GREEN LIGHT HERE, GREEN LIGHT THERE—
LEARNING TO LEAD IN PRACTICE:
CRITICAL MOMENTS AND EXPLORATIONS OF A NOVICE PRINCIPAL’S
LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING

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Dedicated to my family.

To my grandparents, parents, and children, for showing me that fairness isn’t always about equal and that believing in fairness is always right.

To my dad for modeling the power of the intellect, To my mom for assuming no limit to my potential, To my daughter Sophie for demanding that drive be nurtured, To my son Max for insisting on kindness in every turn.

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My life has been filled with magnificent teachers. Both of my grandmothers were college-educated teachers in the early part of the 20th century and I can honestly say that I have been surrounded by teachers all of my life, in and out of school. I know this because I learned all the time. I learned to build things with my grandfather, I learned to bind books with my grandmother, I learned to speak languages and move to different countries and seek Jewish cemeteries with my parents. I learned to think about other people’s experiences. I learned to think about culture and history and geography and time and relationship. Mostly, I learned to listen. And it is for this gift that I am most grateful to my family and all the teachers I’ve had along the way.

When I arrived at Penn’s Graduate School of Education for this doctoral program (yes, my third Penn degree), I once again chanced upon the power of great teachers. I was already experienced in listening—in my life and in my work. But the teachers that I encountered here taught me ways to go far beyond “listening”. Sharon Ravitch, listener extraordinaire, showed me how to listen iteratively with purpose and context. Stanton Wortham showed me how to listen provocatively with specific logic and reason. Torch Lytle showed me how to listen deliberately disruptively. Dana Kaminstein showed me how to listen through legions of information. Susan Lytle showed me yet again how to listen as a stance for justice. And the list goes on. I am so grateful for the opportunity to have been around such wonderful teachers for what now seems a brief moment in time.

I also got the chance to listen to Luke, the principal in this study. This study is called “Learning to Lead in Practice,” but I can honestly say that for me, it’s more aptly
titled, “Learning to Listen in Practice” because that’s what I did. For 18 months, I learned to listen to Luke. He opened his school, his learning, and his thinking to me during this time. I am so grateful for the journey—and for his willingness to let me learn to listen to him laugh and worry and try to work things out. This is truly his story and I was just lucky to be there to capture brief moments of it.

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ABSTRACT
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Suzanne D. Simons
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The need for strong school principals is great as more and more U.S. schools struggle to meet the requirements of federal regulations and as districts search for school leaders who can effect systemic and sustainable organizational change. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (2012) predicts that the U.S. will need an additional 10%, or 23,100 more principals between 2010 and 2020 at a time when the number of available principals is shrinking. In addition to needing more principals, U.S. schools also need more principals who are highly effective. Unfortunately, the turnover rate for principals is drastically high, close to 50% (ERS, 1998) in all schools, and higher still in high-poverty schools (Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2008; Gates, Ringel, Santibanez, Guarino, Ghosh-Dastidar, & Brown, 2006). High turnover rates, coupled with a diminishing pool of principals, an increasing need for more principals, and the now popular trend of using temporary or turnaround principals, illustrate the school leadership crisis that is enveloping our educational system (Norton, 2002). An open question in the field is how
and whether effective school leaders can be purposefully cultivated. Drawing on literatures in the fields of efficacy and school leadership, school leadership development, and optimism, this constructivist study applied qualitative research methods to explore how one novice school leader in an urban PK-5 elementary school learned to lead over an extended period of time, one-and-a-half years. The study investigated the contextual and mediating variables that influenced this novice principal’s choice-making in a watched school in need of improvement. Data collection consisted of regular interviews and observations. By capturing the voice and experience of one principal, this study contributes to the fields of efficacy in school leadership, optimism, and school leadership development a rich example of a principal learning to lead in practice (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). The study also contributes a new construct, an initial articulation of “assumed possibility” as a theoretical stance. School leader’s enactment and execution of vision are still burgeoning fields of study and this study offers a glimpse into one leader’s attempt to transform his school.
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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

The United States educational system struggles to balance a national agenda designed to fulfill a democratic mainstay—free, universal public schooling—while maintaining public accountability and still allowing for a degree of local control and autonomy. The tension between national and local jurisdiction has increased considerably in recent years (some say catalyzed by the publication of A Nation at Risk (NCEE) in 1983) as the world has flattened and education has been elevated to the mechanism for global economic, social, technological, and knowledge-based hegemony. On international assessments, the U.S. is not the international leader in student outcomes. U.S. students on average score 8th in the world on fourth-grade science content tests and 11th on eighth-grade science content tests (Aud, Hussar, & Planty, 2010); 17th on reading tests (about the average for Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] countries); and 2nd on tests of mathematics (OECD, 2010). Local and federal educational agencies across the country are trying to figure out what to do to improve the U.S. standing on such tests.

One of the glaring solutions for improving the quality of U.S. schools is increasing the pool of potential school leaders as well as improving and developing the effectiveness of that workforce. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (2012) predicts that the U.S. will need an additional 10%, or 23,100, more principals between 2010 and 2020 at a time when the number of available principals is shrinking. In addition to needing more principals, U.S. schools also need more principals who are highly effective. Studies have
shown that a highly effective principal can increase student test scores up to 10 percentile points in just one year (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). In addition, highly effective principals can impact other important school outcomes—reducing student absences and suspensions, improving graduation rates, recruiting and retaining effective teachers (Hull, 2012). Indeed, principals become more effective as they gain more experience, and it can take three to five years to fully implement practices that will stabilize a school such that performance outcomes improve (Leithwood et al., 2010a).

Unfortunately, the turnover rate for principals is drastically high, ensuring that many schools get principals with few years of experience, or who are new to the school, or even who have been assigned to dismantle and attempt to rebuild the school’s infrastructure. Studies commissioned by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) reported turnover rates of 42% for elementary and 50% for secondary principals during a 10-year period (ERS, 1998). Layered within these rates are data that show that the turnover rates in high-poverty schools are even higher than in more affluent schools (Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2008; Gates, Ringel, Santibanez, Guarino, Ghosh-Dastidar, & Brown, 2006). These high turnover rates, coupled with a diminishing pool of principals, an increasing need for more principals, and the now popular trend of using temporary or interim principals, illustrate the school leadership crisis that is enveloping our educational system (Norton, 2002).

The result of this crisis has been a focus on the need for more and better school leadership development. However, while this national focus is well intended and
certainly needed, and there is a strong research base for what works, and the National Policy Board for Educational Administration did adopt the *Educational Leadership Policy Standards: ISLLC 2008* (ISLLC, 2008) nationally, the effort to develop school leaders is localized, disparate, and inconsistent. School districts develop their own school leadership development pipelines and training programs, as do universities and professional organizations (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Myerson & Orr, 2007).

One thing is clear from the research about school leadership: effective school leadership is a combination of personality, management abilities, leadership style, vision and mission, and persistence and grit (Hogan & Kaiser, 2005; Kelloway & Barling, 2000). The great need for effective school leaders and the dearth of an existing pool of such leaders has made the challenge of figuring out how one becomes an effective school leader that much more pressing.

The research for this study followed one school leader over an extended period of time—one-and-a-half years during his second and third years as a principal. As a researcher, I had the opportunity to observe this principal in his daily practice, to interview him repeatedly, and to attempt to incorporate the ways he was learning to lead into my own learning about leadership and how one learns to be an effective leader. The study followed this one principal’s journey toward effectiveness as he attempted to turn his own learning and his own leadership ideas into actionable practices to begin to change his school. This study was designed to explore how one school leader conceptualizes leadership effectiveness and choice-making within that leadership and to investigate the following research question: *What are the contextual and mediating variables that*
influence a novice principal’s choice-making in a watched school in need of improvement? The following sections will outline the grounding of this study and present the context.

Research Context and Setting

In April of 2012, I had the opportunity to go to a large urban school district in the western part of the U.S. as part of my previous job responsibilities as the leader of professional development and turnaround partnerships for a private educational company. There, I met with several District administrators at one of their elementary schools, University Heights\(^1\) (UH), and also met the principal of that school, Luke. I noticed immediately that the combination of the District team and District structures, Luke’s enthusiasm, and the UH characteristics seemed like an ideal petri dish for something interesting to occur—possibly for some real change to happen in the school.

I left my work position in June of 2012 and following this, I asked Luke if he would participate in my pilot inquiry into principals’ conceptualizations of leadership. During the summer and fall of 2012, I explored the possibility of doing my dissertation research at UH. I approached Luke and my District contact about the possibility of conducting research at UH. I proposed shadowing Luke over the course of the study as an observer, recording his conversations, observing his participation in professional development, and interviewing him at regular monthly intervals. He agreed and the District Assistant Superintendent agreed to sponsor the research. The pilot inquiry project

\(^{1}\) All names are pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality.
and the data collection for this study took place from August of 2012 to January of 2014, and straddled two school years, SY 2012–2013 and SY 2013–2014.

The study took place primarily at University Heights elementary school and through interviews with Luke, the principal. UH is ethnically diverse, 97% of students at UH qualify for free and reduced price lunch, and when Luke became principal, the school had been falling in the rankings of performance for several years. In SY 2010-2011, University Heights was ranked 841 out of 874 elementary schools in the District. Luke’s charge was to transform the school into a place parents, students, and the district could hold up as a model.

There are multiple ways in which UH was poised at the confluence of what the field hypothesizes are all the necessary factors for real school transformation. Luke is a young, energetic, and charismatic leader; he is bilingual in a community in which Spanish speakers are the majority; UH received a large School Improvement Grant in SY 12–13, so was resource-rich; and Luke had permission and backing from the instructional superintendent of his region to be creative and flexible in his leadership.

The study presented here followed Luke as he led UH during his second and part of his third year as a principal. The study length gives a window into his learning and thinking and his overall leadership experience as he attempted to transform UH and move it from the list of District schools that are failing to the list of schools that are working. The UH principal is a principal who appeared to combine all the factors by which effective school leaders are determined and the opportunity to witness his on-ramp to school leadership presented a unique opportunity. The District has an extensive
leadership preparation program and the chance to follow a principal after his training presented the District with a similarly unique opportunity. Luke agreed to be the sole participant, and the District Assistant Superintendent agreed to be the District sponsor for the District research approval process (Creswell, 2007, p. 178).

**Prior Research: Pilot Study**

This study has a foundation in a pilot study I conducted in 2012-2013 as a part of my doctoral coursework. At the time, I was exploring how school leaders conceptualize school leadership in general and their own leadership specifically. My conceptual framework posited that self-identification as an effective or ineffective leader comprised several factors: personal concept of general leadership effectiveness; personal articulations of the practices of effective school leaders; external indicators or tools used to recognize effectiveness; and self-evaluation as effective or ineffective.

I interviewed five principals working in high-poverty, low-performing urban schools, including Luke, and coded the data into seven categories: qualities of effective leaders, practices of effective leaders, goals of effective leadership, leadership philosophy, external validation/evidence, how one learned leadership, and self-identification as effective or ineffective. I used the Kellogg Theory Logic Model (2004); the Waters, Marzano, & McNulty Leadership Responsibilities Model (2003); comparisons to quantitative data; and other analysis tools in my data analysis.
Several findings from the pilot relate to this study in particular (Simons, 2012). The first was a lack of specificity in the language used to answer the interview questions. This tendency to be general and even vague was discernible in the responses to all the questions, and was especially noticeable in the questions about what evidence the principals used to assess their own work. In fact, when mapped onto the Kellogg Model, I had no specific data for either the Output or the Outcome sections. For example, when asked about measures they use to know if they are effective, one principal said things like, “I measure it by whether my staff is happy, whether my parents are satisfied, stuff like whether kids feel like they’re in a safe, clean, happy place” (Principal A interview transcript; June 15, 2012; lines 105–113). Another shared that she measures her effectiveness by, “whether I’m respected by teachers” (Principal B interview transcript; June 12, 2012; line 51).

In addition to being non-specific, the measures these principals identified as their evidence of effectiveness were strikingly different from the very public, quantifiable and quantitative data used by their districts to measure their effectiveness (such as test scores, retention and attendance rates, and high school graduation rates). One principal even identified those measures as “nonsense”—saying, “I’ve been blessed that way; I’m not going to allow nonsense or what I consider nonsense to go into my zone. Who likes being flustered or stressed out? Nobody does…” (Principal C interview transcript; June 15, 2012; lines 101–103). Another talked about how he has to check the pressure of those measures at the school door, saying, “That’s why you have to step out on faith…And that’s why it’s good to have some measure of confidence in yourself. They
[the district] would tear me down. I would be a basket case if I took it to heart” (Principal D interview transcript; April 11, 2012; lines 726–730).

The literature shows that effective leaders of school change lead with an urgency and clear purpose to effect that change (Waters et al., 2003; Stein, 2012). The lack of specificity of evidence and the lack of inclusion of second-order change practices in my pilot findings led to multiple questions that laid the groundwork for this study. Do principals know or learn leadership research in their training? If so, how do they translate that research into action? How does knowing what could affect change impact a budding leader’s practices and her conceptualizations of leadership effectiveness in general, and her own specifically? In order to be able to examine these questions within a leader’s natural setting (Yin, 2012, p. 5), this study had an unstructured design (Maxwell, 2005). This format allowed for in-situ observations and reflections to be combined with regular interviews in an attempt to capture how the principal lived his learning in practice. This study aimed to explore follow-up questions to the ones articulated above in depth with one principal as he learned to lead.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was constructed (Maxwell, 2005, p. 35) from my experience working with leadership development, reading of the literature and research in the field, and my own leaning toward a constructivist theoretical framework about learning (Ravitch & Riggan, 2012). My professional work over the past ten years
has centered on supporting school leaders—at both school and district levels—to re-think and reorganize their instructional and organizational systems in order to essentially reboot their schools in hopes of changing the trajectory for both the adults and students within a given school community. I have worked with scores of principals, district administrators, teachers, students, and parents trying to figure out how to reconfigure both the focus of students’ work in a school, and increasingly, the focus of the adults’ work.

Specifically, in my work with principals, I have encountered various patterns in school leadership effectiveness. I have worked with principals who were instructional experts but managerially weak, principals who were building managers at best with very weak instructional expertise, and principals who were neither. I have worked with a few principals who were both. In those schools, students and adults were learning, were excited about learning, and were demonstrating that well-run schools, instructionally and organizationally, are places of joy, excitement, stimulation, and a ton of intrinsic motivation for everyone to put forth effort, creativity, risk, and perseverance in teaching, learning, and leading.

A turning point for me in understanding my work came when a principal said to me, “What about the kids who are just born dumb?” Amidst my dumbfoundedness, I realized that leadership for a person who believes that ability is inherent is a very different venture than for a person who believes that ability is changeable (Bandura, 1977). For a person who does not think that ability can be impacted or altered, leading can become an exercise in caretaking or even babysitting. In this case, leadership is a
custodial endeavor. For a leader who believes that ability can be affected, leadership can become an exercise in creating the conditions that will produce a change in abilities for both adults and students. At the moment of that comment, my sense of why some school leaders are more effective than others turned from a focus solely on implementation of certain leadership practices to the integration of one’s efficacy beliefs with leadership actions and how the combination gets manifested in leadership practices.

A review of the literature revealed (and will show below) that the study of efficacy is now connecting with the fields of leadership and leadership development (Machida & Schaubroeck, 2011). This connection is still in its infancy (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008, p. 498) and it has become clear that there is much to learn about how efficacy impacts leadership effectiveness. A school leader makes multiple decisions throughout a day, both short-term and long-term, and is juggling crisis and strategic management continually. The leader uses his or her foundational beliefs instinctually as these decisions are made to inform them, to change them, and ultimately to ensure that they are followed. In addition, a leader’s beliefs about efficacy seep into the ways in and purposes for which the leader uses resources, the vision and mission toward which the leader is headed, and the ways in which the leader assesses his or her own effectiveness (Locke, Frederick, & Lee, 1984).

Questions embedded in the connection of efficacy and leadership development research include how school leaders can learn to become more effective and how foundational beliefs about efficacy impact this learning? (Machida & Schaubroeck, 2011). As a field, educational leadership development needs exploration of such
transactions in order to be able to define, articulate, and implement best practices in leadership development support that take into account the relationships between efficacy beliefs and effective school leadership.

There are, of course, multiple theories about how people learn, synthesize, and adjust to ideas and information, and theories about learning to lead are no different. This study is positioned in a constructivist theoretical stance, framing learning as a process of making meaning while doing and learners as active analyzing, synthesizing agents of their own intellectual development (Dewey, 1916). Constructivism follows from both socio-historic perspectives where learners engage in inquiry that is grounded in meaningful problems within a community of learners, and from cognitive science where learners actively reconstruct knowledge into new knowledge through a process of intrinsically engaging and exploring their interests (Fosnot & Perry, 1996; Phillips, 1995; Ravitch & Riggan, 2012, p. 36; and as described in the works of Dewey, Piaget, Bruner, Gardner, and Vygotsky, among many others). This study imagines that learning to be an effective leader is a cycle (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) and that the learning transactions (Rosenblatt, 1988) that occur within that cycle inform not only the leader’s beliefs, but also his actions or practices.

This learning cycle not only sustains the leader’s personal and professional efficacy, but also is the cycle upon which building a learning organization and systems thinking rest (Senge, 1990, 2006). Beliefs about efficacy influence the focus and vision of the leader, which in turn influence his leadership practices and what he’s learning. Reflectivity about his learning, his vision and focus for the work of the school, then
influence his beliefs. And so on and back and forth. Within this non-linear transactional cycle, each area informs the other, each experience contributes to the others, and growth happens in each area through a process of assimilation and accommodation of new learning and a continuous improvement stance (Piaget, 1986). See Figure 1 below for concept maps (Maxwell, 2005, p. 46) of this leadership learning cycle and the intended outcomes.

Figure 1: Conceptual Map of Leadership Learning Cycle and Intended Outcomes

Within this leadership learning cycle, there are multiple transactional (Rosenblatt, 1988) relationships. This study will focus on specific aspects of this cycle. Specifically, this study posits that leadership starts with foundational beliefs about efficacy—that leaders base their work consciously or unconsciously on their belief in ability as inherent
or as mutable (Bandura, 2000; McCormick, 2001; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008). These beliefs are the grounding for the leadership practices the leader implements, for the ways in which the leader interacts with her mentor and other supports, and for the strategic plan the leader develops to transform her organization, including the focus for that plan. As the leader implements practices and reflects on what works and what doesn’t, her learning necessarily transacts with her foundational beliefs, which then in turn affect her work with mentors and revisions to her focus for the school. It is the adult learning (Mezirow, 1981) during each of these transactional moments that drives this learning cycle, fueling the leader’s ability to impact her school. Below, in Figure 2, the transactions are diagrammed.

