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# Literacy leaders : An analysis of West Virginia secondary school principals' self-reported literacy leaderships perceptions and practices

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LITERACY LEADERS: AN ANALYSIS OF WEST VIRGINIA SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' SELF-REPORTED LITERACY LEADERSHIPS PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES
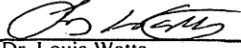
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Approved by
Dr. Louis Watts, Committee Chairperson
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# APPROVAL OF DISSERTATION

**APPROVAL OF THESIS**

We, the faculty supervising the work of **Stephanie Burdette**, affirm that the dissertation, *Literacy Leaders: An Analysis of West Virginia Secondary School Principal's Self-Reported Literacy Leadership*, meets the high academic standards for original scholarship and creative work established by the EdD Program in **Leadership Studies** and the College of Education and Professional Development. This work also conforms to the editorial standards of our discipline and the Graduate College of Marshall University. With our signatures, we approve the manuscript for publication.

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**DEDICATION**

I dedicate this dissertation to my daughter Savannah. My darling girl, you are my heart and soul. This accomplishment pales in comparison to the pride that I take in being your mother. You are the most extraordinary person I've ever known. I thank God with every breath that he has blessed me with the privilege of calling you my daughter. I will love you always and forever.

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While pursuing my doctoral degree, heaven gained another angel with the passing of M, the man who continually inspired me to become 'Dr. Steph'. His brilliance as a professor and an author continues to astound me, just as it did when we first met.  Life without him has not been the same nor will it ever be. I send to him my love until we meet again. You will forever be my Charlie and I, forever, your Rose.

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**ABSTRACT**

Sweeping changes, such as those ushered in as a component of contemporary school improvement initiatives, have created an educational culture in which all teachers are now considered to be literacy instructors with principals being placed in the role of instructional leader. Yet, review of research literature reveals a severe lack of funding and adequate professional development necessary to ensure that secondary school teachers and administrators have the training they need to provide such literacy services to students.   The purpose of this research study was to examine the literacy perceptions and practices of West Virginia's secondary school principals to ascertain the correlations that exist between the individual's perceived beliefs and the practices that are implemented within their schools. A researcher-created survey which consisted of Likert-scored and open response items was utilized with participating West Virginia secondary school principals. The survey's findings indicate that principals agree with the characteristics associated with effective literacy leadership. Yet, close examination of the data revealed discrepancies between the reported Likert-type responses when compared to the replies provided in the open-ended components of the survey. Further analysis of the data indicated that the participants may lack a deep understanding of the actual practices associated with effective literacy instruction and leadership. These findings denote a possible need for extended use of literacy professional development to expand the scope of understanding related to the implementation of successful literacy leadership initiatives.


Key words: literacy leadership, instructional leadership, literacy perceptions, literacy practices

**CHAPTER ONE**

This chapter provides a general overview of the implications of literacy in contemporary schools along with a description of the research problem and a statement of purpose for the study. Next, the significance of the study is offered and accompanied by a section denoting the research questions which serve to form the basis of the investigation. Finally, limitations are noted and the chapter concludes with an overview of the organization of the remaining material associated with the study.

The study was designed to examine the extent to which West Virginia secondary school principals report their perceptions and practices of literacy leadership. The study sought to determine any possible correlations between principals perceived beliefs and practices as compared to specific demographic variables. These variables included years of teaching/administrative experience, educational certifications, and the types of literacy-related professional development that each principal participated in during the three-year period in which West Virginia implemented common core state standards for instruction.

Today's global economy bears few similarities to the highly industrialized climate that served to fuel America's rise as an economic powerhouse during the twentieth century. While site-based jobs once bound individuals to a particular location, the modern work place is highly digitized, providing individuals the ability to work collaboratively on projects from varying locations around the world. The demands of the modern workplace have forever changed the economic environment for workers within America. While a quarter of a century ago, 95% of jobs were considered to be low-skill intensive, today low-skill jobs comprise only 10 % of the entire economy (Darling-Hammond, Barron, Pearson & Schoenfeld, 2008).

The American educational system has struggled to keep pace with the demands of the evolving global economy. As the demands of the modernized economy have changed, so have the educational requirements of contemporary workers with exceedingly more complex levels of literacy being required of those who wish to be successful. Blake and Blake (2002) stated that prior to World War II, it was common to make the distinction between those who had some schooling and those who did not as the basis for measuring an individual's literacy level. This is no longer the case:

Changing literacy requirements are related to the evolving labor demands in our rapidly expanding technological society. Future literacy needs for workers will change in ways that will be difficult to anticipate. In any event, we need to be aware of these changes in job requirements and of the resulting alterations in our notions about literacy, and we need to make the necessary adjustments to teaching reading and writing and to assessing these skills. (p.18)

Further complicating the matter is evidence that American student performance has fallen far below that of other countries on international assessments, recently placing fourteenth on the PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) test in the area of reading (Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 2010). Though there is debate over the accuracy of such international measures, national academic assessments reveal that American student performance has been lackluster. National Center for Educational Statistics (2013) data indicate that only 36 % of the grade eight students tested in 2013 were at or above the basic proficiency level in reading. The figures are equally dismal at the elementary level with only 35% of students attaining proficiency or above (NCES, 2013).

As student performance has fallen on standardized testing instruments, America faces a steadily declining literacy rate. Presently, among the 30 free market nations in the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United States is the only country where young adults are less educated than the previous generations (National Commission on Adult Literacy, 2008). Three decades ago, America laid claim to having 30 % of the world's population of university students, yet presently that rate has fallen to 14 % and continues to decline with a staggering one in three young adults failing to attain a high school degree (National Center on Education and the Economy, 2007). Many individuals who do attain their high school diplomas do not have the skills necessary to enter college or the workforce (NCAL, 2008). Employers report that roughly 39% of the high school graduates lack the literacy skills necessary to be considered highly functional in the modern workplace (Achieve, 2005).

The accountability measures associated with No Child Left Behind (NCLB) resulted in tremendous changes related to the responsibilities and expectations placed upon building level administrators who are now held accountable for the academic progress within their schools (NCLB, 2001). Further fostering the principal's transformation from manager to instructional leader is the expectation that administrators should develop knowledge and skills related to effective instructional strategies by means of professional development and personal inquiry (Hoachlander, Alt, & Beltranena, 2001).

The evolving nature of school environments has placed new demands upon educational leaders. For well over a century, principals were traditionally expected to be effective building managers with attention given to compliance with central office mandates, personnel issues, building maintenance, and other matters which were akin to managerial tasks. However, changing curricular demands have resulted in the need for principals to expand the scope of their

leadership. According to Marzano, Waters, & McNulty (2005), the modern principalship demands a new kind of governance which focuses upon the strengthening of teaching and learning, professional development, data-driven decision-making and accountability.

Hallinger, Bickman, and Davis (1996) indicated that there is a strong connection between the degree of instructional leadership provided by the principal and evidence of a clear school mission. Effective literacy programs are founded upon well-established vision and goals (Hardy, 2014). Within effective schools, reading was "a priority at both the building and classroom level. Teachers and administrators gave their reading program the time, energy and resources to bring all students under its umbrella" (Hiebert & Pearson, 1999, p.11). In a study conducted by Taylor, Pearson, Clark, and Wadpole (1999), the authors concluded that:

In each of the four most effective schools in this study, reading was clearly a priority. The teachers and principals considered reading instruction their job and they worked at it. They worked together, worked with parents, and worked with a positive attitude to reach the goal of all children reading well … They set personal preferences aside in order to reach consensus on school wide monitoring systems, curriculum, and professional development, with the constant goal of improving an already effective reading program. (p. 29)

Sherman (2001) wrote that leadership is frequently called upon to pinpoint the role of literacy within the overall school curriculum. Principals are at the forefront of efforts to establish goals which place reading improvement as a priority (Hoffman & Rutherford, 1984). Briggs and Thomas (1997) stated that principals who are viewed as true literacy leaders are active in "communicating expectations, allocating needed resources and in creating a school environment where reading and writing are a priority in teaching and learning" (p. 40).

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**Statement of the Problem**

For many years, federal dollars have been invested in early reading intervention programs such as Reading First which provided funding to improve reading skills for children in kindergarten to third grade (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013). Approximately 76% of all public elementary schools in America qualify for federal monies by means of the United States Department of Education's Title I program which provides additional funding to supplement reading and math instruction in low-socio economic status (SES) schools, yet only 24% of secondary schools receive comparable funding (National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education, 2004). As a result, Alverman (2001) claimed that adolescent needs for specialized literacy instruction have gone relatively unacknowledged by policymakers and politicians. Additionally, adolescent literacy skills are not keeping pace with the demands of living within an information age (Alverman, 2001).

Just as the focus of leadership has changed, the role of literacy in secondary schools has entered a transitional phase as well. Traditionally, the secondary school curriculum has been designed in a manner which places responsibility for the instruction of core content material upon the teachers for each respective subject, as they are often viewed as experts in their particular fields of study (Moore, Bean, Birdyshaw, & Rycick, 1999). Administrators are given the task of ensuring that teachers are provided with the necessary support to carry out curricular and instructional practices to aid students in attaining higher levels of academic performance (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2007).  Though literacy growth may have been viewed as important, many schools did not include reading instruction in their curriculum for all students.

Secondary school principals now face the daunting challenge of serving as instructional leaders who must oversee the implementation of sweeping curricular changes which call for the integration of literacy into all areas of the curriculum. Effective administrators are instructional leaders with a firm understanding of effective instructional strategies, and who possess the ability to use student achievement data to inform their decision-making (National Association of Secondary Principals, 2007). Hoewing (2011) wrote that "instructional leadership definitions typically deal with identifying, supporting, and developing teachers' skills. Principals' perceptions of what their role is as instructional leader are often influenced by their own educational experiences and distinct expectations of their performance" (p. 28).

Booth (2007) explained that effective principals make change happen when they open their facility to transformative opportunities and embrace a literacy-rich culture which aims to address the literacy needs of all students. The author further underscored the need for administrators to undertake a framework for literacy-based school change which encompasses the following components: a shared vision for the school, understanding of the textual world of students and the practices which are associated with these texts, developing and working closely with a school-based literacy team to build a culture of literacy within the school, providing opportunities for professional development for involved stakeholders and mediating the world outside the school within the school (Booth, 2007).

Schools with successful literacy programs show evidence of solid principal leadership, with attention given to establishing a literacy agenda, acquisition of resources, and support for teachers, thus establishing the foundation for further growth (Booth & Rowsell, 2002). Biancarosa and Snow (2004) stressed the importance of leadership in literacy reform when they

wrote that "without a principal's clear commitment and enthusiasm, a curricular and instructional reform has no more chance of success than any other school wide reform" (p. 21).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the varying dimensions of literacy leadership that are in place within West Virginia secondary schools. The study specifically examined principal perceptions of the importance of literacy leadership and the literacy practices they identify as in place in their schools. It also examined connections between principals' classroom and administrative experience and their self-reported perceptions and practices of various dimensions of literacy leadership identified in the research literature. This task was accomplished by means of an electronic questionnaire comprised of questions answered by means of a Likert-type scale in addition to open-ended requests for specific details related to their literacy leadership practices.

This study used the evolving role of literacy in modern society as a backdrop, as well as the influence of principals' professional and academic background to shape literacy leadership within secondary schools in West Virginia. This general area of investigation was influenced by contemporary studies including those of Leithwood and Duke (1998) who examined literacy leadership in three Connecticut high schools and Hardy (2014) who opted to focus upon the impact of principal knowledge and experience on literacy achievement among English language learners in Indiana. The study served to expand the scope of the aforementioned research to include all secondary schools in West Virginia and sought to expand upon the available knowledge and understanding related to literacy leadership. Principal demographic information was collected to determine whether an individual's professional/educational background influence his literacy beliefs and practices. There has been limited research surrounding the

importance of principals' knowledge and experience across content areas and how these factors may ultimately affect instructional practice and student learning (Stein & Nelson, 2003). The reported dimensions of literacy leadership were analyzed in terms of a principal's previous teaching experience and professional development.

Within the framework of this study, ancillary discussion was provided which underscores the evolving role of principals as well as curricular changes at the secondary level. The selection of schools was based upon the identification of facilities labeled as high schools by the West Virginia Department of Education for the academic years 2014-15 and 2015-16. Principals working within these schools during the years in question were sought to serve as participants in an online survey which will be used to collect quantitative data as well as opened-ended responses related to self-reported dimensions of literacy leadership. For the purpose of this study, the researcher has decided to not include middle schools in the sample population. This decision was made due to the fact many schools which house middle grade students also contain elementary grades which receive federal funding to enhance literacy instruction. The researcher did not want principal perceptions of literacy due to elementary-focused initiatives to influence the examination of secondary level literacy leadership practices.

**Significance of the Study**

There has been limited funding set aside to improve the literacy skills of students beyond grade four (McComb, Kirby, Barney, Darilek & Magee, 2005). Ensuring that secondary school students have access to ongoing literacy development is often more of a challenge than ensuring quality literacy instruction at the primary level. First, secondary literacy skills are more complex, more entrenched in subject matter; second, adolescents are not as easily motivated to improve their skills or as interested in school-based reading as younger students (Biancarosa & Snow,

2004). This statement is underscored by an overall decline in the amount of recreational reading done by adolescents. A report by the National Center for Education Statistics (2010) found that fewer than one-third of 13-year-olds read daily and the percentage of 17-year-olds who read nothing for pleasure has doubled over a two-decade period. Simply stated, many students are attempting to navigate the world of secondary education without either the inclination or ability to comprehend factual information from content area texts and struggle to grasp the basic literacy skills necessary to be successful in college or the workplace (National Association of State Board of Education, 2006).

Adequate literacy skills are essential for secondary students to successfully transition into the workplace of the 21st century. Alverman (2001) indicated that contemporary adolescent-age students are failing to keep pace with the demands of living in an information age which is continually changing. There is a need to address student literacy skills through classroom practices which acknowledge the need for intensive literacy instruction across the curriculum (Moore, Bean, Birdyshaw, & Rycik, 1999). The importance of student learning (the outcome as opposed to the process), combined with federal mandates and curricular changes has placed greater demands upon school administrators than ever before (NCLB, 2001). The sweeping adoption of Common Core State Standards by 45 states serves as acknowledgement that literacy instruction is a task to be taken on by all content area teachers and not relegated strictly to language arts instructors (Calkins, Ehrenworth, & Lehman, 2012).  The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (2010) contended that "part of the motivation behind the interdisciplinary approach to literacy promulgated by the Standards is extensive research establishing the need for college and career ready students to be proficient in reading complex

informational text independently in a variety of content areas" (p.4). All secondary school teachers are now considered to be teachers of literacy area content (Massey & Heafner, 2004).

Effective administrators are considered to be instructional leaders with a firm understanding of effective instructional strategies who possess the ability to use student achievement data to inform their decision making (NASSP, 2007). Schools that are highly successful in providing quality reading instruction to children are often characterized by vigorous instructionally-focused leaders (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985). Murphy (2004a) makes this observation:

> The concept [of instructional leadership] has deepened and became more nuanced. To begin with, the concept has been enriched and our understanding of its dimensions and functions has been expanded. For example, our knowledge of the role the principal plays in 'helping craft a coherent instructional program' is considerably advanced from our understanding of this function in the mid-1980s. Scholars have also been much more attentive to the indirect nature and mediated aspects of instructional leadership as an organizational characteristic as much as a personal attribute. (p.66)

Murphy has written extensively on the subject of instructional leadership with emphasis upon the role of principals in establishing and fostering quality literacy programs (Murphy, 2004a, 2004b). While undertaking the task of drafting an outline for leadership which aims to strengthen literacy, he examined previous research on the following target areas: effective instruction, characteristics of effective reading programs, evidence on effective schools, and studies of leadership which highlighted connections between principals and measures of student performance (Murphy, 2004b). His resulting conclusions denoted 10 functions of leadership which he tied to literacy education: (a) establishing literacy as a priority, (b) developing an

appropriate platform of belief, (c) ensuring quality instruction, (d) maximizing time, (e)

constructing a quality program, (f) assessing performance and ensuring accountability, (g)

creating a coherent and aligned reading system, (h) fostering staff development and promoting

communities of learners, (i) forging links between home and school, and (j) building capacity

(Murphy, 2004a).

The study has the potential to yield findings which could lead to a better understanding of

how professional/educational background shape principal literacy leadership and how such

leadership impacts student English Language Arts (ELA) achievement. By identifying the

existing dimensions of literacy leadership, it is feasible to then to use this information as the

basis for further research aimed at fostering the leadership skills and the knowledge base of

secondary level administrators as it relates to literacy.

**Research Questions**

After an extensive review of the literature and acknowledgement of the limited number of

studies which examined the role of principal literacy leadership in secondary schools, the

following questions were devised for this study:

*Research Q 1—* What level of importance do WV secondary school principals report

they assign to their role in providing leadership in literacy initiatives?

*Research Q2—* To what degree do secondary principals report that they implement

specific dimensions of literacy leadership in their schools?

*Research Q3—* What is the relationship, if any, that exists between principals'

perceptions and practices related to the literacy leadership?

*Research Q4—*To what extent, if any, are selected demographic variables related to

principals' perceptions of their role in providing leadership in literacy initiatives?

*Research Q5*— To what extent, if any, are selected demographic variables related to principals' self-reported implementation of specific dimensions of literacy leadership in their schools?

**Limitations**

All research is bound by limitations beyond the control of the researcher (Heppner and Heppner, 2004). The following were identified as limitations within this study:

1. A non-experimental research study provides no allowance for the random assignment to groups for manipulation or for the manipulation of independent variables (Johnson & Christensen, 2000).

2. Self-reporting questionnaires are subject to contamination and may be limited by participant response (Johnson & Christensen, 2000). This study utilizes a self-reporting questionnaire which aims to assess principal perceptions of literacy beliefs and practices present in their respective facilities.

3. The perceptions reported by principals may be considered to be subjective in nature and these responses limit the accuracy of the collected data (Kerlinger, 1986).

4. The number of schools which qualified for consideration will reduce the pool of participants as did factors such as willingness of the principals to take part in the research. Their respective level of interest may have resulted in a decreased rate of response as well.

**Organization of Study**

This first chapter provided an introduction which served as a foundation for the remainder of the study. Following the introductory section, the chapter moved into a statement

of problem, the purpose of the study and its potential significance, the research questions, research design, and limitations of this study.

Chapter Two consisted of a detailed review of literature associated with the role of principals as literacy leaders. The chapter traced the evolution of the principalship and the impact of the effective schools movement upon the profession. Examination of the emergence of instructional leadership served to build a foundation for understanding the complex responsibilities of the modern principal and provides a bridge into an examination of the shifting curricular climate within contemporary secondary schools. Next, a broad examination of the prominent role of literacy within modern educational reform and the resulting implications for administrators was presented as well as research related to the impact of principal background and professional development. The chapter concluded with a segment detailing the importance of strong principal-led leadership in the literacy reform movement.

Chapter Three reviewed the research questions and examined in greater detail various elements related to the overall design of the study. The survey discussed therein was influenced by the Literacy Capacity Survey, an instrument created by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), which was devised to measure literacy leadership in secondary schools.  Additionally, Murphy's research on leadership for literacy serves as a broad framework for the survey which utilizes Likert-type responses to statements categorized within the following subgroups: culture of literacy, collaboration, use of assessment, instructional practices and procedures, professional development, and home-school connections (Murphy, 2004a).

The findings of the study are outlined in Chapter Four, while Chapter Five is comprised of a summary and discussion of the implications related to the findings as well as concluding notes and recommendations for future research. Additionally, various appendices are included

which contain information related to the research and data collection process. These documents include IRB documentation, a copy of the survey invitation, and a copy of the survey instrument.

**Definitions**

The following terms have significance to the study and should be associated with the accompanying definitions:

*Common Core State Standards (CCSS):* A set of academic standards in English-language arts and mathematics that specifically define the knowledge and skills that students should master at each grade level to prepare them for later success in college or their career.

*Core Content Area Teacher:* An educational professional who provides primary instruction to students in the areas of English language arts, mathematics, or science.

*High School*: The West Virginia Department of Education defines a high school as an educational facility as any school which contains grade 12. (For the purpose of this dissertation, the term high school and secondary school will be used interchangeably. Middle schools were excluded from examination).

