indicated that professional development components such as “(a) focus on content knowledge, (b) opportunities for active learning, and (c) coherence with other learning activities” (p. 916) can improve the performance of teachers. The results of Garet et al.’s study suggest that professional development should focus on precise components to capitalize on the effectiveness of such seminars.

Achievement in Literacy

In some studies, the examination of academic achievement focuses on reading (e.g., Boone, 2010; Flowers & Flowers, 2008; Girolami, 2009). Reading is often used to

measure student achievement (Cox, 2010). Factors such as exposure to professional development seminars and reading remediation programs are examined in relation to influencing student achievement. These factors are discussed in this sub-section.

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) defines the standard of education for all children in public schools. This standard deliberately includes children with disabilities, children with limited English proficiency, migrant children, Native American children, neglected or delinquent children, homeless children, and young children in need of reading assistance.

The purpose of NCLB is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach proficiency on demanding state academic achievement standards and state academic assessments. The objective is to close 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. The law holds schools, local educational agencies, and states accountable for improving the academic achievement of all students (20 U. S. C. § 6301).

Too often children have severely lacking reading skills. Research has found a high relationship between poor reading skills, learning disabilities, and juvenile delinquency. Unfortunately, schools often unwittingly use reading programs that are not effective in teaching children with disabilities, English learners, migrant children, and learners from diverse circumstances. The law authorizes funds to supply assistance to

state and local educational agencies in establishing reading programs for students in kindergarten through grade three that are based on scientifically based reading research, to ensure that every student can read at grade level or above by the end of third grade (20 U. S. C. § 6361).

Reading is a intricate system of extracting meaning from print that requires all of the following: skills and knowledge to understand phonemes, the ability to decode unfamiliar words, the ability to read fluently, ample background information and vocabulary to promote reading comprehension, the development of strategies to construct meaning from print, and the development and continuance of a motivation to read (20 U. S. C. § 6368(5)).

NCLB statutes define the essential components of reading instruction as: explicit and systematic instruction in (a) phonemic awareness; (b) phonics; (c) vocabulary development; (d) reading fluency, including oral reading skills; and (e) reading comprehension strategies (20 U. S. C. § 6368(3)).

No Child Left Behind defines scientifically based reading research as having rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain valid knowledge relevant to reading development, reading instruction, and reading difficulties; and includes research that

- (i) employs systematic, empirical methods that draw on observation or experiment;

- (ii) involves rigorous data analyses that are adequate to test the stated hypotheses and justify the general conclusions drawn;
- (iii) relies on measurements or observational methods that provide valid data across evaluators and observers and across multiple measurements and observations; and
- (iv) has been accepted by a peer-reviewed journal or approved by a panel of independent experts through a comparably rigorous, objective, and scientific review (20 U. S. C. § 6368(6)).

No Child Left Behind describes three types of reading assessments: screeners, diagnostic assessments, and classroom-based instructional reading assessments. A screener is a short method designed as a first step to identify children at high risk for delayed progress or academic failure and require further diagnosis. A diagnostic reading assessment is based on research and is used for the purposes of identifying a child's specific areas of strengths and weaknesses so that the child has learned to read by the end of grade three. The diagnostic assessment can determine difficulties that a child may have in learning to read and the potential cause of such difficulties. Diagnostics also helping to determine possible reading intervention strategies. A classroom based instructional reading assessment consists of classroom-based observations of the child performing academic tasks (20 U. S. C. § 6368(7)).

Using a sample of urban African American students, Flowers and Flowers (2008) examine the factors affecting achievement in reading. African American students may

experience difficulties in reading achievement (Hoffman & Llagas, 2003). Two factors come into view as being significant in the research. The first includes time spent doing homework and the second factor includes parents' expectations that influenced the academic achievement of students in reading (Hoffman & Llagas, 2003). Flowers and Flowers advocate a reading intervention that is culturally sensitive, so that the racial and ethnic background of students is incorporated into the more established approaches used to address reading difficulties in students.

Professional development programs for teachers are the focus of Boone's (2010) study. Reading achievement is measured in terms of five areas: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency. Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) was used to measure the reading proficiency of the 160 Grade 2 participants. The results of the mixed-method study reveal that teachers who participated in professional development programs not only made significant changes in their teaching practice but also influenced academic achievement in reading in their students.

Girolami (2009) examined the influence of a reading remediation curriculum on the reading growth of non-proficient high school students. The Pennsylvania System of School Assessment Reading test was used to evaluate the reading proficiency of the participants by pre- and post-test. The study consisted of 83 participants. Thirty-seven participants were assigned to the treatment group and 46 participants were assigned to the control group. The results indicate that reading remediation was related to significant improvements in reading achievement, particularly among students with learning disabilities.

Literacy levels of teachers are not related to use of summative assessment in class (Hoover, 2009). Hoover found a few differences regarding the habits of teachers on using summative assessment data. Hoover reported that “high school teachers have a higher assessment literacy score than elementary school teachers, and teachers with graduate degrees score higher than those with a bachelor’s degree” (p. xiv). Hoover also reported that teachers who have added years of teaching experience have advanced literacy skills in assessment compared to teachers with less teaching practice.

Literacy Practices of Principals and Student Achievement

There is limited research linking the literacy practices of principals with student achievement. Leadership, however, plays a crucial role in a school’s ability to institute a winning literacy program and improve student achievement. A study released by the Wallace Foundation (Leithwood, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004) found that school leadership is “second only to teaching among school-related factors in its impact on student learning” (p. 3). Improving instruction, the use of professional learning communities, student assessment and achievement, and the effective use of observations must be the focus of today’s instructional leaders (Schon, 1988). Effective principals improve academic opportunities for their students by providing appropriate staff development and by being a driving force in the development of the school’s improvement plan.

In 2001, the Children’s Literacy Network gathered several nationally recognized literacy researchers to determine recommendations for literacy administrators. Their recommendations placed high importance on the principal’s need to have a clear

understanding of the best literacy practices. First and foremost, literacy administrators have to understand what it will take to change school culture with regard to literacy. Effective professional learning communities must be in place in order to allow teachers to collaborate and learn from each other. Principals should examine the work of respected researchers and educators in order to gain an understanding of the best practices related to improving literacy.

Principals should read constantly. Reading material should comprise professional literacy literature as well as books for and about the students in their school. Instructional models should be studied to determine what will work best with each principal's student population. If the professional learning community atmosphere has been successfully created, the principal can effectively activate discussions about successful instructional models and how to best execute them. Literacy administrators should also have more than a working knowledge of national, state, and local curriculum standards and learning expectations. Principals need to know if their teachers have the ability to successfully deliver the content.

Facilities and time should be organized efficiently to create an environment that encourages an increased spotlight on literacy. Data gathered from the various assessments in use in their buildings should be understood by principals and utilized in an appropriate manner to improve instruction and student learning. Principals should have the ability and perseverance to be creative in seeking out funding sources, developing schedules, and designing specific interventions for struggling readers. Finally, the Children's

Literacy Network recommends that principals have an ally in successful literacy program models (Children's Literacy Network, 2001).

In Cox's (2010) study, she focused on three areas regarding the literacy practices of principals in relation to student achievement in reading. First, she was interested in knowing how elementary principals rate themselves as literacy leaders. She also sought to discover how elementary reading specialists rate their principals as literacy leaders. Finally, Cox examined the relationship between elementary principals' literacy actions associated with reading and student reading performance. The researcher developed *Principal Quality Literacy Practices Survey* was broken into five sections: (I) demographic information, (II) knowledge of the foundations of reading processes and instruction, (III) instructional strategies and curriculum materials, (IV) assessment, diagnosis, and evaluation, and (V) professional development. The items in the final four sections of the survey asked respondents to choose a rating of unsatisfactory, basic, proficient, or exemplary. The study consisted of 109 principals from 74 schools. Cox found that principals who are rated as proficient in their literacy practices demonstrated positive influence on reading ability. Principals who are rated exemplary demonstrate literacy practices that exhibit clear and consistent evidence of a significant and measurable impact on student achievement in reading. This finding is based mainly on test scores. The results of the study indicate the practices of principals, particularly practices pertaining to literacy, can influence the achievement of students.