*Figure 2: The Transactions within the Leadership Learning Cycle*
In an attempt to abridge the two previous conceptual frameworks, Figure 3 illustrates a simplified version. Essentially this study is based on the idea that beliefs, combined with support, combined with actions, combined with learning are the ingredients for school transformation and ideally, improved organizational outcomes. This may hold true for any situation, but certainly seems to be present in the work of school leadership.

Figure 3: Simplified Conceptual Framework

Of course, the ultimate questions in leadership development and ultimately in school transformation are:

1) Can a leader implement effective leadership practices? and

2) If so, does doing so result in outcomes that are important to the organization? (Kelloway & Barling, 2000, p. 356). This study contextually explored a situation where a school principal was trying to just this.

The methodological design for the study developed out of the combination of the research question, the literature review, the opportunity to observe one principal over an extended period of time, and from the conceptual and theoretical frameworks—most notably the lens of constructivist meaning making (a full description of the methodology is contained in Chapter 3). As these ideas coalesced, conducting an unstructured study.
(Maxwell, 2005) made a lot of sense. I was going to be studying one participant and looking at him specifically, not directly at those around him. Because the scope of my work needed to be limited, the triangulation data I collected involved interviews and observations of the principal, documents, one interview with the principal’s supervisor, and the comments of those around the principal during the regular course of his practice. Because I as the researcher was going to be at the school so much and over such a duration of time, I needed to embrace the fact that any role I imagined as a strictly outside observer would necessarily shift over time, and in fact this did happen as I became more involved in the principal’s practice as a sounding board and eventually almost as an advisor. The study thus entailed practitioner research (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) and utilized some ethnographic methods (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995).

**Research Question**

School leadership effectiveness sits at the confluence of several critical areas related to improving the effectiveness of schools—defining effective school leadership, integrating the personality characteristics and managerial skills needed for effective school leadership, developing structures that nurture effective school leadership, and integrating the learning of effective leadership skills with the practice of being a school leader. Thinking about school leadership as “a process of social influence in which one person is able to enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task” (Chemers, 2000, p. 27) allows for framing leadership first as a process and second as a vehicle by which one articulates a shared vision and then plans, expects, solicits, and
guides a collective, concerted effort toward reaching that vision. A central part of leadership development is supporting, with both human and material resources, a leader in doing just this.

Of course, both in the field and in the literature, it is possible to get tangled up in the hypotheticals surrounding leadership effectiveness and leadership development. Theories abound that describe, attempt to explicate or articulate, and even imagine what it takes to become an effective school leader. Leaders and researchers can talk about their own visions of leadership (e.g., Elmore, 2005; Fullan, 2001; Senge, 2006), or about the qualities it takes to become a successful leader (e.g., Goleman, 2000; Judge et al., 2002), or about the types of leadership that are most impactful in school settings (e.g., Fink & Resnick, 2001; Marks & Printy, 2003; McKee, Boyatzis, & Johnston, 2008).

Taking those theories and aspirations and turning them into actions or actionable practices is quite a different challenge. The principal in this study was attempting to do just this—turn his leadership training, support, and vision into the reality of implementing effective leadership practices that would transform both the culture and the outcomes of this school. This study explored his attempt to do this by asking this research question:

- *What are the contextual and mediating variables that influence a novice principal’s choice-making in a watched school in need of improvement?*

In asking this question through a focused data collection approach, I hoped at the outset of this study to be able to articulate or bring to light some of the ways in which the
principal understood the influences on his actions, thus elucidating portions of what the
literature strives to capture—that learning to lead is potentially possible.

Rationale and Significance of this Study

I became interested in doing the current study because I am interested in efficacy
and agency and their relationship to leadership and the quality or effectiveness of that
leadership. I am also interested in that “it” factor that some leaders seem to have and
others are always striving for. And I am interested in schools and the notion of “school
improvement.” As I began to ponder these factors, I noticed I was encountering little talk
of agency, efficacy, and the impact of both either in the research literature around school
leadership or in the public discourse on schools and school improvement.

Agency is an umbrella term encompassing beliefs about one’s own self-efficacy,
beliefs about efficacy in others, and the understanding of one’s locus of control—either
perceived or actual (Bandura, 1977). In other words, agency refers to an individual’s
sense of a capacity to be effective, believing that others can be effective, and the ways in
which one is able to control one’s own effectiveness. Efficacy is often used in the
literature to mean agency or effectiveness, or one’s beliefs about one’s own agency or
effectiveness (Bandura, 1977, p. 75). Central to a discussion on agency and efficacy is
the related premise that ability is either mutable or inherent (Bandura, 2000; McCormick,
2001; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008). Core beliefs about this have multiple repercussions in
the schooling world. If ability is inherent, then there is little that anyone, including
schools and their staffs, can do to impact it. If ability is mutable, then there is much that we in schools can do to impact it.

To me, this is an issue of central importance in the national discourse around the potential of education to impact social order change, social justice, class disparities, the elimination of poverty, civil rights, achievement gaps and, in fact, the nature of public schooling itself. If ability is inherent, then perhaps there is little to be done about the injustices in the previous list of issues. If ability is inherent, then perhaps it is reasonable that many of our schools should be designed as holding pens that outlast age and development and funnel people into certain social tracks. If ability is inherent, then perhaps all school leaders and school reform efforts can do is to restructure school sizes, facilities, and behavior management to make schools safe places for young people to spend time and develop.

However, my hypothesis entering this study was that if ability is mutable, then not just adults but children themselves have multiple chances and opportunities to change their circumstances. If ability is mutable, then it’s completely unreasonable that schools are set up as holding pens; they need to be designed as places of possibility and access to opportunity. If ability is mutable, then leaders at all different levels of the schooling system have the chance and indeed the responsibility to ensure that every student and every adult in the system operates in a continuous improvement mode (Bandura, 2000; McCormick, 2001; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008).
This study was positioned to explore some of these questions and to bring to light the experience of one principal as he negotiated his leadership learning. Certainly his training impacted him in some ways, certainly his background experiences impacted him in some ways. I hypothesized that his beliefs about efficacy and agency would have impacted him in certain ways as a leader. This study attempted to explore what variables did in fact impact his learning journey and in doing so, will offer the fields of school leadership and leadership development a critical glimpse into the ways beliefs about efficacy and agency manifest in the school leadership practices of a principal.

There are additional ways this study will contribute to the field. As school districts across the U.S. attempt to build school leadership pipelines, they are each making choices about structures and practices to embed that will result in near and farther generations of school leaders. A recent study shows that the average tenure for newly hired principals in Texas hovers around five years (Fuller & Young, 2009), and this is not uncommon in many states. Principals in high-poverty schools tend to stay even less than five years (Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2008; Gates, Ringel, Santibanez, Guarino, Ghosh-Dastidar, & Brown, 2006). And less than one-third of principals who were not assistant principals stay at the same school for at least five years (Fuller & Young, 2009).

This high turnover comes at great cost to districts as they spend a great deal on the short-term investment of principals who only stay a few years in a school, and little on the long-term capacity building of each school and the District as a whole.

The window, then, to figure out how to keep principals for longer periods of time is short. And the window to support them through those rocky first years is just as short.
Whether initial training and preparation are cursory or extensive, few districts have the resources to closely observe what happens to the principals once they are placed in their schools. Fewer still have the resources to track and monitor how the preparation they provided translates into actual practices and to do this with any kind of consistency or duration. This study was designed to be a window into what happens to a principal during those first few years on the job and to surface some factors that may contribute to understanding a principal’s motivation to remain on the job, to a principal’s feeling of being supported, and to the variables that support a principal’s retention. This study will contribute to the field’s understanding of the experience of being a new principal and of how a principal experiences support during his first few years.

In addition, there is indeed a lot of literature on school leadership—what practices or qualities define an effective school leader, what personality characteristics are best suited for leadership (Bono & Judge, 2004; Judge et al., 2002). There is, however, a dearth of literature containing the principal’s voice and the principal’s own articulation of her or his journey through leadership (Reeves & Burt, 2006; Reitzug et al., 2008). Research studies are often short, are designed to measure quantitative benchmarks such as standardized test scores or grades or student retention figures, or are less interested in the individual principal than in the principal as a part of a larger studied group. Ironically, the literature is clear that it is the principal who most dramatically impacts the culture of a school, the retention rate of teachers, and ultimately the student outcomes (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 3; Hallinger & Heck, 1996). This impact is even greater in low-achieving, high-poverty minority schools (Leithwood et al., 2004; Seashore-Louis et
al., 2010). Thus the voice of that principal is critical to understanding how schools can begin to work, how school performance can be impacted by this one role, and how an individual leader can influence others to the point where the organizational practices are altered in some significant ways. In this third way, this study will contribute to the field by offering the voice and experience of a principal doing just what a system would desire—learning to be increasingly effective while functioning in his professional practice. That the principal in this study leads in a low-achieving, high poverty minority school adds potential applicability of the study to the research and practice of many schools in America where leaders are attempting to just what this principal is.

**Researcher Role**

One of the complexities of this study was my role in the research environment. When initially conceived and proposed, the study was intended to be observational in nature. I, as the researcher, would travel once a month to UH and follow the principal in his “natural setting” (Yin, 2012, p. 5) while he received coaching from a school transformation coach. Following this monthly visit, I would interview the principal on the phone to follow up, check for new learnings and ask specific questions related to what happened during the observation and subsequent decisions the principal made as a result.

As the study got underway, this design evolved. The observations continued as planned; however, I was often asked to offer opinions, feedback, and even directives during the observations. In addition, once the monthly phone calls began, they evolved from being interviews into being conversations that more closely resembled mentoring
sessions. The principal used the conversations as a safe space, trying out ideas, asking questions, challenging his own presumptions. Rather than serving as a sounding board, I moved into this mentor role. The conversations turned into reflective sessions with the principal musing and me listening and asking questions.

This feature is included here because the study necessarily became more practitioner research than observational research and the dynamic between me and participant increased in significance. This evolving complexity is a central component of both the research design and adds many layers related to researcher bias and validity, all of which are discussed in Chapter 3 in more detail. What follows is a review of the literature that serves as the foundational framework within which and against which the research will be situated and analyzed.
Chapter 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Much of effective school leadership has to do with the integration of the personal leadership beliefs of the leader and the systems s/he is able to implement with ownership, focus, and perseverance. The sustainability of such systems—the alignment, reduction of extraneous actions, and local ownership for implementation success and monitoring, often are the signs of effective leadership (Senge, 2006). This study considers how one PK-5 principal in a large urban district has integrated his leadership learning and what factors influence his choice-making practices as he dons the mantle of school leadership.

The principal in this study had significant resources during the years of this study with which to do this—a school transformation partnership with an outside organization; flexibility and permission to try things from the District office; a District sponsored mentor; an external informal mentor; a collaboration with a play-based organization; and three instructional coaches in addition to an assistant principal. In addition, he had his own beliefs about agency and efficacy, his charisma and charm, his bilingualism in a bilingual community, his experience working in another field—sales, and his background in leadership development provided by the District and from his prior experience. The question at the heart of this research was whether he could put all these factors together. Could he take his budding awareness of his own leadership capacities and actually institute and maintain a sustainable instructional and organizational strategic plan that would lead to some kind of change in his building?

Leadership itself is described in so many ways, and various traditions have different formats for articulating leadership. For the purposes of this study, I have
adopted this definition: that "leadership is a process of social influence in which one person is able to enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task” (Chemers, 2000, p. 27), that the school leader must indeed be influential in multiple ways to reach the accomplishment of the school’s common task—improved and increased student learning. The principal in this study wanted to be influential, wanted to influence his staff to change their instructional practices in order to impact student achievement. This study was designed to observe the process of his quest to focus his school around a common vision.

As discussed in Chapter One, the conceptual framework underlying this study posits that beliefs + support + actions + learning = organizational transformation/outcomes. In order to frame a background for the research question, research literature was examined for each of those domains and the following review scaffolds this study by organizing the literature into two major domains—Efficacy and School Leadership (beliefs and actions) and School Leadership Development (support, actions and learning). A review of these literatures follows in order to explicate the theoretical framework of the study (Maxwell, 2005).

**Efficacy and School Leadership**

**Efficacy Defined**

In order to lead, a leader organizes around his critical foundational beliefs. ‘Agency’ is used as an umbrella term encompassing beliefs about one’s own self-efficacy, beliefs about efficacy in others, and the understanding of one’s locus of
control—either perceived or actual. ‘Efficacy’ is often used in the literature to mean agency or effectiveness, or one’s beliefs about one’s own agency or effectiveness (Bandura, 1977, p. 75).

There are several ways to consider efficacy—from an external perspective and an internal one. Externally, there is research examining how people, including leaders and school leaders, are efficacious (their practices and behaviors) (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004; Supovitz, Sirinides, & May, 2010). There is research examining how effective leaders’ practices and behaviors impact others—either in the perceptions, behaviors, or actions of others (Goleman, 2000; Grissom & Loeb, 2011; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008; Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008; Waters et al., 2003). And there is research exploring a more internal perspective, how self-efficacy—the belief about one’s own ability to handle a task, and collective efficacy—a group’s belief about its ability to execute a task or reach a desired goal, impact performance (Bandura, 1993; Bandura, 2000; Locke et al., 1984; Smith, Guarino, Strom, & Reed, 2003). Because beliefs are a building block of the conceptual framework, this study referenced a mixture of this research in an attempt to lay a foundation for the research question.

The research around self-efficacy began in the fields of socio-psychology and social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977) and is entering the leadership and educational leadership arenas, although it is described as being in its “infancy” (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008, p. 498). The early thought leader in the field of self-efficacy, Albert Bandura (1977), described how individuals’ “efficacy expectations are a major determinant of peoples’ choice of activities, how much effort they will expend and how long they will
sustain effort in dealing with stressful situations (p. 77). In other words, the stronger a person’s sense of self-efficacy, the longer they will persist in attempting or completing a task (Bandura, 1977; Bandura, 1993; Locke et al., 1984).

Self-efficacy refers to “one’s belief in one’s capability to perform a specific task” and emerges when an “individual appear(s) to weigh, integrate, and evaluate information about their capabilities” and then “regulate their choices and efforts accordingly” (Gist, 1987, p. 472). Self-efficacy is important because it influences “not only what skills people perceive themselves to have, but also what they believe they can do with the skills they possess” (Chemers et al., 2000, p. 268).

Self-efficacy is related to goal setting and to locus of control, which can be defined as “a perception that rewards are contingent on individual behavior, while external locus of control is the notion that rewards are controlled by outside factors, such as chance” (Gist, 1987, p. 478). The difference between self-efficacy and locus of control is that locus of control is a general construct while self-efficacy is task specific (Gist, 1987, p. 478), meaning that one can have internal locus of control beliefs related to multiple situations and have or not have self-efficacy beliefs related to just one task.

According to Bandura (1993), sense of self-efficacy is also developed based on how controllable or changeable one views the working environment and where one views that locus of control. “The strongest cognitive influence on self-efficacy are beliefs about ability as either an inherent capacity or an acquired skill” (Bandura, 1993; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008, p. 502). Those who believe that ability is an inherent capacity will experience frustration with their sense of efficacy because inherent capacity has little
chance of being influenced or impacted. Believing in changeability or malleability allows one to pursue ways of enacting that change (Bandura, 1993).

Efficacy research is broadening and has entered the discipline of organizational management. Within the efficacy literature, two types emerge—self-efficacy and collective efficacy (Anderson, Krajewski, Goffin, & Jackson, 2008; Bandura, 2000; Chen & Bliese, 2002; Goddard et al., 2004; Machida & Schaubroeck, 2011; McCormick, 2001). Self-efficacy essentially means that “people who think they can perform well on a task do better than those who think they will fail” (Gist & Mitchell, 1992, p. 183; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). Collective efficacy is defined as “a group’s shared belief in its conjoint capabilities to organize and execute the course of action required to produce the given levels of attainments” (Bandura, 1997, p. 477; Leithwood et al., 2010a).

Four information cues influence development of self-efficacy—enactive mastery or repeated performance, vicarious experience or modeling, verbal persuasion or convincing a person of capability to perform a task, and emotional/physiological arousal or an individual’s perceptions of her own physiological state (Gist, 1987, p. 473). According to Gist (1987) enactive mastery or repeated performance is the most effective mechanism by which people develop self-efficacy (p. 473).

Self-efficacy belief is also impacted by motivational and affective processes—namely “by determining the goals that people set for themselves, how much effort they will expend; and how long they will persevere in the face of obstacle; and their resilience to failure” (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008, p. 502; Locke et al., 1984). In addition, self-
efficacy is related to intrinsic motivation and achievement motivation. Bandura and Schunk (1981) speculated “that interest is developed via satisfaction from success, and an increase in self-efficacy is developed from a sense of personal causation” with the later research finding that “interest may be induced externally for repetitive tasks, but is intrinsic for problem-solving tasks” (as cited in Gist, 1987, p. 476). “It appears that high self-efficacy leads to self-administered reward and individuals who reward themselves perform better than those who don’t” (Gist, 1987, p. 476),

Collective efficacy is emerging as an exciting dynamic in the literature, especially if we consider that leadership is being explored as an influence not only on individuals but on collectives (Supovitz et al., 2010) as well as a result of collective positionality (Bandura, 2000). If goal achievement is a result of a coordinated group effort, then individual leadership effectiveness becomes a “socially mediated outcome” (McCormick, 2001, p. 28) and needs to be examined in light of its impact on the collective efficacy of others and in light of the collective sense of self-efficacy of the leader. Considering both self- and collective efficacy demands that a leader understand the potential impact of his beliefs not just on his own development as a leader but also the potential impact of his beliefs on his ability to lead a group or collective. This study considered how a belief system related to self- and collective efficacy manifested in the leadership practice of the UH principal.
**Efficacy in School Leaders**

Principal’s efficacy beliefs influence leadership in schools. “It is not enough to hire and retain the most capable principals—they must also believe that they can successfully meet the challenges of the task at hand” (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004, p. 582). People need mastery experiences (Bandura, 1977) in order to feel efficacious and principals need them frequently in order to gain trust in their own efficacy. “Leaders who are successful in helping teachers develop a sense of efficacy do so primarily by providing them with situations and tasks in which they can be successful. In addition, they find models of effectiveness and encourage effort by providing specific feedback and support” (Hoy & Smith, 2007, p. 163).