*Instructional Leader:* A leader who exhibits the following characteristics: strong vision for student achievement and holds a vision for increasing said achievement, knowledgeable of curriculum, instruction and assessment, spends a significant amount of time within the classroom, organizes resources to foster instruction, actively promotes the use of student performance data to shape instruction, utilizes research to identify and promote best practices, and works with outside resources to enhance the school's educational climate

*Literacy:* The ability of an individual to successfully read and write in a variety of contexts.

*Literacy Leadership:* A collaborative endeavor between teachers and principals which focuses upon a commitment to plan and implement initiatives designed to bolster student literacy learning.

*Literacy Leadership Dimensions*: Identified by Murphy (Murphy 2004a, 2004b) as being clusters of behaviors which are associated with successful literacy practices within schools. The dimensions are comprised of key areas which include: (a) establishing literacy as a priority, (b) developing an appropriate platform of beliefs, (c) ensuring quality instruction, maximizing time, (d) constructing a quality program, (e) assessing performance, (f) creating a coherent reading system, (g) fostering staff development, (h) forging links between home/school, and (i) building capacity.

*Principal:* An individual who has authority within a school who is charged with creating an environment which guides and supports learning for all students.

*Vision:* A statement which defines what an organization hopes to achieve and how it will evolve in the future. The statement has defined goals to be accomplished and takes into consideration the current status of the organization, and serves to guide the direction of the organization.

# CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Chapter two provides an overview of literature related to the principal's role as a leader of literacy within a secondary school. To aid in understanding, a focus was placed upon the evolution of principals from school managers to leaders charged with providing dynamic leadership in an ever-changing educational climate. This is accomplished by means of an examination of the emergence of instructional leadership which served to build a foundation for better understanding the modern principalship. This is followed by a study of the shifting curricular climate related to literacy within contemporary secondary schools with particular examination given to the influence that professional development and previous teaching experience has upon literacy leadership. For the purposes of this study, the researcher opted to focus upon instructional leadership.

**Traditional Leadership Themes**

Day and Antonakis (2012) conducted an extensive review of general leadership literacy in which they identified several schools of leadership philosophy which included: trait leadership, behavioral leadership, contingency leadership, relational leadership, skeptical leadership, informational-processing leadership, and new leadership. However, work by Leithwood and Jantzi (1999) focused upon specific schools of leadership which were closely related to the field of school administration. They noted that the following themes emerged after an extensive review of literature associated more specifically with educational leadership as opposed to the broader field of leadership studies: Instructional Leadership, Transformational Leadership, Moral Leadership, Participative Leadership, Managerial Leadership and Contingent Leadership. These themes have served to shape the evolution of the modern principalship.

**Evolution of the Principalship**

The turn of the 19th Century heralded the bureaucratic framework of the state and local public school systems which serve as the foundation for America's contemporary public school structure. The move to larger buildings due to the spike in overall student population saw the need for supervision that exceeded the ability of individual teachers as had been prevalent during the era of the one room school house (Kafka, 2009). The position of *principal-teacher* emerged to address the changing needs within public education (Rousmaniere, 2013). These principal-teachers served a dual role with teaching duties in addition to administrative responsibilities such as building maintenance and overseeing student disciplinary action. Kafka (2009) noted that many times the position was awarded based upon seniority or classroom expertise, thus providing the conceptual framework of the principal as an instructional leader.

Carlin (1992) described the ongoing evolution of the principalship over the course of the 20th Century by illustrating the slow transition of the principal-teacher to that of a building administrator charged with growing responsibilities which included teacher supervision and school-wide decision making related to curricular issues. The expanse between teacher and principal grew as ongoing changes in education led to principals serving more as supervisors and less as instructors within the classroom.

Beck and Murphy (1993) also traced the evolution of the principal over the course of the 20th Century in their ground-breaking research, *Understanding the Principalship: Metaphorical Themes 1920s-1990s*. The authors proposed that the 1920s view of principals likened them to "value brokers" who sought to strengthen teaching and curricular development which established strong social ties within the school community. The 1930s saw the infusion of more administrative duties being issued to principals which resulted in the position being equated with

that of business managers. The pre/post-war years of 1940-1950 saw the introduction of the metaphor "theory-guided administrators" to describe the expectation of administrators to utilize the growing base of educational research to underscore decision-making as well as the continuation of traditional managerial duties, while the 1960s witnessed a gradual shift in the perceived image of principals with their role being characterized as that of "bureaucratic executives" (Beck and Murphy, 1993).

**The Effective Schools Movement**

The 1983 publication of a nationally commissioned report entitled *A Nation at Risk,* which centered on the need for educational excellence and more rigorous academic standards within schools, led to a public outcry for sweeping education reforms. Outrage following the release of the report led to the organization of more than 275 task forces who sought answers to disturbing questions related to the overall quality of student education (Kaiser, 1995). Between 1983 and 1985 there were more than 700 state laws enacted across the nation which called for initiatives to increase administrator accountability, and this legislation served as a precursor to many reform efforts which continue to present day (Gupton, 2003). The sweeping changes ushered in by the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) foreshadowed in a position taken by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (1990):

> Major environmental transformations [in the 1980s] created new expectations for schools as well generated requirements for new organizational processes and structures. Among these expectations were demands that student achievement match international standards that schools assume responsibility for graduating higher percentages of students, and that operational structures be decentralized. Many principals were unprepared for these circumstances (p. xxi).

Adding to the mounting criticism of public education was the onset of the effective schools movements. Edmonds (1982) published his seminal work in which he contended that there were specific characteristics found in effective schools with the primary factor being the instructional leadership abilities of the principal. He argued that effective administrators "spend most of their time out in the school, usually in the classrooms. They are constantly engaged in identifying and diagnosing instructional problems" (p. 13).  Another study which was highly influential to the effective school's movement was entitled *Why Do Some Urban Schools Succeed?* (Gregory, Duckett, Park, Clark, McCarthy, Lotto, Herling, & Burleson, 1980), and the resulting data indicated that principal attitudes and behaviors were critical in determining the effectiveness of a school.

The aforementioned studies, as well as others conducted during the late 1970s-mid 1980s, underscored numerous characteristics associated with effective principals which included visibility throughout the building, demonstration of a welcoming attitude toward parents and encouragement for teacher participation in school planning; yet administrators knew that responsibility for the school's success ultimately laid upon their shoulders (Kaiser, 1995). Such practices led to the rise of participatory leadership which encouraged administrators to draw upon the strengths of the individuals within their facilities to achieve success (Day & Antonakis, 2012). The overwhelming impact of the effective schools movement led to the emergence of two models of operation which dominated the field of leadership studies: instructional and transformational leadership.

**The Emergence of Instructional Leadership**

Educational reforms which took place over the second half of the century led to a return to the ideology of principals being viewed as leaders of instruction within their respective schools (Crow, Matthews, & McCleary, 1996). The enactment of NCLB legislation in 2001 ushered in an age of accountability which had never before been witnessed in the American educational system. The legislation sought to improve classroom instruction with the goal of all students meeting established levels of proficiency on standardized measures of assessment by 2014 (Conley & Hinchman, 2004). These expectations established high levels of accountability for schools as well as administrators.

Shen (2005) stated that principals are working within an age of accountability in which their evaluations will be closely linked to student performance as will state and federal funding for their facilities. The emphasis upon testing performance is often considered to be the foremost objective in educational reform efforts with school leadership being one of the most significant factors in enhancing student performance (Adams, Gammage, & McCormack, 2009). Therefore, a need arose to examine the influence of the administrators on instructional practices within a school.

Principals are most capable of discharging their leadership role if they develop a deep and broad knowledge base in regard to curriculum (Glatthorn, 1997). Instructional leadership models first emerged as a direct result of research on effective schools, and instructional leadership was thus adopted as the 'model of choice' by the majority of principal leadership academies (Hallinger, 2003). The most noted conceptualization of instructional leadership was developed by Hallinger (2000) which proposed three dimensions of principal leadership: definition of the

school's mission, management of the facility's instructional program of study and the development/promotion of a positive culture of learning.

Despite the prevalent discussion of the term in educational literature, there has been no single, widely accepted definition for instructional leadership. Blasé and Kirby (2000) describe several characteristics which embody the spirit of instructional leadership: praise for effective teaching practices, development of appropriate professional development training, support for collaboration, seeking out opinions/suggestions, providing apt feedback to faculty, and modeling effective instructional strategies. Reeves (2002) aptly described the complexity of instructional leadership:

> Instructional leadership is an elusive concept. It appears to be more than more than management and administration, yet every veteran leader knows that management and administration are vital functions to a school. The phrase emphasizes instruction; this appears to convey that the leader has a role in curriculum and teaching. (p. 59)

Successful school administration involves collaboration with faculty members who possess a broad range of specializations because it is impossible for principals to possess the knowledge necessary to be experts in all curricular areas. Yet possessing knowledge of curricular planning and generalized instructional techniques provides the foundational knowledge necessary to make informed decisions (Seyfarth, 1999). The role of an instructional leader requires a focus of time, consideration and energy upon careful examination of what students are taught and the strategies utilized to present curricular content (Bottoms & O'Neill, 2001).

Principals who are considered to be effective instructional leaders communicate the mission and goals of the school to all stakeholders (Lezotte, 2001). Lezotte noted "There may be

schools out there that have strong instructional leaders, but are not yet effective; however, I have

yet to find an effective school that did not have a strong instructional leader" (p.4).

**Changing Curricular Climate of Secondary Schools**

The models of school leadership are informed by research and best practices. Nowhere is

this more evident than within the field of literacy education. The evolving needs of the global

economy have placed an emphasis upon the need for diverse literacy skills. Findings reported by

the National Centers for Public Policy and Higher Education & the Southern Regional Board of

Education (2010) indicate that 60% of college freshman require remedial courses to prepare

them for the rigors of university level academic work.   Further research suggests these

educational gaps are at least partially due to the significant numbers of students who reach high

school without the ability to read and write with sufficient fluency (Carnevale, 2001).

National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and Council of Chief State

School Officers drafted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in an attempt to address the

challenge of shaping public school curriculum to equip students with the knowledge and skills

necessary to excel in post-secondary education and/or the labor force. Though only written in

2010, the standards have been adopted by 45 states to serve as the governing curricular guide for

instruction in grades K-12 (Calkins, Ehrenworth, & Lehman, 2012).  West Virginia introduced

the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) in late 2015 as a follow-up to the Common

Core-inspired Next Generation Content Standards (Maunz, 2016).

Calkins et al. (2012) stated that although the standards provide a strong framework for

instruction, the "Common Core Standards are clear that the responsibility for interpreting and

implementing these expectations are on the shoulders of teacher and principals…the standards

leave room for educators to determine how these goals will be met and which additional topics should be addressed" (p. 1-2).

The Common Core State Standards are above all a call for accelerating student literacy development. The dire need to improve achievement in the area of literacy is at the heart of the standards which allow American students to remain competitive with their international counterparts. Recent PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) data served to emphasize these concerns with American students placing fourteenth among other nations in standards of academic measure (OECD, 2010). Improving the area of literacy is at the heart of many educational reform initiatives. The goal of literacy instruction is to aid students in acquiring the skills necessary to learning from understanding and enjoying written language (Applebee and Langer 2013). Many secondary level students are failing to move beyond the basic reading requirements of elementary school. Biancarosa and Snow (2004) asserted that many secondary level students fail because the teaching of reading is often neglected in middle and high schools. The ability to engage increasingly complex levels of text is necessary to be successful in the information age of today (Calkins, Ehrenworth, & Lehman, 2012), with an extreme focus upon student ability to construct meaning from text. Torgenson (2004) stated that to be capable of constructing meaning from complex text, students must have "general language comprehension skills and the ability to accurately and fluently identify the individual words in print" (p. 9).

Traditionally, literacy instruction was relegated to elementary school classrooms where the five basic components of reading have been identified as: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension (Gunning, 2000). Yet, there is substantial evidence to support the fact that many adolescent-age students are entering secondary schools without the

skills necessary to meet minimum proficiency levels. Moore et al (1999) stated that National

Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data indicated that approximately 60% of

secondary level students can comprehend factual information yet fewer than 5% of these same

students are capable of extending or elaborating upon the material they have read.

> Adolescents entering the adult world of the 21st century will read and write more than at
>
> any other time in human history. They will need advanced levels of literacy to perform
>
> their jobs, run their households, act as citizens and conduct their personal lives.  They
>
> need advanced levels of literacy to cope with the flood of information they will find
>
> everywhere they turn. They will need literacy to feed their imaginations so they can
>
> create the world of the future. In a complex and sometimes even dangerous world, their
>
> ability to read will be crucial. Continual instruction beyond the early grades is needed.
>
> (Moore, et al, 1999, p. 7)

Many educators are concerned with the number of students who are ill prepared to

engage the complexity of secondary level content/domain material. As students continue to

progress through school, they are required to acquire information from texts that are written with

increasing complexity, contain less relevance to personal experience and contain informational

that is conceptually dense.  Though these linguistic demands continue to escalate, the majority of

secondary course offerings have failed to provide the explicit reading instruction necessary to

address literacy deficiencies (Jetton & Dole, 2004).

Historically, secondary school curriculum has been domain-specific in areas as varied as

history and modern dance (Alexander, 1997). These specific domains utilize their own

vocabulary which students must negotiate if they are to attain sufficient proficiency within each

area of study (Lampert & Blunk, 1994). Teachers must possess extensive knowledge in order to

provide domain-based instruction which Shulman and Quinlan (1996) refer to as *content-knowledge*. Additionally, teachers must also convey the content-knowledge in a manner which is engaging and meaningful to students. Shulman (1986) goes one step further by adding that teachers are responsible for taking text which may be too contextually dense for students and communicating the information in an alternate manner to facilitate learning. The Common Core State Standards (2010) embrace the idea of the content area teacher integrating strategies into their instruction which aid student literacy development and "insist that instruction in reading, writing, listening, and language be a shared responsibility within a school" (p. 4). Calkins, Ehrenworth, & Lehman (2012) extend the concept to "embrace the notion that literacy is everyone's work. Social studies, science, and math teachers are all expected to support literacy. The same rich, provocative, critical reading and writing work that happens in ELA classrooms needs to be present across the curriculum" (p. 12).

**Cross-Curricular Literacy Instruction at the Secondary School Level: Implications for Instructional Leaders**

As student performance has fallen on standardized testing instruments, America is entrenched in a crisis of epic proportions related to its declining literacy rate. The adoption of Common Core State Standards is a sweeping reform movement which aims to provide a curriculum framework reflective of the knowledge and skills necessary to be successful within the world's global economy (Coleman & Pimentel, 2011). Though the standards provide a framework for curriculum, instructional decisions are left to be made by teachers and principals. Yet many educational professionals are ill prepared to provide the literacy-rich instruction which is advocated by the standards. Taylor and Collins (2003) wrote that:

In the past, we have assumed that students learned to read in elementary school; if they did not, there were alternatives found for them in the middle and high school -- alternatives which rarely led to academic success or to graduation" (p.2). For decades, the focus of literacy instruction has been centered upon early education programs. Thus, the need for specialized adolescent literacy instruction at the middle and high school level has gone unacknowledged. (Alverman, 2001)

Secondary school academic requirements are increasingly complex, and the development of foundational literacy skills begins during early education and continues for life. However, students who enter middle and high school without sufficient basic literacy skills have a severe deficit. Research by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development reported that older struggling readers can develop strong literacy capacities when given the proper instruction (Lyon, 2002). Consistent and sufficient hours of instruction are also critical for achievement in older readers with literacy deficits (Shaywitz, 2003). Furthermore, work by McGew and Lew (2007) specified that leadership by the principal which targets instructional practices made a significant different in the performance of students regardless of their socio-economic background.

Many non-English Language Arts (ELA) teachers view themselves as specialists within their content area and assume that literacy instruction is the responsibility of reading teachers (Zipperer, Worley, Sisson, & Said, 2002). The adoption of Common Core Standards has heralded the age of all teachers being viewed as instructors of literacy. It is not uncommon for high school teachers to falsely assume that secondary level students acquired all the necessary literacy skills at the elementary level and that they possess the necessary academic background to be able to successfully interact with grade level content text (Zipperer, et al, 2002).

Misconceptions about the literacy needs of adolescents have also led many teachers to incorrectly link student need to basic elementary level instructional topics such as phonics. These misunderstandings have resulted in many content area teachers developing an overly narrow view of literacy which is reduced to little more than the topics of spelling, grammar and phonics (Shannon, 1991). Typically, secondary level reading is limited to text materials and seldom involves read aloud during class. The assignment of reading tasks is typically relegated to homework assignments with little to no classroom time devoted to monitoring student engagement with text. Routman (2012) suggests that such actions reflect the lack of literacy training made available to non-ELA teachers which underscores the need for the fostering relationships between teachers which promote opportunities for teachers to "routinely visit peers' classrooms, observe each other's teaching, and examine student work samples" (p. 60), leading to collegial conversations related to literacy and instructional practices which permeate the learning culture of the school.

The examination of teacher preparation programs has yielded many surprising findings. Morrison, Bachman, and Connor (2005) claim that 64% of public school teachers state that they feel ill prepared to implement state and district curriculum and performance standards. Further research reveals that the type and amount of collegiate training given to teachers is related to student achievement for content area and student learning (Monk, 2004; Darling-Hammond and Youngs, 2002). Even many experienced teachers have indicated they have insufficient knowledge of language elements and are unprepared to teach foundational reading skills (Moats, 1994). Many non-ELA content area teachers state that they lack the ability to address these deficiencies and are in need of professional development to enable them to teach vocabulary development and other literacy strategies (Bean, 1997).

There is a significant need for secondary level teachers to re-evaluate their definition of the term *text*. The changing nature of the text must be taken into consideration as well as the examining practice to determine the best method by which to aid students in attaining proficiency while attempting to acquire new information (Ash, 2004). Research by Alverman (2001), suggests that students are more proficient at reading digital based materials as opposed to traditional forms of text reading. The data goes on to emphasize that students are more engaged while interacting with digital media yet these forms of text are less frequently found in the classroom. The premise that literacy is continually evolving through new digital technologies (Luke & Elkins, 1998) has immense implications for teachers at the secondary level and these same changes are fundamentally altering how concepts are represented in print and communicated to others (de Castell, 1996). Research supports the use of alternative text materials in content-area instruction. Alverman (2001) noted that in a study of adolescents who were deemed to be 'at risk' based on their scoring in the lowest percentile of a standardized reading test were in fact capable of demonstrating in-depth knowledge of how an array of media texts represented people, events and ideas.

Literacy reform is one of the most effective means of school transformation because successes in the area of literacy serve to strengthen other content area achievement. Fullan (2007) contends that leadership is the driving force behind literacy-based school reform. Schools that have successful literacy programs show evidence of strong principal leadership with focused emphasis placed upon collaboration, facilitation of professional development, establishing a literacy agenda, supporting teachers, and building the foundation for future literacy growth (Booth, 2007). These findings echo earlier work by Biancarosa and Snow (2004) in their pivotal

report to the Carnegie Corporation entitled *Reading Next* which examined the needs of adolescent literacy learners. They stated that:

> It is critical that a principal assumes the role of an instructional leader, who demonstrates commitment and participates in the school community. This leadership role includes a principal building his or her own personal knowledge of how young people learn and struggle with reading and writing and how they differ in their needs. (p.21)

Within *Reading Next*, the authors noted nine instructional improvements and six infrastructure improvements which were key to addressing deficiencies in adolescent literacy instruction. The instructional improvements include:

- effective instruction embedded within the content

- direct, explicit instruction

- text-based collaborative learning

- motivated, self-directed learning

- diverse texts

- text-based collaborative learning

- intensive writing

- ongoing student assessment

- integration of technology (p. 12)

Though these issues are most typically considered to be teacher-related, Biancarosa and Snow (2004) stressed that principal support of teacher-led classroom initiatives is vital to ensure success. Biancarosa and Snow (2004) pinpointed six literacy 'infrastructure' improvements which include: (1) a comprehensive, coordinated literacy program; (2) strong literacy leadership; (3) teacher teams; (4) ongoing assessment of students and literacy initiatives; (5) professional

development; and (6) extended time for literacy. Though these elements have direct implications for the classroom, they are typically considered to be matters associated with decision-making at the school administrator level. The role of the principal as an agent of instructional change cannot be ignored. Principals possess the power to enact positive change within the educational environment of a school. Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson (2005) wrote that the influence of a principal is only second to that of the classroom instruction in regard to bolstering student learning.  In order to enact their influence in a positive manner, principals must be prepared to focus their efforts upon examining teaching strategies, curricular choices and assessing student learning within their facilities (Bottoms & O'Neill, 2001).