A study by Fletcher, Greenwood, Grimley, and Parkhill (2011) examines how principals specifically elevate the reading scores of students in their schools. Positive

improvements in reading achievement were reported in principals who demonstrate true passion for their job. According to Fletcher et al., passion translates into the principals' active participation in and support toward professional development seminars, collaboration with teachers, and the support for assessment procedures that identify students who have reading difficulties and track the progress of students regarding achievement in reading.

Gap in the Literature

There is already evidence based on the previous literature that principal leadership can influence student achievement and learning (Dinham, 2005; Nettles & Herrington, 2007). Most of the studies about the relationship of the characteristics of principals and student achievement focus on the different leadership styles that principals adopt (Kouzes & Posner, 2002).

There is minimal research on the influence of specific characteristics of principals to academic achievement, particularly in literacy. One area that can be examined further is how the literacy practices of principals influence academic achievement of students in literacy. Cox (2010) suggests that principals who are rated as exemplary in literacy practices are able to affect significant positive improvements in the reading achievement of students.

Summary

Research spanning over 30 years indicates that there is a correlation between the principals actions through instructional leadership, their impact on the schools environment and student achievement (Goldhaber, 2007; Hallinger & Heck, 2000; Heck,

Larsen, & Marcoulides, 1990; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008; Leithwood et al, 2004; Levine & Lezotte, 1990; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Sammons, Hillman, & Mortimore, 1995). A 15 year research analysis presented by Hallinger and Heck's (2000) on school leadership indicates that an exceptional principal facilitates a "measurable though indirect effect" (p. 47) on the effectiveness of schools and student success. Leithwood et al. (2004) found that amongst the many variables in a school setting that classroom instruction came before leadership as a function of student achievement.

Although the effect on student achievement by a principle may be oblique, it is also vital. Drawing in, choosing, and retaining quality teachers is at the control of the principal, this is an important factor that affects the teaching and instructional quality of a school (Harris, Rutledge, Ingle, & Thompson, 2006; Jacob & Lefgren, 2005); his or her ability to support learning and instruction, express and interpret the goals and vision of the school, and their effective gathering of resources has a direct correlation (Eberts & Stone, 1988; Knapp, Copland, Pliecki, & Portin, 2006; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). These are all in addition to the traditional areas in which principal responsibility is increasing (Kaplan, Owings, & Nunnery, 2005).

While researchers' opinions fluctuate greatly over the methodology of changing education, the principles' ability is seldom of question (Leithwood, Tomlinson, & Genge, 1996; Marzano et. al., 2005). Principles influence on the climate and environmental conditions that influence instruction in their schools is profound. This crucial piece transfers a level of persuasion into the quality of teaching and learning within the schools.

Research indicates that principal leadership can influence positive school outcomes (e.g., Dinham, 2005; Owens, 2004). Dinham found that principals in Australian government schools are able to affect positive educational outcomes. Effective leadership in schools influences practices that are conducive for positive outcomes such as the development of positive school culture and teacher satisfaction (Dinham & Scott, 2000; Hargreaves & Fink, 2004). Principal leadership involves the cooperation of other groups of individuals in schools such as teachers and department heads (Bennett, 1999; Busher & Harris, 1999).

Several factors are associated with student achievement such as teacher characteristics, student motivation, school culture, and classroom characteristics (e.g., Anobi, 2006; Atkins, 2008; Baker, Kana, & Al-Misnad, 2008; Doane, 2008; Leone, 2009; Lewis, 2005). Reading is often used to measure student achievement. Professional development seminars and reading remediation programs are two factors that were found by previous researchers to affect student achievement in reading (Boone, 2010; Girolami, 2009).

Although everyone typically agrees that the behaviors that principles profess have an impact on performance and achievement of student and schools alike, there still remains a difficulty in examining the effects of student achievement by comparison to the varying forms of leadership methodologies and application concepts.

Hoy and Miskel (2008) state that, educational leadership concepts are focused in two areas, one as an administrator, placing emphasis on efficiency and effectiveness, second as leader, placing emphasis on motivation of personnel to accomplish tasks and

goals. Despite methodology and statistical data, when studying school leadership, it is imperative to administer prudence without a conceptual equivalence. (Pounder, Ogawa, & Adams, 1995; Witzier, Boskers, & Krieger, 2003) because the definition of leadership may not translate between the areas of study..

Researchers are in accord that it is not an easy task to gauge the effects of a principal's leadership, indirect or otherwise. (Hallinger & Heck, 1996, 1998; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Witziers, Bosker, & Kreiger, 2003). There are a few research projects that make a direct connection between student achievement and leadership traits of principals, those that do are weak in methodology(Witzier, Bosker, & Krieger, 2003). As maintained by Hallinger and Heck (1998). Indirect models that have been used have had an increased likelihood in showing an elevated impact on schools and student achievement verses the direct model.

The purpose of this correlation study is to observe the relationship of elementary school principals' literacy practices on the academic achievement of students in reading. The gap in the professional literature is focused upon the relationship of specific characteristics of principals and student achievement in reading. Most of the studies on the relationship of principal leadership and student achievement focus on the different leadership styles. There are a few studies that focus on the literacy practices of principals and their influence on improving academic achievement in reading of students (e.g., Cox, 2010; Fletcher et al., 2011). Cox (2010) suggests that principals who are rated exemplary in their literacy practices are able to influence positive changes in the reading achievement of students.

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to examine the relationship of elementary school principals' literacy practices on the academic achievement of students in reading. In this chapter, the presentation is organized as follows: (a) research approach and design including the appropriateness of the selected design, (b) research sample, (c) informed consent, (d) confidentiality, (e) instrumentation, and (f) data collection and timeline. The chapter ends with a summary of this study's methodology.

Methodology: Research Approach and Design

This study utilized a quantitative research approach. Quantitative research uses conventional statistical methods for measuring results. This research is constructed in such a way that it enables others to replicate the study and get similar results. One benefit of quantitative research is that it allows for accuracy and objectivity of results. In general, this kind of research is designed to offer summaries of information that support generalizations regarding phenomenon being studied. It is suggested that researchers make use of subjects unknown to them in order to eliminate bias. Quantitative research generally filters out peripheral factors and provides unbiased and valid results. When further research is defensible, quantitative research provides the benefit of narrowing down possible research directions.

Research Sample

The population of this study consists of a stratified sample of public school elementary principals from Tennessee. Elementary public school principals whose school grade structure is either PreKindergarten through grade five or Kindergarten through grade five in Tennessee ($N = 502$) were contacted by mail and were invited to participate in the study. This sample answered the Elementary Principal Literacy Survey created by the researcher. The survey can be found in the appendix. The sample included 40 principals representing schools from West Tennessee, 96 principals representing schools from Middle Tennessee, and 71 principals representing schools from East Tennessee who responded to the survey. Principals represented a variety of schools with a range of demographic and socio-economic classes with 32 urban schools, 92 rural schools, and 83 suburban schools.

The sample was limited to elementary school principals with the above mentioned grade structure for two reasons. First, attitudes and instructional practices regarding literacy tend to vary greatly as grade structure changes from elementary school to middle school and even more so to high school. There is a strong disconnect linking pedagogy and secondary curriculum and that of content literacy.. A primary reason middle and secondary classroom teachers provide for not putting into practice within the content area of reading strategies in their curriculum is that the focus has to be upon the content area with little time for integration of reading strategies. Wilson, Grisham, and Smetana (2009) state that classroom teachers that teach in specific subject area “do not see a connection between literacy skills and content information, as these skills appear to be

inconsistent with the traditional goals of the curriculum” (p. 708). Cantrell, Burns, and Callaway (2009), state that all secondary and middle schools can be differentiated by “distinct subject area divisions and content area subcultures that value different forms of knowledge and pedagogy” (p. 77). Incorporating a literacy perspective into middle and secondary classrooms provides teachers with a difference in perspective on what teaching means.. This perspective and content area focus makes this group as a whole different.