As efficacy research is applied to school settings, the data regarding the influence of collective efficacy is growing (Goddard et al., 2004). Collective efficacy is “the extent of influence that organizational members and stakeholders exert on decisions in their schools” (Leithwood et al., 2010a, p. 19). The relationship between collective efficacy and student performance is a recent development in the literature but is now being investigated (Bandura, 1993; Bandura, 2000; Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). The literature analyzed here suggests that a strong sense of collective efficacy enhances teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs while weak collective efficacy beliefs undermine teachers’ sense of efficacy, and vice versa (Goddard et al., 2004, p. 10). The same may be true of principal efficacy (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008).

School leaders with a strong sense of self- and collective efficacy will be motivated and able to enact change in their schools as their belief in their own ability to
influence others makes them “more likely to be effective in that endeavor” (Hoy & Smith, 2007, p. 163). Districts will be most effective when developing their principals’ senses of collective efficacy (Miller, 2004). School leaders will be effective when supporting the self-efficacy of others but most effective when impacting the collective efficacy of others—including staff and students (Supovitz et al., 2010). So, not only does a leader’s sense of her own efficacy impact her effectiveness, but a leader’s sense of the self- and collective efficacy of her staff and students will also impact her effectiveness (Wise & Jacobo, 2010, p. 161). For this reason, in this study, self- and collective efficacy are considered the foundational beliefs upon which leadership is based.

Stein states that “the right school leader will always act with a sense of urgency and belief that his or her (failing) school can and will be transformed.” He goes on to describe the process of school transformation work as a two-stage process—“immediate action that stops the bleeding; (then) rehabilitation that prepares for full recovery” (2012, p. 53). Often what is needed for the full recovery of school transformation is a leader who believes in his own efficacy and that of the other members of his team who can then act with that sense of urgency and belief that the school can become a different place. This study considered how the participant’s efficacy beliefs influenced or were influenced by his role as the school leader.

**Efficacy in School Leader Practices**

School leaders must, of course, build on their efficacy beliefs while leading in school settings in order to be effective in their work. In the same way as the general
leadership literature, within the literature on effective school leadership there is also a tradition of describing behaviors and practices and then classifying them into categories (Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Leithwood et al., 2004; Waters et al., 2003). Most school leadership research points to “categories of successful leadership practices that are broadly useful across organizational contexts” (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008, p. 506).

There is a bulk of research focusing on different labels for these leadership categories—either by power distribution (Heck, Larsen, & Marcoulides, 1990; Fink & Resnick, 2001; Marks & Printy, 2003; Robinson et al., 2008; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001) or by descriptors of influence (Leithwood, et al., 2010; Reitzug et al., 2008). And then we have the school leadership models that break down school leadership into task categories—instruction management, internal relationships, organization management, administration, external relations (Grissom & Loeb, 2011; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982; Mendels, 2012).

Amidst the descriptions, labels, and categories by which researchers classify effective school leadership, some dimensions of that effectiveness and its impact are very clear. “It turns out that leadership not only matters: it is second only to teaching among school-related factors in its impact on student learning” and “…the impact of leadership tends to be greatest in schools where the learning needs of students are most acute” (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 3; Hallinger & Heck, 1996).

Just how do effective leaders achieve this impact? Chemers et al. posit that “a major aspect of effective leadership is the ability to project a positive and leader-like image” (2000, p. 269). And “at the core of most definitions of leadership are two
functions: ‘providing directions’ and ‘exercising influence’” (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 20). Researchers categorize these functions into the following groups:

1. *By setting directions*—charting a clear course that everyone understands, establishing high expectations and using data to track progress and performance.

2. *By developing people*—providing teachers and others in the system with the necessary support and training to succeed.


In short, effective leaders focus on:

1. Purpose
2. People

Leithwood and Jantzi (2008) now include a fourth category in their work: setting directions, developing people, redesigning the organization, and *managing the instructional program* (p. 508). This reflects the changing understanding of effective school leadership and the research, while still underdeveloped, (Hallinger & Heck 2010, p. 656) that is showing that collaborative and/or shared leadership has stronger impacts on student achievement outcomes. Marks & Printy (2003) found that it is when transformational leadership and instructional leadership coexist that the influence on student achievement is substantial (p. 370).

It is interesting to note that most of this literature examines leadership practices from the leader out, not from the perspective of the recipients of that leadership. When Blase and Blase (1999) studied leadership practices from the perspective of teachers.
under that leadership, they found 11 strategies that teachers identify effective principals using. These strategies can be put into two categories: talking with teachers to promote reflection and encouraging professional growth. Kelloway and Barling (2000) judged their leadership intervention effective “if the subordinates saw an increase in the transformational behaviors displayed in their leaders” (p. 356) and if the “attitudes/behaviors of subordinates change(d) in response to leaders’ enhanced transformational leadership skills” (p. 357). These studies are intriguing because the categories are quite different than the ones described above, suggesting that recipients of leadership may have very different views of effective practices and perhaps different conceptualizations of leadership effectiveness.

Wahlstrom and Louis (2008) found that when described by teachers, shared leadership and professional community were highly correlated with desirable and effective instructional leadership practices, suggesting that teachers respond instructionally when these functions are present (p. 458). Grissom and Loeb’s (2011) triangulation work between parent, teacher, and assistant principal perspectives on principal effectiveness shows that effective organizational management (maintaining campus facilities, managing budgets and resources, and developing a safe school environment) results in a significant portion of teacher satisfaction while instructional management results in none (p. 26). These three studies add layers of complexity to the results of above, raising questions about only studying leadership from only one viewpoint.
Of course, effective leadership is hard to assess as useful as a function in and of itself. At the end of the day, we need effective leaders in schools so that students achieve. A dimension of the literature shows that school leadership has the highest impact on student achievement indirectly, mediated by school level factors (Grissom & Loeb, 2011; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Marks & Printy, 2003; Robinson et al., 2008). This means that in order to impact student achievement, school leaders need to focus on the adults who are will have direct impact on student achievement—the teachers. It is when facilitating the self-efficacy and collective efficacy of teachers that principals make the most impact on student achievement.

It’s clear in the literature that the principal is critical to the organizational and instructional effectiveness of a school—only teaching has a greater impact on student achievement among school-based factors (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). Indeed, not only is the principal the lynchpin of school success, the importance of this role increases for schools where “the learning needs of students are most acute” (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 3).

To summarize the literature, Leithwood et al. (2008) make seven strong claims about effective school leadership.

1. School leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning.
2. Almost all school leaders draw on the same repertoire of basic leadership practices.
3. The ways in which leaders apply these basic leadership practices—not the practices themselves—demonstrate responsiveness to, rather than dictation by, the contexts in which they work.
4. School leaders improve teaching and learning indirectly and most powerfully through their influence on staff motivation, commitment and working conditions.
5. School leadership has a greater influence on schools and students when it is widely distributed.
6. Some patterns of distribution are more effective than others.
7. A small handful of personal traits explains a high proportion of the variation in leadership effectiveness. (p. 27).

In both the literature on leadership in general and on school leadership in particular, the studies that observe and list and categorize behaviors and practices leave me with fewer ways to contextualize their findings. It is in the studies that include the prior step—examination of how the leaders studied were deemed to be effective prior to selection, or the subsequent step—examination of how the leadership style effected school or student performance (Heck, 1992; Heck et al., 1990; Leithwood et al., 2010a; Leithwood et al., 2010b; Supovitz et al., 2010) that allow me to frame leadership in relation to outcomes. These studies certainly have more consideration of the relationship of action to outcome rather than just action alone.

Another problematic aspect of the categorical literature is that it appears to be the after-the-fact descriptions of leaders who are already effective. There is much less literature that revolves around the journey of becoming effective and the ways in which those categories or even lists of behaviors and practices can be useful to those who are not effective or are looking at becoming more effective. In addition, much of the literature ascribes little or no hierarchical order to any of the categories, again frustrating its usefulness as a guide for effectiveness improvement. This study considered how self- and collective efficacy beliefs contextualized or were manifested in the actual leadership
practices of the UH principal. In addition, I used this body of literature to design codes for the second round of coding as described in the analysis section.

**Optimism, Self-Efficacy, and Leadership**

This section was added to the literature review toward the end of this study—after one of the findings was emerging more clearly—that optimism could be related to the principal’s sense of his own self-efficacy and possibly his leadership successes. In the literature, optimism has been shown to be related to self-efficacy (Roux, 2010) with optimism being a more generalized capacity and self-efficacy a task-specific capacity. This addition to the literature review deepens the understanding of both collective and self-efficacy in relationship to school leadership effectiveness because, as Hoy & Smith (2007) state, “to influence people, leaders must exude an air of optimism, which is contagious and moves seamlessly from leader to follower. Optimism provides leaders with a perspective in which they look for opportunities in problems and concentrate on possibilities rather than obstacles. Problems are filled with possibilities—just find them” (p. 164).

Optimism expectations are related to self-efficacy expectations and both are related to effectiveness of functioning (Karademas, 2006, p. 1282). In fact, “feelings of enhanced self-efficacy and optimism might be related to high levels of motivation, which could affect levels of aspiration, goal-setting, perseverance in the face of difficulty, and enthusiasm, causing a leader to work harder and longer to achieve group goals” (Chemers et al., 2000, p. 269). And this kind of enthusiasm may in fact rub off on followers,
impacting their own outlook and beliefs about potential success. In other words, “Optimism in leaders provides followers with a ‘can do’ attitude” (Hoy & Smith, 2007, p. 164).

Essentially, optimism “views people as capable, willing, and able” (Hoy & Smith, 2007, p. 164), offering a striking insight that believing in the self-efficacy and agency of others may actually be a manifestation of optimism beliefs combined with beliefs about ability. “Optimism reflects an overall positive appraisal of the future and of the things to happen. A positive view of the future requires a positive appraisal of the current person-environment interaction, or a relatively strong belief that things are going to become better” (Karademas, 2006, p. 1287). Optimism is often called a positive outcome expectancy—people expect good things to happen, not bad things.

In researching measures of optimism, I encountered some counter-arguments to Bandura’s focus on efficacy expectancy within the reciprocal relationship of efficacy expectancy and outcome expectancy. Scheier & Carver (1985) argue that outcome expectancies are more powerful than efficacy since they include outcomes that are not controlled by the person herself. Snyder et al. (1991) disagree with both Bandura and Scheier & Carver, arguing that focusing on either dimension of that relationship is limited. They posit that hope, like optimism, “is a more general cognitive set that applies across particular settings and…may yield a wider range of goal-related predictions (p. 572). Because of these disagreements, I decided to include three tests in my data collection (The Life Orientation Test (LOT) from Scheier & Carver (1985), the HOPE Scale from Snyder et al. (1991), and the General Self-Efficacy Scale from Shwarzer &
Jerusalem, 1995) possibly in hopes of uncovering some competing views and/or data but certainly not for any formal analysis of those tests.

In the literature, the study of the relationship between leadership and optimism is minimal, with Chemers et al. (2000) noting “no studies of optimism” in leadership trait research (p. 268). This under-studied area does draw from research on optimism and self-efficacy in general and the connection between the two. Seligman (1998), one of the fathers of modern psychology and the study of optimism, argues that optimism may matter as much as talent or motivation to achieve success but “has the added feature that it can be learned and enhanced” (as cited in Hoy & Smith, 2007, p. 163). This is critical to school leadership development. If optimism is so important in leadership effectiveness and it can be learned, then there is a lot of potential for school leaders to learn optimism and add it to their leadership repertoires.

**Efficacy and School Leadership Summary**

In summary, the efficacy literature points to the relationship between a school leader’s own self- and collective efficacy beliefs and his beliefs about ability in general and more specifically about the abilities of those he’s leading. After all, “leaders who are confident in their own abilities and those of their followers, and who are optimistic about the outcomes of collective action, present an image quite consistent with leadership prototypes” (Chemers et al., 2000, p. 269). And this optimism may “provide an expectancy that good performance will result in positive outcomes, that is, a hopefulness that sustains positive motivation and perseverance: (Chemers et al., 2000, p. 275). There then seems to be a relationship indicated between a leader’s self-and collective efficacy
beliefs and the success of the leadership practices that have the highest impact on others in his system. These relationships are built into the conceptual framework of the study and not only guided the data collection but also added layers to the data analysis process.

The principal in this study brought with him his own belief system about self- and collective efficacy beliefs. These beliefs are foundational to how he approached others, how he viewed his own chances of being successful at accomplishing certain tasks, how much agency he believed the teachers and students had, and how much he believed ability is mutable. This means that his belief system permeated his interactions, his leadership style, and the expectations he has for himself and others. Understanding this body of literature and the participant’s positionality vis-a-vis self- and collective efficacy was important in contextualizing his actions and choices and provided the foundation for the data analysis.

**School Leader Development**

The school leadership literature shows that “there is not a single documented case of a school successfully turning around its pupil achievement trajectory in the absence of talented leadership” (Leithwood et al., 2008, p. 29). How then, does one learn to be such a leader, who has strong efficacy beliefs, who can develop both the self- and collective efficacies of her own self and of her staff, and who can be efficacious in her leadership practices?
Teaching School Leadership

Research is showing that “it is possible to create systematic learning opportunities for school leaders that help them develop the complex skills needed to lead and transform contemporary schools” (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007, p. 24). And there “is a widespread belief that specific preparation makes a difference” (Bush, 2009, p. 377). As the field of leadership development becomes more sophisticated and more widely researched, there are various findings that are both clarifying and problematic.

There seems to be a significant relationship between leadership and learning, implying that a learning stance is a critical component of leadership and that instilling an organizational learning stance is also critical for effective leadership (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Doh, 2003; Lytle, 2010; Senge 1990, 2006). Research does indicate that “many leaders are born with qualities and attributes that assist them in leadership effectiveness” (Brungardt, 1996, p. 82). For example, “some people are born competitors or driven achievers or empathetic people. These sorts of attributes are more deeply embedded and less trainable than other skills and abilities” (Doh, 2003, p. 64). There is also some literature reflecting that “early childhood development, education and later on-the-job experiences encourage and nurture leadership abilities (Brungardt, 1996, p. 82), leading some experts to conclude that leadership can be learned (Allio, 2005, p. 1072; Doh, 2003).

There are, however, mixed views on whether leadership can be taught. Some literature in the organizational and school fields claims with strong argument and “an unequivocal yes!” that leadership can indeed be taught (Avolio, 2005; Kelloway &
Barling, 2000, p. 356). It does seem that “the skills of emotional intelligence can be learned at any age” with some practice and commitment (Goleman, 2000, p. 15) and that some leadership characteristics, “such as good communication, are teachable” (Doh, 2003, p. 64).

There is, however, another strand of research claiming that leadership is not teachable (Allio, 2005). This makes very problematic the issue of whether leadership can be taught as part of school leader development, although there is some research suggesting that at least some aspects can be (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005; Kelloway, Barling, & Helleur, 2000). This contradiction in the literature makes it harder to see just how to support leadership learning if leadership is learnable but not, in fact, teachable.

That said, the field has not stopped trying to teach or train current and future school leaders. One current trend is the shift from “what” leadership training is delivered (the content) to “how” it is delivered (the process) (Bush, 2009, p. 378-379). This shift has led to a clearer picture of what one type of support—“high quality training, before and on the job, should look like” (Mendels, 2012, p. 49). Leadership is best learned in the field, “as part of a practical, experiential” experience (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004; Brungardt, 1996; Doh, 2003, p. 64;)—in other words, school leaders should be “learning leadership practice in practice” (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007, p. 8). Kelloway & Barling (2000) recommend “making small changes and maintaining those changes over time” (p. 358). Small changes can include “do(ing) what is right, rather than what is expedient or cost-effective,” taking time to make “decision making more
transparent” and “be consistent in their reasoning” (p. 358). Whatever the steps, it’s clear that leadership is best acquired through “experimentation and learning, followed by repeated and dedicated practice” (Allio, 2005, p. 1072).

This type of experiential leadership learning can happen in two ways: individualized learning and group learning (Bush, 2009, p. 379; Wallace Foundation, 2012). Bush (2009) describes individualized learning supports as facilitation, mentoring, and coaching and group learning supports as action learning, networking and school visits, and portfolios (p. 379-381; Bloom, Castagna, & Warren, 2003, p. 7). The common features of all of these types of leadership development experiences are that the learning environment is “a bridge between the work situation and the learning situation,” there is a recognition of “personalized learning needs,” and an inquiry approach is the goal (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). The literature shows that there is only “limited value in didactic approaches and considerable gain from active learning” (Bush, 2009, p. 381-382). This ideal type of learning environment requires cycles of coaching, mentoring, patterning, and trial and error (Doh, 2003, p. 66), and training and feedback (Kelloway & Barling, 2000, p. 359; Kelloway et al., 2000, p. 147; Mendels, 2012, p. 51).

Mentoring

Mentoring is a particular form of leadership support that the principal in this study received. Workplace mentoring, a “relatively new focus of study” (Allen et al. 2008, p. 344. within leadership development takes many forms. Mentors can be either internal or external (McNally & Lukens, 2006; Tung & Feldman, 2001), informal or formal (Allen
et al., 2008) and have been defined as “persons usually considered as more experienced, who support, train, “teach the ropes to” or sponsor others as they pursue their career goals” (Allen et al., 1997). Mentoring is one of the methods of leadership development (Bush, 2009) that has been shown to impact the effectiveness of leaders in general (McNally & Lukens, 2006 report a 6:1 return on investment for executive coaching, p. 159; Kombarakaran, Baker, Yang, & Fernandes, 2008) and school leaders in particular (Knight, 2008; Robertson, 2008). Mentoring “can provide a compass…a right direction for protégés” and can help a leader to a “greater understanding of who they are as an administrator” (Hopkins-Thompson, 2000, p. 30).

For clarification, in some of the literature, mentors are sometimes thought of as “organizational insiders in job-alike positions” and coaches as professional experts who are “outsiders, and have leadership coaching as their primary work” (Bloom et al., 2003, p.3). In some of the literature, these outsider ‘coaches’ are called mentors, thus confusing the discussion of mentorship. In this study, I refer to mentors as external experts who have leadership coaching as their primary work and mentoring as the process by which these external experts support leaders.

Mentoring is a particular practice—instead of training on particular content, mentoring focuses on the process—the “needs of the individual” with “goal accomplishment” as the task at hand (Bloom et al., 2003, p. 4-5). Matching mentors with mentees (often called protégés in the literature) is crucial (Hall, Otazo, & Hollenbeck, 2003, p. 45). Mentoring has been described as a “process of equipping people with the tools, knowledge, and opportunities they need to develop themselves and become more
effective” (Peterson, 1996, p. 78). Effective mentoring is built on trust and confidentiality (Ely, Boyce, Nelson, Zaccaro, Hernez-Broome, & Whyman, 2010, p. 587) and “the two primary factors in good mentoring are honest, reliable feedback and good action ideas or ‘pointers’” (Hall et al., 1999, p. 44). Of course at the heart of the mentoring relationship is “the need for feedback focused on reflection” (Hopkins-Thompson, 2000, p. 32).