Schoenbach, Greenleaf, Cziko, & Hurwitz (1999) asserted that principals must be advocates for literacy within their schools by being capable of articulating the research and rationale for curricular decisions. The International Reading Association (2010) echoed this sentiment within the most current release of *Standards for Reading Professionals*. Standard Six of the IRA's Standards for Reading Professionals specifically applies to the category of professional leadership with the following recommendations for administrators:

1. Connect foundational knowledge associated with educational leadership to the organizational and instructional knowledge required to implement effective, school wide reading programs.

2. Apply knowledge from a variety of disciplines to promote positive school cultures and climates for students and adults.

3. Ensure positive and ethical learning contexts for reading that respect students, families, teachers, colleagues and communities.

4. Foster community involvement in school wide literacy initiatives.

5. Encourage and support teachers and reading professionals to develop their knowledge, skills and dispositions.

6. Provide leadership by participating in ongoing professional development with staff and others in leadership positions.

7. Encourage use of technology among teachers for their own learning and for improving student learning.

8. Work collaboratively with school staff to plan, implement, and evaluate sustained professional development programs to meet established needs at grade, discipline, and individual levels.

9. Provide varied professional development opportunities for those having responsibility for student learning.

10. Promote effective communication and collaboration among parents and guardians, community members and school staff.

11. Understand the importance of hiring highly qualified literacy personnel, providing clear role descriptions for literacy positions, and supporting - in those positions.

12. Advocate at local, state, and federal levels for needed organizational changes to promote effective literacy instruction. (p. 31-33)

McGew and Lew (2007) affirmed that the knowledge principals have related to instructionally sound practice is shaped by the manner in which they handle managerial tasks indicating that the chasm between management verses instruction may be closing. Evidence supports the need for revisions to administrator preparation programs which address the need to, "if preparation programs were committed to teaching the organizational aspects of school leadership though a lens of leadership for learning, the relationship of management to teaching and

learning might be more readily understood and practiced when the student assumed a formal

leadership position" (p.376).

**Literacy Leadership for Principals**

Literacy must be viewed by all stakeholders as being vital to the academic success of all

students (Zipperer, et al., 2002). A study conducted by Mackey, Pitcher and Decman (2006)

examined the influence of principals upon reading programs. Their findings pinpointed three

particular areas that enabled principals to influence reading achievement: (a) the administrator's

vision for the overall reading program within the school, b. the professional

background/education of the administrator, and c. the administrator's beliefs and practices

related to their role as the school's instructional leader. (p. 52-53).

Murphy (2004b) examined contemporary literature related to the role of instructional

leadership as it applied to the areas of literacy. The examination of contemporary literacy

leadership research focused upon a variety of areas. He examined studies related to the general

area of literacy which he regarded to be central lines of research. Secondly, he then focused upon

specific areas of literacy and specific literacy instruction practices for subgroups such as special

education and those deemed to be at risk. His analysis of the literature encompassed an

examination of effective literacy programs before concluding his research on the growing body

of data that links the activity of principals to student learning.  His resulting work outlined what

we know about leadership for literacy by organizing his findings into 10 broad categories which

he termed as 'functions of literacy leadership': (a) establishing literacy as a priority, (b)

developing an appropriate platform of beliefs, (c) ensuring quality instruction, maximizing time,

(d) constructing a quality program, (e) assessing performance, (f)  creating a coherent reading

system, (g) fostering staff development, (h) forging links between home/school, and (i) building capacity.

**Establishing Literacy as a Priority**

Schools which are successful in fostering literacy skills tend to be those which place an extraordinary focus upon reading (Murphy, 2004b). Hiebert and Pearson (1999) claim that effective schools contain teachers and principals who give their literacy programs high levels of time, energy and dedication of resources. Murphy (2004a) wrote "Across nearly every aspect and dimension of an effective school – from organizational structures, to policies, to resources, to culture – the priority is unmistakable in these effective schools, reading is the central activity" (p. 76).

**Developing an Appropriate Platform for Beliefs**

The beliefs and perceptions of faculty and administration play an important role in effective schools. Strong literacy leadership is often noted by an individual's pursuit of educational excellence which requires not only productive ideas but also a combination of philosophy, knowledge, and action (McGew & Lew, 2007). A principal's literacy beliefs and the resulting actions are a crucial factor in understanding the impact an administrator has upon student learning. Hallinger, Bickman, and Davis (1996) noted that in their work which examined the influence of principals upon reading achievement, the administrators who were perceived to be strong instructional leaders by teachers indirectly fostered a positive learning environment and improved student achievement.

**Ensuring Quality Instruction**

Lyon & Chhabra (2004) stated that "reading proficiency depends on the expert and integrated teaching of literacy skills so that the reader learns to access print accurately and

fluently and to relate what he or she reads to vocabulary and content knowledge to ensure comprehension" (p. 16). All students require early exposure to the purposeful instruction which builds upon their individual needs as a literacy learner. Failure to read by nine years of age foreshadows a life of illiteracy for seventy percent of struggling readers (Shaywitz, 2003). Fullan (2003) wrote that it is "the moral imperative of the principal (to lead) deep cultural change that mobilizes the passion and commitment of teachers, parents, and others to improve the learning for all students, including closing the achievement gap."

**Maximizing Time**

Time spent reading within the classroom significantly contributes to growth in the area of reading achievement (Taylor, Frye, & Maruyama, 1990). The use of block scheduling and the promotion of cross curricular literacy instruction are two methods by which administrators may maximize time for literacy-based activities. Productive use of time is a key component in the success of classrooms which are deemed to be effective in promoting elevated levels of literacy (Murphy, 2004b). Leinhardt, Zigmond, & Cooley (1981) state that one strategy to improve reading instruction is to increase the amount of time spent reading.

Successful schools use allocated time more productively than is the norm in American schools, which is they squeeze more out of every minute of instruction. At the school level, leaders are dedicated to protecting instructional time and they devote considerable energy to developing strategies and policies to match this commitment, for example establishing policy to buffer reading time from the plethora of activities to which schools need to attend, such as assemblies, safety drills and announcements. (Murphy, 2004b, p. 83)

**Constructing a Quality Program**

Schools which are deemed to be highly effective are found to emphasize a single set of core values (Murphy, 2004a). "A convergence of evidence exists on the need for children to have access to a rich and varied supply of books that are of appropriate difficulty and engaging. In other words, attractive and well-stocked school and classroom libraries are an important factor in developing reading" (Allington, 1997, p. 32). Successful reading classrooms are underscored by a diverse and balanced platform for instruction. Adams (1991) asserts that systematic code instruction is utilized side by side with numerous opportunities for students to engage in activities aimed at advancing reading achievement.

**Assessing Performance and Ensuring Accountability**

"Close examination of data shows that educators who are successful in reducing the language gap assess their students' progress frequently" (McNaughton, 1999, p. 12). To ensure that no student is left without the skills necessary to function in a literate society, it is imperative that there be systems in place to assess student knowledge, monitor growth, and provide support when there is sufficient evidence that performance is not sufficient with established expectation (Murphy, 2004a). Effective literacy programs often provide layered systems of support to carefully assess achievement. The continuous monitoring of student performance is a hallmark of classrooms and schools where students consistently demonstrate mastery of basic literacy skills (Murphy, 2004b).

**Creating a Coherent and Aligned Reading System**

Beane (1993) suggests that there is a necessity to provide support to content area teachers by infusing literacy instruction across the entire school curriculum. Reading becomes more meaningful to individuals when it is viewed as a component of all courses as opposed to being a

skill taught in a single class. The process skills involved in reading and writing should be integrated with course content and not introduced in isolation. Content area teachers are to be considered a catalyst for learning by helping students in their efforts to read and learn from texts (Zipperer, et al, 2002).  The ultimate goal of literacy instruction by non-ELA teachers is to provide students with the ability to acquire knowledge effectively rather than amass isolated bits of information (Stevenson & Carr, 1993).

### Fostering Staff Development and Promoting Communities of Learners

Murphy (2004a) affirms that within successful schools that "there is a collective sense of activity around professional development. One sees less of the usual pattern of the individual development and more group activity around the mission. In this collective enterprise, one is also much more likely than is usual to see the principal taking an active role in program planning and a participative role in the learning activities" (p. 90).   Routman (2012) asserts that expert educators utilize the talents of their colleagues and are "willing to collaborate, coach and mentor each other. The school-wide strengths, common purpose and strong professional learning communities enable…a school to thrive" (p.60).

### Forging Links Between Home and School

Literate environments are settings in which children have numerous opportunities to engage with a wide array of reading materials at a variety of topics and levels of difficulty (Murphy, 2004a). The opportunities and resources available to students in their home are often significant predictors of literacy development (Baker, Allen, Shockley, Pellegrini, Galda, & Stahl, 1996). Schools which are adept at elevating student literacy levels provide literacy-rich environments both school and at home (Morrow, Tracey, Woo, & Pressley, 1999).  Effective literacy programs tend to be more aggressive in stimulating connections to, support of, and

involvement in schools (Murphy, 2004a).  Quality reading programs maximize learning opportunities for students with adults within the program expecting children to read both at home and at school. Parents are vital resources in aiding children in developing reading proficiency.

**Building Capacity**

Principal leadership is considered to be of utmost importance for programmatic development of literacy skills (Fisher & Adler, 1999). Schools which have consistently demonstrated high levels of reading achievement are environments which are characterized by stability, routine, and order (Rowe, 1995).  Schools which have proven themselves to be academically successful are adept at building capacity. Murphy (2004b) identifies several types of capacity which are developed by principals within such schools: intellectual, human, social and fiscal capacity.

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) published a booklet entitled *Creating a Culture of Literacy: A Guide for Middle and High School Principals* which was created to serve as a tool to aid secondary level principals in examining their literacy beliefs and practices. The research behind the document was conducted by Phillips (2005) and reviewed in turn the nine action steps relevant to the development and fostering of literacy leadership.

**Determine the School's Capacity for Literacy Improvement**

Schools that are successful in improving students' literacy achievement have data-based plans of action which include interventions for struggling readers as well as high expectation for content-area literacy support (Matsumura, Satoris, Bickel, & Garner, 2009) establish the foundation for school wide literacy initiatives which encompass "attention to how data will be

used, allocation of time, technology, and personnel resources to support literacy development as well as attention to school structures and policies" (p. 21).

**Develop a Literacy Leadership Team**

A school literacy team is organized to identify student needs by way of assessment data and to then formulate a plan to bolster student learning through informed curricular decision making and professional development (Phillips, 2005; IRA, 2010). These tasks are most often accomplished through examination of a school's literacy curriculum, resources, instructional practices and varying assessment tools which include both formative and summative data sources (Marks & Printy, 2003). Jackson (2000) adds that the analysis of assessment trend data as well as institutional practices provides a literacy team with the ability to identify the issues most relevant to a school's curricular needs.

**Create a Collaborative Environment that Fosters Sharing and Learning**

The role of collaboration between teachers and principals is vital to the success of any school wide literacy initiatives. Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) conducted a meta-analysis survey which revealed 21 job responsibilities that are associated with effective principals. The authors concluded, "Taken at face value, this situation would imply that only those with superhuman abilities or the willingness to expend superhuman effort could qualify as effective leaders" (p.99). It is by means of collaboration that principals at successful schools accomplish this deed.

**Develop a School Wide Organizational Model that Supports Extended Time for Literacy Instruction**

Phillips (2005) writes that 25-30% of students entering secondary schools possess major deficits which impede their ability to interact with text appropriate to their grade level. Reading

difficulties witnessed in secondary level students typically do not stem from a lack of basic knowledge related to phonics but rather from "a lack of comprehension strategies, inadequate vocabulary development, insufficient prior knowledge, poor reading fluency, and little to no motivation to read" (p.7). Phillips (2005) concluded that intervention services must address the end goal of assisting struggling readers in attaining grade level proficiency by way of intensive accelerated instruction within the classroom environment.  Covey (2004) states that the "number one challenge of being a secondary school literacy leader is finding resources which includes time" (p. 35).  Many secondary schools continue to operate within the framework of outdated models of operation which include master schedules which lack flexibility and instructional practices which are not suited to student needs (Covey, 2004).

**Analyze Assessment Data to Determine Specific Learning Needs of Students**

Today's high-stakes testing environment has placed tremendous accountability upon school principals to interpret assessment data in a manner which serves to underscore their curricular decision making (Gupton, 2003). Assessment must be multidimensional and not based solely upon standardized measures of achievement. Black and William (1998) write that "feedback on tests, seatwork, and homework should give each pupil guidance on how to improve, and each pupil must be given help and an opportunity to work on improvement" (p. 146).

**Develop a School Wide Plan to Address the Professional Development Needs of Teachers**

Biancarosa & Snow (2004) described the role of the principal as being that of "the instructional leader who demonstrates commitment and participates in the school community. This leadership role includes a principal's own personal knowledge of how young people learn

and struggle with reading and writing and how they differ in their needs" (p. 30). Principals must use their knowledge of the school and gather data to formulate a plan of action for the implementation of quality professional development. A key element to supporting instructional change is full participation by administrators in all professional development offerings (Baincarosa & Snow, 2004). By participating in professional development, administrators are afforded a better understanding of how to support teachers and offer constructive feedback aimed at enhancing instruction. Teachers learn by receiving feedback for their efforts and by doing so they are afforded a means by which to reflect upon their labors and modify future attempts in order to be more successful (Ash, 2004).

**Create a Realistic Budget for Literacy Needs**

The budgeting requirements for secondary school literacy development is an area of concern for administrators. Historically, funding for literacy development has been focused upon initiatives aimed at early childhood education because there has been a significant amount of research to support such measures. Torgesen (2004) in conjunction with the Florida Center for Reading Research have documented that if students are identified as being literacy deficient and receive intervention prior to eight years of age, 80% of these individuals will be reading on grade level by third grade. Similar findings related to the power of strong literacy support for young learners is supported by other researchers as well (Francis, Shaywitz, Stuebing, Shaywitz & Fletcher, 1996; Juel, 1988; Chall, 1967, Torgesen, 2002). However, many students are not moving beyond the basic phonetic decoding that is a key component of primary level reading instruction (Carr, Saifer, & Novick, 2002). Literacy instruction aimed at addressing the specific needs of struggling adolescent learners is imperative. Administrators must analyze the school's literacy needs and plan ahead to allocate funding necessary to support instruction.

**Develop a Broad Understanding of Literacy Strategies that Work in Content Area**

**Classes**

Phillips (2005) explained that though principals are not expected to be experts in the field of literacy, they must possess basic knowledge of "literacy strategies and be able to converse with content teachers about strategies that help students to activate prior knowledge, develop metacognition, and expand thinking and understanding of text" (p. 12). Classroom observations are key to the successful implementation and monitoring of a school wide literacy initiative. Routman (2012) notes that without strong principal leadership the effectiveness of teacher-led initiatives and overall school achievement is rarely possible and certainly not sustainable. Principals are deemed to be accountable for student learning and the practice of monitoring instructional practices is one of the most successful strategies for ensuring make progress toward meeting standards and that teachers are successfully integrating literacy into their instructional practices (Phillips, 2005).

**Principals Need to Demonstrate Their Commitment to the Literacy Program**

Principals must share their vision of school change with all stakeholders by acting as collectors of data which is reflective of the school's efforts to improve achievement (Ash, 2003). The resulting data serves as a framework for both short and long term literacy goals. Hunt (2008) stresses that vigilance on the part of the school administrator is essential to ensure ongoing literacy success within a facility and that ongoing monitoring of the following four elements is necessary: environment, engagement, expectations, and encouragement/support.

**The Role of Professional Development and Teaching Experience in Literacy Leadership**

A quantitative study by McGee and Lew (2007) explored teacher perceptions of principal support for and understanding of effective literacy instruction and the impact of principal

knowledge upon administrative decision-making. Their findings revealed that principals who have strong knowledge of and beliefs in effective instructional practices tend to organize their schools and act in ways that support teacher needs. Additionally, the research revealed that leadership knowledge affects student interventions thereby underscoring the importance of content knowledge for principals. Stein and Nelson (2003) wrote that:

> Administrators' knowledge of how to lead – how to build the culture of a school community, how to use professional development programs, and other resources well, how to conduct a curriculum selection process so that it is perceived as legitimate and politically viable, how to plan for the systemic array of interventions that will be needed in order to successfully reform a system's academic program, and so – appears to be transformed by newly learned subject matter. (p. 424)

A study on the "Competencies of Rural Oklahoma School Principals" by Branscum (1983) stated that secondary school principals, board members, superintendents and teachers held similar expectations of principals in regard to their job competencies. The data pointed to evidence that the participants viewed the principalship as a position in which competencies in dealing with the human component of school (parents, teachers, community and educational professionals) were equally as important as the competencies necessary to promote academic growth. Perception plays a multifaceted role in shaping school climate and teacher performance. Mutually shared perceptions of leadership between principals and teachers foster empowerment and significantly influence teachers' sense of meaning, autonomy and impact (Lee & Nie, 2013). The authors continued by illustrating the need for leadership development which "increases school leader's awareness of what constitutes empowering leadership behaviors and how these

empowering behaviors and how these behaviors may affect teachers' empowerment…and work outcomes" (p. 76).

Teachers' awareness of how their beliefs drive their practice is essential for highly effective teaching (Routman, 2008). The establishment of common beliefs is an early step in creating a unified vision for a school. Coherent beliefs and practices among teachers and administrators are crucial to maintain a consistent level of academic rigor and relevance (Routman, 2012). Identifying one's beliefs and examining how they influence practice is an important reflective act for educators. Lee and Nie (2013) write that many of the responsibilities of principal leadership require skill and knowledge, but also dispositional qualities such as flexibility and specific beliefs. Reiss (2007) affirmed this sentiment by pointing out that "…by eliminating old beliefs, it is possible for new possibilities to be considered …and for new results to pour in. While thinking outside the box is a first step, acting outside the box becomes a daring act of courage" (p 58).

**The role of teaching experience**

Lortie (2009) explains that previous learning experiences affect teaching knowledge and decision-making. Therefore, the knowledge that principals gained while working as a teacher will serve to influence their thinking and decision-making as an instructional leader. Principals' perceptions of what their role is as an instructional leader are often shaped by their own educational experiences and expectations (Hoewing, 2011). Educators need knowledge and expertise that allows them to aid others in learning content material which is a goal for effective instructional leaders (Stein & Nelson, 2003).

Munby, Russell and Martin (2001) examined research related to educator beliefs and teaching. They noted that it was difficult to change established beliefs because many beliefs are

established before teachers have exited their preparation programs. Hoewing (2011) conducted research with elementary principals which revealed that their "deep-seated beliefs regarding the role of teaching reading that influence their perspective on teaching reading. Experiences, as a student, as a teacher and as a principal have defined how these principals perceive the teaching of reading and influence their theoretical orientation" (p. 158).

**The role of professional development**

Stein and Nelson (2003) explain that research over the past decade have explored what is known about principal knowledge of different subject area content and how this knowledge informs their supervisory and professional development practices as well as their overall decision-making. Principals who are more aware of the central ideas being conveyed by teachers are more effective observers of classroom practices and presumably more effective instructional leaders (Nelson and Sassi, 2000). The complexity of a principal's understanding of a content area influences how he or she interacts with teachers and approaches instructional issues.

One barrier to the development of consistent, high quality literacy instruction is that within many schools, administrators and teachers have not developed a common understanding of the essential elements of an effective literacy program. Effective practices will be successfully implemented unless principals firmly believe that literacy is a priority and assume personality responsibility for understanding literacy instruction, define it for colleagues and observe it on a daily basis (Reeves, 2008). Contemporary literature on professional development for principals is linked to initiating and sustaining reforms to promote student learning across all areas of the curriculum (Hourani & Stringer, 2015).

Professional development for principals must address essential issues related to their practice. Nicholson, Harris-John, and Schimmel (2005) suggest that effective professional

development for school administrators must contain four characteristics. The training must be on-going, job-embedded, connected to school improvement and site-specific. The content of professional development must address the individual needs of the principal as well as the demands of the school. Browne-Ferrigno and Maynard (2005) conveys the need for participants in professional development to engage in authentic practices. Ultimately, the content and processes of professional development must be evaluated to determine their value, benefits and usefulness to educators (Guskey 2000).

Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen (2007) conducted a study which examined eight exemplary principal development programs. The programs were chosen because they demonstrated evidence of strong outcomes in preparing principals as well as having provided a variety of unique approaches in their design, policies, and partnerships between universities and school districts. The states represented in the program sample included: California, Connecticut, Kentucky, Mississippi, and New York. Principals in all participating states indicated that were provided access to traditional forms of professional development such as workshops and conferences. Many noted that they had undertaken visits to other schools as a component of their professional development. Although mentoring was rarely reported, it was more highly rated than any other form of professional development by the participating principals. "Finally, a change in practice nationally was signaled by the frequency with which principals were engaged in professional development with teachers in their schools in the previous 12 months, a proportion which ranged from 70% in California to 100% in Kentucky" (p. 125).

A principal's active participation in a learning network is vital if they wish to remain aware of research-based literacy instruction and to maintain open discussion of issues facing

administrators who wish to establish successful literacy programs within their school (Children's Literacy Initiative, 2005). Support for programs has grown in recent years. Columbia University's Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (2005) has provided administrators with support as they engage with topics related to curriculum. Participants attend a conference at Columbia University which provides them with a wealth of information related to the latest research in literacy education. The conference is followed up by study group discussions aimed at the examination of school curricular practices. The project then releases plans for ongoing learning opportunities for the principals who are located throughout the country. Network conferencing then occurs with principals visiting Project mentor schools in their vicinity. Additionally, they participate in round-table discussions with mentor principals and staff developers on topics related to the fostering of quality literacy instruction and supervision.

The impact of professional development programs for principals is mixed (Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyncoff 2008). Programs such as the Cahn Fellows program in New York City have demonstrated improvements in the effectiveness of principals (Clark, Martorell, & Rockoff, 2009). However, data collected by the Wallace Foundation revealed that principals across the nine states surveyed gave their districts poor ratings for providing quality training for administrators (Seashore-Louis, Wahlstrom, Leithwood, & Anderson, 2010). It is essential that principals have the support of their districts. Leaders at the district level play a vital role upon the impact principals have within their schools by supporting them in obtaining appropriate, relevant professional development training (Bottoms & Schmidt-Davis, 2010).

### Professional Development in the Area of Literacy

The Literacy Learning Network (Bongerton, 2006) is a model of professional development aimed at supporting the needs of teacher leaders and principals. The program

consists of 'in class' modeling of literacy strategies by both principals and teacher leaders as well as summer institutes. The principals who participate in the program are designated to be instructional leaders who oversee training, location of resources, and allotment of time for literacy learning. Administrators who have participated in the program have witnessed significant literacy gains within their schools. For example, students in the Jeffersonville, Indiana school district witnessed an increase of 25% in literacy test scores during the three years their administrators were active in the network (Bongerton, 2006). Additionally, Literacy Learning Network data indicated that reading achievement scores for participating schools in the Battle Creek, Michigan school district increased from 29% to 79% over the course of 5 years. Though there has been research which indicates that principal leadership had no significant direct effect on student achievement, there has been argument that instructional gains are not directly related to leadership but rather to the leader who serves as a catalyst for change (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004).

Overbolt and Szabocsik (2013) created a professional development intervention for school leaders entitled *Literacy for Leaders* that aimed to develop leadership knowledge of literacy content. Eighteen participants were provided 12 hours of professional development training on various topics relate to literacy instruction.

The outcomes of the study reveal that, as a result of professional development, participants did change their thinking to be more aligned with current best practices for literacy. They also reported changes in supervisory practices that included classroom observations, professional development opportunities for teachers, available resources, and collaborative discussion. Because they developed greater knowledge of content knowledge, they were more explicit and directive when evaluating classroom practices. They offered specific guidance to

teachers about their instructional practices, provided better resources, and engaged in more collaborative discussions with teachers. (p.54)

Overholt and Szabocsik (2013) conclude the findings of their work by stating that school districts need to provide professional development for administrators that is closely aligned with research-based best practices for literacy.  It is not necessary for principals to have the same depth of knowledge as literacy teachers. Yet they do require a basic understanding of best practices in order to effectively communicate with teachers on matters such as instructional practices and the overall quality of the school's literacy program.

**Summary**

The role of the modern principal has evolved over the course of the last century. No longer viewed as merely facility managers, principals are now charged with a multitude of tasks, one of the most demanding being that of instructional leader. The evolution of the principalship was due in no small part to the far-reaching educational reforms which began in the 1980s and continue to the present day. Mounting criticism of the public educational system topped by declines in student achievement heralded the age of accountability. Principals were deemed responsible for ensuring their schools were successful in attaining proficiency on standardized testing instruments in order to be deemed effective administrators. Additionally, the allocation of federal funding and other resources necessary to provide a broad range of services for students were tied to testing data.

The sweeping adoption of Common Core State Standards established a framework to address the challenge of shaping public school curriculum to equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary to excel once they enter post-secondary education or become a part of the labor force. However, these reform initiatives have altered the traditional course of secondary

school instruction. The new standards call for the implementation of literacy strategies across all areas of the curriculum which mean that secondary level English/language arts teachers are no longer the sole dispensers of literacy instruction. All teachers are charged with the task of being literacy teachers. Yet there is evidence to support the fact that most content area teachers are ill-prepared for such a task. It is these cross-curricular literacy demands which have placed principals in the arduous position of ensuring that all teachers within their buildings have the training and resources necessary for the successful implementation of common core standards.

The need for literacy leadership is echoed in the International Reading Association's Standards for Reading Professionals with a section of recommendations aimed specifically at administrators. Effective literacy leadership requires principals to be advocates for effective cross curricular literacy instruction. Yet it also mandates that these same individuals themselves be knowledgeable of current literacy research and facilitate professional development for the faculty. Working collaboratively with teachers and other members of the school community is essential to establish and maintain a positive literacy environment within a school which addresses the needs of all students.

## CHAPTER THREE:

## RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

The intense focus upon the role of literacy leadership in the era of Common Core State Standards and the impact such leadership has had upon instruction secondary schools provide the foundation for this mixed methods study. The purpose of this study was to examine the literacy perceptions and practices of principals in West Virginia's secondary schools. This study was designed to examine the literacy beliefs and actions of select secondary school principals. Participant demographic characteristics were collected including: educational background, professional/certification background, and years of experience as principal and teacher. In addition, data were collected on the number of hours of literacy-related professional development offered in the last 3 years. Chapter three will examine the design and methods undertaken during the study.

**Restatement of Research Questions**

*Research Question 1*— What level of importance do WV secondary school principals report they assign to their role in providing leadership in literacy initiatives?

*Research Question 2*— To what degree do secondary principals report that they implement specific dimensions of literacy leadership in their schools?

*Research Question 3*— What is the relationship, if any, that exists between principals' perceptions and practices related to the literacy leadership?

*Research Question 4*—To what extent, if any, are selected demographic variables related to principals' perceptions of their role in providing leadership in literacy initiatives?

*Research Question 5*— To what extent, if any, are selected demographic variables related to principals' <u>self-reported</u> implementation of specific dimensions of literacy leadership in their schools?

## Research Design

Though the research design was primarily quantitative, there were elements which lead the research to be considered mixed methods in nature. Johnson and Onwuebuzie (2004) state that a mixed methods approach was a third research model that allowed researchers to draw from strengths and to minimize weaknesses of the traditional approaches of qualitative and quantitative research methods. Researchers utilize a mixed methods approach to research when neither qualitative nor qualitative methods can fully address the questions they wish to answer. Glesne (2011) wrote that a mixed method approach enhances the opportunity to validate data and to reveal answers in ways that a single method would not have alone. The use of a single approach fails to address the complexity of the subject matter for this study. Therefore, the researcher utilized a mixed methods approach for this study which was underscored by a concurrent embedded strategy for data analysis.

Creswell (2009) defines concurrent embedded strategy of mixed methods research as being an approach which has "a primary method that guides the project and a secondary database that provides a supporting role in the procedures. Given less priority, the secondary method (quantitative or qualitative) is embedded, or nested, within the predominant method (quantitative or qualitative). This embedding may mean that the secondary method addresses a different question or seeks information at a different level of analysis" (p.214).

The research design for this study was primarily quantitative with qualitative elements. Data were collected by means of a researcher-developed survey aimed at measuring self-reported

literacy leadership perceptions and practices among West Virginia secondary school principals. The study specifically examined connections between principals' classroom and administrative experience and their self-reported perception as well as practices of various dimensions of literacy leadership identified in the research literature. This task was accomplished by means of a researcher-developed electronic questionnaire composed of questions answered by means of a Likert-type scale in addition to open-ended requests for specific details related to their literacy leadership practices. Principal demographic information was collected to determine whether an individual's professional/educational background influence his literacy beliefs and practices.

The quantitative survey data were analyzed by means of SPSS using appropriate statistical methods. The qualitative data yielded by the open-ended survey questions was examined for the existence of patterns, categories or themes by organizing the information into categories of information. Criswell (2009) writes that "this inductive process illustrates working back and forth between the themes and the databases until the researchers have established a comprehensive set of themes" (p. 175). The reason for combining both qualitative and quantitative data is to better understand the research problems by converging both quantitative (broad numeric trends) and qualitative (detailed views) data and to seek out information which may shape the field of literacy leadership.

## Population and Sample

The population for this study ($N = 119$) were principals who served in a West Virginia secondary school during the 2015-16 school year and who met the additional criterion that each individual must have served as principal within their present school during the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years. The number of surveys returned yielded a sample of 47 ($n = 47$) and a

return rate of 39%. The names of participants were kept private and were not published in any form.

Data provided on the West Virginia Department of Education website served as a reference point for determining the schools which met participation criteria as being labeled as a high school. The West Virginia Department of Education defines a high school as an educational facility which contains grade 12. (For this study, the term "high school" and "secondary school" will be used interchangeably). Middle schools were excluded from examination. Administrators at each individual high school were contacted to ascertain their willingness to participate in the study. West Virginia Department of Education records indicate that there were 116 educational facilities classified as secondary high schools during the years 2015-16. The researcher decided to not include middle schools in the sample population. This decision was made due to the fact many schools which house middle grade students also contain elementary grades which receive federal funding to enhance literacy instruction. The researcher did not want principal perceptions of literacy due to elementary-focused initiatives to influence the examination of secondary level literacy leadership practices.

**Validation**

Validation for the survey instrument was completed by means of a pilot study of West Virginia principals as well as experts in the field of school leadership and literacy education. The participants were charged with reviewing the survey and providing input on its design, wording and overall clarity. The resulting feedback was used to modify the instrument.

**Data Collection**

This section details the data collection process utilized by the researcher. Within this section there is a description of the steps taken in preparing and administering the survey in an on-line format. Additionally, there is a brief overview of the survey as well as discussion of confidentiality procedures and the resulting methods used to bolster participation to ensure the validity of the collected data.

**Online Survey Overview and Completion Procedures**

It was decided that the best method for administering the survey was via an electronic format. After examining several electronic survey tools, the researcher decided to utilize *Survey Monkey.com* (http://www.surveymonkey.com). The features made available through the online instrument provided many advantages in regard to survey design, data collection methods, and analysis of data.

The survey consisted of nine sections. Section one required principals to indicate if they have served as an administrator within their current school for the past three years. Sections two through seven were tied to research findings related to literacy leadership in schools. The headings for these sections included: culture of literacy (beliefs and practices), collaboration, instructional practices and procedures, professional development, home-community connections, and maximizing capacity. The final section of the survey was related to the collection of participant demographic data. All demographic questions were devised to determine their professional and educational background as well as the types of literacy-related professional development attended within the previous three years.

After the creation of the electronic survey via the *SurveyMonkey* website, the researcher compiled a list of email addresses for administrators at each of the schools who met the criteria

for the study. The email addresses were obtained from the WVDE website and an introductory email was sent to each administrator. The correspondence provided an overview of the study as well as a request for participation. Additionally, the communication contained a link to the IRB-approved survey along with detailed instructions for completing the instrument and submitting responses electronically.

Participants were asked to complete the survey within 10 days from the date of the email. A second email was sent a week after the initial mailing with another sent after three weeks to maximize participation.

**Confidentiality**

To ensure confidentiality, and to protect the rights of all participants, all steps were taken to comply with the requirements of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Marshall University. All participants were provided with information related to research confidentiality. The confidentiality statement denoted that by completing and submitting the survey via the internet, they acknowledged informed consent and freely participated in the project.

**Data Analysis**

This mixed method study was designed to examine any relationship which may exist between secondary school principals self-reported literacy leadership perceptions and practices as well as with selected demographic data. Data was collected by means of an electronic survey. Qualitative analysis was conducted by means of SPSS using Pearson correlation statistics. Prior to distributing the survey to principals, the instrument was reviewed by a panel of experts in the field of literacy and school leadership to ascertain that the content and format of the survey were consistent with the variables being measured.

Several quantitative as well as qualitative methods were utilized to measure data as it relates to the research questions:

*Research Question 1*— What level of importance do WV secondary school principals report they assign to their role in providing leadership in literacy initiatives?

For the first research question, frequencies will be calculated to yield the percentage of participants who ranked survey items related to this question for each category of perceived importance. A table will be created to show the frequency distribution for each respective Likert-response related to literacy leadership perceptions.

*Research Question 2*— To what degree do secondary principals report that they implement specific dimensions of literacy leadership in their schools?

As with the first research question, a table was utilized to reveal the frequency distribution of each respective response related to implemented practices within schools.

*Research Question 3*— What is the relationship, if any, that exists between principals' perceptions and practices related to the literacy leadership?

For research question 3, there was examination of the relationships between perceptions of their leadership in literacy and self-reported practices by making use of correlations between responses by means of bivariate analysis.

*Research Question 4*—To what extent, if any, are selected demographic variables related to principals' perceptions of their role in providing leadership in literacy initiatives?

*Research Question 5*— To what extent, if any, are selected demographic variables related to principals' self-reported implementation of specific dimensions of literacy leadership in their schools?

Data collected regarding research questions 4 and 5 sought relationships between and/or among specific demographic characteristics and self-reported literacy leadership perceptions and practices. This was accomplished by means of conducting bivariate analyses between and/or among the noted variables.   Principals were also asked to provide the number of hours of professional development in literacy provided in their schools during the last 3 years.

**Limitations**

All research is bound by limitations beyond the control of the researcher (Heppner and Heppner, 2004).  The following were identified as limitations within this study:

1.  A non-experimental research study provides no allowance for the random assignment to groups for manipulation or for the manipulation of independent variables (Johnson & Christensen, 2000).

2.  Self-reporting questionnaires are subject to contamination and may be limited by participant response (Johnson & Christensen, 2000). This study utilizes a self-reporting questionnaire which aims to assess principal perceptions of literacy beliefs and practices present in their respective facilities.

3.  The perceptions reported by principals may be subjective in nature and these responses limit the accuracy of the collected data (Kerlinger, 1986).

4.  The number of schools which qualified for consideration will reduce the pool of participants as did factors such as willingness of the principals to take part in the research. Their respective level of interest may have resulted in a decreased rate of response as well.

# CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

This chapter will provide an overview of the data collected using the Literacy Leadership Survey. The overall purpose of this study was to examine the presence of dimensions of literacy leadership in West Virginia secondary schools. The study sought to explicitly examine principal perceptions of literacy leadership as well as the literacy practices they report currently in place within their schools. There was also examination of relationships between principals' classroom and administrative experience and their self-reported perceptions and practices of the dimensions of literacy leadership identified in a review of current literature. Demographic information collected dealt with the principals' years of experience as a teacher and administrator, the types of certifications held, highest degree earned. Though not included in a research question, principals were asked to provide the number of hours of professional development provided in their schools for the last 3 years (2013-14, 2014-15, and 2015-16).

The West Virginia Board of Education formally adopted the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) in late 2015 to serve as the guide for curriculum implementation within the state. The CCRS represented West Virginia's second revision of their curriculum guidelines since the adoption of the Next Generation Content Standards, which were influenced by the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), in 2010 (Maunz, 2016). The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (2010) asserted that the literacy emphasis within the CCSS standards is deeply rooted in research which supports the need for college- and career-ready students to be proficient in their ability to engage with text in a variety of content areas. Researchers such as Reeves (2008) have noted that if literacy is to improve at the secondary level and beyond, it is vital to examine literacy-related perceptions and practices of school administrators.

**Data Collection and Participant Characteristics**

The target sample for this study was all individuals employed in the role of principal at each of West Virginia's 119 high schools. The term "high school" for this study is used to describe each public school which housed only grades 9-12. Each principal was emailed a link to the researcher-created Leaders of Literacy Survey. The survey was hosted on the Survey Monkey website, which enabled the researcher to collect data anonymously. Although all 119 high school principals were invited to participate, the number of those who responded was 47. The resulting return rate was 39%.

Based upon approval by Marshall University's Institutional Review Board, the Leaders of Literacy Survey was used to gather data from the principals in the sample. The researcher-designed survey was piloted with a variety of educational professionals which included university professors, former high school principals, and literacy education specialists. The survey collected data related to literacy perceptions and practices as well as demographic information. The demographic data consisted of disciplines taught, years of teaching experience, highest degree held, years of administrative experience, and types of certifications held. Principals were also asked to indicate the hours of professional development in literacy undertaken in the previous three years.

**Disciplines Taught/Years of Experience Teaching and Certification**

The survey requested respondents to report the disciplines taught and the number of years of teaching experience. The responses were not always complete, with some individuals failing to report either the disciplines taught or the number of years of teaching experience. Question 37 required respondents to select all the specific teaching certifications held. The certification choices included administration, ELA/Literacy, mathematics, science, technology/vocational,

fine arts, social studies, foreign language, physical education, remediation and other. This question yielded a more accurate view of professional background. Comparison review of Questions 34 and 37 indicates that 37% reported other certifications not listed, which included special education, business education, elementary/pre-school education, alternative education, driver's education, journalism, and counseling. These certifications are represented in Table 1.

Table 1

*Types of Certification*

| Types of Certifications Held | Responses |
| --- | --- |
| Administration | 100% |
| Special Education | 20% |
| Social Studies | 22% |
| ELA/Literacy | 15% |
| Science | 17% |
| Fine Arts | 12% |
| Mathematics | 10% |
| Physical Education/Health | 10% |
| Technology/Vocational | 10% |
| Foreign Language | 5% |
| Pre-School/Elementary | 5% |
| Remediation | 5% |
| Alternative Education | 2% |
| Business Education | 2% |
| Counseling | 2% |
| Driver's Education | 2% |
| Journalism | 2% |

**Years of Experience as an Administrator**

Most respondents (54%) had 10 or more years of experience as a school administrator with 12% having more than 20 years of administrative experience. Principals with five to 10 years of experience composed 27% of the total response rate. Individuals with fewer than three years of experience comprised the smallest grouping of respondents at 7%.

**Highest Degrees Held**

Most respondents (73%) held a master's degree plus 45 or more graduate hours of education; only 24% had a master's degree with fewer than 45 hours of graduate course work. All applicants held a minimum of a master's degree in some field with 2% having been awarded a doctorate. Six respondents opted to skip the question related to the highest degree held.

**Hours of Professional Development**

Principals were also asked to indicate the approximate number of hours of literacy-related professional development provided in their schools for the previous 3 years of time (2013-14, 2014-15, and 2015-16). Though not a research question, these data are discussed in this section.

**Research Question 1— What level of importance do WV secondary school principals report they assign to their role in providing leadership in literacy initiatives.**

The survey contained nine questions which focused upon principal perception of the importance of various areas of literacy leadership. Question 1 asked principals if literacy served as a foundational element for their overall academic program. The mean response for this was 5.70, as 99% rated this as 5 or 6, indicating strong agreement. This was the highest level of agreement in perceptions. The principals also strongly agreed (a rating of 5 or above) that they placed value on the expertise and literacy beliefs of their teachers (mean of 5.47), that collaborative efforts with teachers were valuable to student literacy growth (mean of 5.39), that

they valued teacher input in developing literacy initiatives (mean of 5.48), that they believed

literacy strategies needed to be integrated daily throughout the curriculum (mean of 5.35), and

that data played a positive role in shaping the course of literacy instruction in their schools (mean

of 5.06).  Two questions had a mean of less than 5: Question 25, that asked principals about

whether ongoing literacy-related professional development was essential to foster literacy growth

in their schools (mean of 4.86), and Question 29, which asked principals if they believed parental

and community support were vital components of an effective literacy program (mean of 4.83).

Table 2 contains complete results.