The second reason for limiting the sample to elementary principals whose grade structure is PreKindergarten or Kindergarten to 5th grade is the availability of archived TCAP Achievement Test data. Many elementary schools in the state of Tennessee have a grade structure that ends at the 4th grade. However, in light of the fact that state mandated achievement testing begins at 3rd grade, including elementary schools whose structure includes 5th grade allowed for analysis of three grade levels worth of reading achievement. For the purpose of this study, collected survey data is representative of the 95 counties in Tennessee.

Informed Consent

An informed consent form was prepared to ensure that the participants in the study were properly informed and were fully aware of their rights within the study. The consent form can be found in the appendix. All prospective participants were asked to sign informed consent forms. The informed consent included the following: (a) a brief description of the purpose of the study, (b) the possible risks associated with participating in the study, (c) confidentiality clauses pertaining to the data collected from the participants, and (d) contact information of the researcher in instances in which the

participants need to contact the researcher. Only participants who completely filled out and submitted the informed consent forms were part of the final sample.

Participants were able to withdraw before the start of the data collection by informing the researcher or by simply not answering the survey questionnaire. If participants decided to withdraw after data was collected, participants were able to contact the researcher through email or phone and express their request for withdrawal. Participants were not required to provide reasons for withdrawal. Their requests were granted categorically, and data collected from these participants were excluded from the data analysis. No penalties or any form of negative consequences occurred as a result of participants' requests for withdrawal.

Confidentiality

All data collected from the participants was handled with integrity and care. Assigning a unique code for each of the participants as well as their schools and school districts protected the real names of the participants. All data is being kept in a secure place. The paper files are in a locked cabinet and electronic files are password protected. All data will be retained for a minimum of five years after the date of publication of the research.

Instrumentation

To investigate the literacy practices of the principals, the Elementary Principal Literacy Survey was administered to all the principals who participated in the study. The researcher developed the instrument. Items were written based on their relevance to literacy practices and how those impact student achievement.

The first category of information is demographic. The participants were asked to provide name, gender, age, ethnicity, the name of the school, and the school district. Information about the school such as setting (urban/rural/suburban), status (public/private/parochial), and grade structure could be useful for further analysis outside of the proposed study at a later point in time. The participants were asked to indicate the number of years served as principal, number of years of teaching experience, grade level/content area, and highest degree earned. All of this information provides an interesting lens through which to interpret the results of the study.

Questions one through five inquired specifically about resources within the principals' control such as what and how often they access print resources about literacy, whether they belong to any professional literacy organizations, how many literacy focused professional development programs they have attended in the last two years, and where they go to get information on "best practices" for children's literacy development. Question 10 focused on the principals' pedagogical beliefs and practices about teaching reading. The researcher developed and included these items in order to investigate what level of responsibility the principal takes with regard to staying current on literacy instruction and development.

Questions six through nine focus on resources and practices that are likely outside of the principals' control. These resources include specialized staff, professional library materials, assessments and intervention kits, and staff development. These resources typically are tied to budgetary constraints and district policies. These questions were

developed and included by the researcher in order to examine the relationship of the use of these resources to the reading achievement of students.

Data Collection and Timeline

Data collection commenced when the approval of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was secured and her committee approved the researcher's proposal in October of 2011. The IRB approval letter can be found in the appendix. Data were collected and coded from October 2011 until January of 2012. Once the researcher had exhausted all efforts to collect data from her target sample, data analysis commenced.

All principals were invited to answer the Elementary Principal Literacy Survey. Instruments were sent through the U.S. Postal Service. A self-addressed, stamped envelope was included so that the participants could return the survey instruments to the researcher. A second attempt was made by email with a link to the survey after three weeks to collect survey data for those who do not respond to the mailing. Finally, the researcher personally visited schools within a 100-mile radius to collect data from those principals who remained unresponsive. The researcher also contacted several district superintendents to garner their support for the study. A thank you note was sent to all the principals so that the researcher could express gratitude for their participation. Responses to the survey questions were entered into an excel spreadsheet so that the data could be uploaded into SPSS for statistical analysis.

Survey instruments provided data for measuring the variables of literacy practices of principals and student achievement. The literacy practices of the principals were measured using the researcher developed Elementary Principal Literacy Survey. The

reading achievement of students was measured using the results from the 2011 Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) Achievement test data for grades three through five available on the Tennessee state website.

Research Question 1: What are the current literacy practices of elementary principals?

Professionals are surrounded by information in a variety of formats. The Elementary Principal Literacy Survey asked principals to identify what types of print resources about literacy they utilized (books, journals, magazines, newspapers, and/or electronic sources) and how often they consult those literacy resources. Principals were also asked if they hold membership in any professional literacy associations such as the International Reading Association, National Council for Teachers of English, or American Library Association. Membership in organizations such as these demonstrates a commitment to literacy education, professional growth, and access to research-based resources, strategies, and practices. Administrators in Tennessee are required to attend a minimum of 28 hours of Tennessee Academy for School Leaders (TASL) approved professional development during every two-year cycle. With that in mind, the researcher asked how many of the professional development activities attended in the last two years had a literacy focus. Also of interest to the researcher was where elementary principals go to seek out information on “best practices” for children’s literacy.

According to Daniels and Bizar (1998), best practices can be defined as an intrinsic part of a curriculum that exemplifies the relation and significance identified in educational research. Standard curriculum is energized with rigor by incorporating

strategies and practices that develop thinking and problem-solving skills through active learning. Using teamwork builds relationships between and among students and teachers. Best practices can be developed and instituted at all grade levels to provide the foundation for solid instruction. The effective use of best practices motivates and engages students to learn and achieve. Participants were asked to indicate their preferences of resources about best practices by checking as many options as apply. Options range from popular magazines to college/graduate courses.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship of elementary school principals' literacy practices on the academic achievement of students in reading?

This question was developed by the researcher in an attempt to pinpoint the impact of the principals' knowledge of literacy practices on the academic achievement of the students in their schools. As an assistant principal working in two PreKindergarten through 5th grade schools, the researcher has had many opportunities to observe a variety of instructional leadership practices throughout the county school district. These practices have ranged from very little instructional leadership to intentional hands-on instructional leadership. The literacy practices observed by the researcher have also varied from micro-management to minimally involved. Being in the position of observer for several years as well as in the position of someone who impacts staff development, the researcher has often wondered if the principal's literacy practices impact the reading achievement of students. The researcher initially thought that literacy practices of principals would be correlated to reading proficiency and have an impact on academic achievement in reading. However, further reflection made the researcher wonder if a good leader who is

smart enough to hire teachers and coaches who possess the literacy knowledge the leader does not possess, could still lead a school where students demonstrate high levels of proficiency on reading measures.

To measure the academic achievement of students in reading, the combined proficiency levels in reading/language arts of third through fifth graders from the 2011 TCAP Achievement Test (Reading/Language Arts) were correlated to survey data that was analyzed quantitatively. Correlational studies are used when researchers want to examine variable relationships (Neuman, 2003). The major advantage of correlational designs is that they are typically efficient to perform. The major disadvantage of correlational designs is that they leave the actual reason for the associations found quite unclear. In spite of this, correlational studies are quite common and popular.

The data from the final question on the Elementary Principal Literacy Survey was not used within the context of this study. The question asks elementary principals to rate their agreement level with various statements about reading instruction based on their instructional philosophy of teaching reading. The responses from nineteen statements may be used for a follow-up study at a later time.

Summary

The purpose of this correlational study was to examine the relationship of elementary school principals' literacy practices on the academic achievement of students in reading. The study focused on two research questions:

1. What are the current literacy practices of elementary principals?

2. What is the relationship of elementary school principals' literacy practices on the academic achievement of students in reading?

The population of the study consisted of public school elementary principals from urban, rural, and suburban Tennessee. Five hundred two principals were mailed the survey tool. All participants were given informed consent forms prior to the collection of data. Only participants who filled out and submitted the informed consent forms became part of the study. To protect the participants' confidentiality, all documents and data were handled with integrity and care. All data will be retained for a minimum of five years after the date of publication.