Mentoring can occur along two realms—career functions and psychosocial functions. Career functions include “actions such as providing protégés with human capital enhancement opportunities and links to powerful individuals in the organization.” Psychosocial functions include “counseling the protégé about anxieties and uncertainties, providing friendship, and role modeling” (Kammeyer-Mueller & Judge, 2008, p. 270). Results from mentoring can be found on intrinsic and extrinsic levels, impacting career satisfaction and performance measures (such as promotions). Kammeyer & Judge’s (2008) quantitative review of mentoring research shows that career mentoring was “positively related to promotions.” In addition, having a mentor “was significantly related to job and career satisfaction” (p. 277). An important finding from this research was that “career mentoring is considerably more important” than previously demonstrated (p. 277).

**Summary**

In sum, it appears that “leadership must grow by design not by default” (NCSL, 2007, p. 17). Leadership can be learned and some leadership capacity can be taught
(Brungardt, 1996; Boyatzis & McKee, 2005; Carson & Earley, 2010; Cawelti, 2000; Danzig, 1999; Davis et al., 2005; Doh, 2003; Kelloway & Barling 2000; Kelloway et al., 2000; McKee et al, 2008; Mendels, 2012; Turner & Mavin, 2008) but those working to develop leaders are well served to look for the people who demonstrate four indicators: strong motivation, positive attitude, morality, and potential for growth (Allio, 2005, p. 1074; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Wallace Foundation, 2010, p. 2). Then, provide them with hands-on opportunities for trial and error and to practice leadership behaviors (Matthews, 2012), provide them with coaching and mentoring (Allio, 2005, p. 1075) and frequent experience for reflection (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007), along with emotional intelligence and self-awareness development (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005; Goleman, 2000; McKee et al., 2008; Wales, 2003).

This area of the literature was important for this study because a large component of the study design as well as the conceptual framework focuses on learning leadership. The study entered the principal’s learning mid-stream, right at the beginning of his second year as a principal, and followed him through his second and third years as a school leader. The study included multiple observations of the principal learning to lead, learning from others, interviews about his learning process, and also his attempts to shift into teaching leadership to his staff. Considerations from this body of literature were critical to the analysis process of the study.
Reflections on the Literature

In this study, the principal of University Heights wanted to learn to be an effective leader, wanted to build a learning organization, and wanted to transform his school. The literature above indicates that there are a host of layers that enter into the equation for this aspiring effective school leader, many of which set the stage for the current study.

The literature described above suggests the following summary:

1. A leader’s optimism beliefs may impact his effectiveness;
2. A leader’s beliefs about his own self-efficacy and the collective and self-efficacy of others contribute to his leadership practice and effectiveness;
3. A leader is socially influential;
4. A leader impacts the self- and collective efficacy of others in order to impact student achievement;
5. While there are some inherent leadership qualities, leadership can be learned;
6. Learning in practice is an effective method of leadership development;
7. Career function mentoring with feedback and reflection supports the leader’s learning;

The leader in this study attempted to focus on his vision of student learning and followed the advice of Steve Jobs who described leadership as a combination of focus, “deciding what not to do”— (“as important as deciding what to do”) and simplicity— (“the ultimate sophistication” (Isaacson, 2012, p. 94-95). DuFour (2002) writes extensively about leadership effectiveness in general and his own in particular, talking about his years “in hot pursuit of the wrong questions” (p. 13). He describes a tipping point in his understanding of leadership and his effectiveness as a leader when he made the shift from a “focus on teaching to a focus on learning” (p. 13). The principal of University Heights attempted to reach such a tipping point during the course of this study.
Certainly understanding the core components of effective leadership and implementing them are different. Smith et al. (2003) show how principals “report that a majority of their time is actually spent in management practices” (p. 506)—rather than on instructional or people development. Spending time on the right things, focusing on the core functions, believing in one's own self-efficacy, and believing in one’s collective efficacy within a group appear to be factors in being an effective leader. As the UH principal attempted to do what the literature is advising, what Fullan and Miles (1992) call “restructuring” and “reculturing” (p. 752), this study captured some of his thinking along the way. Presenting the voice of an actual learning leader will bring richness, texture, and pragmatism to the discipline and will allow description of the “how to” portion of leadership development to be enhanced.

Sustainability must be the goal of successful school leadership (Mulford & Moreno, 2006). “Sustainability is when new ways of working and improved outcomes have become the norm. Not only have the process and outcome changed, but the thinking and attitudes are fundamentally altered and the systems surrounding them are transformed in support. In other words, it has become an integrated or mainstream way of working rather than something ‘added on’. As a result, when you look at the process or outcome one year from now or longer, you can see that at a minimum it has not reverted of the old way or old level of performance. Further, it has been able to withstand challenges and variation; it has evolved alongside other changes in the context, and perhaps has actually continued to improve over time” (NHS Modernisation Agency, 2002, p. 12).
The UH principal looked to effect sustainable changes to the school and considering these bodies of literature was a significant dimension of the study process. I began thinking about and developing the conceptual framework early, and adding literature allowed me to articulate the conceptual framework more substantially. My first literature review generated the first set of etic codes which were conceptualized from the literature and/or conceptual and theoretical frameworks prior to data collection and analysis (Maxwell, 2005). I also used the literature to develop my second set of etic codes during the data analysis. I returned to the literature again to narrow down my data set, and again to help me sort through the data. Finally, I returned to the literature again prior to writing to add sections that helped me think through some of the findings and ground those findings in context from the research. This iterative nature of my interactions with the literature formed the backbone of my process at each stage. The full nature of these interactions are described in the following chapter.
Chapter 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Connections to the Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks

As the conceptual framework indicates, this study was positioned to explore the ways in which contextual variables influence a leader’s choices and practices, and manifestations of the ways he integrates his learning into actionable leadership practices. The research question was the scaffold around which the study was implemented:

- **What were the contextual and mediating variables that influence a novice principal’s choice-making in a watched school in need of improvement?**

The study itself began with an unstructured (Maxwell, 2005, p. 80) design where I as the researcher was following the learning journey of one school principal. This study was informed by a core theoretical lens (Creswell, 2009, p. 62)—namely constructivist learning theory (Dewey, 1916) and its later manifestation in sociocognitive learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978). Constructivism frames learning as an active process through and by which learners construct meaning as they act (Phillips, 1995, p. 5). In other words, people learn by making sense and making meaning in all of their actions and reflections and it is this constant activity of action and reflection amidst a complex and “fundamentally nonlinear” process that is indeed called learning (Fosnot & Perry, 1996, p. 11). Initially, I paid specific attention to core design decisions (Maxwell, 2005, p. 82) but intended to learn from the principal as the study unfolded and develop the architecture of the study as I collected data.
Constructivism privileges experiential learning and posits that people are inherently curious, self-directed, flexible problem-solvers. Thus learning environments are those where people can express their intrinsic motivation to learn and be supported in their zones of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978)—that is, at the close edges of their current knowledge. Learning is considered an active, social process and teachers are facilitators in this process, adept at creating settings where the interplay between the students, teachers, and the task is the heart of the learning cycle. Vygotsky considered knowledge to be “situated and collaborative,” suggesting that “knowledge can best be advanced through interaction with others in cooperative activities” (Santrock, p. 38).

This theoretical framework was relevant for this study for several reasons. First, it connected the focus of the study—asking how a leader learns in practice, and with the methodology of the study—a research design that sets up an exploration of this learning. Because learning was assumed to be a continual social process, then what this study was attempting to do was enter this learning process at one point and exit at another later point and in between those two points, attempt to articulate the process that was happening (Maxwell, 2005, p. 75). And assuming that learning was continual and social, the very act of entering this process necessarily positioned me as part of the learning and therefore part of what would be happening during the research. In the case of this study, I was both the key research instrument (Creswell, 2007, p. 175) and a participant—a leadership mentor for the principal being investigated. This study was, then, a case of practitioner research by its very nature.
The second reason the theoretical framework was relevant to this study is that I wanted to keep “the seeking of rival explanations” (Yin, 2012, p. 14) central to the research. This particular theoretical framework establishes potential rival hypotheses (Maxwell, 2005, p. 106)—as useful for embedding a sense that “continual skepticism” (Yin, 2012, p. 14) needed during the research process. It was certainly possible that a behaviorist or positivist stance (Creswell, 2009) would explain, enlighten, or inhibit the research process or offer differing data analyses so keeping this in mind ensured that I would be open to multiple ways of seeing the data.

The third reason this theoretical framework was relevant was that it informed the work of the practitioner researcher. In other words, what I did as the researcher and as the leadership mentor was also informed by a constructivist stance, and my advice and guidance for the principal assumed that our interaction was both a process by which he was learning and a process by which I was learning as I researched. Therefore, this stance informed the practice as well as the research in practice.

The following sections outline the specific research design methods, including the research design rationale, participant selection and sampling, data collection, and data analysis process. IRB status for this study was granted on 3/28/13 and approval for research from the District was received on 10/4/13.

**Research Design Rationale**

**Study Design**

This study was intended to be an unstructured design that included some practitioner research methods and some ethnographic methods as part of the data
collection methods. Because of the data collected from Luke for the pilot inquiry, I wanted to explore his situation further. I approached this study out of a “desire to derive an up-close or otherwise in-depth understanding of a single …case, set in (its) real world context(s)” (Bromley, 1986, p. 1 as cited in Yin, 2012, p. 4). An unstructured design “favors the collection of data in natural settings” (Yin, 2012, p. 5) and thus the opportunity to observe this principal within his daily practice fit naturally into this design.

The rationale for this unstructured design lay in the convergence of certain presenting conditions. Because of the high-profile nature of the school within the District’s reform efforts, because the principal had an SIG grant (a short-term federal funding stream), and because the principal was completely open about his own learning, this situation presented an opportunity for research about what appeared to be a unique phenomenon (Maxwell, 2005, p. 80; Yin, 2012, p. 7). And while unstructured studies often trade “generalizability and comparability” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 80), they can be analytically generalizable to other situations in which the conceptual claims might be similar (Yin, 2012, p. 18). While no other school in the U.S. will face the exact circumstances UH was facing, many other schools face similar circumstances. While no other principal has Luke’s individual characteristics and challenges, many other school leaders hope to do what Luke was hoping to do at UH. For this reason, this school leader was both unique and commonplace in the educational world today, making him a highly interesting and also highly representative case.

Difficult in an unstructured study is the bounding of the case and data collection (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 27) and in fact, this bounding was the greatest challenge of
the data collection and analysis portions of the study due to the extremely large amount of data. Thus, setting the boundaries was on critical move in the design process. This design was considered holistic (Yin, 2009, p. 50) because of the boundaries around the unit of analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 25). This study focused on an individual as the unit of analysis (Yin, 2009, p. 29) as it explored Luke’s reflections and his behaviors. In other words, it focused solely on Luke as a school leader and all primary data collected was from him and the practitioner researcher. Additional data that was collected for triangulation and contextualization purposes were not in and of themselves units of analysis.

**Ethnography**

While the overall study design was not an ethnography, there were several ethnographical methods were embedded within. Emerson et al., (1995) describe an ethnographer as someone who “enters into a social setting and gets to know the people involved in it,…participates in the daily routines of this setting, develops ongoing relations with the people in it, and observes all the while what was going on” (p. 1). In addition, the ethnographer “writes down in regular, systematic ways what she observes and learns while participating in the daily lives of others” (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 1). In this study, I spent 21 days at University Heights doing just this—joining the leadership team and observing the principal in his natural setting (Yin, 2012, p. 5), developing relationships with multiple people at the school site, and systematically recording what I
observed and engaged in. For this reason, the data collection and analysis included some ethnographic methodologies.

**Practitioner Research**

Practitioner research maintains that “practitioners were deliberative intellectuals who constantly theorize practice as part of practice itself” and that the goals of learning initiatives is “the joint construction of local knowledge, the questioning of common assumptions, and thoughtful critique of the usefulness of research generated by others both inside and outside contexts of practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 2). Practitioner research values local generation of knowledge, challenges traditional knowledge power paradigms, and privileges the meaning made in the establishment of an inquiry stance. Not only does this flow from sociocognitive learning theory, but it also flows into qualitative research design—valuing the discovery of grounded or emic (Emerson et al., 1995) data, concepts, and understandings.

In this study I was the researcher, but as the informal external leadership mentor, I was also situated as a practitioner (Zeni, 2001, p. xiv). Not only did the study include multiple occasions to observe the principal in action, and to hear his reflections, it also included multiple events where the interaction between him as the case and me as a participant in that case was the focus of the research. The ways in which our conversations supported his learning and even supported his behavioral changes were components of the research. Thus, I was positioned to have a first-hand relationship that “may provide clues to understanding the subtler, implicit underlying assumptions that were often not readily accessible through observation or interview methods alone”
(Emerson et al., 1995, p. 3). In addition, my role as the leadership mentor allowed me to experience “special opportunities to get close to, participate, and experience life in previously unknown settings” (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 4)—in this case, a school under pressure to transform.

**Participant Selection**

Because the study’s focus was on a leader and his leadership development, the UH principal was himself the case and therefore he was the actual study participant. I studied Luke, the principal of University Heights. Guided by the research questions, I focused on how his beliefs manifested in his leadership practices and how he was able to take his learning and reflections and implement actions or behaviors.

There are hundreds and thousands of schools across the U.S. in the midst of transformational school reform efforts led by just as many school leaders. University Heights, in a large urban district, is just one of those schools. It was selected through a process of purposeful or criterion-based sampling (Creswell, 2007, p. 178; Maxwell, 2005, p. 88; Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 27) that included both site-based and personnel-based criteria. I was hoping to find a school site where most of these factors were in place: the principal was new, the school was significantly underperforming based on external indicators such as state test scores, the District had given flexibility to the school and principal, the school had resources and had engaged a school reform partner, and the principal was willing and ready to engage in the research process. It was quite a stroke of luck, then, to come across UH while at my previous job. UH and the District
were in conversation with my previous employer, Read America (RA), as they searched for a school reform partner. I attended an initial meeting and it was there that I met Luke, the UH principal.

After leaving my job at Read America, I approached Luke first about being part of my pilot inquiry and then about being part of a research study. The presence of the above factors along with some additions—full access to personal and professional data from the principal, the willingness of the District assistant superintendent to be involved as a sponsor, and the importance the District was placing on the success of UH, made the choice seem apropos.

**Data Set**

This study included the collection of vast amounts of data. In total, I spent 21 days at UH, conducted 16 interviews during our mentor sessions, recorded close to 55 hours of interviews and observations, in addition to additional reflection sessions, and collected numerous documents. The primary data came from interviews, direct observations, and my own participant observations. Additionally, I collected documents such as self-assessment scales, emails, staff rosters, and school test results. Most crucial to the success of the study was the continual process of data reduction (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 10) from the very beginning. The on-going analysis process included limiting the kinds of data collected as the study progressed and as the analysis began, revealing more specific ways to explore the research question. I say this with the
recognition that data overload (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 56) was inevitable—the data collection plan was ambitious at best, and overwhelming at worst.

Much of the data reduction began in early 2013, as I realized that my data was beginning to “pile up” (Maxwell, p. 95). Themes were emerging and I was developing a grounded or emic coding set, one that was built on noticings and findings from the field without preconceptions from the literature. (Emerson et al., 1995). In addition, I identified several critical moments I had observed that contained multiple examples of both my research question and the principal learning in practice. In January 2013, at my dissertation proposal hearing, my committee assisted with a narrowing strategy. I turned to data collection with the intention of focusing on small moment stories that were representative of what I was observing and the emerging themes. This strategy allowed me to focus on data identifying and explicating the small moments, and thereby narrow the set. With each round of coding, I was able to further narrow the data set. The final data set includes 28 points of data collected in the field and 18.35 hours of recordings. Field notes, memos, the research journal, and some archival documents are also included as secondary data.

Figure 4, below, outlines the data collected in the field. Figure 5 outlines the researcher data included in the data set and Figure 6 outlines the secondary data considered. A complete table of field data is included in Appendix B. Following the tables is a description of each component of the data set, followed by sections related to sequencing, triangulation, and specifics about the instruments.
Figure 4: Field Data Set

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TOTAL HOURS OF RECORDING INCLUDED IN THE DATA SET 18.35
Figure 5: Researcher Data

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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3/20/13</td>
<td>Memo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>4/10/13</td>
<td>Memo 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>4/10/13</td>
<td>Memo 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>4/15/13</td>
<td>Memo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>4/28/13</td>
<td>Memo 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>4/28/13</td>
<td>Memo 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>5/16/13</td>
<td>Memo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>5/17/13</td>
<td>Memo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>5/20/13</td>
<td>Memo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>6/1/13</td>
<td>Memo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>9/29/13</td>
<td>Inquiry Community Feedback Memo and Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>10/8/13</td>
<td>Memo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>on-going</td>
<td>Coding records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>on-going</td>
<td>Field jottings and field notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>on-going</td>
<td>Research Journal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6: Secondary Data Considered

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Data Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>10/21/11</td>
<td>Principal Intern School Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2/13/13</td>
<td>Luke email to staff on observation day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4/23/13</td>
<td>Luke email to staff re: scheduling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Summer 2013</td>
<td>School Satisfaction Survey Results: parent survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>8/14/13</td>
<td>Luke email to staff re: staffing and new year intro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>10/16/13</td>
<td>Luke email to staff re: walkthrough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>10/30/13</td>
<td>UH Critical Friends Review Report</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A primary method used for this study was the responsive interview (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 36) and as Emerson et al. point out, “what the ethnographer finds out is inherently connected with how she finds it out” (p. 11). The responsive interview was selected because it is flexible and adaptive (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 36), making it inherently constructivist as the interviewer “ask(s) broad enough questions to avoid limiting what interviewees can answer, listen(s) to what interviewees tell them, and modify(ies) their questions to explore what they were hearing, not what they thought before they began the interview” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 36). In addition, because one purpose of this study was to gather the thinking of the participant as it happened—to “elicit the interviewee’s views of their worlds, their work, and the events as they have experienced or observed” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 28), the responsive interview fit. Also, because I as the researcher was also a practitioner, the interviews functioned with dual purposes—the occasions of the mentoring as well as the research events. Finally, this study explored the personal experiences of a leader, and thus only one-on-one interviews offered the safety, privacy, and confidentiality that allowed space for the candor and risk needed for the participant to think out loud.
A combination of several types of responsive interviews were used, the semi-structured interview, the unstructured interview (Maxwell, 2005, p. 80), and a certain type of structured interview—the critical incident interview (Flanagan, 1954). Semi-structured phone interviews were also used following each of the observation days to have the principal describe events (Maxwell, 2005, p. 94) or his experiences of events that happened on the observation days. The format was also the same for some of the in-person interviews to get the principal’s perspective. The interviews were especially valuable in gathering data related to the Research Question as the principal described how he was making choices and decisions and making sense of the support he was receiving. The semi-structured interviews covered the following topics:

1) the principal’s foundational beliefs;
2) how the principal was making choices and moving between plans, decisions, and actions;
3) what the principal’s transformation plan was;
4) how his leadership was developing, changing, evolving;
5) what manifestations of his evolving leadership he could see in the organizational structures of his school;
6) how he was continually assessing his efficacy as a school leader.