Table 2

*Principals' Perceptions of Importance of Providing Leadership in Literacy Initiatives*

| Question | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q1.  Literacy serves as a foundational element | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 10 | 35 | 5.70 |
| Q2. Principals place value on beliefs/expertise | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 19 | 25 | 5.47 |
| Q6. Principals believe in the value of collaboration | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 19 | 23 | 5.39 |
| Q8. Principals place value on teacher input | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 17 | 26 | 5.48 |
| Q13. Data play an important role in literacy initiatives | 0 | 0 | 3 | 10 | 13 | 19 | 5.07 |
| Q17. Literacy strategies used across the curriculum | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 19 | 20 | 5.35 |

Table 2

*Principals' Perceptions of Importance of Providing Leadership in Literacy Initiatives (Continued)*

| Question | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q25. Ongoing PD fosters literacy growth | 0 | 1 | 4 | 6 | 21 | 11 | 4.86 |
| Q29 Community support is vital for literacy initiatives | 0 | 0 | 6 | 8 | 14 | 13 | 4.83 |

## Research Question 2— To what degree do secondary principals report that they implement specific dimensions of literacy leadership in their schools?

Principals were asked to provide input on 22 survey questions related to their literacy leadership practices. The mean ratings of the practice-related responses ranged from 5.67 to a low of 3.46. Question 9 was associated with their school's use of experienced literacy teachers as models for those who require additional literacy support. The question with the highest mean response was Question 9 —teachers serve as models for colleagues.  Three other questions had a mean of 5.0 or greater: (a) Question 33 —measures were taken to ensure an equitable distribution of resources for both ELA and non-ELA (English Language Arts) classrooms (mean of 5.17); (b) Question 18 — that professional development was provided to support literacy practices (mean of 5.02); and (c) Question 15 — that principals routinely observed classrooms for literacy-related activities. The question that had the lowest mean response asked respondents to rate the opportunities for community members to take an active role in the implementation of literacy initiatives with a mean response of 3.46.  The second lowest mean rating was also from a question associated with home-community literacy practices, Question 28 asked for input associated with parents having access to training, information and

support to promote literacy in the home with a mean of 3.63. The next three lowest mean responses were to questions in the following subcategories of the survey: instructional practices/procedures, professional development and maximizing capacity. Question 16 requested input related to funding for instructional support materials. The question yielded a mean response of 4.00. Question 24 dealt with principal participation in literacy professional development with a resulting mean score of 4.09. Rounding out the lowest mean responses was Question 31 with a mean average of 4.27. The question centered upon the maximizing of capacity by means of a literacy-focused daily schedule. The responses to all questions are found in Table 3.

Table 3

*Principals' Implementation of Leadership in Literacy Initiatives*

| Question | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q3 Teachers are engaged in literacy initiatives | 0 | 0 | 2 | 11 | 22 | 12 | 4.94 |
| Q4 Principal engagement in literacy initiatives | 0 | 1 | 3 | 11 | 14 | 17 | 4.93 |
| Q7 Collegial decision-making between teachers & admins | 0 | 1 | 5 | 11 | 17 | 411 | 4.71 |
| Q9 Teachers serve as models for colleagues | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 7 | 35 | 5.67 |
| Q10 Data guided planning for literacy initiatives | 0 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 21 | 13 | 4.98 |
| Q11 Various data serves to support literacy | 0 | 0 | 2 | 12 | 16 | 15 | 4.98 |
| Q12 Non-ELA use data for literacy planning | 1 | 1 | 6 | 15 | 17 | 4 | 4.32 |
| Q14 Monitoring of practices to support learning | 0 | 0 | 2 | 11 | 20 | 10 | 4.88 |

Table 3

*Principals' Implementation of Leadership in Literacy Initiatives (continued)*

| Question | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q15 Routine observation for long term growth | 0 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 19 | 12 | 5.00 |
| Q16 Locating funding to support literacy | 0 | 6 | 10 | 9 | 12 | 5 | 4.00 |
| Q18 ELA teachers attend literacy PD | 0 | 0 | 2 | 9 | 18 | 14 | 5.02 |
| Q19 Non-ELA attend literacy PD | 1 | 2 | 7 | 8 | 16 | 9 | 4.47 |
| Q20 Collaborative PD Planning | 0 | 1 | 9 | 8 | 14 | 11 | 4.58 |
| Q21 Admin evaluations support literacy planning | 0 | 0 | 4 | 9 | 21 | 9 | 4.81 |
| Q22 Collaboration for PD for literacy initiatives | 0 | 0 | 11 | 8 | 16 | 6 | 4.41 |
| Q23 Teacher assessment of literacy practices | 0 | 0 | 5 | 11 | 21 | 5 | 4.62 |
| Q24 Principals attend literacy PD | 1 | 6 | 7 | 10 | 12 | 7 | 4.09 |
| Q26 Admins serve as a liaison to community | 1 | 3 | 7 | 11 | 14 | 5 | 4.20 |
| Q27 Opportunities for community involvement | 2 | 12 | 10 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 3.46 |
| Q28 Parent training access | 3 | 5 | 10 | 13 | 6 | 4 | 3.63 |
| Q31 Daily schedule maximizes time | 1 | 4 | 6 | 11 | 10 | 9 | 4.27 |
| Q32 Schedule complies with state mandates | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 6 | 30 | 5.59 |
| Q33 Equitable distribution for ELA & non-ELA | 0 | 0 | 2 | 6 | 16 | 17 | 5.17 |

**Research Question 3— What is the relationship, if any, that exists between principals'**

**perceptions and practices related to the literacy leadership?**

The survey instrument contained 33 specific questions/statements within seven categories related to principal perceptions and practices of literacy leadership. The categories included literacy beliefs, collaboration, use of assessment, instructional practice/procedures, professional development, home-school connections and maximizing capacity. Each category contained questions related to both perception and practice except for maximizing capacity which focused solely upon items related to practice. There were nine Likert-type questions/statements which focused upon perception with another 22 statements/questions which measured practice-related issues. The survey contained two opened-ended items which requested information about literacy initiatives undertaken at individual schools within the state.

In analyzing the data, the researcher used Pearson $r$ correlations to determine if any significant relationships existed between items that measured principal beliefs about the importance of literacy leadership and their self-reported practices related to literacy. It was determined that each belief response and each practice response for the seven categories in the survey needed to be calculated independently rather than in an aggregate manner. All categories are represented except for Maximizing Capacity which contained no perception-related questions/statements.

The literacy beliefs section of the survey contained five questions. Question 1 and Question 2 were perceptual in nature while Questions 3 and 4 were related to principals' literacy practices. There were no significant correlations found between the two perception items and the two belief items for the literacy beliefs section of the survey.

Within the Collaboration section of the Literacy Leadership Survey, there were four items which measured principal literacy perceptions and practices. Belief-related Questions 6 and 8 were found to correlate with Question 7, the only practice-related item within the subcategory. An analysis of the questions from within the collaboration section are provided in tables 4-5.

Table 4

*Bivariate Correlations Between Use of Collegial Decision Making and Collaborative Efforts*

|  | Q6 Collaborative efforts deemed to be of value | Q7 Use of collegial decision making |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Q6 Collaborative efforts deemed to be valuable | .379* | --- |
| Q7 Use of collegial decision making | --- | .379* |

*Correlation is significant at the $p < 0.05$ level (two-tailed)

Perception-oriented Question 7 was found to have a moderate relationship of .379 (significant at $p < 0.05$ level) with Question 6 which measured principals use of collegial decision making in literacy initiatives as presented in Table 4. A slightly weaker Pearson $r$ correlation of .333 (significant at $p < 0.05$ level) was found to exist between Question 7 and Question 8 which centered upon the value given to teacher input in developing literacy initiatives. See table 5.

Table 5

*Bivariate Correlations Between Use of Collegial Decision Making and Value Given to Teacher Input*

|  | Q7 Use of collegial decision making | Q8 Value given to teacher input |
|---|---|---|
| Q7 Use of collegial decision making | --- | .333* |
| Q8 Value given to teacher input | .333* | --- |

*Correlation is significant at the $p < 0.05$ level (two-tailed)

The Use of Assessment section of the Leaders of Literacy Survey contained a total of four items. Question 13 was the sole perceptual item within the section. There were significant correlations found between the perceptual question and the three practice-related items. As noted in table 6, when principals reported all teachers were provided with data to guide planning (Q13), they also noted that teachers were given access to data for shaping literacy instruction with a Pearson *r* of .368.

Table 6

*Bivariate Correlations Between Teachers Being Given Access to Data Usage to Shape Instruction and Principal Perceptions of Data Usage to Shape Instruction*

|  | Q10 Teachers are given access to data | Q13 Principal believes that data shapes instruction |
|---|---|---|
| Q10 Teachers are given access to data | --- | .368* |
| Q13 Principal believes that data shapes instruction | .368* | --- |

*Correlation is significant at the $p < 0.05$ level (two-tailed)

Question 13 focused upon the principal's role in shaping the direction of literacy instruction. Q13 correlated with each of the practice-related items with the strongest relationship being with Question 11 at .637 (significant at the $p < 0.01$ level). Q11 focused upon the use of formative and summative assessment to guide literacy learning. See table 7.

Table 7

*Bivariate Correlations Between The Use of Multiple Forms of Data to Support Instruction and Principal Perceptions of Data Usage to Shape Instruction*

| | Q11 Multiple forms of data used to support instruction | Q13 Principal believes that data shapes instruction |
|---|---|---|
| Q11 Multiple forms of data used to support instruction | --- | .637** |
| Q13 Principal believes that data shapes instruction | .637** | --- |

\*\*Correlation is significant at the $p < 0.01$ level (two-tailed)

The remaining practice items also correlated at a significance level of $p < 0.01$ with Question 12 (Pearson *r* of .490) seeking to measure Non-ELA teachers use of literacy data for planning. See Table 8.

Table 8

*Bivariate Correlations Between Non-ELA Teachers Being Given Access to Data and Principal Perceptions of Data Usage to Shape Instruction*

|  | Q12 Non-ELA teachers use data to guide instruction | Q13 Principal believes that data shapes instruction |
|---|---|---|
| Q12 Non-ELA teachers use data to guide instruction | --- | .490** |
| Q13 Principal believes that data shapes instruction | .490** | --- |

**Correlation is significant at the $p < 0.01$ level (two-tailed)

The Leaders of Literacy Survey contained a section entitled Instructional Practices and Procedures which was comprised of four questions. The items consisted of one perceptual-related item (Q17 — principal belief that it is vital to integrate literacy strategies into daily instruction) and three practice-related items (Q14 — monitoring of literacy-related classroom practices, Q15 — routine monitoring for long-term literacy support initiatives, and Q16 — allocation of funding for literacy initiatives). The initial correlations for the instructional practices and procedures section are listed in Table 9 below.

Table 9

*Bivariate Correlations Between Principal Beliefs in Importance of Cross Curricular Strategies and Support for Personalized Learning*

| | Q14 Support for personalized learning | Q17 Principal believes in the importance of cross-curricular strategies |
|---|---|---|
| Q14 Support for personalized learning | --- | .512** |
| Q17 Principal believes in the importance of cross-curricular strategies | .512** | --- |
| . | | |

**Correlation is significant at the $p < 0.01$ level (two-tailed)

There was also another notable correlation between Q17 (the sole perception item) and Q15 with a Pearson *r* of .481 at the $p < 0.01$ level of significance. As noted in table 10, when principals noted that they believed in the importance of cross-curricular literacy strategies (Q17), they also reported that there was regular monitoring of for instructional practices that promoted literacy. There was no significant relationship found between Q17 and Q16.

Table 10

*Bivariate Correlations Between Principal Beliefs in Importance of Cross Curricular Strategies and Support for Personalized Learning*

| | Q15 Monitoring of instructional practices | Q17 Principal believes in the importance of cross curricular strategies |
|---|---|---|
| Q15 Monitoring of instructional practices | --- | .481 |
| Q17 Principal believes in the importance of cross-curricular strategies | .481 | --- |

**Correlation is significant at the $p < 0.01$ level (two-tailed)

Within the Leaders of Literacy Survey, there were seven practice-related items and a single perception item within the Professional Development section of the instrument. Question 25 was the single perception item that was included. It measured principal perceptions of the importance of ongoing professional development to support literacy growth within a school. As noted within Table 16, there was a single practice item (Q24 — principal participation in literacy professional development) which yielded a strong relationship with Q25 resulting in a correlation of .411 at a significance level of $p < 0.01$. There were no other significant relationships found between the remaining items within the professional development category.

Table 11

*Bivariate Correlations Between the Principal Participation in Ongoing PD and Belief that PD is Essential*

|  | Q24 Principal participates in ongoing PD | Q25 Belief that ongoing PD is essential |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Q24 Principal participates in ongoing PD | --- | .441** |
| Q25 Belief that ongoing PD is essential | .441** | --- |

**Correlation is significant at the $p < 0.01$ level (two-tailed)

The Home-Community section of the Leaders of Literacy Survey contained three practice items and a single perception-related statement (Q29 — principals feel that parental and community support are vital components of an effective literacy program). The weakest correlation between practice and perception items within the home-community section is noted in table 12. The resulting relationship produced a .318 at a significance level of $p < 0.05$ between Q26 (principal serves a liaison between school and community) and perception item Q29.

Table 12

*Bivariate Correlations Between the Belief that Community Support is Essential and the Principal's Role as Liaison*

| | Q26 Principal serves as liaison between school and community | Q29 Parental & community support is vital |
|---|---|---|
| Q26 Principal serves as liaison between school and community | ---- | .318* |
| Q29 Parental & community Support is vital | .318* | --- |

*Correlation is significant at the $p < 0.05$ level (two-tailed)

Table 13 denotes the relationship between Q29 and Q27 — opportunities for community involvement. The data revealed a Pearson *r* correlation of .533 at the $p < 0.01$ significance level.

Table 13

*Bivariate Correlations Between the Belief that Community Support is Essential and the Principal's Role as Liaison*

| | Q27 Opportunities for community involvement | Q29 Parental and community support is vital |
|---|---|---|
| Q27 Opportunities for community involvement | --- | .533** |
| Q29 Parental and community support is vital | .533 | --- |

**Correlation is significant at the $p < 0.01$ level (two-tailed)

The final significant correlation within the Home-School Connections category was between Q29 and Q 28 which concerned parental access to literacy training. There was found to be a correlation of .431 at a significance level of $p < 0.01$ as noted in Table 14.

Table 14

*Bivariate Correlations Between Belief that Parental & Community Involvement is Vital and Parental Access to Literacy Training*

| | Q29 Parental & community support is vital | Q28 Parental access to literacy training |
|---|---|---|
| Q29 Parental & community support is vital | --- | .431** |
| Q28 Parental access to literacy training | .431** | --- |

**Correlation is significant at the $p < 0.01$ level (two-tailed)

## Research Question 4—To what extent, if any, are selected demographic variables related to principals' perceptions of their role in providing leadership in literacy initiatives?

The Literacy Leadership Survey contained a demographic section which asked participants to indicate disciplines taught, years of teaching experience, highest degree/hours held, number of years of administrative experience, and the types of certification held. The section also contained two additional questions. The first was related to the number of hours of literacy professional development undertaken within the previous two school years and an open-ended response item which asked principals to elaborate on the specific types of literacy professional development that they feel had a positive impact upon their administrative practices. An analysis of the data using SPSS revealed that there were no significant relationships between the varying demographic factors and the participants self-reported perceptions of literacy leadership.

**Research Question 5— To what extent, if any, are selected demographic variables related to principals' self-reported implementation of specific dimensions of literacy leadership in their schools?**

Using SPSS software, the data related to the principals' areas of certification were broken down into five basic categories: reading/language arts, math, science, social studies and other. There were no significant correlations found between the self-reported literacy practices and the areas of certification held by the respondents. The same categories were utilized for analysis for the disciplines taught by respondents prior to their entry into administration. Again, no significant correlations were found between previous teaching experience and the implementation of literacy leadership.

The number of years of administrative experience correlated negatively with Q15 which dealt with the routine observation to support long-term literacy growth. The breakdown revealed a Pearson of -.346 with 0.29 significance at $p <.05$.  Data from the survey indicated that two additional practice-related items correlated negatively when compared to the years of administrative experience. Q21 which focused upon the way administrative evaluations shaped literacy PD planning yielded a -.353 at 0.24 significance at $p <.05$. The third item to produce a negative relationship with administrative experience was Q29 which produced a correlation of -.342 with .031 significance at $p <.05$. This item dealt with the importance of community support for literacy initiatives.

Though not listed as a research question, the study also gathered data on the number of hours of professional development in literacy principals reported for their school over a three-year period of time (2013-13, 2014-15, and 2015-16).   These data provided some interesting

information about the relationship between the time provided for literacy professional development and implementation of literacy practices.

Significant relationships were found between 16 reported literacy leadership practices and the number of hours of professional development in literacy. As the number of hours increased, the reported level of implementation of these practices also increased. The greatest relationships were found between the hours of professional development provided and principal participation in professional development to enhance school-wide literacy instruction (.706 at the $p < 0.01$ level). A very high correlation was also found for hours of provided professional development and the principals' self-reported practice of serving as a liaison between the school and the community to convey the school's literacy expectations and goals (.619 at the $p < 0.01$ level). Five other self-reported practices correlated at greater than .5 using the Pearson $r$ test: (a) practices are in place to ensure that teachers are actively engaged in initiatives which promote literacy, (b) the principal engages in practices to promote literacy, (c) the teachers and principal participate in professional development planning based on identified student literacy needs, (d) data from observations and evaluations affecting literacy development are shared with teachers in professional development activities, and (e) teachers and the principal collaborate to plan literacy development activities. These data are displayed in Tables 15-21.

Table15 illustrates the correlation between the number of hours of professional development undertaken by principals and their self-reported use of practices which ensure engagement in literacy initiatives with a correlation of .512 at the <0.01level of significance.

Table 15

*Bivariate Correlation Between Hours of Professional Development and Practices that Ensure Engagement*

| | Hours of professional development | Practices ensure engagement |
|---|---|---|
| Hours of professional development | --- | .512** |
| Practices ensure engagement | .512** | --- |

**Correlation is significant at the $p < 0.01$ level (two-tailed)

When comparing the hours of professional development with principal engagement in literacy initiatives, there was a resulting Pearson *r* correlation at .573 as shown in table 16.

Table 16

*Bivariate Correlation Between of Hours of Professional Development and Principal Engages in Initiatives*

| | Hours of professional development | Principal engages in initiatives |
|---|---|---|
| Hours of professional development | --- | .573** |
| Principal engages in initiatives | .573** | --- |

**Correlation is significant at the $p < 0.01$ level (two-tailed)

A moderate correlation of .527 at the $p < 0.01$ significance was found to exist between the hours of professional development undertaken and the use of needs based professional development within a school. See table 17.

Table 17

*Bivariate Correlation of Hours of Professional Development and Needs Based Professional Development*

|  | Hours of professional development | Needs based professional development |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Hours of professional development | --- | .527** |
| Needs based PD | .527** | --- |

**Correlation is significant at the $p < 0.01$ level (two-tailed)

Table 18 contains the results of correlations found to exist between the hours of professional development and the fact that data is used to shape professional development. A correlation of .503 was found to exist between the two items.

Table 18

*Bivariate Correlation Between of Hours of Professional Development and Principal Joins in Professional Development*

|  | Hours of professional development | Data effects professional development |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Hours of professional development | --- | .503** |
| Data effects professional development | .503** | --- |

**Correlation is significant at the $p < 0.01$ level (two-tailed)

The self-reported hours of professional development correlated with Question 22 (Joint participation in professional development) at the $p < 0.01$ significant level with a Pearson $r$ of .560.

Table 19

*Bivariate Correlation Between Hours of Professional Development and Joint Professional Development*

| | Hours of professional development | Joint professional development |
|---|---|---|
| Hours of professional development | --- | .560** |
| Joint professional development | .560** | --- |

**Correlation is significant at the $p < 0.01$ level (two-tailed)

When comparing the hours of professional development with the varying questions from the survey, the strongest relationship (Pearson *r* of .706) was found to exist with Q24 which was related to principal participation in teacher-centered professional development.

Table 20

*Bivariate Correlation Between Hours of Professional Development and Principal Joins in Professional Development*

| | Hours of professional development | Principal joins in professional development |
|---|---|---|
| Hours of professional development | --- | .706** |
| Principal joins in professional development | .706** | --- |

**Correlation is significant at the $p < 0.01$ level (two-tailed)

Table 21 contains the final correlations associated with the principal's self-reported hours of professional development. A strong correlation of .619 was found to exist between the hours of PD and Q26 which focused upon the principal's role as a literacy liaison to the community.