The Elementary Principal Literacy Survey, developed by the researcher, was used to measure the literacy practices of the participants. To measure the academic achievement of students in reading, the combined proficiency levels of third through fifth graders on the TCAP Achievement test were examined.

Initial instruments were sent through mail. A return address, an envelope, and a stamp were included so that the participants could return the survey instruments to the researcher. Follow-up instrumentation was done through email and personal visit by the researcher. A thank you note was sent to all the principals so that the researcher could express gratitude for their participation.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

The sample consisted of 207 elementary school principals in Tennessee whose school grade structure was either Prekindergarten through grade five or Kindergarten through grade five. According to Cohen (1988), for a sample size of 200, power is expected to be .18 for a small effect size, .98 for a medium effect size, and .995 for a large effect size. See Table 1 for demographic information about Elementary Principal Respondents.

Table 1
Demographic Information of Elementary Principal Respondents

Item Description	<i>N</i>	%
Gender		
Male	77	37.2
Female	130	62.8
Ethnicity		
Caucasian	186	89.9
Af. Am.	20	9.7
Setting		
Urban	32	15.5
Rural	92	44.4
Suburban	83	40.1
Highest Degree		
Masters	103	49.8
Ed.S.	71	34.3
Ph.D.	26	12.6
Ed.D.	7	3.4

Most of the sample was female (62.8%) and Caucasian (89.9%). The school setting was predominantly rural (44.4%) or suburban (40.1%). The average age of the principals was 49 years old ($N = 203$, $M = 49.02$, $SD = 18.91$). They have a combined average of 23 years educational experience ($N = 206$, $M = 23.03$, $SD = 8.70$), 10 years as a principal ($N = 207$, $M = 9.59$, $SD = 6.46$), and 7 years as principal of their current school ($N = 207$, $M = 7.25$, $SD = 5.49$). Half of the respondents had a Master's degree (49.8%). Tests on years of experience, years as principal, and highest level of education were not related to TCAP Reading/Language Arts scores. School setting, however, was related so the relationship of literacy practices to TCAP scores was evaluated with and without controlling for school setting.

Data Analysis of Research Question 1: What are the current literacy practices of elementary principals?

Descriptive information for responses to survey questions, which relate to literacy practices, were computed and reported. Questions were designed to ask specifically about what and how often principals read about literacy, whether or not principals belong to professional literacy associations, how many professional development opportunities principals have attended with a literacy focus, and how they stay current on “best practices” for children’s literacy development. Additional information as to what resources principals have made available to teachers in their schools to help them plan and implement effective reading instruction as well as who is responsible for monitoring the progress of struggling readers. Table 2 reports the descriptive statistics for survey responses on Questions one through four, six, and seven. The researcher discovered that

of the principals surveyed, the majority of the principals are seeking out information, research, and strategies with regard to effective literacy instruction through print, electronic resources, conferences, staff development, and personnel resources both within and from outside their school buildings.

Table 2
Summary of Principals' Answers on Survey Items

Within the past year, how often have you read any of the following?						
		% Never	% 1-5 Times	% 6-10 Times	% 11 or More Times	
Q1A	Books about literacy	25.1	44.0	22.7	8.2	
Q1B	Practitioner Journal	10.6	41.1	31.9	16.4	
Q1C	Magazines	31.9	35.7	22.2	10.1	
Q1D	Newspapers	25.1	45.4	20.3	9.2	
Q1E	Research Journals	36.7	42.0	16.4	4.8	
Q1F	Electronic Sources	8.7	29.0	22.3	40.0	
Of the professional development opportunities in which you have participated in the last two years, how many have had a literacy focus?						
Q3		% 0	% 1	% 2-3	% 4-5	% More than 5
		4.8	10.6	28.0	23.7	32.9
				% Yes	% No	
Q2	Member of a professional literacy association?			32	68	
How do you stay current on 'best practices' for children's literacy development?						
Q4A	Professional Journals			71	29	
Q4B	Popular Magazines			14	86	
Q4C	Internet			64	36	
Q4D	Workshops			61	39	
Q4E	Conferences			71	29	
Q4F	Professional Dev.			86	14	
Q4G	Parents			2	98	
Q4H	Graduate courses			12	88	

Table 2 Continued
Summary of Principals' Answers on Survey Items

	%	%
	Yes	No
What resources are available in your school to help teachers plan and implement effective reading instruction?		
Q6A Reading Specialist	75	25
Q6B Professional Library	67	33
Q6C Intervention Kits	71	29
Q6D Assessments	80	20
Q6E Staff Development	85	15
Q6F None of the Above	0.5	99.5
In your building, who monitors the progress of struggling readers?		
Q7A Classroom Teacher	97	3
Q7B Reading Specialist	68	32
Q7C Special Ed. Teacher	67	33
Q7D Assistant Principal	43	57
Q7E Principal	70	30

N = 207

Question one offered respondents four choices (Never, 1-5 times, 6-10 times, 11 or more times) when asking how often they had accessed literacy resources within the previous year. Electronic resources about literacy such as the Internet, CD-ROM programs, databases were the most frequently accessed resources with 91.3% of the respondents reporting their use 1 or more times within the previous year. Practitioner Journals (89.4%), Newspapers (74.9%), Books about literacy (74.9%), Magazines (68.1%), and Research Journals (63.3%) were also accessed at least once during the past year, but not nearly as often as electronic resources.

Question three required the principals to reflect on the professional development they participated in over the past two years and report the professional development that maintained a literacy focus. Most principals (95.2%) had attended at least one literacy focused professional development session during the past two years. Only 32% of the respondents reported membership in a professional literacy association such as the International Reading Association, the National Council of Teachers of English, and the American Association for Applied Linguistics, etc. When asked to choose from eight options, principals reported that they elected to stay current on 'best practices' for children's literacy development primarily through professional development (86%), conferences (71%), professional journals (71%), the internet (64%), and workshops (61%).

Principals were also given the opportunity to identify specific literacy resources available to teachers and students in their buildings. Of the five choices provided in the survey, principals relied the most on targeted staff development (85%) to help teachers

plan and implement effective reading instruction. Other resources such as assessments (80%), reading specialists (75%), intervention kits (71%), and professional libraries (67%) also seem prevalent within the schools in the sample. Progress monitoring is a practice that is used to assess students' academic performance and evaluate the effectiveness of instruction. Monitoring the progress of struggling readers is still the primary responsibility of the classroom teacher according to the results of the survey (97%). The principal (70%), followed by the reading specialist (68%), the special education teacher (68%), and the assistant principal (43%) are also part of the progress monitoring team.

Data Analysis of Research Question 2: What is the relationship of elementary school principals' literacy practices on the academic achievement of students in reading?

Descriptive statistics were reported for each analyzed survey item. See Table 3. Correlational analysis at the item level examined the relationship between the literacy practices of principals and the reading achievement of students (Neuman, 2003). The relationship between the two variables can be positive, negative, or no relationship. A positive relationship indicates that higher ratings for the literacy practices of principals will correspond with higher reading achievement of students. A negative relationship indicates that lower ratings for the literacy practices of principals will correspond with higher reading achievement of students. No relationship correlation indicates that literacy practices of principals are not related to student achievement of students. An independent samples *t* test to compare reading scores for the groups was completed.

Correlational analysis was used to examine principals' answers to individual literacy questions and the achievement of students in their schools. Type I error rates within each section were controlled with a family-wise alpha of .05. ANOVAs were used to determine if any of the demographic information indicated significance in reading scores. Unless otherwise noted, an alpha level of .05 was used for all ANOVA analyses.