Unstructured phone interviews were used monthly in order to give the principal some time to offer his perspective and discuss his own thoughts and topics. These interviews allowed the principal and researcher to have some time where the focus was not predetermined and there was more room for wandering thoughts.
As part of narrowing down the data and focusing solely on data that would answer the research questions, a structured interview (Wright, Lichtenfels, & Pursell, 1989) was used periodically. The purpose of this was to follow up from the observation day about important, seminal events that were representative or illustrative of the ways the principal was integrating his learning. These interviews drew from critical incident technique (CIT). A critical incident is considered “any observable human activity that is sufficiently complete in itself to permit inferences and predictions to be made about the person performing the act. To be critical, an incident must occur in a situation where the purpose or intent of the act seems fairly clear to the observer and where its consequences were sufficiently defined to leave little doubt concerning its effects” (Flanagan, 1954, p. 327). CIT is used to pinpoint and focus an interview on a very specific event and what the participant is thinking and experiencing during that event.

CIT interviews were used to add a focus at specific moments in time to the data collected during observation days and to focus attention on the small moments (Calkins & Oxenhorn, 2003) as recommended by my committee. Using periodic structured interviews allowed me to narrow the attention of the participant and use a specific event to try to understand his thinking and how his thinking led to his actions. In addition, using the same structured protocol for these interviews increased the reliability of the interviews and allowed for different types of data analysis across multiple interviews (Wright et al., 1989, p. 193).
In addition to interviewing the principal participant, I interviewed the principal’s supervisor, the District Assistant Superintendent, once formally at the end of the first year of the study for contextual and triangulation reasons. This interview was semi-structured.

Some of the interviews used interview protocols (Creswell, 2009, p. 183) and some were open for discovery and reflection (See Appendix C for various interview protocols). Each interview was audio-recorded and I took field jottings as they occurred (see below for more information). Following each interview, the audio recordings were transcribed and these transcriptions, along with the field jottings and field notes serve as secondary data records of the interviews.

**Observations and Fieldnotes**

Observations were the second primary method of data collection. I spent 21 days at University Heights observing the principal in his natural professional setting (Creswell, 2007, p. 175). I followed him for these days, and took field jottings all the while. In addition, I audio-record various events, especially those in which data was emerging that directly related to the research question and the small moments (Calkins & Oxenhorn, 2003). These events included: meetings led by the principal, meetings between the principal and coaches he has, encounters with teachers during individual or group meetings, the ways in which he acts while visiting classrooms, his interactions with students and/or family members, or the ways he works with his leadership team.

Observations provided a “direct and powerful way of learning about people’s behavior and the context in which this occurs” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 94) and were
important for triangulation as well as for “draw(ing) inferences about this perspective that you couldn’t obtain by relying exclusively on interview data” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 94). In this study, the observations were crucial because the research question specifically focuses on what variables were impacting by his actions, choices—in other words, his practices. A way to discover and explore these practices was through observing the principal in action.

The observations generally occurred once per month, with a few missed months during holiday seasons. Observations were included in the methods so that I could see the participant in his natural setting with no agenda in mind, allowing for observations of “tacit understandings and ‘theory in use’” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 94). This was crucial for this study as the research question specifically focuses on theory in use issues.

This study provided prolonged time observing the participant in his natural setting (Creswell, 2007, p. 192). In addition, the observations were a combination of direct observation and participant-observations (Yin, 2009, p. 98). In other words, I was engaged as a participant in some of the events, while will I was a non-participant in others. Becker and Gee (1957—as cited in Emerson, 1995, p. 110) claim that “long-term participant observation provides more complex data about specific situations and events than any other kind of method. Not only does it provide more, and more different kinds, of data, but also the data were more direct and less dependent on inference” Emerson, 1995, p. 110). Because I was there regularly over the course of eighteen months, I was able to collect this type of complex, direct data.
Fieldnotes were taken during the observations and were written as systematically and objectively as possible (Anderson et al., 2007, p. 186). In order to do this, fieldnotes were formatted specifically, with divided pages (Creswell, 2007, p. 181)—the left side containing descriptive notes of the event or incident and the right side containing space for observations about the event and the social and interactional process that make up” the event (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 11), about my meta-cognitive processing of the event, about connections between this event and other events. In this way, the field notes were structured in a What? So What? Now What? format—with the What? on the left and the So What? and Now What? on the right (Thompson-Grove, 2004). The left hand side was the fullest during the note taking as I tried to “‘get it down” as accurately and completely as possible, avoiding too much self-consciousness about the writing process itself” (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 64). The right hand side was used some during the writing but mostly once I entered “reading” mode and “step(ped) back and (began) to consider the complexities which permeate fieldnote descriptions” (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 64). In this way, the fieldnotes contained space for the main components of this type of data collection—narrating, translating, and textualizing enacted experiences into written form (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 16).

Because I was both participant and researcher, the shape of the fieldnotes changed throughout the research process. The recognition that a practitioner researcher “cannot and should not attempt to be a fly on the wall” (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 3) demanded that the reactive nature of taking fieldnotes during research was in and of itself a “source of that learning and observation” (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 3)—thus the fieldnotes were not
only a record of the happenings and thinking occurring during an event or incident, they were indeed a mechanism for learning from an event or incident.

**Self-Assessment Scales**

In order to get a sense of foundational beliefs of the participant, I used interviews and observations. However, as optimism emerged as a theme and then a finding in this study, I returned to explore the literature and decided to add two scales to the data collection. Due to some disagreements in the literature, I decided to administer three very short but seemingly powerful tests related to optimism. The Life Orientation Test (LOT) scale measures “dispositional optimism” (Scheier & Carver, 1985, p. 219). The LOT scale is a psychometrically validated measure of optimism defined as “the favorability of a person’s outcome expectancy” (Scheier & Carver, 1985, p. 239). The LOT scale was developed in response to Bandura’s focus on task efficacy, focusing instead on outcome expectancies.

In addition, I gave the HOPE Scale (Snyder et al., 1991), another scale with construct, convergent and discriminant validity that measures hope—a more general construct than self-efficacy and more similar to optimism. The Hope Scale adds to information about a person’s goal-related activities and coping strategies. At this point, I decided to also add The Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995). The GSE is available in 33 languages and has had widespread use since 1979 to assess levels of perceived self-efficacy, with the intention of predicting coping skills for daily hassles.
I added these scales for triangulation purposes and to gather some data considering alternate perspectives. I did not add these scales for any formal quantitative analysis. I was really just very curious as to how the participant would respond and I wanted to see if there were similarities and/or differences across the scales.

**Research Journal**

As the researcher and as a participant, I entered multiple entries within my research journal—attempting to capture my experiences of both roles. The on-going researcher journal contained a running collection of what I noticed about three facets of the study—the data I was collecting as a researcher, the data I was collecting as a participant, and the process of doing the research (Emerson et al., p. 40). This research journal was also the place in which I captured much of my initial data analysis, and was the place where I noticed the interactions and steps of both the data collection and the analysis I was doing, giving me space to make conscious what I was thinking as I developed the analysis (Creswell, 2007, p. 79). This “reflexive” journal was invaluable for “catalytic validity, where researchers can trace their own reorienting and refocusing in light of the evolution of the research” (Anderson et al., 2007, p. 153). Having a designated place to do this strengthened the research process on two levels—the doing of the research and the learning from the research. In addition, this research journal was the place for critical subjectivity (Maxwell, 2005, p. 38)—the place where I acknowledged my own experience, assumptions, and biases and used them as part of the inquiry process.
The research journal was considered a secondary data source (Anderson et al., 2007, p. 208) among the many included in the study. For in the way that Emerson et al. (1995) describe, “‘doing’ and ‘writing’ should not be seen as separate and distinct activities, but as dialectically related and interdependent activities” (p. 15) and as such, the writing of the research journal was a form of “doing” the research. Important in this doing was deciding on stance and audience, form and voice, style and purpose, point of view, and the ways in which the interplay between the participant and me were framed (Emerson et al., 1995, Chapter 3). As the place where such thinking was recorded, the research journal was an important component for triangulation (Maxwell, 2005, p. 94). In fact, the research journal was the epicenter of the triangulation effort, as it was the place where I compared data sources, compared multiple experiences of the same event, compared archival findings to observed or heard findings, and compared primary source data to secondary source data.

**Field Jottings, Field Notes, and Memos**

Critical to the study design were the jottings, notes, and memos that I wrote during the data collection period. Field jottings were taken during interviews and observations. I have struggled in the past with field jottings that I did not make enough decisions beforehand regarding what I would be jotting. During the interviews, because I was recording the sessions, my jottings focused some on transcriptase details and on initial impressions, key events or incidents described, patterns in responses, sensory details about talk and actions, and indigenous meanings (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 26-29,
p. 32). This was done all the while listening for moments when the participant responded opaquely, or with bias or prejudice or assumptions, and for signs of responses with certain motivations—especially related to my positionality and our work relationship. During observations, my jottings focused on descriptive details, including impressions along with key events and incidents (Emerson, 1995, p. 27). All jottings were used as the scaffolds for my field notes and memos.

A central part of qualitative research involves the processes of “discovery” of circumstances (Emerson, 1995, p. 12) and the “reveal(ing) of multiple truths apparent in others’ lives” (Emerson, 1995, p. 3). Field notes and memos were the place where these discoveries were revealed. In order to build “thick description” (Emerson, 1995, p. 11; Maxwell, 2005, p. 116), I needed to remember that description was just that, description, and as such needs to be uncovered and discovered and not forcibly manipulated into what I wanted it to mean or what I hoped it would mean or what I thought it meant. Description implies capturing others’ experiences and meanings layered in transaction with my own experiences and meanings.

Each interview was recorded and transcribed, followed by the field notes and memos (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 67; Maxwell, 2005, p. 96, Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 110, Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 72). In writing the field notes, I tried to remember that “this process involves deciding not simply what to include but what to leave out” (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 51) and also remembering to listen for and notice what the participant decided to include and what to leave out. This piece of the process involved moving
from writing mode into reading mode, as I began to “create, rather than simply record reality” (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 64).

This study began with the writing of a memo, in fact, multiple memos to myself. In order to create the conceptual framework, I wrote, rewrote, and rewrote again, about the research, my areas of interest, the concepts embedded in both, the relationships between them all (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 72). This concept map for my study (Maxwell, 2005, p. 52-53) became the foundation for conceptualizing the research and positioning it within my goals and interests. Additional memos were written at intervals during the research process, and functioned on multiple levels—as ways to understand my topics more deeply, as ways to make sense of problems I encountered, as ways to reflect on readings and ideas (Maxwell, 2005, p. 12). All memos were written with two dimensions in mind—that they were the place for serious, critical reflection and that they were organized systematically (Maxwell, 2005, p. 13). Memos and the research journal were written on the computer. Memos were crucial for capturing thinking and as drafts of material that were used later on (Maxwell, 2005, p. 13) in written explorations of the study.

Certain initial memos serve to help me “step back from the field setting to identify, develop, and modify broader analytic themes and arguments” (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 157). I knew that I needed to write a researcher identity memo early on in order to articulate my own goals, experiences, assumptions, feelings and values (Maxwell, 2005, p. 27) within the research setting. Other initial memos included an assumptions and bias memo to address issues I was bringing to the research; a practitioner
positionality memo in which I explored how my participation would impact the research; a validity threat memo (Maxwell, 2005, p. 114) in which I identified and explored threats to validity in the study; a research relationship memo (Maxwell, 2005, p. 86) in which I reflected on how my current relationship with the participant was set up and what arrangements and agreements needed to be made.

In-process memos followed and took a “more consistent analytic stance” (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 100). These memos were the ones in which initial coding, interpretive writing, and identifying analytic themes occurred. These memos occurred regularly after the data collection began as analysis and pattern coding began. Integrative memos were used once some analysis had begun and I was looking to “clarify and link analytic themes and categories” (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 143). These memos were the ones that began the process of developing grounded theory (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 143) that led to the discoveries and findings of the study.

In many ways, this unstructured study included layers or building blocks that would support the development of the thinking. Thinking began with field jottings, then was developed in field notes, and was more flushed out in the research journal. Once analysis entered in the memos, coding began and patterns emerged. As patterns were interconnected and explored, the fabric of the research was woven. Data analysis, revisiting of the literature, and subsequent writing were the culminating thinking events that wove the final product—all founded on the bedrock of the early writing in jottings and notes and allowed to grow and develop and meander and be proven wrong during the process of writing in these scaffolded layers.
Document/ Archival Record Review

The study included document and archival record reviews for triangulation and contextualization purposes. This data was valuable for documenting events and incidents in leadership learning, enactment of leadership practices, and impact of leadership learning on leadership practices. In addition, this data added valuable layers for triangulation purposes—allowing for evidence of leadership behavior change to be included, allowing for comparison between multiple reporters (i.e., me as the researcher, the participant, and the data), and allowing for teacher-reported formative as well as high stakes student data to be referenced. The importance of having multiple sources of data for the research was the potential for the “development of converging lines of inquiry” (Yin, 2009, p. 115)—meaning that triangulation and corroboration were stronger. This in turn increased potential for addressing threats to construct validity and ensuring that what was being researched has been defined and what was been defined was being measured (Yin, 2009, p. 42).

Archival/ document review was a review of data that included the participant’s notes following mentoring sessions; the participant’s records of meetings; participant’s emails to mentors, staff, and supervisors; school schedules for SY 12-13 and 13-14; the UH School Improvement Plan; a Critical Friends Review conducted at the school by an outside agency, parent survey data, a school evaluation by a principal resident (Creswell, 2007, p. 181). In addition, public quantitative data for the current school year and for the past three years was reviewed for contextualization purposes. Available school data for at least 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 included:
a. Student and teacher demographic data

b. Student high stakes test data

A sampling of this data is included in the data set as portions of the small moments stories and as examples of certain findings.

Data Collection Index

A serious question when collecting large amounts of data lies in the data management system used to keep track of what research events and analyses have occurred (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 45). Decisions included ensuring data was readily accessible, deciding on the formatting of files, using consistent cross file names and codes, deciding on categories for an indexing system and then using them (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 45). I used a data collection “index” to keep track of the data collection process. This file contains information on all data collection points—a “running record of events” (Anderson et al., 2007, p. 208). The following information was tracked: date, event type, location, length, participants, if a recording was done, were transcriptions complete, were notes complete, was memo complete.

Triangulation

This study design included multiple methods, multiple data collection points, and multiple sources of data. While the primary data came from the participant himself and from the participant researcher, various interviews and document reviews provided additional data with which to compare the primary data. Including multiple data points
and methods “reduces the risk that your conclusions will reflect only the systematic biases or limitations of a specific source or method, and slows you to gain a broader and more secure understanding of the issues you were investigating” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 93-94).

The methods that were included to increase triangulation were asking the same question of multiple data sources (Yin, 2012, p. 104), persistent observations, memos, and secondary data collection. In addition, as a researcher I worked closely with two peer debriefers (Creswell, 2007, p. 192) who were conducting their research on the same time frame. Conversations with these “critical friends” allowed me to “hear (myself) out loud as (I) made the case for (my) decisions and analyses (Anderson et al., 2007, p. 153) and gave me outsider perspectives on methods, insights, and research design.

Additionally, in the fall of 2013, I participated in an inquiry group presentation with a group of peers, fellow doctoral students also conducting research at that time. This inquiry presentation involved choosing terms and questions for the group to examine in relationship to one piece of data. I used the structured interview from 4/26/13 for this presentation. This process was extremely helpful in raising numerous analysis issues that I was overlooking or missing. It was especially helpful in exposing researcher bias issues. My colleagues perceived the relationship between researcher and participant in complex ways that I had previously not considered.
Data Analysis

This section contains a description of the data collection/data analysis interplay.

The table in Figure 7 outlines the analytic moves made during the data collection and analysis process of the study.

**Figure 7: Analytic Methods**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates/Timeframe</th>
<th>Analytic Moves</th>
<th>Periodic Moves</th>
<th>On-Going Moves</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 2012-Fall 2012</td>
<td>1. Hypothesis, interesting RQ</td>
<td>1. Memos/emails to committee</td>
<td>1. Data collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 2013</td>
<td>5. Decide on small moments structure</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan. 2013</td>
<td>6. Data Collection begins</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan.-Feb. 2013</td>
<td>7. Record words that repeat, identify themes, codes emerge during data collection</td>
<td>3. Examinations of secondary data—emails, documents, schedule, staffing lists</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2013</td>
<td>8. Read and code data set—emic codes. Coding Set 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2013</td>
<td>9. Return to literature</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>July 2013</td>
<td>10. Riggan class and meeting</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Aug. 2013</td>
<td>12. Sharon meeting</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 2013</td>
<td>13. Reframing—focus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2013-Jan. 2014</td>
<td>14. List of topics from each interview, code those lists with same code bank</td>
<td>5. Peer debriefer conversations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Analytic Moves

The articulated analysis period, beginning in January 2013, began with the formulation of a hypothesis and several initial research questions, following the advice of Miles and Huberman (1994) to have some guidance within my inductive mode (p. 25). Throughout that summer, I worked on the conceptual framework (Ravitch & Riggan, 2012, p. 81) by looking for underlying constructs and relationships within my research questions (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 25). To do this, I reviewed the research questions, the literature review, conceptual framework and the data from the pilot study and worked through multiple iterations (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 22). This period of review served as the original framing and purpose of the study was crucial in moving into conscious analysis.
Analysis, embedded in data collection, then followed what Miles and Huberman (1994) describe as a “classic set of analytic moves” (p. 9). The field notes, transcripts, and research journal became the data set that contained “themes, patterns, and variations” (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 144) and thematic analysis could begin (Boyatzis, 1998).