Table 21

*Bivariate Correlation Between Hours of Professional Development and Liaison for the Community*

| | Hours of professional development | Liaison for the community |
|---|---|---|
| Hours of professional development | --- | .619** |
| Liaison for the community | .619** | --- |

**Correlation is significant at the $p < 0.01$ level (two-tailed)

## Qualitative Findings

The Leaders of Literacy Survey contained four open-ended questions related to varying literacy issues within secondary. Fink (2006) noted that opened ended questions offer insight into why individuals maintain specific belief. Fink (2006) continued by asserting that the resulting data provides descriptions of feeling and perceptions, values, habits, and personal background or demographic characteristics (p. 4). Creswell (2009) writes that the analysis of qualitative research consists of "analyzing the data for significant phrases, developing meanings and clustering them into themes, and presenting description of the phenomenon (p.160). The resulting data from the open-ended were searched for patterns to add understanding of the topics beings researched.

On Question 5 of the survey, respondents were asked to briefly describe literacy initiatives promoted within their school. A total of 29 respondents (61.7% of the sample) chose to provide feedback. The responses were examined by the reported topics. The most common topics were categorized by the researcher based upon key words located within the given responses. Table 22 contains a breakdown of the key words/concepts.

The highest reported literacy initiatives were student-focused school initiatives and packaged program and/or purchased resources (12 responses each). Principals also indicated they promoted classroom literacy strategies (9 responses), encouraged teacher-focused school initiatives (6 responses) and promoted district or state mandates in their schools. In Chapter 5, consideration will be given to the importance of these initiatives.

Table 22

*Comments by Principals for Question 5 Categorized into Key Concepts*

| Key Words/Concepts | Number of Comments |
|---|---|
| Teacher-Focused School Initiatives | 6 |
| Student-Focused School Initiatives | 12 |
| District and/or State Mandates | 5 |
| Packaged programs and/or purchased resources | 12 |
| Classroom literacy strategies | 9 |

On Question 30 of the survey, respondents were asked to briefly describe literacy based activities made available to parents. A total of 12 individuals (25.5% of participants) provided feedback. Again, responses were examined by topics and then categorized based upon key words/concepts. Table 23 contains a breakdown of the key words/concepts for Question 30 responses.

Table 23

*Comments by Principals for Question 30 Categorized into Key Concepts*

| Key Words/Concepts | Number of Comments |
|---|:---:|
| Parental access to resources | 2 |
| Direct parental training | 1 |
| Participation in school initiatives | 5 |
| Invitation to school events | 2 |
| No parental offerings provided | 3 |

Survey question 39 requested participants to share feedback related to specific literacy-related professional development which they felt had a positive impact upon their administrative practices. A total of 16 individuals (34.04% of participants) provided a response. Table 24 provides an overview of the key words/concepts that were yielded after categorization of terms was undertaken by the researcher.

Table 24

*Comments by Principals for Question 39 Categorized into Key Concepts*

| Key words/Concepts | Number of Comments |
|---|:---:|
| Initiatives mandated by the WVDE | 1 |
| Conferences/Presentations | 4 |
| Packaged programs/purchased resources | 6 |
| School/District-Level trainings | 8 |

Survey Question 40 invited participants to share feedback related to additional information related to their literacy leadership perceptions and practices. A total of 16 individuals (17.02 % of participants) provided a response. Table 25 provides an overview of the key words/concepts that were yielded after categorization of the responses.

Table 25

*Comments by Principals for Question 40 Categorized into Key Concepts*

| Key words/Concepts | Number of Comments |
|---|---|
| Lack of emphasis for literacy at secondary level | 2 |
| Lack of funding for secondary literacy initiatives | 2 |
| Identification of successful school literacy practices | 5 |
| Lack of quality professional development | 1 |
| Establishment of school-wide literacy goals | 4 |

**Summary**

Analysis of the data provided from the Leaders of Literacy survey yielded insight into the literacy perceptions and practices of secondary school principals in West Virginia. Data was collected in the form of opened-ended items and Likert-type responses on a scale of 6 (strong agreement) to 1 (strong disagreement). The mean ratings ranged from a low of 3.46 to a high of 5.70 on a 6-point scale.

**CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS**

**Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to assess the literacy leadership perceptions and practices of West Virginia's secondary school principals. Respondents were surveyed as to their varying perceptions and practices related to literacy initiatives within their school. The study focused upon five research questions:

*Research Question 1*— What level of importance do WV secondary school principals report they assign to their role in providing leadership in literacy initiatives?

*Research Question 2*— To what degree do secondary principals report that they implement specific dimensions of literacy leadership in their schools?

*Research Question 3*— What is the relationship, if any, that exists between principals' perceptions and practices related to the literacy leadership?

*Research Question 4*—To what extent, if any, are selected demographic variables related to principals' perceptions of their role in providing leadership in literacy initiatives?

*Research Question 5*— To what extent, if any, are selected demographic variables related to principals' self-reported implementation of specific dimensions of literacy leadership in their schools?

**Sample**

The population for this research study was all West Virginia secondary school principals. The survey specifically focused upon secondary schools which met the definition of being a high school (a facility housing grades 9-12). There were 119 individual principals whose job descriptions met these criteria. Of the 119 individuals who were surveyed, a sample of 47 responded. This resulted in a response rate of 40%.

**Methods**

  The focus of this primarily qualitative study was to gather information related to secondary school principals' literacy perceptions and practices using an instrument entitled Leaders of Literacy Survey. A Likert-type scale was used to measure responses to survey questions which were centered around seven subcategories: literacy beliefs, collaboration, use of assessment, instructional practices/procedures, professional development, and home-community connections. The survey was administered using the Surveymonkey.com site with invitations being sent via email to the 119 secondary school principals in West Virginia.

  SPSS software was used to analyze all quantitative data. Question 5, 30, 39 and 40 were open ended questions related to literacy perceptions and practices. Data gathered from these questions was analyzed and then classified by topic.

**Summary of Findings**

  **Research Question — 1: What level of importance do WV secondary school principals report they assign to their role in providing leadership in literacy initiatives?**

  Principals were asked to rate the level of importance they assigned to their efforts in providing leadership as it related to literacy initiatives. There were nine survey questions which were related to principal perceptions of their literacy leadership. The clear majority of respondents (99%) indicated that literacy served as a foundational element for their school's overall academic curriculum with a mean score of 5.70 (on a 6-point scale).

  Principals believe the role of teachers is vital to the success of literacy initiatives. This is illustrated by the responses given to strong level of agreement noted for three perception items, giving each of the items a rating of 5 or above on items which measured the value placed on the expertise and literacy beliefs of their teachers (mean of 5.47), collaborative efforts with teachers

were valuable to student literacy growth (mean of 5.39), and the value of teacher input in developing literacy initiatives (mean of 5.48), Thus, it may be concluded that principals perceive there to be value in the integration of literacy across the curriculum and that the role of the teacher is vital to the success of literacy initiatives.

Perception items associated with the use of literacy strategies and data to guide instruction yielded a mean of 5.21, which also indicated strong agreement from respondents. The remaining survey questions were associated with literacy outreach as it relates to professional development and community initiatives. The resulting averages were the lowest of the perception items with a respective ranking of 4.83 and 4.86 on a 6-point Likert-type scale. Despite being comparatively lower, the items yielded a high level of agreement.

The mean for perception related items was 5.27 which indicates that principals assigned high levels of importance to items associated with their perceptions of literacy leadership.

**Research Question — 2: To what degree do secondary principals report that they implement specific dimensions of literacy leadership in their schools?**

Principals were asked to provide input on 22 items related to the dimensions of literacy leadership implemented within their schools. Approximately 88% of the respondents rated their implementation of literacy initiatives as either a 4 or 5 on a 6-point scale. Two practice-related items associated with home-school connections were scored lower with ratings of 3.46 and 3.63, respectively. Given the overall high ratings assigned to practice-related items, it is evident that principals assign a high level of agreement regarding their implementation of varying dimensions of literacy leadership as a component of their role of principal.

In assessing their practice of leadership, mean ratings from principals ranged from a high of 5.67 to a low of 3.46 on various items on the survey. The highest mean response indicated

that principals reported that they utilized experienced literacy teachers as models for those who require additional literacy support (mean of 5.67). Other high mean responses included (a) ensuring an equitable distribution of resources for both ELA and non-ELA classrooms (mean of 5.17); (b) that professional development was provided to support literacy practices (mean of 5.02); and (c) that principals routinely observed classrooms for literacy-related activities (mean of 5.00). The lowest mean response (3.46) was for a question that asked respondents to rate the opportunities for community members to take an active role in the implementation of literacy initiatives. The second lowest mean rating (3.63) asked if parents had access to training, information and support to promote literacy in the home. Three other questions yielded mean low mean responses: (a) locating funding for instructional support materials (mean of 4.00); (b). principal participation in literacy professional development (mean of 4.09); and (c) maximizing of capacity by means of a literacy-focused daily schedule (mean of 4.27).

**Research Question — 3: What is the relationship, if any, that exists between principals' perceptions and practices related to the literacy leadership?**

Several relationships were found to exist between the self-reported literacy perceptions and practices of the responding principals. Data were collected across seven categories on the Leaders of Literacy Survey. The composition of the items consisted of 22 statements/questions which measured practice items with an additional nine items which measured perceptions of leadership.

There were no significant relationships found with the initial section (entitled Literacy Beliefs) of the survey which was comprised of items associated with general beliefs about literacy. The Collaboration section of the Literacy Leadership Survey contained correlations between two belief-related questions (items measuring the value given to collaborative efforts

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and value assigned to teacher input) and a single practice item (use of collegial decision making) with bivariate correlations of .379 and .333 respectively (significant at $p < 0.05$ level). Within the Use of Assessment section, significant correlations found between the perceptual question (principal belief that data shapes instruction) and the three practice-related items: (a) gauging teacher access to data (Pearson $r$ of .368 at $p < 0.05$ level), (b) forms of data are analyzed ($r$ of .637 at the $p < 0.01$ level), and (3) Non-ELA teachers have access to data ($r$ of .490, significant of the $p < 0.01$ level).

The survey section entitled Instructional Practices and Procedures consisted of one perceptual-related item which measured principal belief that it is vital to integrate literacy strategies into daily instruction that correlated significantly at the $p < 0.01$ level with three practice-related items: (a) that principals monitored literacy-related classroom practices (Pearson $r$ of .512), (b) that routine monitoring occurred for long-term literacy support initiatives ($r$ of .481), and (c) the allocation of funding for literacy initiatives ($r$ of .441). There was a single correlation found with the Professional Development section which measured principal perceptions of the importance of ongoing professional development to support literacy growth within a school. This perception was found to have a strong correlation with principal participation in literacy professional development, with a bivariate correlation of .318 (significant at $p < 0.01$ level, two-tailed).

The Maximizing Capacity section contained no correlations between practice and perception items. The last remaining category measured home-school connections. There were three significant correlations in the Home-School Connections section between the perception item which measured the belief that parental/community support is vital and reported practices: principals had a role as a liaison to the community with a bivariate correlation of .318 which was

significant at $p < 0.05$ level, two-tailed. Additionally, opportunities for community involvement, and parental access to literacy training were each found to be statistically significant with a bivariate correlation of .533 and .431, respectively (with each significant at $p < 0.01$ level, two-tailed).

Though principals strongly indicated that literacy was a foundational element for the overall academic environment of their schools in the first section of the survey, no significant correlations were found between this belief and principals' statements that practices were in place to promote literacy or that they were engaged in initiatives to promote literacy. There also were no significant relationships between perception and practice items in the section of the survey on Maximizing Capacity.

Within the Home-Community section, there was significant evidence to connect principal beliefs in the importance of parental/community support with practice-related items associated with the principal's role as a liaison who provides opportunities for the community to be actively involved in literacy initiatives. Professional organizations such as the International Reading Association have long supported the need for active community involvement to support student literacy growth. This message is contained within their standard six which specifically applies to the category of professional leadership with the following recommendation for administrators: promote effective communication and collaboration among parents and guardians, community members and school staff (International Reading Association, 2010). The survey respondents indicate that they promote expanding the scope of literacy exposure by engaging in activities which support home-school literacy connection. This sentiment is echoed in research by Baker, Allen, Shockley, Pellegrini, Galda, & Stahl (1996) in when they report that opportunities and

resources available to students in their home are often significant predictors of literacy development.

**Research Question — 4: To what extent, if any, are selected demographic variables related to principals' perceptions of their role in providing leadership in literacy initiatives?**

The Literacy Leadership Survey contained specific items which obtained data related to specific demographic variables. These items included: disciplines taught, years of teaching experience, highest degree/hours held, number of years of administrative experience, and the types of certification. Using SPSS software to analyze demographic data, it was determined that there were no significant relationships to be found between the noted demographic data and principal perceptions of their implementation of literacy leadership skills.

**Research Question — 5: To what extent, if any, are selected demographic variables related to principals' self-reported implementation of specific dimensions of literacy leadership in their schools?**

Some relationships were found to exist between demographic variables and the reported dimensions of literacy leadership. A negative correlation was found to occur between the years of administrative experience and the practice of routine observation of classroom practices to foster long-term literacy growth (-.346 with 0.29 at $p < .05$). Two practice-related items were also found to have a significant negative correlation to the respondent's years of administrative experience. These negative correlations were associated with the way classroom observation data were used to shape professional development (-.353 at 0.24 significance at $p < .05$), as well as the belief that community was a vital to the success of literacy initiatives (-.342 with .031

significance at $p < .05$).  The greater the number of years of administrative experience, the less importance assigned to these dimensions of literacy importance.

SPSS data analysis failed to identify any significant relationships between the types of certification held and principals reported implementation of literacy leadership dimensions within their schools. There were also no relationships found to exist between the dimensions of literacy leadership and the disciplines taught prior to entering administration.

**Hours of Professional Development**

Though not a research question variable as initially conceived, the researcher gathered data on the hours of professional development principals stated had been provided in literacy training over a 3-year period.   Significant relationships were found to exist between the hours of literacy-related professional development undertaken by the principal and their reported level of implementation of literacy practices. There were 16 items found to have high correlations with the relationship between the completed number of hours of professional development and collaborative participation (between teachers and principals) in professional development. Overall, the greater the number of hours of professional development, the higher the level of reported implementation of literacy-related practices.

### Qualitative Findings

The survey contained four open-ended items which were related to varying literacy topics which included: the types of literacy activities being promoted, the types of literacy activities offered to parents/community, description of literacy professional development sessions which were viewed to be impactful, and an open response section for additional relevant information tied to literacy leadership perceptions and practices.  Twenty-nine respondents (61.7% of the

sample) opted to leave feedback for the open-ended items. Full responses to all open-ended questions are in Appendix D.

Question 5 dealt with the types of literacy initiatives that were promoted within the respondent's school. The researcher reviewed the data from these responses and constructed five categories based upon the reoccurring key words within the reported replies. The categorized items included: teacher-focused initiatives, student-focused initiatives, district and/or state mandates, packaged programs and/or purchased resources and classroom literacy strategies. The given responses indicated that principals understand how initiatives could be implemented, yet the limited scope of their responses point to a lessened focus upon student-centered activities.

Question 39 centered upon literacy-related professional development. Responses were placed into the following categories: initiatives mandated by the WVDE, packaged programs, conferences/presentations, and school/district level training. Most the respondents indicated that their professional development occurred at the school/district level. They also noted that the scope of their training was focused upon packaged programs/resources, and not topics associated with their specific literacy needs as administrators.

Question 40 invited participants to share additional feedback related to their individual literacy leadership perceptions and practices. There were 16 individuals (17.2% of participants) who added to this open-ended feedback. Their responses were categorized as follows: lack of emphasis for literacy at the secondary level, lack of funding for secondary literacy initiatives, identification of successful school literacy practices, and lack of quality professional development. 31% of the responses consisted of individuals listing packaged programs (Read 180, Odyssey Bridge) used within their buildings.

**Summary of Results**

Examination of the data yielded from the Likert-type items on the Leaders of Literacy Survey when compared with the open-ended statements provided significant information in regarding the literacy perceptions and practices of respondents. There are serious discrepancies between the reported perceptions/practices and the responses given to specific open-ended prompts. The responses given to the Likert-type items indicated high levels of agreement with the statements which were closely associated with research-supported positive literacy perceptions/practices. However, the responses to the open-ended items did not reflect that principals were in fact implementing practices which would have been aligned with the reported Likert-type data.

**Discussion and Implications**

The data collected from the survey instrument demonstrates that the clear majority of West Virginia secondary school principals who opted to participate in the study perceive there to be value in the implementation of literacy strategies within their respective facilities. Principal responses to the questions/statements to the Likert-type scored segments of the survey reveal high levels of agreement with the varying dimensions of literacy leadership. However, replies to the given open response items were somewhat contradictory to the quantitative findings.

**Research Question 1 — What level of importance do WV secondary school principals report they assign to their role in providing leadership in literacy initiatives?**

Secondary principals in WV do view the provision of literacy leadership as an important task for them as school leaders. They view literacy as a foundational element for the school's entire academic program. This is reflective of their knowledge of the research showing that secondary students in the United States do not have the level of literacy skills found in students

in other countries, with American student performance falling far below that of other countries on international assessments, recently placing fourteenth on the PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) test in reading (Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 2010).

The principal belief that literacy in secondary schools is important may also be attributed to the adoption of national and state standards emphasizing literacy skills, especially in the ability to read and comprehend informational texts. The accountability standards associated with NCLB resulted in administrators being held responsible for the academic progress of their students (NCLB, 2001). Principals are now viewed as instructional leaders with the task of overseeing curriculum changes (such as the mandate for the implementation of literacy strategies across the curriculum). Having taken on the role of instructional leader, principals ensure the strengthening of teaching and learning, professional development, data-driven decision-making as well as accountability (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005).

**Research Question 2 — To what degree do secondary principals report that they implement specific dimensions of literacy leadership in their schools?**

Secondary school principals in West Virginia assert that they have strong agreement with the importance of implementation of literacy leadership practices within their buildings. Based upon Likert-type data responses, they actively engage in literacy initiatives (including professional development) which support collegial decision-making and work collaboratively with all teachers (including non-ELA teachers) to provide data-driven learning experiences. These activities are all undertaken with the overarching knowledge such endeavors are supported by research which indicates that effective schools contain teachers and principals who give their literacy programs intensive levels of dedication, energy and time (Hiebert and Pearson, 1999).

West Virginia high school principals indicate that they place high levels of importance upon the monitoring and overseeing of literacy-related instructional practices as well as providing resources and scheduling support for instruction. Their feedback to teachers is used to enhance literacy instruction. Fullan (2003) declared that it is vital for the principal to lead deep cultural change that mobilizes the passion and commitment of teachers, parents, and others to improve the learning for all students. Additionally, these same principals work with parents and the community to gain their support of literacy initiatives and to provide them with the training/support needed to strengthen literacy outside the classroom. This practice is supported by research which concludes that the opportunities and resources available to students in their home are often significant predictors of literacy development (Baker, Allen, Shockley, Pellegrini, Galda, & Stahl, 1996).

**Research Question 3— What is the relationship, if any, that exists between principals' perceptions and practices related to the literacy leadership?**

Perception- and practice-related Likert-type data were collected across seven subcategories on the Leaders of Literacy survey. (No perception data was collected for the Maximizing Capacity category since it contained only practice-related items). Though no significant correlations were found between perceptions and practices within the Literacy Beliefs section, there were significant relationships found within the Collaboration section for the practice item (use of collegial decision making) and two perception items (value given to teacher input and collaborative efforts are deemed to be of value). These connections reveal that principal beliefs about the value given to collaborative efforts and teacher input has a direct impact upon the practices associated with collegial decision making. Collaboration is an essential component of a successful school wide literacy program. Routman (2012) writes that successful

administrators utilize the talents of their teachers and are "willing to collaborate, coach and mentor…The school-wide strengths, common purpose and strong professional learning communities enable…the school to thrive" (p.60).

Data correlations within the Assessment category reveal relationships between principal perceptions of data as a driving force within instruction and ensuring that all teachers (both ELA and non-ELA) use multiple forms of data. Within today's high stakes testing environment, it is imperative for school principals to make full use of data to underscore curricular decision making (Gupton, 2003). Data indicates that participants have made key connections between their beliefs about assessment and the practices they chose to implement to provide data driven instruction within their schools. Merely relying upon a single form of data fails to capture the depth of information necessary to implement successful instructional practices. Black and William (1998) extend this view to assert that both formative and summative data should be utilized to provide each pupil with guidance on how to improve.