According to the independent sample *t* tests and correlational analysis, there was no significant relationship between the literacy practices of principals and the academic achievement of students in reading. See Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3
TCAP Reading Scores by the Literacy Practices of Principals (N =207)

Item	Item Description	Yes Mean 99% CI	No Mean 99% CI	Mean Difference 99% CI
Q2	Member of a professional literacy association?	57.9 (52.0, 63.9)	53.6 (50.7, 56.5)	-4.3 (-10.9, 2.2)
How do you stay current on 'best practices' for children's literacy development? Please check all that apply. (Professional Development)				
Q4A	Professional Journals Checked?	53.5 (50.2, 56.7)	58.8 (53.9, 63.8)	5.4 (-0.5, 11.2)
Q4B	Popular Magazines Checked?	59.1 (50.5, 67.6)	54.4 (51.5, 57.3)	-4.78 (-13.7, 4.2)
Q4C	Internet Checked?	55.7 (52.1, 59.3)	53.7 (49.6, 57.9)	-2.0 (-7.4, 3.4)
Q4D	Workshops Checked?	55.3 (51.7, 58.9)	54.6 (50.4, 58.8)	-0.7 (-6.2, 4.8)
Q4E	Conferences Checked?	53.5 (50.3, 56.6)	58.9 (53.5, 64.3)	5.4 (-0.8, 11.6)
Q4F	Professional Development Checked?	54.8 (51.9, 57.7)	56.5 (48.1, 65.0)	1.8 (-7.1, 10.6)
Q4G	Parents Checked?	47.5 (29.0, 66.1)	55.2 (52.4, 57.9)	7.6 (-8.6, 23.9)
Q4H	College/graduate courses Checked?	51.8 (43.5, 60.2)	55.4 (52.5, 58.3)	3.6 (-5.1, 12.3)
What resources are available in your school to help teachers plan and implement effective reading instruction? Please check all that apply. (School Resources)				
Q6A	Reading Specialist/Literacy Coach?	54.6 (51.5, 57.8)	56.2 (50.5, 61.8)	1.6 (-4.8, 8.0)
Q6B	Professional Library?	56.2 (52.8, 60.0)	52.6 (48.0, 57.3)	-3.6 (-9.3, 2.1)
Q6C	Intervention Kits?	53.5 (50.2, 56.8)	58.4 (53.8, 63.3)	5.0 (-0.7, 10.7)
Q6D	Assessments?	54.8 (51.8, 57.8)	55.6 (48.7, 62.5)	0.8 (-6.6, 8.3)
Q6E	Targeted Staff Development?	54.8 (51.8, 57.8)	55.7 (48.6, 62.8)	0.9 (-6.7, 8.5)
Q6F	None of the Above	70.0 (70.0, 70.0)	54.93 (52.2, 57.7)	-15.1 (-54.4, 24.2)

Table 3 Continued
TCAP Reading Scores by the Literacy Practices of Principals (N = 207)

Item	Item Description	Yes Mean 99% CI	No Mean 99% CI	Mean Difference 99% CI
<i>In your building, who monitors the progress of struggling readers? (Staff Resources)</i>				
Q7A	Classroom Teacher?	55.2 (52.5, 58.0)	48.7 (26.3, 71.2)	-6.5 (-28.8, 15.7)
Q7B	Reading Specialist/Literacy Coach?	54.1 (50.7, 57.4)	57.0 (52.3, 61.8)	3.0 (-2.8, 8.7)
Q7C	Special Education Teacher?	54.9 (51.7, 58.2)	55.2 (50.0, 60.3)	0.2 (-5.8, 6.2)
Q7D	Assistant Principal?	57.4 (53.0, 61.9)	53.1 (49.8, 56.5)	-4.3 (-9.9, 1.3)
Q7E	Principal?	54.6 (51.4, 57.8)	55.9 (50.7, 61.1)	1.3 (-4.8, 7.4)

Note. CI = confidence interval.

Table 4
Correlations Between TCAP Reading Scores and Literacy Practices of Principals
(N = 207)

Item	Item Description	Correlation
Within the past year, how often have you read any of the following?		
Q1A	Books about literacy	.15
Q1B	Practitioner Journals	-.03
Q1C	Magazines	-.00
Q1D	Newspapers	.02
Q1E	Research Journals	.06
Q1F	Electronic sources about literacy	.15
Q3	Number of literacy focused professional development opportunities	-.07
Q4 Total	Number of resources for staying current on best practices	-.09
Do you agree or disagree with these themes? (1=Strongly Disagree, 4=Strongly Agree)		
Q5A	Literacy should be taught as a source of entertainment.	.10
Q5B	Literacy should be taught as a skill to be learned.	.04
Q5C	Literacy should be taught as integral part of our everyday lives.	.09
Q6 Total	Available resources in the school to help teachers plan and implement effective reading instruction.	-.03
Q7 Total	Who monitors the progress of struggling readers in the school building?	.02

The researcher checked to see if any of the demographic variables were significant indicators of reading scores among the sample. A Welch ANOVA indicated that setting (urban, rural, or suburban) was an indicator of Reading/Language Arts proficiency on the TCAP Achievement test, $F(2, 76.64) = 46.84, p < .001, \omega^2 = .30$. Post hoc Games-Howell comparisons indicated urban schools, ($M = 40.66, SD = 15.13$) in the study reported lower overall achievement in reading on the TCAP Achievement Test than rural schools ($M = 50.74, SD = 9.38$) and suburban schools ($M = 65.25, SD = 13.40$).

Additional exploratory analyses were conducted to assess the relationship between literacy practices and TCAP scores when controlling for setting. There is a significant correlation between principals who have read books about literacy in the past year when removing the effects of setting, $r(153) = .22, p = .001$. There is also a significant correlation between principals who accessed electronic sources about literacy within the previous year when the effects of setting were removed, $r(187) = .25, p < .001$. Table 5 reports the correlations between TCAP Reading scores and literacy practices while controlling for setting.

Table 5
Correlations Between TCAP Reading Scores and Literacy Practices of Principals after Controlling for Setting
(N = 207)

Item	Item Description	Part Correlation
Within the past year, how often have you read any of the following?		
Q1A	Books about literacy	.22*
Q1B	Practitioner Journals	-.05
Q1C	Magazines	.04
Q1D	Newspapers	.04
Q1E	Research Journals	.03
Q1F	Electronic sources about literacy	.25*
Q3	Number of literacy focused professional development opportunities	-.01
Q4 Total	Number of resources for staying current on best practices	-.07
Do you agree or disagree with these themes? (1=Strongly Disagree, 4=Strongly Agree)		
Q5A	Literacy should be taught as a source of entertainment.	.10
Q5B	Literacy should be taught as a skill to be learned.	.13
Q5C	Literacy should be taught as integral part of our everyday lives.	.14
Q6 Total	Available resources in the school to help teachers plan and implement effective reading instruction.	.03
Q7 Total	Who monitors the progress of struggling readers in the school building?	.10

Note. Part correlations are reported within the table, but partial correlations were identical when rounded to two decimal places.

* indicates significance at a familywise alpha of .05.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to identify the common literacy practices of elementary school principals and then to determine if those literacy practices had an impact on the reading achievement of students in grades three through five in their schools. Analyses determined which demographic information about the schools and principals had an impact on reading achievement through the literacy practices in use in their buildings. This chapter begins with a review of the methodology used in this study, followed by a description of the findings. The next section addresses the interpretations of the findings and relationship to prior research. The chapter ends with recommendations and suggestions for further research.

Summary of Methodology

Tennessee Prekindergarten through 5th grade or Kindergarten through 5th grade public school principals were selected for this study. Principals that responded were surveyed regarding their current literacy practices both personally and in use in their schools. Principals responded to the Elementary Principal Literacy Survey, which was developed by the researcher. The survey asked about the principal's professional affiliations, professional development, school resources, and staff resources as they pertain to literacy instruction throughout the school building.

The survey responses were coded and recorded on an excel spreadsheet and compared to the schools' percentage of students in grades three through five achieving Proficient and Advanced in Reading/Language Arts on the 2011 Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment (TCAP) Achievement Test. Demographic information was

gathered regarding the principals' gender, age, ethnicity, number of years as principal, school setting, highest degree earned, number of years in education, and types of educational experience (teacher, counselor, administrator, etc.). The demographic data was analyzed to determine if other factors might have influenced student achievement in reading.