Sensing patterns was the first step in the search for the codeable moments (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 3). These patterns became the initial coding set (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 56), as I looked for emerging conceptualizations, definitions, and similarities and differences within the data.

Initially, I anticipated emic coding categories to emerge (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 157; Maxwell, 2005, p. 97) in a coding structure (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 207) based on the components of the conceptual framework—efficacy related, leadership practices in action, evolutions in thinking. As I started to collect data for this study and read the first transcripts, I attempted to be open and notice many themes emerging in the data. I wrote down repeated and common words from the transcripts and from my notes, extracting statements and themes and listing them separately (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 209) in order to be able to sort and compare the ideas (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 226). This “start list” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 58) allowed for descriptive coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 57) as I labeled each phrase or set of phrases with the codes. The themes became the first grounded code set (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 57): authority, leadership, execution, relationships, vision, mentoring, context/background, data, flexibility. I categorized this as Coding Set 1 (see Appendix D for the complete list of all three coding sets).
The proposal hearing was critical in establishing my analytic moves—refining the research questions, narrowing them down, and deciding on the vignettes structure (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 81) as the construct through which to tell the story of my data. Using vignettes would allow me to focus on subsets of especially “rich “pockets” of representative, meaningful data” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 81). This strategy, similar to the “small moments” strategy used in teaching writing (Calkins & Oxenhorn, 2003) would allow me to consider specific incidents or moments in my data and do a deeper exploration of the ways in which they were representative, allowing for a “narrative, storylike structure” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 81).

A decision to focus on “small moments” allowed me to taper the lens through which I would collect data and through which I would begin to more formally code the data. This meant that I did not have to listen for everything and could listen for specific things. I welcomed the fact that “data collection is inescapably a selective process” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 55) and I needed a way to be selective. This tapering was a relief because I could be proactive about what I was observing and hearing, and also because it made completing this study more viable. In addition, I decided to formally name a bounded data set (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 27) as soon as possible so that I could begin coding. This data reduction, itself an analytic move (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 10), was intended to help me sharpen my ability to learn from the data. I decided to include only the monthly interviews done with the principal in my data set, adding additional data points such as observations as needed to present the findings.
In June 2013 I read this entire data set. I lightly coded using Coding Set 1. In July, during a summer data analysis class and meeting with the professor, I decided that my emic code set was unlikely to help me answer the research question for my study. Etic code sets are developed prior to data collection from literature or conceptual and theoretical frameworks (Maxwell, 2005). I decided an etic code set might indeed offer me more guidance in seeing my data. So, I developed a new theoretical etic code set (Maxwell, 2005 p. 97-98) that contained items directly related to the research question: choices, plans, decisions, actions.

Following this, I engaged in an inquiry group exercise in which I used a question to focus the feedback from my colleagues, who were school leaders engaged in their own doctoral research. This question, “what kinds of choices do you hear reflected in the ways this principal talks about his practice?” came directly from my research question. The format of the session allowed for my colleagues to analyze a piece of my data set. Their analysis led me to see the restrictions and constrictions in my coding set. Along with the reframing I had just done, I decided once again to revise my coding structure (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 62) to reflect both emic and etic codes. In reviewing my emic and etic sets of codes, I realized that the patterns in what I was hearing reflected the categories identified in the literature as essential for successful leadership—setting directions, developing people, making the organization work, and managing the instructional program (Hallinger & Heck, 2010, p. 657; Heck, 1992; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2004). These buckets seemed to allow for the merging of my emic and etic coding sets.
An additional consolidation that happened at this time was my realization that instead of looking for vignettes that represented each one of the representative moments in my data, I had one ongoing vignette that seemed to either follow or lead Luke throughout the time I observed and interviewed him—the establishment and continual refinement of the school schedule. Luke began and ended our long data collection period on the same topic—the UH schedule. Not only did were the stories of the schedule most representative of Luke’s learning but they also represented real life examples of how leaders need to focus on purpose, people, organization and instruction. (Hallinger & Heck, 2010, p. 657; Heck, 1992; Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 3, 8-9; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008). This discovery of course was apropos as I recalled a comment from Dr. Lytle’s school finance class, a proclamation that power in a school resides in its roster (Simons notes, 2-9-13). Using this structure would allow me to “look for relationships that connect statements and events within a context into a coherent whole” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 98).

These two consolidations meant that I could now return to my data set, which was itself slightly larger and do two things: decide which additional pieces of data to include in the data set that were specifically related to the schedule vignette (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 81) and recode with my new combined etic/emic coding set—Code Set 3. For this coding set, I used four codes from the literature: purpose, people/relationships, organization, and instruction. And I then “filled in” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 62) with three emic codes: mentoring, leadership identity, and focus. At this time, I also toyed with using an additional analysis tool—the Rigor, Relevance, Relationships and
results framework (McNulty & Quaglia, 2007) which combines a knowledge taxonomy and an application model. After using it on a few data pieces, I decided it was not beneficial because it did not actually help reframe any data or surface any new themes or noticings.

During the fall of 2013, I coded the entire data set using these codes. While this may seem like multiple rounds of coding, I was using them to peel the onion, so to speak. As Miles and Huberman (1994) state, “the longer we are in the environment, the more layers appear to surface” (p. 62). During this coding round, I made a list of topics that were covered in each data component, and then coded these lists of topics using the same code set. This process of data reduction (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 10) allowed me to begin to think across data collection points and see patterns and themes beyond an individual’s words. In addition to the list of categories of variables (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.240), I also used multi-colored post-its to mark the data by category, so I could visually see how much of each category was present in the data. Following this coding round, I decided to conduct a critical incident interview (Flanagan, 1954) specifically about the schedule—asking Luke to revisit the journey of schedule development from his first year to the present.

At this point, some findings were emerging that I had anticipated through the data collection and some that I had not. One that I noticed very late was the presence of optimism in the data and this directly connected all the way back to my conceptual framework and my original interest in doing this study—efficacy. So, I returned to the literature on optimism and its relationship to self-efficacy, demonstrating the ways in
which using literature in this study was “iterative” (Creswell, 2009, p. 28). Within this return to the literature, I noticed some disconnects between optimism, self-efficacy and some other related dimensions—hope and outcome expectations. I then decided to administer three short assessment tools to Luke on these three pillars. I used the HOPE Scale, the Life Orientation Test, and the General Self-Efficacy Scale. I had no intention of doing an in-depth analysis on these tests, I was just curious about how he would score and if these data would be at all relevant for triangulation purposes.

Following this last literature exploration, I returned again to my data to do some rereading and some light recoding. And finally, to write.

**On-Going Moves**

The data collection itself was continuous and ongoing. I began collecting data in August 2012 and stopped formally collecting data in January 2014. As Maxwell (2005) reminds us, “data analysis (begins) immediately after finishing the first interview or observation” (p. 95). Indeed, the research process can be described as a “spiral” of “planning, acting, observing, and reflecting” (Anderson et al., 2007, p. 145) as the practitioner work leads to the research work again and again.

The ongoing research journal contained a running record of what I was noticing about two facets of the study—the data I was collecting and the process of doing the research (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 40). This research journal was the place in which I captured much of my initial data analysis, and was the place where I noticed the interactions and steps of both the data collection and the analysis I did, giving me space
to make conscious what I was thinking as I developed the analysis (Creswell, 2007, p. 184). In addition, I took moments to conduct initial analysis intervals (Anderson et al., 2007, p. 212). During these intervals, I used Anderson et al.’s questions as a guide (See Appendix E) to reflect both on methods and on data analysis. This analysis process, embedded in the data collection process, provided new framing and rethinking for the next data collection event (Maxwell, 2005, p. 95-96).

**Periodic Moves**

A crucial part of the data collection and analysis was my own writing about what I was learning or what I thought I was learning. I wrote multiple memos during the study period, not only to “capture (my) analytic thinking about (my) data, but also facilitate such thinking, stimulating analytic insights” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 96). I wrote about possible findings and my thinking about those findings. I wrote about frustrations with Luke and with myself. I wrote about my noticings and wonderings, my worries and hopes.

Much of the value in the research came during those moments of reflection, as I pondered my research questions, attempted to discover ways in which the participant had evolved over the course of the study, and searched for pattern theories to emerge (Creswell, 2007, p. 64). Also, while unstructured study research may not be statistically generalizable and comparable “for internal validity” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 80), in my writing I wanted to think about how each “particular” in the data was related to the other “particulars.” I was not aiming for the “universal” generalizability especially but I was
looking to discover commonalities and dissonance between the “particulars” (Silverstein, 1988 as cited in Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 173).

Additional periodic analysis moves included some sorting, coding and analyzing steps on the documents that I had (see Table 7 for a complete list of data included)—including emails from Luke to his staff, evaluations and assessments conducted by others at UH, parent surveys, summative test score data. This search was an attempt to link my qualitative data with some more quantitative data in order to support triangulation, to develop deeper analysis, and to initiative “new lines of thinking” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 40). Ultimately, I decided to include pieces from this data in my data set if they related to either background information on Luke or UH, or if they related specifically to the vignette structure or any of the findings.

Also, important to the analysis process was continuing my work with my two peer debriefers (Creswell, 2007, p. 192). This included sharing data analysis, talking through that analysis and trying out theories about what I was finding. I found that doing this startled me out of my “tunnel vision” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 67) around how to analyze the data and was very helpful in seeing my data differently.

**Data Management**

I made every effort to keep all the information shared during the study strictly confidential. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Pennsylvania has access to study information, upon request. All signed documents and all documents with the participant’s name or site-related identifiers on them are kept in a secure place in my
home office. These documents have been kept confidential. All the documents will be kept for five years, upon agreement with the participant and then destroyed.

Audio-recorded group discussions and individual interviews are kept on my computer which is password protected. Audio-recorded files were transcribed by a transcription service, *Mark My Words*. The transcription service did not have access to identifying names or information—all names were coded prior to being sent to the transcription service.

Once transcriptions were filed on my computer, all files were password protected. The sound files and written files will be kept for the recommended period of time (five years as cited by Creswell, 2007, p. 91) and then destroyed. I made every attempt to keep all responses confidential in both the storage of the data and anything written. The participant and the people around him were given pseudonyms so that they remain anonymous in written accounts of the study. The only exceptions to anonymity will occur upon explicit written consent by the study participant. All other names will continue to remain disguised. I reminded the participant at each interview about the consent and confidentiality agreements so that the participant had regular opportunities for input at each stage of the research study.

An additional layer to the data management in this case was ownership of the data. The participant expressed interest in being able to access the data for his own doctoral work. Part of the research agreement was a personal agreement (Creswell, 2007, p. 91) designating shared ownership of the primary data collected—the recordings, transcripts, and collections of document data. Field jottings, field notes, memos, and all
analytical writing, including the dissertation will remain under my ownership and can be shared at will upon mutual agreement (See Appendix F for the Informed Consent Form).

**Role of the Researcher/ Issues of Validity**

There were multiple ways in which my role and positionality vis-a-vis the participant complicated the data collection and analysis of this study. I knew the principal from two days of visits to UH in my previous position. I was then working (SY 2011-2012) for the organization that would be providing Luke with a coach so I was very familiar with the content and direction that the coaching was going to take. Luke and I had many conversations about the study prior to beginning and because of this, had a budding relationship at the onset.

As the study unfolded, my role shifted more and more from engaged observer to advisor to mentor to participant. For example, in the early observations and interviews, my participation was limited to asking questions and giving non-judgmental responses, such as “ok” and “can you tell me more about that,” during conversations. However, by the late fall of 2013, during observations, Luke began to ask my opinion about the work going on during the day. I was realizing that I could and “should not attempt to be a fly on the wall” (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 3). During the next months, Luke began to ask my judgment prior to work happening as opposed to just reflecting on past work. I was slowly becoming the “outsider-within” (Anderson et al., 2007, p. 10). In the spring of 2014, I was asked to work on the schedule during several observations, helping to align Luke’s goals for the school with input from his leadership team and teachers. I was also
asked to help the leadership team do some vision work—articulating their vision of what they want the school to be and facilitating some alignment between the team members.

From my perspective, I know that it was definitely easier for me during interviews to restrain from offering advice and guidance than it was during the observations. Since most of the interviews were done on the phone, I could more easily act as sounding board, receiver of ideas and thoughts without offering my own. I was tempted, to be sure, to step in at certain moments. I remember often wanting to say—“c’mon, you keep talking about what you’re going to do but you never actually do it!” I did not though. It was critical that the interviews be designed to allow the participant to be honest and accurate, and also so that I could be honest and accurate. The initial questions and follow-up questions were structured to help me “recognize distortions, fabrications, and omissions” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 73)—all possibilities given my positionality (Anderson et al., 2007, p. 8) in relation to the participant.

An interesting moment occurred in late summer 2014. Luke and I decided I would end data collection and I remember experiencing a huge relief at finally being able to tell him what I was thinking about and to actually give him some really concrete directives. Our phone call in August 2014 was very different for me—I felt liberated and could engage in a completely participatory way. After this, I did decide to continue to collect data at UH through the fall of 2014 and found myself resigned to putting on my “listen only” hat again.

My changing role and relationship with Luke certainly made it possible that the responses I got from him were less than fully honest, although they also make it possible
that the responses were more honest than with others with whom he speaks. They also made it possible that I may have interpreted the responses in ways that only confirmed my biases or assumptions and did not challenge them (Maxwell, 2005, p. 108). In addition, I was very much both a confidante and periodic insider and an outsider in the setting, as well as being both the researcher and a practitioner (Anderson et al., 2007, p. 8-9). This shifting was confusing to me as the researcher and must have been confusing to Luke as the participant (Anderson et al., 2007, p. 8). I imagine it was also a source of confusion to the others surrounding Luke in his work, such as other members of the leadership team and teachers.

All of these layers of power and insider/outsider status added complexity to the way I both collected and analyzed the data and pose threats to the validity or trustworthiness of the findings. There was no real way to avoid the tension caused by my positionality as I continued to “juggle these multiple demanding roles” (Anderson et al., 2007, p. 11). So I had to be very careful in several ways. I was certainly the “instrument of the research and the research relationships were the means by which the research gets done” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 83). I needed to make sure to be as transparent about my role and purpose and to include ways of surfacing some of these threats along the way.

In soliciting the participant, I was upfront, and made serious promises of confidentiality and privacy—paramount in reassuring the principal that he could speak freely with me. I restated repeatedly that no individual information will ever be given or shown to anyone besides myself and Luke, and certainly not to any District administrators. As Rubin & Rubin (2005) remind us, “it was imperative to keep that
promise” (p. 98). The informed consent form (Creswell, 2007, p. 89) included reiterations of these promises and gave Luke some contractual reasons to believe me. The consent form contained a section describing the confidentiality clause and I co-signed the consent form as a means of publically agreeing to keep their names and individual associative data completely confidential and untraceable (See Appendix F for a copy of the consent form).

It was also important to be upfront with the purposes of the study. I showed Luke the early research questions and described what my final product would be—indeed his willingness to be involved was based on the transparency I promised in regards to showing him data, sharing my analyses with him, and helping him learn from what I was learning. I am interested in using my research in further explorations—more research, or in writing about what I found—in articles, journals, and other mediums. It was my hope that an “ongoing feedback loop (would) help generate mutual understanding” (Anderson et al., 2007, p. 162) between me and the participant, allowing us both to benefit from the study.

This transparency was intertwined with the recognition that both of us, the researcher and the participant, have a stake in the research process and findings, whatever the outcomes may be. Luke is being watched by his District as one of the next generation of budding leaders, and his District gave permission for the study, with the expectation of some type of final report. My stake, as the researcher, is more related to the usability of my data for future inquiries and whether or not, the time I devoted to this study bears some intellectual fruit for me in my future pursuits. These stakes were certainly threats to
validity and had to be taken into account during the entire research process. In fact, they had to be part of the conversations at various points and the participant and I discussed them many times.

Additional threats to validity included my own bias and assumptions. I certainly have my own opinions and expertise around school leadership, and needed to constantly remind myself that this study was not about my own methods or opinions of leadership or about imparting the principal with my own wisdom, but about discovering the participant’s. It was also not about how my words of wisdom might impact the participant’s leadership, it was about how he evolved as a leader in collaboration with the many supports he has.

The interviews and observations needed to be conducted with a strong sense of responsiveness and non-judgmental reactions. As I have done in other situations where this was a concern, I chose a standard response to use and tried to remain consistent in using it during the interviews. I needed to make sure that I did not take a reflexive stance in analyzing the data I collected (Maxwell, 2005, p. 109). I included several Researcher Identity Memos (Maxwell, 2005, p. 27) as part of my pre, during, and post data analysis process, allowing me to reflect on how my goals, biases, and assumptions were impacting my thinking about the data. I also included other memos based on the issues raised in Zeni’s (2001) Guide to Ethical Decision Making (p. 153). I know that my positionality and my role and relationships with the participant rendered me not neutral (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 3) so the task at hand was to consider my positions, biases and assumptions,
consider my data, and strive to explore, pursue, and articulate as much “indigenous meaning” (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 12) as possible.

One consideration during the study was my own personality and conversational style that will impact the “conversational partnership” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 81). As Emerson et al. (1995) describe, this project was going to require “subjecting yourself, your own body, your own personality, and your own social situation, to the set of contingencies that play upon a set of individuals, so that you can physically and ecologically penetrate their circle of response to their social situation, or their work situation or their ethnic situation” (p. 2). I frequently take on various personalities with principals depending on my past experiences with them and of course by own biases and prejudices. Each data collection event had a different purpose and this suggested that I needed to make conscious decisions about which personality to invoke.

A complication related to this was raised by the committee during my dissertation proposal hearing (1-31-13). During the inquiry group presentation, one of my colleagues pointed out that it was almost like Luke was seeking my approval in our conversation and another asked, “I wonder what will he do without your monthly visits?” (Simons, Inquiry Group notes, 9-29-13). The complication was the nature of the personal relationship between Luke and I that developed over the course of the study. Luke and I were developing a relationship beyond our monthly interviews—we were becoming personal and professional friends and this posed an increased risk of bias and ethical challenges. As Zeni (2001) reminds us, “it is precisely the relationships—insider to insider—that pose the most significant ethical dilemmas” (p. 33) and the relationship between Luke
and I could have been a threat to validity. This threat will be examined further below and again in Chapter 5.

Luke and I are certainly friends now. This friendship has influenced both of us in various ways. For example, in the fall of 2013, Luke entered a doctoral program at the leading university in his city, in part due to my influence and experience as a doctoral student. I decided to continue collecting data at UH for at least some of SY 2013-2014, in part to continue my relationship with Luke, the school leadership team, and to extend my work for future use. This decision added a “personal goal” to the “intellectual (scholarly) goals” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 16) with which I started the study. I needed to constantly remind myself that “immersion is not merging” and that I attempted “to get close to” the participant, I needed to remain a “partial stranger” (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 35).