Data from the Instructional Practices and Procedures section of the survey revealed connections between the principal's belief in the implementation cross-curricular strategies and support for personalized learning as well as the need for the monitoring of instructional practices. These findings are aligned with research which supports the uses of individualized instruction across all areas of the curriculum. Successful literacy instruction is dependent upon the expert and integrated teaching of literacy skills so that the reader learns to access print accurately to relate what is read to vocabulary and content knowledge and thereby ensure comprehension (Lyon and Chhabra, 2004). Furthermore, Beane (1993) contends that there is a need to provide support to content area teachers by permeating literacy instruction across all areas of the curriculum.

The Maximizing Capacity section contained no correlations between practice and perception items. The last remaining category measured home-school connections. There were three significant correlations between the sole perception item which measured the belief that parental/community support is vital and the remaining practice-related items (measuring principal's role as a liaison to the community, opportunities for community involvement, and parental access to literacy training) with a bivariate correlation of .431 (significant at $p < 0.01$ level, two-tailed).

Within the Home-Community section, there was significant evidence to connect principal beliefs in the importance of parental/community support with practice-related items associated with the principal's role as a liaison who provides opportunities for the community to be actively involved in literacy initiatives. Professional organizations such as the International Reading Association have long supported the need for active community involvement to support student literacy growth. This message is contained within their standard six which specifically applies to the category of professional leadership with the following recommendation for administrators: promote effective communication and collaboration among parents and guardians, community members and school staff (International Reading Association, 2010). The survey respondents indicate that they promote expanding the scope of literacy exposure by engaging in activities which support home-school literacy connection. This sentiment is echoed in research by Baker, Allen, Shockley, Pellegrini, Galda, & Stahl (1996) in when they purport that opportunities and resources available to students in their home are often significant predictors of literacy development.

**Research Question 4—To what extent, if any, are selected demographic variables related to principals' perceptions of their role in providing leadership in literacy initiatives?**

The Leaders of Literacy Survey collected data related to the following demographic variables: disciplines taught, years of teaching experience, highest degree held, number of years of administrative experience, and the types of certification held. A review of the SPSS data collected for the study revealed that there were no significant correlations between the selected demographic variables and the principals' perceptions of their role in literacy initiatives.

This lack of significant relationships is particularly noteworthy considering the magnitude of the demographic variables and the role of perception in shaping administrative practices. McGew and Lew (2007) examined the topic of principal perception and its impact upon school improvement. Their results revealed that principals who have strong knowledge of and beliefs in effective instructional practices tend to organize their schools and act in ways that support teacher needs. Hoewing (2011) wrote that "principals' perceptions of what their role is as instructional leader are often influenced by their own educational experiences and distinct expectations of their performance" (p. 28). Yet the overarching data related to RQ4 indicates that there are limited connections between varying principal demographics and the beliefs they hold related to literacy leadership practices.

After reviewing the demographic data, the researcher feels that the participating West Virginia secondary school principals possess a strong background in education with high levels of experience with 71% of participants holding an MA degree plus 45 or more hours of continuing educational credit. Additionally, 53% of respondents had ten or more years of experience school administrators with 15% of them possessing certification within the field of

English Language Arts.  Research by Hoewing (2011) analyzed principal perceptions about literacy leadership and he wrote that "deep-seated beliefs regarding the role of teaching reading that influence their perspective on teaching reading. Experiences, as a student, as a teacher and as a principal have defined how these principals perceive the teaching of reading and influence their theoretical orientation" (p. 158).  Yet the resulting survey data associated with principal perception appear to lack alignment with this research finding.

**Research Question 5— To what extent, if any, are selected demographic variables related to principals' self-reported implementation of specific dimensions of literacy leadership in their schools?**

Statistical analysis of specific demographic variables (areas of certification and teaching experience) found a negative correlation between the demographic factor of administrative experience and practice-related items within the survey categories of instructional practice/procedures, professional development and home-school connections. Simply stated, the more years of administrative experience, the lesser the value given to these literacy leadership practices.

Nelson and Sassi (2000) concluded that principals who are more aware of the central ideas being conveyed by teachers are more effective observers of classroom practices and presumably more effective instructional leaders (Nelson and Sassi, 2000). The negative relationships found within the analysis of RQ5 data are in stark contrast to research tied to effective leadership practices.  As a component of their research on leadership knowledge of literacy content, Overbolt and Szabocsik (2013) stated that:

> As a result of professional development, participants do not seem to have changed their thinking to be more aligned with current best practices for literacy. They also reported

changes in supervisory practices that included classroom observations, professional

development opportunities for teachers, available resources, and collaborative discussion.

Because they developed greater knowledge of content knowledge, they were more

explicit and directive when evaluating classroom practices. They offered specific

guidance to teachers about their instructional practices, provided better resources, and

engaged in more collaborative discussions with teachers. (p.54)

Yet experienced administrators who participated in the study did not report such positive

correlations in terms of the impact of professional development upon long-term literacy growth

within their schools.

A substantial amount of research exists to support the benefits of establishing strong

home-school bonds to maximize learning opportunities for students. Effective literacy programs

tend to be more aggressive in stimulating connections to, support of, and involvement in schools

(Murphy, 2004a). Yet the data yielded a negative finding between the administrator's years of

experience and their practices related to establishing home-school connections within their

schools. If such relationships are not present, students will no doubt fail to receive the extended

opportunities that such actions would support and thereby impact their long-term literacy growth.

**Hours of Professional Development**

Though not considered a demographic variable, data were collected which were reflective

of the literacy-related professional development undertaken by principals over a three-year time.

Several significant correlations were found to exist between the hours of completed training and

the implementation of literacy practices tied to professional development for their faculty.

Analysis of reported data indicated that as the hours of professional development increased, as

did the implementation of select literacy practices with the most significant correlations being

found between completed hours of PD and the level of principal participation in activities aimed at enhancing improved school-wide literacy instruction.

Research indicates that schools which are successful in nurturing literacy skills tend to be those which place a strong focus upon reading (Murphy, 2004b). One of the most successful strategies for ensuring that students make progress toward meeting standards and that teachers are successfully integrating literacy into their instructional practices is the regular monitoring of classroom instruction (Phillips, 2005). Participating principals with increased levels of training reported higher levels of agreement with practices that ensured teacher engagement in literacy initiatives (Table 15 in Chapter 4). These principals acknowledged the importance of teacher participation and took active steps to ensure that the resulting literacy initiatives were fully implemented within classrooms. Additionally, principal participation in a wide array of professional development was tied to increased administrative engagement in the promotion of literacy initiatives in the school (Table 16 in Chapter 4). Without strong principal leadership, the effectiveness of teacher-led initiatives and overall school achievement is rarely possible and certainly not sustainable (Routman,2012).

Exposure to literacy topics via professional development provided these administrators which the knowledge that collaborative school-wide efforts were essential to the success of their literacy programs. Via the Likert-type data, they reported strong agreement in the offering of needs-based, data-driven professional development for their faculty (Table 17 and 18 in Chapter 4) which also included administrative participation (Table 19 in Chapter 4). Such practices are rooted in research by Baincarosa and Snow (2004), who write that a key element to supporting instructional change is full participation by administrators in all professional development offerings. Such joint professional development involving faculty and administrator is imperative

to there being a full understanding of literacy initiatives and the support necessary to foster their development and successful implementation. Principal understanding of literacy strategies enables them to provide teachers with feedback for their efforts and by doing so they are afforded a means by which to reflect upon their labors and modify future instructional efforts (Ash, 2004).

**Qualitative Findings**

The Leaders of Literacy survey contained four open-ended questions which provided a wealth of understanding related to literacy initiatives within West Virginia's secondary schools. The finds were of interest because in several instances, the opened ended responses failed to truly support the data yielded from the qualitative items on the survey. Appendix E contains a full transcription of the open-ended responses provided by participants.

The responses to each to each of the open-ended items were categorized based upon key words provided in the given statements. Question 5 asked respondents to briefly describe the literacy initiatives implemented within their schools. A wide array of responses was given which were compressed into five categories: teacher-focused initiatives, student-focused initiatives, district/state mandates, packaged programs/purchased resources, and classroom literacy strategies.

Mackey, Pitcher and Decman (2006) state that successful school initiatives must encompass data-based plans of action which include interventions for struggling readers as well as establishing high expectation for literacy support with attention being given to how data are used and how time, technology and personal resources are allocated to support literacy development. Yet careful analysis of the limited quantity of open-response answers given reveals that they are somewhat lacking in quality or focus upon specific student/faculty needs.

There were only three individuals who indicated data played a role in the implementation of measures to support literacy within their respective schools.

Question 30 dealt with the types of literacy-based activities made available to parents. Again, responses were categorized into broad topics based upon repeating patterns as determined by qualitative analysis. The topics associated with Question 30 included: parental access to resources, direct parent training, participation in school initiatives, invitation to school events and no available offerings.

Morrow, Tracey, Woo, & Pressley (1999) state that schools which are adept at elevating student literacy levels provide literacy-rich environments both in school and at home. School administrators must have a firm grasp of the impact that positive home-school relationships may have upon literacy instruction and initiatives. The principalship is viewed as a position in which competencies in dealing with the human component of school (parents, teachers, community and educational professionals) were equally as important as the competencies necessary to promote academic growth (Branscum, 1983).

The replies to Question 30 appear to reveal a lack of understanding regarding home-school literacy initiatives. There were no principals who stated that their schools provided direct training for parents. A single participant stated that they provided parents with training materials (with another individual reporting that there was a centrally located resource center within his county). The bulk of the responses were for activities in which parents played a passive role (e.g., attendance at poetry readings, coordination of the book fair, attendance at open house activities, and so forth). The data reveal an apparent lack of proper parental training or opportunities for them to take an active role in shaping the selection and implementation of school literacy endeavors.

Question 39 centered upon specific literacy-related professional development which principals felt had a positive impact upon their administrative practices. Again, responses were grouped using key terms provided by participants which yielded four broad categories: initiatives mandated by the WVDE, conferences/presentations, packaged programs/purchased resources, and school/district level trainings.

Research related to professional development for administrators indicates that quality professional development for principals must be on-going, job-embedded, connected to school improvement and site-specific (Nicholson, Harris-John, and Schimmel, 2005). The bulk of the given responses to Question 39 failed to meet these criteria. Specifically, there being no indication of sessions selected per identified school need or individual preference. The items listed point to a preponderance of PD that was mandated by district or state level governing organizations or training tied to the implementation of packaged programs. Though it is not necessary for principals to possess the same level of content knowledge as teachers, it is essential that they have a firm understanding of basic literacy strategies and instructional procedures. Based upon the given responses, it seems that most principals appear to lack exposure to a sufficient amount of quality literacy training from which they may gain the insight necessary to be successful instructional leaders within their schools.

The final open-ended item in the survey was Question 40 which asked principals to share any other information of relevance related to their literacy leadership perceptions and practices. The categorization of responses yielded the following groupings: lack of emphasis for literacy at the secondary level, lack of funding for secondary literacy initiatives, identification of successful school literacy practices, lack of quality professional development, and establishment of school-wide literacy goals. These responses provide a degree of understanding regarding the

discrepancies that exist between the quantitative findings and the statements given to the open-response items.

A principal noted, "There isn't a great deal of funding for literacy at the secondary level in my county. Specifically, in non-ELA classrooms. I feel that we need more training on literacy strategies as they relate to coursework outside our ELA classrooms." Then another principal stated, "There isn't a big push for literacy at the secondary level. Most county money for literacy is spent at the elementary level though. I have many students who do not have the skills they need to be successful but we lack the resources to fully help them." These statements underscore the fact that most training and funding related to literacy has been aimed at elementary level programs with adolescent needs for specialized literacy instruction having gone relatively unacknowledged by policymakers and politicians (Alverman, 2002).

Developing a true understanding of literacy and how to implement effective strategies within secondary schools is essential to the fostering of quality literacy programs. This knowledge may be shared via needs based, site specific training to aid principals in developing a working knowledge of literacy instruction and how to support it within their respective schools.

Many administrators and teachers have not developed a common understanding of the essential elements of an effective literacy program. When this fails to occur, principals often fail to make literacy a priority and do not assume personal responsibility for understanding literacy instruction (Reeves, 2008). The need for such training is echoed in the statement of one participant who wrote, "There have been little to no quality literacy professional development sessions for teachers or administrators at the high school level in the past 3 years."

Every Child Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2016 heralded a new generation of federal legislation aimed at improving the quality of instruction in America's schools. ESSA places

emphasis upon the transformation of professional development offerings for educators. Not only does ESSA include both teachers and administrators within the framework of joint professional development, it transforms the very definition of such training. ESSA's predecessor, the No Child Left Behind Act, described professional development in very generalized terms. Under NCLB, it was defined as activities that improve teachers' knowledge in the subjects they teach, allow them to become highly qualified and advance their understanding of instructional strategies. However, ESSA updates this definition by stating that professional development activities "are sustained (not stand-alone, one day workshops) but rather, intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data driven and classroom focused" (ESSA, 2015, p. 295). Given this change in PD requirements, it is even more evident that West Virginia's secondary school principals must seek out professional development for themselves, as well as their teachers, that provides rich, personalized experiences which foster long term growth and development.

It should be noted that not all participants provided qualitative data so it is feasible that there is a greater understanding and implementation of literacy leadership dimensions present within West Virginia's secondary schools than is suggested in this analysis of qualitative responses.

## Recommendations for Future Research

This study could be expanded to include a comparison of principal literacy perceptions and practices as compared with student performance on state mandated testing instruments (such as the Smarter Balance Assessment Tool). Such a comparison (with an emphasis upon English Language Arts/Literacy subtests) would shed light on any possible correlations between student achievement and literacy leadership endeavors. Additionally, a teacher-focused survey of

principal literacy leadership within a school could provide a more in-depth view of the power of principal perceptions/practices to influence and foster a culture of literacy.

Expanding the scope of the research to include the perceptions and practices of West Virginia elementary and middle school principals would allow for comparisons between their responses and their counterparts at the high school level. Since the bulk of federal funding for literacy is focused at the elementary level, it would be possible to examine the impact of expanding funding for professional development and other factors which may serve to inform the perceptions/practices of elementary leadership when compared to that for the secondary level. Also, deeper analysis of the types of literacy professional development undertaken by secondary principals would serve to form a better understanding of their existing perceptions/practices.

Given the statements provided by principals regarding a lack of funding to support the implementation of literacy initiatives, the researcher recommends an additional examination of funding options for secondary school literacy programs with a follow-up study of how such expanded initiatives would affect schoolwide literacy growth.

Finally, the researcher suggests the use of a case study which would target a small number of schools to provide a more thorough examination of their individual literacy leadership beliefs and practices. Such a study – involving observation, interviewing and focus groups – would provide a more comprehensive view of individual perceptions and how such beliefs serve to underscore implementation of effective literacy practices within specific facilities.

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# APPENDIX A: INSTRUCTIONAL REVIEW BOARD LETTER

**MARSHALL UNIVERSITY®**

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FWA
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**Office of Research Integrity**
Institutional Review Board
One John Marshall Drive Huntington, WV 25755
June 23, 2016
Louis Watts, Ed.D.
Leadership Studies, MUGC
RE: IRBNet ID# 919911-1
**At:** Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral)
Dear Dr. Watts:

[919911-1] Literacy Leaders: An Analysis of West Virginia Secondary School Principal's Self-Reported Literacy Leadership Perceptions and Practices

**Expiration Date:**     June 23, 2017
**Site Location:**     MUGC
**Submission Type:**     New Project          APPROVED
**Review Type:**     Exempt Review

In accordance with 45CFR46.101(b)(2), the above study and informed consent were granted Exempted approval today by the Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral) Designee for the period of 12 months. The approval will expire June 23, 2017. A continuing review request for this study must be submitted no later than 30 days prior to the expiration date.

This study is for student Stephanie Burdette.

If you have any questions, please contact the Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/ Behavioral) Coordinator Bruce Day, ThD, CIP at 304-696-4303 or day50@marshall.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

# APPENDIX B: SURVEY CONSENT

**Anonymous Survey Consent**

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled "Literacy Leaders: An Analysis of West Virginia Secondary School Principals' Self-Reported Literacy Leadership Perceptions and Practices." The survey is designed to analyze the literacy perceptions and practices of secondary school principals in West Virginia. The study is being conducted by Dr. Louis Watts and Stephanie Burdette from Marshall University. This research is being conducted as part of the dissertation requirements for Stephanie Burdette

This survey is comprised of a series of Likert-type responses to statements as well open ended questions. It will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete the survey. Your replies will be anonymous, so do not put your name anywhere on the form. There are no known risks involved with this study. Participation is completely voluntary, and there will be no penalty or loss of benefits if you choose to not participate in this research study or to withdraw. If you choose not to participate, you may either return the blank survey or you may discard it. You may choose to not answer any question by simply leaving it blank. Returning the survey via surveymonkey.com indicates your consent for use of the answers you supply. If you have any questions about the study, you may contact Dr. Louis Watts at (304)746-1933 or Stephanie Burdette at (304)545-9040.

If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Marshall University Office of Research Integrity at (304) 696-4303.

By completing this survey and returning it you are also confirming that you are **18** years of age or older.

Please keep this page for your records.

# APPENDIX C: INSTRUMENT

## Disclaimer

**Voluntary Consent to Participate in this Research Study**
You are invited to participate in a research project entitled "Literacy Leaders: An Analysis of West Virginia Secondary School Principals' Self-Reported Literacy Leadership Perceptions and Practices."

This survey was designed to analyze the literacy leadership perceptions and practices of secondary school principals. The study is being conducted by Dr. Louis Watts and Stephanie Burdette from Marshall University. This study has been approved by the Marshall University Institutional Review Board (IRB). This research is being conducted as a part of the dissertation requirements from Stephanie Burdette.

This survey is comprised of a series of statements which will be assessed using a Likert-type scale and open ended questions. It should take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

Your replies will be anonymous, so do not include any personal information such as your name or the name of your school. There are no known risks involved with this study. Participation is completely voluntary and there will be no penalty or loss of benefits if you choose not to participate in this study or you opt to withdraw. If you choose not to participate, you can leave the survey site.

Once you begin the survey, you may end your participation at any time by clicking the 'Exit this Survey.'

Once you complete the survey, you can delete your browsing history for added security. Completing the online survey indicates your consent for use of the answers you supply. If you have any questions about the study, you may contact Dr. Louis Watts at wattsl@marshall.edu or Stephanie Burdette at toney14@marshall.edu.

If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Marshall University Office of Research Integrity at (304) 696-4303. Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research study on literacy leadership perceptions and practices among West Virginia's secondary school principals. The contributions of professionals are critical to the success of this project.

We understand your time is valuable and are appreciative that you have agreed to aid us in your endeavor. Thank you for your participation.