The principals selected for this study were selected from elementary (preK-5 and K-5) public schools within Tennessee. The researcher utilized the Tennessee Department of Education School Directory to identify schools and principals. Principals at identified schools were contacted for participation by ground mail, email, and, in some cases, in person. The research involved an attempt to mail, email, and visit a total of 502 identified schools with the selected grade structure. Responses were ultimately received from 207 principals. Academic achievement data from the 2011 TCAP Achievement Reading/Language Arts test were then retrieved from the 2011 Tennessee State Report Card found on the Department of Education website.

Description of Findings

Electronic resources about literacy were the most commonly accessed and read by elementary school principals; followed by practitioner journals, newspapers, books, magazines, and research journals. Principals reported a focus on literacy as they have chosen professional development opportunities for themselves with 32.9% of principals indicating that they have participated in more than five professional development opportunities within the previous two years. These professional development sessions have not, however, led to principal memberships in professional literacy associations.

Only about one-third of principals reported belonging to such organizations. Principals reported participating in professional development, reading professional journals, and attending conferences to stay current on ‘best practices’ for children’s literacy development. The resources principals provide to teachers to help plan and implement effective reading instruction are led by targeted staff development followed by assessment tools, reading specialists, intervention kits, and professional libraries. Many faculty and staff members take responsibility for monitoring the progress of struggling readers, but it is clear that this remains the primary responsibility of the classroom teacher.

Initially, this study found no significant correlation between the literacy practices of elementary school principals in Tennessee and the reading proficiency of students in grades three through five as reported by the TCAP Achievement Test. Controlling for the effects of setting (urban, rural, or suburban), data was analyzed again which uncovered significant relationships between principals who read books about literacy and who accessed electronic resources about literacy within the previous year and the reading proficiency of the students in their schools. This would suggest that principals who actively search for information about best practices in literacy instruction have a positive impact on the reading achievement of students.

The findings suggest that an elementary school principal’s literacy practices do not have an overarching impact on students’ achievement in reading. Not surprisingly, school setting does seem to have a significant impact on reading proficiency.

Interpretation of the Findings

This study found that the correlation of an elementary school principal's literacy practices and the number of students achieving Proficient or Advanced on the TCAP Achievement Reading/Language Arts Test was not significant. Research question one examined the current literacy practices of elementary principals. Research question two examined the relationship of the identified practices to the reading proficiency of students.

The age of the technology has made it increasingly easy to find information about anything and everything. The researcher is not surprised that electronic sources about literacy far surpassed their print counterparts with regard to what principals are reading. Today, even the print options can be accessed electronically faster, easier, and sometimes less expensively. The Internet has drastically changed how people access information. For the most part, this is an excellent option for busy professionals with discriminating reading and analysis skills. Unfortunately, not all sources are created equal. A reader must be able to discern fact from fiction and legitimate research from research that has not been peer-reviewed. The researcher speculates that with the multitude of options principals have to choose from when reading about literacy, that this practice is not correlated to the reading proficiency of students in their schools.

This study found that the majority of principals are focusing on their own literacy knowledge and pursuing literacy focused staff development as a way to help position him or herself as an instructional leader among the faculty. Nearly 85% of the principals surveyed have participated in at least two literacy focused staff development in the

previous two years. This indicates a strong desire to increase their personal knowledge. Principals are then able to disseminate this knowledge in their schools by way of making more informed personnel decisions, budgetary choices, and schedule changes.

The majority of the principals in this study did not claim membership in a professional literacy association. This had neither a negative or positive impact on the reading proficiency of their students. Without knowing for certain, the researcher speculates that principals may belong to other professional organizations such as the National Education Association or the National Association for Elementary School Principals and maintaining membership in these organizations can be expensive.

Staying current on 'best practices' in education is imperative when planning for, supporting, and implementing effective instruction. The primary way principals in this study have done this is through targeted staff development. This suggests that the principal is able to assess the areas of strengths and weaknesses among the faculty and choose staff development that will fill the gaps in the faculty's literacy knowledge and instruction. This is done in a similar manner as the use of assessments and interventions kits that are used with the students to identify and progress monitor their areas of strength and weakness. The addition of reading specialists to a faculty is often beyond the control of the principal. Title I schools in Tennessee all have reading specialists (although they may go by different titles) but non-Title I schools might have to use their general funds budget to support such a position, and this might not be seen as a prudent expenditure for some schools. Those principals may choose to fund more sustainable items such as

books, magazine subscriptions, and educational tools and kits for their professional libraries.

The idea of responsibility for monitoring the progress of struggling readers has certainly evolved over time. The teacher is no longer solely responsible for carrying the weight of his/her students' future successes on his/her shoulders. In the wake of educational reform, almost every faculty member somehow carries the responsibility of students' achievement whether as the classroom teacher, the art teacher, or the administrator. Survey results clearly indicated that although the classroom teacher is primarily responsible for progress monitoring the struggling readers in the class, other stakeholders such as the school administration, reading specialist, and special education teacher also participate in the process. The process of implementing progress monitoring one must first identify the student's relative performance level and implement goals to achieve over a specified period of time. A measurement of the academic performance of the student is taken routinely to ensure accuracy. Progress is determined through analysis of the set goals and the progression rate of learning. These results allow for teaching modifications as indicated by the results. In summary progress is monitored to and instruction is altered to accommodate the level of learning based on the needs and progression of the student. . Everyone holds a stake in student achievement. Teachers no longer teach from an isolated perspective and must be aware of what reading skills students are missing as well as what reading skills they will need in order to promote successfully to the next grade. Educators have to be willing to collaborate with each other in order to do what is most effective for the students.

Analyses showed that only when accounting for school setting did any of the literacy practices have a significant relation to student achievement. The expected finding was that principals who demonstrate strong literacy practices in instructional leadership roles would yield higher student proficiency in reading. However, the data did not support this finding and found no significant relationship of literacy practices to reading proficiency.

One supposition with regard to the significance of school setting is that principals at lower-performing schools must be more involved in instruction because more attention is given to student achievement scores and the need to improve. Also, with the advent of No Child Left Behind, many school administrators are required to become more knowledgeable about instructional practices and to insert themselves into the instructional process. Administrators at lower-performing schools may also have had the benefit of Title I funds along with educational consultants and specialists to assist with improving teacher effectiveness and student achievement. For the purposes of this study, the researcher will focus on NCLB. Race to the Top and common core will be discussed in future research.

Hallinger and Heck (1996) proposed that schools with lower academic performance might have a climate that includes low expectations for student learning. The greatest negative effect on student learning is born from lower expectations (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). This culture may be difficult for an administrator to influence. Principals who are able to maintain their positive expectations for teachers and students over an extended period of time may be able to change the vision of the teachers and of

the possibilities for student success. At this point the concept of poverty needs to be addressed. Poverty has many dimensions and does simply include low income levels. *Absolute poverty* encompasses the lack of financial resources essential to sustain a certain minimal standard of living. In contrast, *relative poverty* is partially determined by where a person lives and the societal factors of that area (Sen, 1992, 2001). People might experience poverty via sources such as social marginalization, decreased educational experiences, low income, barriers in language skills that are not reflective of the discourse of power, and other factors that prevent success in mainstream society. Both absolute and relative poverty are relevant in the field of education. Fiscal resources may hinder some schools attendance rates. The common inequalities in today's educational system can be viewed through the lens of sociocultural theory. According to Perie, Grigg, and Donahue (2005), 42% of school-aged children in the United States labor to progress past basic reading skills. Minorities and children living below the poverty level perform disproportionately in the lowest quartile on standardized reading measures. These statistics are hard to ignore. This, along with mounting diversity in American classrooms, has led teachers to reassess their approach to literacy instruction (Lee, 2007).

Length of time working at a school also impacts a principal's ability to share leadership, promote learning, and utilize an assortment of approaches to management based on the teachers' development level toward greater professional and personal aptitude (Stewart, Prebble, & Duncan, 2001). A period of one or two years may not be adequate for implementing needed change. A period of six to ten years would permit time to create positive change in attitudes and behaviors of teachers and other staff members

(Stewart et al., 2001). Improvement in student achievement would then highlight the changes in attitudes and behaviors and would promote sustainability in the changes.