Other layers of complication: I am female and Luke is male—opening up gender issues of power, sexuality, and communication style. I am about 10 years older than Luke, adding layers of age, experience, and power to the equation. In other words, the personal relationship between Luke and I as participant and researcher has probably deeply affected the nature of the data, the data collection process, and the interpretation of the data in ways that may remain unexplored despite the checks built into the methodology. I tried to remain conscious of this throughout the process, addressing it as I could but also understanding that much lies outside of conscious awareness.

My goal in using some additional data sources beyond the interviews and observations, using reflective writing and analysis, and recognizing that I was bringing
with me certain prejudices and ambitions, was that I would be able to confront my own involvement in the research process. As Maxwell (2005) states, “repeated observations and interviews, as well as the sustained presence of the researcher in the setting studied, can help rule out spurious associations and premature theories. They also allow a much greater opportunity to develop and test alternate hypotheses during the course of the research” (p. 110). But they also allow more time for the developing relationships to influence what the researcher and participant notice, wonder, experience, and conclude.

Specific methodological moves were included in the study to counter some of the threats to validity. Peer debriefing, clarifying bias through memos and the research journal, using additional data for triangulation (i.e., interview of the participant’s supervisor, archival documents and emails, outsider evaluations of the school), presenting counter arguments, spending prolonged time in the field, attempting to do some thick description in the vignettes (Creswell, 2009, p. 191-192) were all used for this exact reason. This type of study embodies the “peculiar practice of representing the social reality of others through the analysis of one’s own experience in the world of these others” (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 10). Within the methods, I hoped to design a study that would surface not “the truth” about learning to lead, but “the multiple truths” (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 3) of someone else’s journey. At the end of the day, while I cannot dismiss the ways in which my positionality as the participant researcher complicates the validity of the study, I can only embrace it and hope that this study has generated “knowledge that is useful, valid, descriptive of the world, and informative of how we might change it” (Argyris et al., 1985 as cited in Anderson et al., 2007, p. 26).
Reflections on the Research Design and Methodology

I certainly did not intend to spend such a long time, over a year, observing and talking to this principal at University Heights and recoding his every word. I was hoping to spend six months at the school and come out with some findings that would explain or demonstrate how and why it is so hard for our system to develop strong, effective school leaders. The initial research design reflected a more concrete, systematic plan, but as I “enter(ed) into the matrix of meanings of the researched” and “learned what (wa)s required to become a member of that world,” I shifted into a more ethnographic mindset, seeking “to experience events and meaning in ways that approximate members’ experiences” (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 2). This meant letting go of some of my preconceived organizational structure and “subjecting (my)self, (my) own body and (my) own personality, and (my) own social situation, to the set of contingencies that play upon a set of individuals, so that (I) (could) physically and ecologically penetrate their circle of response to their social situation, or their work situation… (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 2).

This letting go made sorting through the data and the analysis difficult for me. Early on, I anticipated completing this study and this dissertation far earlier than it actually happened. One of my roadblocks was my own struggle to navigate through the data, through my own hopes and fears about the data, and to surface with some tangible concepts and ideas that emerged from the data and my experience collecting it. I found there were months where living within this study was like quicksand—the more I struggled, the more I sank. Once I let go, and learned to listen to my data, the more I was able to extract myself from the quicksand and proceed. While this may not be a finding
for anyone else but me, this process has certainly taught me to trust and let go. Hopefully doing this has given me a chance to “understand (my) own enterprise in much the same terms that (I) understand those (I) stud(ied)” Emerson et al., 1995, p. 216).

**Importance of the Study**

This study is valuable for multiple intellectual and practical reasons (Maxwell, 2005). Because this study was positioned at an epicenter of leadership learning—with a principal who has some of the innate leadership qualities described in the literature (Carson & Earley, 2010, p. 3; Kelloway & Barling, 2000), who was receiving in-situ training, and who had mentors for reflection and guidance, I had the opportunity to explore his learning process up close. In conducting this research over an extended period of time with deep access, I was able to frame the context in which the principal was leading, try to make sense of the meaning he was making, understand the process by which he was learning, and generate some grounded theories (Creswell, 2007, p. 49; Maxwell, 2005, p. 42) about phenomena that arose over the course of the study (Maxwell, 2005, p. 22). While causal explanations are hard to develop, process theory allowed for analysis that helps explain how certain factors played a role in causing others, and explicate the relationships between them (Maxwell, 2005, p. 23). These outcomes were all valuable because they were what really interested me and a huge dimension of research was motivation to me as a researcher—bottom line, I was really interested in the study and what I learned from it.
In addition, there may be some practical outcomes that could be more globally valuable. My goal was to develop some insights into the relationship between leadership and learning to lead, choice-making within leadership, and between learning about one’s own leadership and manifestations of that learning in leadership actions. I hoped to generate some grounded theory in combination with practical advice that will add to the fields around school leadership and school leadership development. This study accomplished that in ways explored in the following two chapters.

Specifically, there are multiple ways in which this study is positioned to contribute to the field. Because research on efficacy is a recent addition to school leadership research, this study will contribute to the connection between the two. In addition, this study was not an after-the-fact categorization of leadership practices of an effective leader. It was indeed an exploration of the process of becoming a leader and as such, will add to that gap in the literature surrounding school leadership development. It will be particularly useful to practitioners such as districts developing school leadership pipelines, principal evaluation systems, connections between principal leadership and instructional effectiveness. This study offers many insights for field-based practitioners—those developing school leadership and those leading schools.

The following chapter is an exploration of the major finding of the study. It includes a vignette, along with data presentation and analysis.
Chapter 4: MAJOR FINDING AND DATA ANALYSIS

This qualitative study was guided by the following research question: *What are the contextual and mediating variables that influence a novice principal’s choice-making in a watched school in need of improvement?* This question is a reflection and distillation of other critical questions in the leadership field, which include questions such as: Can school leaders implement effective leadership practices and if so, how does doing so result in outcomes that are important to the organization? (Kelloway & Barling, 2000). How do school leaders know which practices to implement and how will they know if they are working? How do school leaders navigate the tensions between very concrete performance goals and their more idealistic dreams for their students?

As described in previous chapters, this study followed a novice principal during two school years as he led his school, a PK-5 neighborhood elementary school in a large urban school district. Through monthly interviews and observations, the principal reflected on the research question in relation to his work as a school leader. The questions guided what was a very personal and intense experience—being followed and interviewed by the same person repeatedly for more than a year.

The constructivist theoretical framework that guided the study values ongoing and iterative cognitive development and deep understanding (Fosnot & Perry, 1996, p. 10). Constructivism posits that learners use their experiences and their thinking about their experiences to actively construct meaning and understanding that makes sense to them in complex and non-linear ways (Fosnot & Perry, 1996, p. 11). This position combines three strands in the constructivist theory. First, individuals create their own body of
knowledge through a process of forming and reforming schema (cognitive constructivism—Piaget, 1986). Second, individuals make sense of and transmit this knowledge in their own minds but assisted through a social process—that includes language, social interaction, and mutual construction (social constructivism—Vygotsky, 1978). And finally, metacognition, or the process of thinking about your own thinking, is critical to a learner both monitoring learning progress and adapting learning strategies as needed for understanding (Santrock, 2009).

In this study, both the participant Luke, and I as the researcher were constantly making meaning in living and iterative ways assisted through our social interactions during interviews and observations. It was the process of becoming more metacognitive about the data that allowed for patterns and findings to emerge. In other words, both Luke and I needed to experience all three of the above referenced constructivist strands in order to make sense of the data.

When I finally learned to listen through the complex layers of the data, I discovered one major finding. Perhaps it was not a surprise given my reading of the literature and what I experienced during the data collection; however, it took me a long time to distill. In this chapter, I will discuss the finding summarized here in depth.

1. The principal demonstrated an assumption of possibility as his foundational method of operation.

In this chapter, I will explore this finding and use the principal’s own voice to demonstrate his thinking. I attempt to surface Luke’s explorations of meaning, showing
how he acted and talked his way to deeper understandings of leadership, himself as a leader, and his own efficacy as a leader.

In this chapter and the next, a set of vignettes (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 81) is included. The vignettes are meant to illustrate small representative moments (Calkins & Oxenhorn, 2003) that happened during the course of data collection. The vignettes are narratives and reference only the interviews and observations, not the literature or other sources of data. The vignette topic is recurring and was selected for several reasons. Once I settled on the final coding set (see Appendix D for Coding Set 3), I realized that there was one recurring story that not only followed Luke in his journey but embodied critical leadership directions and choices during the time of the study—the story of the construction of the UH schedule. In addition, the vignettes illuminate real life moments that embody various aspects of the literature or conceptual or theoretical frameworks. The chosen vignettes tell sequential pieces of the story of the schedule and Luke’s journey to embed his vision for the school into the schedule.

This chapter is structured as follows. It will begin with a background section on University Heights followed by a description of the school’s principal, Luke. This section will serve as background and contextualization for the subsequent presentation of the major finding. The introduction is followed by two sections: Presentation of the Data and Finding, which includes a vignette, and a Discussion of the Finding in relation to the conceptual framework and literature. The final chapter, Chapter 5, includes a postscript vignette and implications for research, practice, and theory.
Introduction: Background and Context

In this section, I discuss background information about the site of the study—University Heights ES—an elementary school in a large urban school district. I also discuss background information about Luke, the principal of University Heights and focus of this study. The background sections are offered to provide contextual information and to introduce two important elements of this study—the leader and the school where he is learning to lead.

Background: University Heights ES

The observations for this study took place at University Heights, a PK–5 elementary school in the District with approximately 400 students. UH was built in 1995 after its previous building was declared dangerous, and in the spring of 2005 playgrounds and basketball courts and the large grassy field behind the school were all landscaped. In the late 1990s, the school became a Transitional Native Language Instruction school for Spanish speaking children and as the population of Vietnamese students has risen, ESOL and Vietnamese tutors were hired. For a time, University Heights was an Indian Focus School, however that population has dwindled significantly in recent years.

Currently, 97% of UH students qualify for free and reduced price lunch, compared with the state average of 40%. The school has some ethnic diversity, with 77% Hispanic, 10% Asian, 5% African American, 4% White, 2% American Indian, 1% Pacific Islander, and a smattering of other ethnicities (Retrieved from schooldigger.com, 12-15-13). In SY 12-13, there were 46 students, or 12%, with some special education classification (Meeting Observation, 11-6-12, line 275).
During SY 11–12, UH had 27 full-time teachers and a student: teacher ratio of 16:1. In SY 12–13, UH had 23 full-time teachers with a student-teacher ratio of 20:1; and many of those teachers were new hires. By the beginning of SY 13-14, 80% of the teachers were not only new to UH, but in fact were hired by Luke and his assistant principal—effectively resulting in an almost complete staff turnover during the years of this study.

UH’s Performance Framework (a District coding system) declined between 2009 and 2010. The school moved down from the green category (Meets Expectations) to the yellow (Accredited on Watch) at that time (See Appendix A for the District’s color coding system). Overall, school performance on summative assessments was declining from year to year. In 2009, the state moved to a new state test, the Transitional Assessment Program (TAP²). In SY 2010-2011, University Heights was ranked 841 out of 874 elementary schools in the District.

In addition to declining performance, University Heights was also a school riddled with problems with staff and leadership morale. In 2011, a visiting principal intern described it this way: “I learned that people are not confronting the elephant in the room and that I am enabling them to continue to not name the elephant. I also learned that there is a lack of communication between teachers, committees, and administrators which is creating frustration. Finally, we have no system for reflection” (Principal Intern School Report, 10-21-11). Luke’s Assistant Principal (AP) said of that time, “two years ago when we came, there were hard feelings with some people, our office wasn’t running

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² All names changed to protect participant confidentiality.
well…people thought they were collaborating, but they weren’t. There were just lots of silos” (Simons fieldnotes, 10-15-13, lines 47-49). The District Assistant Superintendent confirmed this, saying Luke “inherited the staff that was very disconnected and not aligned and collaborative” (District Interview, 8-20-13, line 108).

During Luke’s first year, SY 2011–2012, UH moved to #822 out of 874 schools in the District, and in his second year, SY 2012–2013, UH moved up in the rankings to #764 out of 887 (retrieved from schooldigger.com, 12-15-13). Figure 8 shows where the UH overall performance rankings on the TAP compared to other schools for the year prior to Luke’s arrival and his first two years.

**Figure 8: UH Overall TAP Performance Rankings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>UH Overall TAP Performance Score: UH performed better than:</th>
<th>Conversely, UH performed more poorly than:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010-2011</td>
<td>3.9% of District schools</td>
<td>96.1% of District schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-2012</td>
<td>5.9% of District schools</td>
<td>94.1% of District schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-2013</td>
<td>13.9% of District schools</td>
<td>86.1% of District schools</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 9 shows the percentage of students in each grade who scored proficient or advanced on the TAP during Luke’s first year in the school SY 2011–2012 and the percentages during his second year in the school, SY 2012–2013. The table also includes two change scores; the first differential number is the change in scores for the grade from
year to year. The score below is cohort data, showing how much the yellow and green
cohorts changed between those two years. While the test scores remain low, the growth
scores dramatically increased between the two school years (except for 5th grade absolute
reading and writing scores).

Figure 9: UH TAP Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Grade 3</th>
<th>Grade 4</th>
<th>Grade 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Grade 3</th>
<th>Grade 4</th>
<th>Grade 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>54 (+8)</td>
<td>54 (+15)</td>
<td>44 (+12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>52 (+4)</td>
<td>48 (+18)</td>
<td>32 (-12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>25 (-4)</td>
<td>56 (+45)</td>
<td>16 (+13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>22 (+3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key:
Cohort 1
Cohort 2

Background: Luke, Principal University Heights ES SY 2011 to present

In 2011, Luke was assigned as the principal of UH. He was new to principalship,
ever having been a principal or school administrator before. Luke is a change of career
educator. Upon graduation from college with a business degree, he worked for no pay at
an educational software importing start-up company for two years, making money by
coaching youth sports and working in a summer camp. He then took a 6-month IBM
training program in Atlanta, and upon leaving to begin work, he took a different
opportunity in San Francisco selling software in Latin America.

Luke and his wife then decided to save some money and travel. They spent nine
months traveling, returned speaking fluent Spanish, and decided to move back home to
the large urban city where he grew up. With no job, Luke tried substitute teaching until
someone pointed out the District’s Teacher Residency Program. Luke obtained a job
because of his Spanish, worked for three years as a 3-5th grade ELA-S (bilingual) teacher.
During this time, he earned a master’s degree in public policy with an emphasis on
sustainability (the District did not specify the major one needed to get the master’s pay
increase).

In his fourth year of teaching, Luke received a Fulbright teacher exchange grant
and he and his wife moved to Bogota, Colombia. Upon his return, he continued to teach
and became a teacher leader in the school. In his 6th year, he applied and was rejected as
a Marshall —the District’s principal pipeline and licensure program run in conjunction
with the local university. He was named a teacher-of-the-year at his school, reapplied
again to become a Marshall leader in his 8th year of teaching, and was then accepted. As a
Marshall, he spent an entire year essentially shadowing a principal mentor, with few
responsibilities beyond figuring out how the school worked, and working on 4-5 projects
over the course of the year. The Marshall cohort spent 6 hours together weekly reflecting
upon what they were learning.
Following his year as a Marshall, Luke was offered an assistant principalship in an elementary school. He lasted there for two weeks before deciding it was not going to work. This was followed by a conversation with an assistant superintendent, then by an offer to become a principal. He was given two schools to choose from—one a highly functional school and one in disorder with a principal who was being forced out. In the superintendent’s office for his final interview, Luke ended up choosing University Heights, the more challenging of the two, all the while thinking, “what the hell are you saying? You’re taking the worst school in the world over this gem of this school. It turns out that it’s totally more my style. Speaking Spanish and getting to know the parents” (Luke interview, 3-13-14, lines 45-47). Luke took the principal position because he was eager to lead on his own. As he recalls, “I ha(d) no idea what I (was) doing. Ignorance was total bliss” (Luke interview, 3-13-14, lines 49-50).

Luke’s first move was to hire an assistant principal who had much more experience than he did and “from that point forward, she was co-principal except my name was on the door…I had no idea what I was doing, it was kind of bs, a white male with no experience whatsoever. The only two people who got principal jobs that year was because they spoke Spanish” (Luke interview, 3-13-14, lines 52-55). Luke’s first year at UH was SY 2011-2012. Several teachers quit upon his hiring, and the climate and morale among staff was extremely difficult. This study was hatched in the spring of that year, and the actual study began in August 2012, at the beginning of Luke’s second year as the principal of UH.
Luke instituted an extended day schedule in his second year, SY 12–13, in response to his frustration at the ways in which the existing UH schedule contained too much time when teachers weren’t with their students. Students in Grades 1 through 5 stayed at school until 4 pm. There were three instructional coaches; a competent assistant principal; the building and outdoor space were well resourced and well kept; there was a partnership in SY 12–13 with Playmobile for additional playground and community-building teamwork; and UH had a partnership with Read America (RA) in both school years to provide a school transformation framework based on a complete rethinking of literacy instruction, formative assessment, and data monitoring. The District was watching UH closely—there were frequent visitors from the District office, and the assistant superintendent frequently attended both professional development and turnaround meetings at the school.


In this section, I introduce the first aspect of the finding—the vision toward which Luke is attempting to lead his school. I will describe Luke’s vision in two parts:


2) *The Evidence: How Luke’s Vision will be Manifested*: In this part, I discuss the ways in which Luke will know whether his vision has been realized.
Following the first section, I introduce the major finding: Green Light Thinking / Assuming Possibility. I conclude this chapter with a discussion of this finding in relation to the research question, conceptual framework, and literature.

Luke’s Vision for University Heights

*How do you grow thinkers? Are we creating world citizens, right? That’s kind of always been what I want. I want to create better world citizens. That’s what I want, right, these global thinkers, problem solvers, etc., etc.*  

(Luke interview, 11-2-12, lines 766-772).