## Literacy Beliefs

**Rating Scale: With 1 representing strong disagreement and 6 representing strong agreement, indicate your personal level of agreement for each of the following statements.**

1. Literacy serves as a foundational element for the overall academic environment.

| 1. Strong disagreement | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6. Strong agreement |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |

2. I place value upon the expertise and literacy beliefs of teachers in our school.

| 1. Strong disagreement | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6. Strong agreement |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |

3. Practices are in place to ensure that teachers are actively engaged in initiatives which promote literacy.

| 1. Strong disagreement | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6. Strong agreement |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |

4. As principal, I am engaged in initiatives which promote literacy.

| 1. Strong Disagreement | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6. Strong Agreement |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |

5. Briefly describe the literacy initiatives being promoted in your school.

[                                                  ]

## Collaboration

6. I believe that collaborative efforts with teachers are valuable to student literacy growth.

| 1. Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6. Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |

7. I engage in collegial decision-making with teachers to plan literacy activities.

| 1. Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6. Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |

8. I value teacher input in developing literacy initiatives.

| 1. Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6. Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |

9. Teachers with literacy expertise should be utilized as models for less experienced teachers.

| 1. Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6. Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |

## Use of Assessment

10. All teachers are provided with data to guide planning for literacy improvements.

| 1. Strong disagreement | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6. Strong agreement |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

11. Formative and summative data guide literacy planning to support student learning on a regular basis.

| 1. Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6. Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

12. Non-English Language Arts (ELA) content classes in my school make use of formal and informal assessment to guide literacy planning to support student learning on a regular basis.

| 1. Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6. Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

13. I feel that data play a significant role in shaping the direction of literacy instruction.

| 1. Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6. Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

## Instructional Practices and Procedures

14. Regular monitoring of classroom practices is conducted to determine whether teachers provide personalized student support to improve literacy.

| 1. Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6. Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

15. Classrooms are routinely observed to ensure that instructional practices are designed to provide long term literacy development for students.

| 1. Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6. Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

16. I seek to locate funding sources for a variety of instructional materials which provide meaningful literacy experiences for students.

| 1. Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6. Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

17. I feel that it is vital for literacy strategies to be integrated into daily instruction across the curriculum.

| 1. Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6. Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

## Professional Development

18. English/Language Arts (ELA) teachers receive professional development to learn literacy strategies.

| 1. Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6. Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

19. Content-area teachers receive professional development to learn literacy strategies.

| 1. Strong disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6. Strong agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

20. The teachers and I participate in professional development planning based on identified student literacy needs.

| 1. Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6. Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

21. Data from administrative observations/evaluations affecting literacy development are shared with teachers in planning professional development activities.

| 1. Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6. Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

22. The teachers and I collaborate to plan literacy professional development activities.

| 1. Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6. Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

23. Teacher-assessment of instructional practices is encouraged to provide direction for ongoing literacy professional development planning.

| 1. Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6. Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

24. I attend professional development sessions aimed at enhancing school-wide literacy instruction.

| 1. Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6. Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

25. Ongoing literacy-related professional development is essential to foster literacy growth within the school.

| 1. Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6. Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

## Home-Community Connections

26. I serve as a liaison between the school and the community and communicate to both groups the school's literacy expectations and goals.

| 1. Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6. Strongly agree |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

27. I provide opportunities for community members to take an active role in the implementation of literacy initatives.

| 1. Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6. Strongly agree |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

28. Parents have access to training, information and support in order to promote literacy within the home.

| 1. Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6. Strongly agree |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

29. Parental and community support are vital components of an effective literacy program.

| 1. Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6. Strongly agree |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

30. Briefly describe literacy-based activities made available to parents.

## Maximizing Capacity

31. A daily schedule has been created to maximize time for literacy-related activities and instruction.

| 1. Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6. Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

32. The daily teaching schedule fully complies with state mandates associated with time allotment for English Language Arts (ELA) instruction.

| 1. Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6. Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

33. Measures are taken to ensure that there is an equitable distribution of resources for both ELA and non-ELA classrooms.

| 1. Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6. Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

## Demographic Information

34. Disciplines taught/Years of experience within each teaching discipline

[ ]

35. Highest degree/hours held

[ ]

36. Number of years of administrative experience

[ ]

37. Certification (mark all that apply)

[ ] Adminstration

[ ] ELA/Literacy

[ ] Mathematics

[ ] Science

[ ] Technology/Vocational

[ ] Fine Arts

[ ] Social Studies

[ ] Foreign Language

[ ] Physical Education/Health

[ ] Remediation

[ ] Other (please specify)

[ ]

38. Approximate number of hours of professional development related to literacy undertaken in the previous school years FY 2013-14, 2014-15 and 2015-16

[ ]

39. Briefly describe any specific literacy-related professional development which you felt had a positive impact upon your administrative practices.

[ ]

40. Feel free to share any other information of relevance related to your literacy leadership perceptions and practices.

*Summary of Responses to Likert-Type Questions*

| Question | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q1 Foundational elements | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 10 | 35 | 5.70 |
| | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 4.24% | 21.28% | 74.47% | |
| Q2 Value of expertise/beliefs | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 19 | 25 | 5.47 |
| | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 6.38% | 40.43% | 53.19% | |
| Q3 Engagement in initiatives | 0 | 0 | 2 | 11 | 22 | 12 | 4.94 |
| | 0.0% | 0.0% | 4.26% | 23.49% | 46.81% | 25.53% | |
| Q4 Principal engagement | 0 | 1 | 3 | 11 | 14 | 17 | 4.93 |
| | 0.0% | 2.17% | 6.52% | 23.91% | 30.43% | 36.96% | |
| Q6 Belief in collaborative efforts | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 19 | 23 | 5.39 |
| | 0.0% | 0.0% | 2.17% | 6.52% | 41.39% | 50.00% | |
| Q7 Collegial decision-making | | 0 | 1 | 5 | 11 | 17  11 | 4.71 |
| | 0.0% | 2.22% | 11.11% | 24.44% | 37.78% | 24.44% | |
| Q8 Teacher input | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 17 | 26 | 5.48 |
| | 0.0% | 0.0% | 2.17% | 4.35% | 36.96% | 56.52% | |
| Q9 Utilization of expertise | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 7 | 35 | 5.67 |
| | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 8.70% | 15.22% | 76.09% | |
| Q10 Data guided planning | 0 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 21 | 13 | 4.98 |
| | 0.0% | 2.27% | 4.55% | 15.91% | 47.73% | 29.55% | |
| Q11 Data support for learning | 0 | 0 | 2 | 12 | 16 | 15 | 4.98 |
| | 0.0% | 0.0% | 4.44% | 26.67% | 35.56% | 33.33% | |

*Summary of Responses to Likert-Type Questions (continued)*

| Question | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q12 Non-ELA planning | 1 | 1 | 6 | 15 | 17 | 4 | 4.32 |
| | 2.27% | 2.27% | 13.64% | 34.09% | 38.64% | 9.09% | |
| Q13 Role of data in instruction | 0 | 0 | 3 | 10 | 13 | 19 | 5.07 |
| | 0.0% | 0.0% | 6.67% | 22.22% | 28.89% | 42.22% | |
| Q14 Monitoring of practices | 0 | 0 | 2 | 11 | 20 | 10 | 4.88 |
| | 0.0% | 0.0% | 4.65% | 25.58% | 46.51% | 23.26% | |
| Q15 Routine observation | 0 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 19 | 12 | 5.00 |
| | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 27.91% | 44.19% | 27.91% | |
| Q16 Locating funding | 0 | 6 | 10 | 9 | 12 | 5 | 4.00 |
| | 0.0% | 14.29% | 23.81% | 21.43% | 28.57% | 11.90% | |
| Q17 Integration of strategies | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 19 | 20 | 5.35 |
| | 0.0% | 0.0% | 2.53% | 6.98% | 44.19% | 46.51% | |
| Q18 Professional development | 0 | 0 | 2 | 9 | 18 | 14 | 5.02 |
| | 0.0% | 0.0% | 4.65% | 20.93% | 41.86% | 32.56% | |
| Q19 Professional development | 1 | 2 | 7 | 8 | 16 | 9 | 4.47 |
| | 2.33% | 4.65% | 16.28% | 18.60% | 37.21% | 20.93% | |
| Q20 PD planning | 0 | 1 | 9 | 8 | 14 | 11 | 4.58 |
| | 0.0% | 2.33% | 20.93% | 18.60% | 32.56% | 25.58% | |
| Q21 Administrative evaluations | 0 | 0 | 4 | 9 | 21 | 9 | 4.81 |
| | 0.0% | 0.0% | 9.30% | 20.93% | 48.84% | 20.93% | |
| Q22 Collaboration for PD | 0 | 0 | 11 | 8 | 16 | 6 | 4.41 |
| | 0.0% | 0.0% | 26.83% | 19.51% | 39.02% | 14.63% | |

*Summary of Responses to Likert-Type Questions (continued)*

| Question | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q23 Teacher assessment | 0 | 0 | 5 | 11 | 21 | 5 | 4.62 |
| | 0.0% | 0.0% | 11.90% | 26.19% | 50.00% | 11.90% | |
| Q24 PD for principals | 1 | 6 | 7 | 10 | 12 | 7 | 4.09 |
| | 2.33% | 13.95% | 16.28% | 23.26% | 27.19% | 16.28% | |
| Q25 Ongoing PD | 0 | 1 | 4 | 6 | 21 | 11 | 4.86 |
| | 0.0% | 2.33% | 9.30% | 13.95% | 48.58% | 25.58% | |
| Q26 Liaison to community | 1 | 3 | 7 | 11 | 14 | 5 | 4.20 |
| | 2.44% | 7.32% | 17.07% | 26.83% | 35.15% | 12.20% | |
| Q27 Community opportunities | | 2 | 12 | 10 | 5 | 6  6 | 3.46 |
| | 4.88% | 29.27% | 24.39% | 12.20% | 14.63% | 14.63% | |
| Q28 Parent training access | 3 | 5 | 10 | 13 | 6 | 4 | 3.63 |
| | 7.32% | 12.20% | 24.39% | 31.71% | 14.63% | 9.76% | |
| Q29 Community support | 0 | 0 | 6 | 8 | 14 | 13 | 4.83 |
| | 0.0% | 0.0% | 14.63% | 19.51% | 34.15% | 31.71% | |
| Q31 Daily schedule | 1 | 4 | 6 | 11 | 10 | 9 | 4.27 |
| | 2.44% | 9.76% | 14.63% | 26.83% | 24.39% | 21.95% | |
| Q32 Schedule compliance | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 6 | 30 | 5.59 |
| | 0.0% | 0.0% | 2.44% | 9.76% | 14.63% | 73.17% | |
| Q33 Equitable distribution | 0 | 0 | 2 | 6 | 16 | 17 | 5.17 |
| | 0.0% | 0.0% | 4.88% | 14.63% | 39.02% | 41.46% | |

# APPENDIX E: RESPONSES TO OPEN ENDED SURVEY ITEMS

**Question 5: Briefly describe the literacy initiatives being promoted in your school**

1.  We have a book club sponsored by the ELA department. We also participate in the state writing contest.

2.  Reading informational texts across the curriculum; writing across the curriculum.

3.  Literacy Design Collaborative and Step Up to Writing.

4.  Silent Sustained Reading. Reading 180. Accelerated Reader.

5.  Work in our weekly PLC's and our PD workshops. Book studies between our staff.

6.  Literacy design collaborative (LDC).

7.  Reading across the curriculum, close reading, reading classes, Cornell Notes, Achieve 3000, Star.

8.  Complete Literacy for Learning book study.

9.  Two column notes- note taking strategy. Grammar and literacy practice using technology noredink.com

10. Strong intervention program that incorporates reading/English and math weekly.

11. Reading A to Z, Reading Counts (AR program), Fairview (ASL to English)

12. Silent Sustained Reading every Monday. A library on campus that works collaboratively with teachers who all share common focus on improving reading comprehension and clear writing goals.

13. Strong department and PLC leadership provided to faculty, including special education collaborative teachers who share a common focus on improving reading comprehension and clear writing goals.

14. Read 180 vocabulary across the curriculum.

15. LDC

16. IXL program, summer reading programs, book exchange program.

17. Silent Sustained Reading in every ENGLISH course.

18. Instruction targeted on areas of need identified by student performance on benchmark assessments.

19. Read 180 for at risk. Reading across the curriculum, part of our school goals.

20. Promoting literacy across the curricula.

21. Students entering 9th grade scoring below the benchmark on ELA will be scheduled into a reading 9 course before taking English 9. Those same students have the opportunity in their 10th grade year to take Reading 10 class to improve literacy.

    22. READ 180, reading and writing across the curriculum.

23. Sustained Silent Reading, formulary writing.

24. Integrated into classroom instruction—separate initiatives are not promoted.

25. Use of the Brockton, MA Model for Active Reading; charts and graphs; attendance at Model Schools conference for more training; all staff in weekly PLC's to review student work and work on initiatives.

26. Silent sustained reading in English classrooms, purchase of non-fiction resources for students in 9-12, purchase of contemporary literature for classes 7-12.

27. Document-based questions; use of close reading and other literacy strategies to help students and teachers develop understanding of written standards and objectives.

28. My experience is in elementary. I have been actively involved in programs such as Dibels, Fundations, Daily 5, and CAFÉ.

29. Sustained silent reading, implementation of Literacy Design Collaborative.

**Question 30: Briefly describe literacy-based activities made available to parents.**

1. Parents have access to a county-wide resource center. We have nothing at the school level.

2. None

3. They run our school book sales for students.

4. Open house activities and parent teacher activities.

5. Read alouds, poetry out loud.

6. Parents as teachers

7. NA

8. Parent educator resource center is available to all parents to provide support to meet student's academic and developmental needs.

9. Share literacy plan with parents at orientation; parent night and LSIC meetings. Also, information regarding literacy progress is reported in local newspaper on occasion.

10. Read aloud program parents may volunteer for, PASS program that parents may volunteer for.

11. In our county, title I schools provide programs for literacy.

12. Workshops on literacy activities during PT conferences and open house.

**Question 39: Briefly describe any specific literacy-related professional development which you have had a positive impact upon your administrative practices.**

1. I have attended a few sessions related to next gen standards and how literacy is applicable across the curriculum.

2. Literacy Design Collaborative, SREB Conference, Step Up to Writing, READ 180.

3. Our county 'teacher talks'.

4. Achieve 3000, close reading

5. Book study on literacy

6. SREB High Schools That Work Literacy Sessions

7. Visible Learning for Literacy

8. RESA 7 Training and Numeracy

9. LDC

10. None

11. AP summer institutes, Count PD on Data Interpretation

12. Dr. Mark Johnson on Meaning Instruction

13. Use of Brocklton model for literacy has caused us to change our schedule to allow for a SMART lunch (where tutoring is available during the school day).

14. Teaching non-fiction series

15. Literacy Design Collaborative through SREB; High Schools at Work Summer Conference

16. Daily5/CAFÉ

**Question 40: Feel free to share any other information of relevance related to your literacy leadership perceptions and practices.**

1. There isn't a great deal of funding for literacy at the secondary level in my county. Specifically, in non-ELA classrooms. I feel that we need more training on literacy strategies as they relate to coursework outside our ELA classrooms.

2. There isn't a big push for literacy at the secondary level. Most county money for literacy is spent at the elementary level though. I have MANY students who do not have the skills they need to be successful but we lack the resources to fully help them.

3. The key has become identifying what makes children care about a topic that we hold very few credible benchmarks or requirements for. Therefore, why should the child care. This is the new focus along with real strategies that are specific for students individually. We use Star 360 benchmarking linked to Odyssey Bridge to provide specific assignments based on student assessment performance.

4. We know what works. Our ELA/LA department have made significant improvements to our ELA smarter balance assessment scores.

5. There have been little to no quality literacy professional development sessions for teachers or administrators at the high school level in the past 3 years.

6. This is my second year at a new school. We're making great strides. Next week, our LA department will be leading two hours of PD on reading complex text across the curricula.

7. As a result of the school wide literacy initiative last year, we saw a significant increase in the RLA section of the GSA. We hope to continue with that in addition to showing significant increases in math with the work on problem solving with charts and graphs.

8. Literacy is critical in every class taught. Our expectation is that a wide variety of literature be integrated in every class.

# CURRICULUM VITAE

## for

## STEPHANIE A. BURDETTE

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Graduate School of Education

& Professional Development

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**ACADEMIC BACKGROUND**

Associate Degree
Southern West Virginia Community College, Logan, WV

May 1990
General Education


Bachelor of Science
West Virginia State University, Institute, WV

May 1993
Elementary Education (K-8) and Social Studies Education (8-12)


Master of Arts
Marshall University, Huntington, WV

May 2003
Reading Education (PK-Adult)


Administrative Certificate
Marshall University, Huntington, WV

December 2008
Principal Certification Program


Master of Arts
Marshall University, Huntington, WV

August 2014
Leadership Studies

Doctor of Education    Marshall University, Huntington, WV

(Tentative: 5/2018)    Leadership Studies (Areas of Emphasis: Human Resource
             Management and CI: Literacy Education)


**ACADEMIC CERTIFICATIONS HELD:**

Elementary Education (K-8)

Reading Education (PK-Adult)

Social Studies (5-Adult)

Superintendent/Supervisor of Instruction/Principal Certification (PK-12)


**PROFESSIONAL APPOINTMENTS**

Research Project Coordinator, Marshall University/National Institute for Early Education
   Research/Rutgers University.  Study: Examine the effects of West Virginia's Universal
   PreK Program on Children's Development. November 2015-Present

Adjunct Professor (Supervisor of Student Teaching and Educational Administration),
   Department of Education, Grand Canyon University, Phoenix, Arizona, May 2015-
   Present

Co-Director, Central West Virginia Writing Project, Marshall University Graduate School of
   Education  and Professional Development, Marshall University Graduate College, South
   Charleston, WV. August 2014-Present.

Assistant Professor of Literacy Education, Marshall University Graduate School of Education
   and Professional Development, Marshall University Graduate College, South Charleston,
   WV. August 2013-May 2014

Assistant Principal, Chapmanville Middle School, Chapmanville, WV. January 2010-August
   2013.

Adjunct Instructor of Literacy Education, Graduate School of Education and Professional
   Development,Marshall University Graduate College, South Charleston, WV. August
   2008-Present.

Title I Teacher (Grades K-4), Logan County Schools, Logan, WV. August 1993- January 2010.

**COURSES TAUGHT**

Literacy Assessment

Developmental Reading

Literacy Technology

Children's Literature

Literacy Facilitator Practicum

Content Area Literacy

Literacy Acquisition

Teaching Struggling Readers Practicum

Current Issues and Problems in Reading

Writing in the Literacy Curriculum

Special Topics Coursework: Comprehension and Vocabulary Development

Student Teaching Clinical Experience (Supervisor)

Literacy Education: Clinical Experience (Supervisor)


**Professional Affiliations**

National Writing Project

Central West Virginia Writing Project

American Association for Adult and Continuing Education

International Reading Association

West Virginia Reading Association

Logan County Reading Association

American Federation of Teachers

West Virginia Education Association

West Virginia School Administrators Association


**PRESENTATIONS**

"Strengthening the Home-School Literacy Connection: Tips for Parents", Parent Workshop
Training, Logan Elementary School, Logan, WV, April, 25, 2016.

"The Power of the Principal: Examining the Role of Administrators in a Quality Literacy
        Program", West Virginia State Reading Conference, White Sulphur Springs, WV,
        November 21, 2014,

"Fostering Teacher Leaders: The Role of the Principal in Developing Leadership in a Facility,"
        Southern  Regional Council of Educational Administration, New Orleans, LA, September
        6, 2012.

"The Power of Social Media and Networking: Tools for the Modern Doctoral Student," Marshall
        University Doctoral Seminar, South Charleston, WV, October 29, 2011.

"Literacy Leaders: A Closer Look at the Challenging Role of Developing Quality Literacy
        Education Programs," West Virginia State Reading Conference, White Sulphur Springs,
        WV, November 17, 2011.

"Camp Read-A-Lot: Examining Unique Methods to Promote Literacy Growth and Parent
        Involvement", West Virginia State Reading Conference, White Sulphur Springs, WV,
        November 19, 2010.


**PROFESSIONAL ORIENTED SERVICE**

External Evaluation Team, West Virginia Department of Education, Office of Performance
        Audits. March 2009

Facilitator, Improving Teacher Quality Grant in Mingo County, Marshall University and the
        West  Virginia State Department of Education. March 2010-March 2011.

Doctoral Seminar Planning Committee, Marshall University Graduate College, March-October
        2011.

Facilitator, Improving Teacher Quality Grant in Logan County, Marshall University and the
        West Virginia State Department of Education. March 2012-March 2013.

Literacy Department Representative, West Virginia State Reading Conference, November 20-23,
        2013.

Literacy Department Representative for CAEP Standards Training, International Reading
        Association Conference, May 9-11, 2014.

American Association for Adult and Continuing Education Conference Program Reviewer for
        Literacy Special Interest Group, May 2014.

Data Assessment Specialist, Lincoln County Improving Teacher Quality Grant Program,
Marshall University Graduate School of Education and Professional Development,
Marshall University Graduate College, South Charleston, WV. August 2014-August
2015.

American Association for Adult and Continuing Education Conference Program Reviewer
Distance and Online Learning, May 2015.

Literacy Department Representative, West Virginia State Reading Conference, November 2015.

Facilitator, Advanced Summer Institute: Career and College Readiness Writing Program,
Marshall University and the National Writing Project, June 2016-May 2017.

Facilitator, Improving Teacher Quality Grant: Improving Reading and Writing in Secondary
School, Marshall University and the West Virginia Department of Education, March
2016-May 2017

Facilitator, Improving Teacher Quality Grant: Writing for All, Marshall University and the West
Virginia Department of Education, April 2017-May 2018.

Data Analyst/Technical Consultant, Advanced Institute: CRWP High Needs School Grant,
Marshall University with the National Writing Project and Capital High School, April
2017-May 2018