Supplemental Demographic Information

Highest Degree Earned

All 207 principals who participated in the study earned graduate degrees. One hundred and three principals held a Master's degree, 71 held an Education Specialist degree, 26 held a Ph.D., and 7 held an Ed.D. The level of formal education and professional development received by the principals indicates an expected level of expertise required of administrators, whether serving at a school with a high level of reading proficiency or at a school where students are not meeting the educational standards as set by NCLB. The level of education was not significant in predicting reading achievement and this finding does not support the assertion that a principal's knowledge of literacy learning and instruction has a direct effect on student achievement in reading.

The administrator's level of knowledge should translate to more effective teaching, more effective professional development opportunities, and higher student achievement. However, when considering previous research findings of little direct relationship between instructional leader behaviors and student achievement, one must consider the effects more indirect as indicated by Hallinger and Heck (1996). One supposition is that learning alongside the staff is more impactful than bringing expertise to the school site. This is in agreement with the findings of Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe

(2008) that participating in professional development with teachers as the “learning leader” has a greater positive impact on student achievement.

Years of Educational Service

Principals had an average of 7.25 years of service in their current school building, 9.59 years as a principal in any school, and an average of 23.03 total years in education. Principals who had longevity in education as well as serving in their current school building may have the necessary longevity to have greater influence on student achievement and that this longevity may be more important than their actual literacy practices or leadership styles.

After conducting the study, the researcher concluded that literacy practices of elementary principals do not have a correlative effect on student achievement in reading. There is no relationship between elementary school principals’ literacy practices and reading proficiency of students in grades three through five with all other factors being equal. The only way to discern any significance is to control for the effects of school setting on reading proficiency. Results then showed that principals who read books about literacy and accessed electronic sources about literacy with the previous year did have an impact on student achievement.

Recommendations, Suggestions, and Implications for Further Research

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations can be made:

Emphasize preservice and inservice administrator training.

Although no direct relationship was found between education level and literacy practices of principals with student achievement in reading, the fact that a negative

relationship was not found is meaningful. Continued training in literacy development and instruction could become a significant predictor of reading achievement. Having experienced a degree and licensure program for educational administrators, I have seen first-hand the focus of the program. Coursework included School law, School Finance, School and Community Relations, Curriculum Design, and Microcomputing just name a few. Nowhere in my preparation was I required to take even a single course in literacy. Although the roles and responsibilities of the principal are varied, instructional leadership should never take a backseat to the other more managerial requirements of the job. With the high level of accountability facing schools today, principals, whether new or veteran, should be provided the necessary training and support to be effective instructional leaders.

Provide support to new principals in the first couple of years of service that guides the execution of instructional leadership practices in the form of coaching and/or mentoring to assist principals in building a cooperative and trusting relationship with staff.

In 2000, NAESP and National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) published a report titled *The Principal, Keystone of a High-Achieving School: Attracting and Keeping the Leaders We Need*, based on a survey of current and past principals. Principals were asked about the strengths and weaknesses of their own administrative preparation. Respondents heralded high-quality on-the-job training under a successful mentoring principal a strong positive. Successful internships were credited with giving aspiring administrators a realistic view and preparing them appropriately.

NAESP's *Leading Learning Communities: Standards for What Principals Should Know and Be Able To Do* (2001) distinctively identifies mentoring as a valuable approach in the ongoing professional development of principals.

Measure a principal's level of literacy knowledge rather than practices to see if (how) that level of knowledge impacts student achievement in reading.

Participation in a study of that manner should include principals that have served in their building for a minimum of five years and compare schools with principals having similar number of years of experience in the same school building. Research on administration from the past forty years emphasizes the principal as instructional leader. However, the research community has done very little to examine what literacy knowledge principals of elementary buildings need to possess regarding literacy teaching and learning. As federal legislation has focused increased scrutiny on literacy, the role of the elementary school principal as the instructional leader has intensified. In an era of increased accountability, effective literacy leadership is essential to the development and continued improvement of an elementary school.

Study the effects of principal longevity on student achievement.

Across the United States the turnover rates of principals has plagued school districts in finding qualified applicants to fulfill their pending needs (Hargreaves, 2005; Norton, 2003). High volume of change from retirement and demographics have abandoned school systems leaving them without having and unable to find a suitable replacement(Hargreaves, 2005).A key aspect is the establishment of security, academic support, and communication that a principal establishes in the learning environment..

Leithwood, et al. (2008) have determined that although classroom teachers often have the greatest impact on the performance of students, principals are a key aspect for modeling a positive and motivated learning environment that encourages better teacher performance. . The creation of a positive work environment, improving and developing staff members, and encouraging growth and achievement within the school are only a few of the critical roles a principal assumes in order to create a functional learning environment that allows student to progress (Leithwood et al., 2008).

Summary

This study sought to identify the literacy practices of elementary school principals in Tennessee and whether or not those practices impacted the student achievement of students in grades three through five in reading based on the TCAP Achievement Reading/Language Arts test. Participants responded to the researcher created Elementary Principal Literacy Survey and their responses were analyzed in comparison to their schools reading proficiency on the TCAP. Although initial analyses did not find a significant relationship between the literacy practices of principals and the reading proficiency of students, school setting was found to be a discriminating factor leading to significant relationships between reading books and electronic resources about literacy. The researcher discovered that elementary principals who read books and accessed electronic resources about literacy were found to have higher reading proficiency than those who did not do so as often.

There are four recommendations, suggestions, and implications for future research based on the results of this study. First, the researcher suggests that an emphasis

be placed on preservice and inservice literacy training for all school administrators. Second, principals should have access to mentoring/coaching at the district level to support them in becoming effective instructional leaders as well as build trusting relationships with their staff. Third, future research should be done to measure principals' level of literacy knowledge rather than their literacy practices to see if that knowledge impacts student achievement in reading. Finally, studying how principal longevity affects student achievement could help districts plan for school leadership and training/support for their principals and assistant principals.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, school setting has a significant impact on the reading achievement of students. Urban schools, as identified by the principals, reported lower overall average reading scores on the TCAP Achievement Reading/Language Arts test. This coupled with the finding that 97% of the survey respondents reported the classroom teacher as the primary person responsible for progress monitoring struggling readers, indicates that students in urban schools need more educational supports and more innovative ideas with regard to reading instruction. One suggestion would be to increase the use and responsibility of reading specialists and special educators in helping the classroom teacher progress monitor struggling readers and design and implement reading interventions. In the current culture of academic accountability, all faculty and administrative members alike share the responsibility of ensuring the academic achievement of all students.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Elementary Principal Literacy Survey

Name _____ Gender _____ Age _____ Ethnicity _____

School _____ District _____

of years as principal of this school _____ School Grade Structure _____

Which best describes your school setting? URBAN RURAL SUBURBAN

Which best describes your school? PUBLIC PRIVATE PAROCHIAL

of years as a principal _____ Highest Degree Earned _____

of years of teaching experience _____ Grade Level/Content Area _____

1. Within the past year, how often have you read any of the following:

	Never	1 - 5 Times	6 - 10 Times	11 or More Times
Books about literacy	1	2	3	4
Practitioner journals (such as <i>English Education</i> , <i>Language Arts</i> , <i>The Reading Teacher</i> , <i>School Library Journal</i> , <i>Educational Leadership</i>)	1	2	3	4
Magazines (such as <i>Instructor</i> , <i>Mailbox</i> , <i>Teaching K-8</i>)	1	2	3	4
Newspapers (such as <i>Reading Today</i> , <i>NCTE Council Chronicles</i>)	1	2	3	4
Research Journals (such as <i>Reading Research Quarterly</i> , <i>Research in the Teaching of English</i>)	1	2	3	4
Electronic sources of information (Internet, CD-ROM, databases)	1	2	3	4

2. Are you a member of a professional literacy association (such as IRA, NCTE, ALA)?

Yes

No

3. Of the professional development opportunities in which you have participated in the last two years, how many have had a literacy focus?

0

1

2-3

4-5

more than 5

4. How do you stay current on “best practices” for children’s literacy development? (Where do you go for information?) Please check all that apply.

- Professional journals/magazines
- Popular magazines
- Internet
- Workshops
- Conferences
- Professional development
- Parents
- College/graduate courses

5. Do you agree with these themes?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Literacy should be taught as a source of entertainment	1	2	3	4
Literacy should be taught as a skill to be learned	1	2	3	4
Literacy should be taught as an integral ingredient of our everyday lives	1	2	3	4

6. What resources are available to teachers in your school to help them plan and implement effective reading instruction? (check all that apply)

- Reading Specialist/Literacy Coach
- Professional Library
- Intervention Kits
- Assessments for identifying strengths/weaknesses and progress monitoring
- Targeted Staff Development
- None of the above

7. In your school building, who monitors the progress of struggling readers? (check all that apply)

- Classroom teacher
- Reading Specialist/Literacy Coach
- Special Education Teacher
- Assistant Principal
- Principal

8. Aside from brief, informal contact, do general education teachers and other special reading service teachers collaborate in planned, structured meetings to discuss the academic needs and progress of their students?

Yes _____ No _____

If so, how often? _____

Who attends?

9. Are parents involved and included in their child's reading program at your school? How?

10. Circle the number that best represents your beliefs and practices

1	2	3
I support skills and back-to-basics	I support an eclectic approach that combines both basic skills and whole language	I support whole language beliefs and practices

11. Please indicate the degree to which you believe the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Children should not write until teachers show them how to form each letter	1	2	3	4
Children need plenty of drill and practice to learn the sounds of letters	1	2	3	4
Children need to hear the same story more than once to learn new words	1	2	3	4
Children do not need to learn the meanings of words to become good readers	1	2	3	4
Children can learn to read without knowing each letter and its name	1	2	3	4
Children should write without worrying about conventional spelling	1	2	3	4
Children learn language by talking about their ideas and expressing their feelings	1	2	3	4
Children learn letter names by singing the ABC song	1	2	3	4
Children should look at books to help them learn to read	1	2	3	4
Children should not waste time scribbling or drawing when they can be learning to write	1	2	3	4
Children should be taught to hear sounds in their environment before they are taught to hear sounds in words	1	2	3	4
Children do not need to hear many stories in order to become good readers	1	2	3	4
Children learn new words as teachers define them when reading books to them	1	2	3	4
Children learn to write in part by watching their teachers write	1	2	3	4
Children learn new words by connecting them to real things	1	2	3	4
Children learn to read before learning to write	1	2	3	4
Children should be taught to speak in complete sentences	1	2	3	4
Children should learn to identify beginning and ending sounds in words	1	2	3	4
Children need many experiences, such as going to the zoo and talking about it, in order to learn new vocabulary	1	2	3	4

All responses to this survey are voluntary.

APPENDIX B

**Middle Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board
Informed Consent Document for Research**

Principal Investigator: Stacey J. Miller

Study Title: The Effect of Elementary Principal's Literacy Knowledge on Student Achievement

Institution: Middle Tennessee State University

Name of participant: _____ Age: _____

The following information is provided to inform you about the research project and your participation in it. Please read this form carefully and feel free to ask any questions you may have about this study and the information given below. You will be given an opportunity to ask questions, and your questions will be answered. Also, you will be given a copy of this consent form.

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You are also free to withdraw from this study at any time. In the event new information becomes available that may affect the risks or benefits associated with this research study or your willingness to participate in it, you will be notified so that you can make an informed decision whether or not to continue your participation in this study.

For additional information about giving consent or your rights as a participant in this study, please feel free to contact the MTSU Office of Compliance at (615) 494-8918.

1. Purpose of the study:

You are being asked to participate in a research study because as elementary principals and instructional leaders you are ultimately responsible for the achievement of the students in your school. I am interested in knowing if your level of literacy knowledge is directly related to the academic achievement of students in your school.

2. Description of procedures to be followed and approximate duration of the study:

You will be asked to complete a written survey related to your literacy knowledge and practices in your school with regard to reading instruction. Public TCAP Achievement Test and TVAAS data for your school archived on the state of TN Department of Education website will be accessed. Statistical analysis will attempt to determine if the responses of the survey can be linked to the academic achievement of the 3rd – 5th grade students in your school. The study is expected to continue through May 2012.

3. Expected costs:

There are no expected costs for this research.

4. Description of the discomforts, inconveniences, and/or risks that can be reasonably expected as a result of participation in this study:

Discomforts, inconveniences, and/or risks are not to be expected as a result of participating in this study.

5. Compensation in case of study-related injury:

No study-related injuries should be encountered.

6. Anticipated benefits from this study:

a) The potential benefits to science and humankind that may result from this study: It is my hope that by being able to link specific content knowledge of administrators to academic achievement of students, our profession will benefit by being able to be true instructional leaders that our teachers can look to for guidance.

b) The potential benefits to you from this study: You will have the satisfaction of knowing that you participated in important research in the field of instructional leadership and hopefully increased the amount of research available in the area.

**Middle Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board
Informed Consent Document for Research**

- 7. Alternative treatments available:**
Not applicable.
- 8. Compensation for participation:**
No compensation is provided for your participation.
- 9. Circumstances under which the Principal Investigator may withdraw you from study participation:**
If survey data is incomplete or if archived TCAP Achievement Test and/or TVAAS data is not available for your school, you may be withdrawn from the study.
- 10. What happens if you choose to withdraw from study participation:**
You may choose at any time not to participate in this study. If you withdraw from the study, your survey and data will be marked inactive/withdrawn and not included for analysis and/or write-up.
- 11. Contact Information.** If you should have any questions about this research study or possible injury, please feel free to contact **Stacey Miller** 931-206-0086 or my Faculty Advisor, **Dr. Jeanne Fain** at 615-494-8838.
- 12. Confidentiality.** All efforts, within reason, will be made to keep the personal information in your research record private but total privacy cannot be promised. Your information may be shared with MTSU or the government, such as the Middle Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board, Federal Government Office for Human Research Protections, if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.
- 13. STATEMENT BY PERSON AGREEING TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY**
I have read this informed consent document and the material contained in it has been explained to me verbally. I understand each part of the document, all my questions have been answered, and I freely and voluntarily choose to participate in this study.

Date

Signature of patient/volunteer

Consent obtained by:

Date

Stacey J. Miller

Signature

Stacey J. Miller Primary Investigator

Printed Name and Title

IRB
MB Approved
Date 3-31-11

APPENDIX C

April 12, 2011

Stacey J. Miller
Department of Literacy Studies
millerest@rcschool.net , jfain@mtsu.edu

Protocol Title: "The effect of elementary principal's literacy knowledge on student achievement"

Protocol Number: 11-282

Dear Investigator(s),

The MTSU Institutional Review Board, or a representative of the IRB, has reviewed the research proposal identified above. The MTSU IRB or its representative has determined that the study poses minimal risk to participants and qualifies for an expedited review under 45 CFR 46.110 Category 7.

Approval is granted for one (1) year from the date of this letter for 500 participants.

According to MTSU Policy, a researcher is defined as anyone who works with data or has contact with participants. Anyone meeting this definition needs to be listed on the protocol and needs to provide a certificate of training to the Office of Compliance. **If you add researchers to an approved project, please forward an updated list of researchers and their certificates of training to the Office of Compliance (c/o Emily Born, Box 134) before they begin to work on the project.** Any change to the protocol must be submitted to the IRB before implementing this change.

Please note that any unanticipated harms to participants or adverse events must be reported to the Office of Compliance at (615) 494-8918.

You will need to submit an end-of-project form to the Office of Compliance upon completion of your research located on the IRB website. Complete research means that you have finished collecting and analyzing data. **Should you not finish your research within the one (1) year period, you must submit a Progress Report and request a continuation prior to the expiration date.** Please allow time for review and requested revisions. Your study expires April 12, 2012.

Also, all research materials must be retained by the PI or faculty advisor (if the PI is a student) for at least three (3) years after study completion. Should you have any questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,
Emily Born
Compliance Officer
Middle Tennessee State University
eborn@mtsu.edu