University Heights, a PK-5 neighborhood urban public school, was no different from other schools in the ways intellectual, emotional, and “environmental turbulence” (Lortie, 2009, p. 17) were housed within. Children explored, parents showed their hopes and their desperation, social class collided, expectations abounded, bias seeped in, and the unexpected delighted—in other words, schools are what Lortie (2009) refers to as “an emotionally charged setting” (p. 172). For school leaders, this is all a day at the office. Luke’s charge at University Heights was to lead in this space, to find ways to organize and systematize the chaos so that the real work of a school, nurturing a thriving democratic citizenry (his goal) could happen. Luke used this lens to frame his work, constantly asking himself the question above. “Here are my beliefs, right? I mean my core, better world citizens. I hope we create producers not consumers. I think the whole child should have the whole package, right” (Luke Interview, 10-15-13, lines 42-44).

Luke revisited this goal again and again. “And, to me, here’s kind of the answer that I’ve kind of come up with over the, I don’t know, past few weeks, months. It’s just
this idea of I want my kids, both my own personal children and kids in my class, I mean, I want them to be able to have all these tools in this tool bag so that it doesn’t matter what we set down in front of them; they can access it, right?” (Luke interview, 11-2-12, lines 513-522). He had an absolute stance about social justice and equity of opportunity and schools being the place where the wrongs of our society can and should be righted for poor children and families. In this sense, he had an understanding of the role of leader as steward, the conscious choice that one is leading for a larger purpose and mission (Senge, 1990, pp. 12-13).

Here Luke described his goals. “But I do love the concept of kind of a little bit more project-based learning and seeing kids have to take into account the greater environment, etc., etc. …I would love to see a school that’s more my population in an expeditionary model” (Luke interview, 11-30-12, lines 870-875). Luke was determined to demonstrate that the kind of schooling that works for kids from higher SES families, such as project-based learning, expeditionary learning, or thematic inquiry, can work just as well for poor kids. “So the goal has to be as a district how do we get the traditional schools- so I like to say I’m an innovative traditional school” (Luke interview, 2-1-13, lines 706-712). He was certain that this could happen in a typical, neighborhood school without exemptions from district mandates and guidelines.

The District’s Assistant Superintendent reiterated Luke’s hope for doing this kind of school transformation work in a traditional neighborhood school. “I think his vision would be able to find a balance between the two. So that kids really could explore topics that interest them at a deep level, and still learn and focus on the standard that as a system
we expect kids to know depending on what grade they’re in and what time of the year it is” (District Interview, 8-20-13, lines 71-75).

Luke often articulated his goals for his school aloud. “I do think we can’t just close down and only open up under the guise of an expeditionary school” (Luke interview, 11-2-12, lines 911-913). “I would love to do something that’s more, um, you know, that can be replicated, um, at a traditional school level” (Luke interview, 2-1-13, lines 655-657). Luke wanted to do “something that I believed would be the right thing, it was based in research, and was just able to do it as a traditional elementary school” (Luke Interview, 4-26-13, lines 403-406). Most of all, he wanted to show that it could be done in his type of neighborhood school.

Of his work in relation to the larger system, Luke said, “…I’m not looking to switch and blow everything up” (Luke interview, 11-30-12, lines 882-883). Luke believed that the work in his school was part of a larger mission to change schooling for all children, and certainly for those poor or underserved groups, saying,

“As much as I want my school to succeed, I’m trying to think bigger and I need every single school in the entire city, and let’s, you know, let’s be honest, state level. I need every single school to be doing amazing things and growing by 10% and feeling innovative and feeling fresh… You know, how do we—how do we replicate what works?” (Luke interview, 2-1-13, lines 728-732, 734).

Luke was committed to staying at UH for at least five years, in part because he wanted to prove transformation can be done in a school that ranks very close to the bottom of a district’s performance rankings. This seriousness permeated his thinking on all levels, from the profound, as will be articulated in this chapter and the following
chapter, to the mundane. Upon arrival at UH, Luke discovered that one of the school uniform colors was pink and that only girls were wearing pink to school. Luke decided to make a public gender statement and declare that pink was not just for boys. He began to wear pink shirts and pink uniform shirts himself, and now pink has become a universal uniform color for boys and girls. Luke frequently saw school transformation in the details.

Luke often used personal referents to anchor his vision. “It's hard because it's not easy to articulate a very clear vision all the time. I feel these are all pieces and parts. They are in my mind but possibly have been said, haven't been said but at the same time that's what I want for my kid. I know it’s what everybody wants for any of their kids. It’s what you want for your neighbors. It’s what you want for students” (Meeting Observation, 2-13-13c, lines 1260-1264). This constant refrain embodied Luke’s way of grounding his vision in something that was for him concrete—his wishes for his own young children. Luke’s children went to their neighborhood public school in the same district as UH, which happened to be a Montessori school. As he learned more about the Montessori method, he appreciated the philosophy toward learning. “…I do like the idea now that I’ve gotten to know a little bit more about it, it’s the way kids learn. I mean it’s not sit and get. It’s not sage on the stage, which I’m kind of against” (Reflection Interview, 2-13-13d, lines 138-140). While Montessori may not ultimately have been the path for UH, Luke was determined to build the school into a place where the students’ experience mirrored his children’s experience in school.
The National College for School Leadership (2007) discusses the ways values are connected to leadership, saying “values provide a moral compass and an anchor for the work of school leaders” (p. 7). Luke seems to have taken his values for his own children’s development and mapped them onto his values and vision for what he wants for UH students. This merger is reminiscent of Senge’s (1990) notion of the second type of stewardship in a leader that “arises from a leader’s sense of personal purpose and commitment to the organization’s larger mission” (p. 13). Luke has embedded his personal values into his values and vision for UH students, and above, for all students.

Luke fluctuated on the ways to reach the vision, but overall the vision remained relatively constant.

“More importantly, big picture, better world citizen, right? Who's the better world citizen? Somebody who can go out and solve problems? Someone who has that compassion for others and has the skills to solve any problem that comes in front of him. We don't know what the problems are that this generation's going to face. We want to just give them this tool that whatever the problem is- critical thinkers- I say first and foremost, ‘Are you a critical thinker? Can you think for yourself? Can you solve a problem?’” (Meeting Observation, 2-13-13c, lines 1241-1247)

Luke viewed the point of education as the development of a thinking, problem-solving, considerate, responsible, self-sufficient, democratic citizenry. In some ways, Luke has translated his own experience learning leadership in his family into his vision for the students of UH. Global citizenship, flexibility, adaptability, curiosity, and excitement are cornerstones for Luke for his own personal development and these values are translated into his vision for the students of UH.
How Luke’s Vision will be Manifested

*If you want a school in four or five years where everyone’s doing great, we’ve got to a) have some energy; the kids have to love coming to school, and b) they need to be excited about things that they’re learning.*

(Luke interview, 12-17-13, lines 245-248)

Luke was 37 years old when this study began. He was a tall, charismatic man with an exuberant personality that almost magnetically attracted others. As he walked the halls, students ran up to him for a hug, for a word, to tell him about their day. Teachers smiled and checked in with him about something exciting that happened that day. He exuded three of what Judge et al. (2002) consider the five essential factors of a leadership personality—extraversion, agreeableness, and openness (p. 174). In describing himself, Luke said, “Yeah, but I’m fun, Suzanne. I mean, let’s face it” (Luke interview, 11-30-12, lines 654-655). In talking about his staff in the office, Luke said, “Because let’s be honest, Katie and I have a lot of fun. Jennifer, who is our community engagement specialist, has a lot of fun. Briana, our secretary. In the office, we’re having a pretty good time. I mean, we are. Let’s be honest, we’re laughing. We love to see each other. We say “Good morning,” every morning to everyone. And that part’s great” (Luke interview, 11-30-12, lines 298-307). Luke was playful, joyful, and above all wanted to be having fun in his work.

This playfulness imbued even Luke’s email writing.

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3 All names are pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality.

He certainly had an enthusiastic personality about most everything. Here he described an upcoming weekend project.

Luke: I’m installing a furnace tomorrow. I’d be lying to you if I didn’t say I’m pretty psyched. Pretty psyched.
Suz: Are you really?
Suz: Right, that’s awesome.
Luke: Because it’s knowledge. I like understanding how things work. If I was smarter, I would have been an engineer. (Luke interview, 11-30-12, lines 627-634).

Here he described his job. “You know, I’m at a dinner party with friends and people say, “Do you like your job?” And I say, “No, I love it” (Luke interview, 11-30-12, lines 201-203). Luke’s enthusiasm permeated every social interaction.

Luke decided to ground the enactment of his vision for the school around a theme—fun and engagement. He demonstrated this by asking,

At the same time, don’t you just want the kids in your class, the kids in your school, the kids in your neighborhood, the kids all over the damn city, to be engaged and excited about what they're learning? If they're not engaged, if you're not excited about the learning that's taking place then we have to change what we're doing.

(Meeting Observation, 2-13-13c, lines 1286-1290).
Luke was certain that students must be having fun at school and the way he saw fun manifest for students was in their engagement levels in the classroom.

Once again, Luke has situated the vision he has for UH students in the larger context of community and city. Luke’s energy around this idea of engaged learning for all children is another example of steward leadership, demonstrating that “people’s natural impulse to learn is unleashed when they are engaged in an endeavor they consider worthy of their fullest commitment” (Senge, 1990, p. 13). Luke has positioned his work at UH within the much larger endeavor of being part of a city-wide or even national drive to make learning fun and engaging for all students.

Just as he wanted students to be engaged and have fun and excitement in their learning, Luke also wanted the adults to have fun and be engaged and happy in their work. “At the end of the day, I could care less what my friends do, but I really need them to be happy. And if they’re not happy, then I will support them and do whatever I can as a friend and, in this case, as a principal, to make sure that they are happy. Because we need people, just, I’m not comfortable with the idea of waking up at 3:00 AM, stressed out about your job” (Luke Interview, 11-30-12, lines 131-137). Luke believed that all people, including the adults in the school, should be having as much fun as he was.

“How do we get the most out of everyone so they are, for the most part, engaging people to engage these students?” (Luke interview, 9-11-12, lines 359-361). Luke wanted to feel engaged and he wanted to see engagement in others. Luke tried to use this enthusiasm purposefully, in the sense that he made conscious decisions to put engagement and excitement at the forefront of his interactions with staff and students.
For example, midway through the 2012-2013 school year, he became worried about morale. So, he decided to focus on fun, asking every adult person in the building whether or not they were having fun at work. Or fun in their lives. “That’s definitely the gas. We’re going to continue to have a little bit of fun here, sure” (Luke interview, 10-8-12, lines 308-309). This question surprised some, frustrated others, and made others laugh. But in all cases, it was clear the principal was serious about fun. “No, I mean, we did this silly thing where we had, you know, so we’re trying to have a little bit more fun. So the whole time we’re always working on culture, right?” (Luke interview, 11-30-12, lines 294-296).

Luke’s focus on fun and engagement became a mantra he used during observations, conversations with staff, meetings, and as he began to remove staff and hire new staff, it became central to his hiring process. He guided the hiring process toward people who fit his vision “because we looked for personality more than we did, you know, experience” (Reflection Interview, 2-13-13d, lines 115-121). Luke was attempting to do what Senge (2006) calls “developing shared vision (p. 7-10).

He used this theme in his annual conversations with teachers, reminding himself here how much he values these types of conversations. “I’m huge on what is your five-year plan, and what do you want to be, and are you happy with what you’re doing? Let’s have those kind of those bigger picture life conversations as opposed to, you know, are your students achieving, right? I mean, maybe I should be having more of those conversations” (Luke Interview, 11-30-12, lines 93-98). His goal in all of this was to make sure that, “It’s this idea, I mean, coaching people so that they are happy in whatever
it is that they do so they find success, so that they get as excited about coming to work as I am” (Luke Interview, 11-30-12, lines 199-200). Luke was beginning to do a piece of a leader’s new work articulating where he wanted the school to be so he could then begin to manage the creative tension between that vision and the current reality of the school (Senge, 1990, p. 9).

Focusing on fun extended to encouraging staff to leave UH as well, saying to those he counseled out, “if you were not having fun at UH and coming to work energized and ready to engage students, then you were not in the right place. And I created it with a bunch of people, right? So you have a bunch of people on board. But if this is not for you, let me know” (Reflection Interview, 2-13-13d, lines 128-133). Part of articulating this vision to others was making sure that people also knew that if fun and engagement were not part of their work, UH was probably not the school for them to be working in. Here Luke was starting to bring in the reality of UH’s current situation into his leadership (Senge, 1990), locating and moving out teachers who were not aligned to the vision.

Luke thought about this a lot and returned to his vision during our conversations repeatedly. For UH, Luke wanted to create something akin to the way he thought children naturally learned—by trial and error, practice and mistakes, doing something they are excited about. “Well, I mean, kids get it. I mean, kids do it naturally. I mean, kids play a video game; and they will die 8,000 times before they get to level 27. And they could care less about making 8,000 previous mistakes, but they never give up because they’re engaged, and they want to get to level 24 or whatever. How do you transform that into here?” (Luke Interview, 8-29-12, lines 217-222). This example
demonstrates how Luke wanted to build a school for students to learn in ways that promote their “insatiable drive to explore and experiment” (Senge, 1990, p. 7).

As Luke better articulated this vision, a step he took was to define his focus goals as a leader—he decided to look for learning rather than teaching. Luke described his moment of realization as follows. “And I think that’s a shift in the way we’ve got to think, making sure that everything we say is not about the teaching process but it’s everything we do with teaching is it resulting in learning? And if all adults thought that way, at the end of each lesson, each day, or whatever, and you just thought, “Did learning take place,” that could be hard for people, right?” (Luke Interview, 9-11-12, lines 375-381). This shift is the same one DuFour (2002) described as his tipping point, when he moved from a “focus on teaching to a focus on learning” (p. 13). The literature confirms that “the development of a common vision of increasing student learning is considered an indispensable element for success” (Wise & Jacobo 2010, p. 163). Luke believed that moving from a focus on teaching to learning would be critical but hard for his school community to handle and they would need support.

Luke attempted, over the course of the study, to determine strategies for how this type of learning could happen at UH. He investigated multiple options, visiting an expeditionary school, a thematic project-based learning school, his children’s Montessori school. He returned again and again during the study to the notion of project-based learning, saying “But I do love the concept of kind of a little bit more project-based learning and seeing kids have to take into account the greater environment, etc., etc. I don’t know, I thought it was interesting” (Luke Interview, 11-30-12, lines 870-875).
Throughout the course of the study, Luke was trying to find an implementation model that would support his vision for student learning at UH. The need for an implementation model developed out of Luke’s efforts to manage the “creative tension” (Senge, 1990, p. 9) between his vision and the realities of current instruction at UH. Luke knew that the instruction at UH was not engendering the kind of exciting and engaging learning experiences he wanted for his students and he was looking for an implementation model that both embodied his vision and provided a road map for teachers to get there.

Luke’s path toward implementing his vision was not fully realized over the course of the study. “I feel like sometimes we’re stuck in the weeds. I like to think I’m big picture and vision and all sorts of stuff, and we’re looking way down the road” (Luke Interview, 9-11-12, lines 392-394). He knew that he needed to work on the “accurate picture of current reality” (Senge, 1990, p. 9). He took a step toward this by thinking about ways to ground his vision in data representative of the type of learning he was seeking. He knew that students at UH were reading below grade level, some far below. “And that would be exciting if you could, in fact, hit this goal of 80% of the kids that are below grade level, did they all grow by a year-and-a-half. I think it would be really fun to stay focused on that goal and see if we as a school hit it” (Luke Interview, 10-8-12, lines 555-558). Luke was using grade level reading as a way to articulate the school’s current reality, and a progress goal that represents growth toward the vision.

Luke also knew that he needed to consolidate the vision into grounded practicalities, such as in the school schedule. He wished for this almost longingly. “And wouldn’t it be nice, though, to know what your big picture is, to have that vision, to know
that it’s possible to set up your schedule so you can then have this conversation with people and say look, this is where we’re going” (Reflection Interview, 2-13-13d, lines 128-133). Here Luke was expressing his understanding that a vision needs logistical infrastructure in order to become realized. He was wishing for this, the way he asked this as a question indicates his uncertainty about how exactly to enact his vision.

Ultimately, Luke knew that enacting his vision was still in process. “Where I sit, I look a year out and two years” (Luke Interview, 12-17-12, lines 11-12), and “at the end of the day, like, I could care less about anything, are kids engaged? And even if they’re learning the wrong stuff, wouldn’t that be better that they’re learning?” (Reflection Interview, 2-13-13d, lines 50-51). Luke wondered, “if we all had magic wands, what would we change?” (Luke Interview, 11-30-12, lines 414-416). For him, the answer to this question was always, “…big picture, holistic. Are we creating world citizens, right? That’s kind of always been what I want. I want to create better world citizens. That’s what I want, right, these global thinkers, problem solvers, etc., etc.” (Luke Interview, 11-2-12, lines 768-772). Luke’s goal for UH was to build a place that could sustain the type of learning needed to develop these world citizens.

The previous sections offer some context about Luke and his leadership vision for UH. These sections were included to give some descriptions of Luke personally and professionally, and to situate the finding within his environment. The following section explores in detail the major finding followed by a discussion of the finding in relation to the conceptual framework, literature, and theoretical framework.
Green Light Thinking / Assuming Possibility

So, I wanna say the first step was me kinda seeing that it was possible...and so, you know, it was kind of-- the interesting thing, Suzanne, when you think about it was, green light here, green light there.

(Luke interview, 1-29-14, lines 76, 79-81)

In this section, I discuss how Luke implemented changes to the UH schedule at the end of his first year and into his second year as principal as a specific way to enact his vision. During this implementation, Luke demonstrated optimism and an assumption of multiple solutions to challenges he faced as he moved from stakeholder to stakeholder in the change process. During the process to change the schedule, Luke received permission, or a green light, at each turn which meant that he was able to move from step to step with ease. I begin the section with a vignette which exemplifies the finding. The vignette centers around Luke’s process of using the UH schedule as a way to represent his vision and as a way to build infrastructure for enacting his vision. Following the vignette, I discuss the finding in four sections:

3) Assuming Possibility as Stance: In this section, I discuss Luke’s optimism and his tendency to tackle problems assuming many solutions are possible.

4) Expecting an Assumption of Possibility in Others: In this section, I discuss how Luke expects others to approach problems and challenges as he does.

5) Noticing his Own Assumption of Possibility: In this section, I present moments when Luke notices his own assumptions of possibility.

6) Assuming Possibility Fuels Luke’s Leadership: In this section, I discuss how Luke continues to grow as a leader based on his assumption of possibility stance.
Following the four finding sections, I include a discussion of this finding in relation to the research question, conceptual framework, and literature.

**Vignette**

**The UH Schedule SY 2011-2012**

When Luke became the principal of UH in the fall of 2011, he took the lead at a school where the culture was described by the Assistant Principal as full of “hard feelings” and “lots of silos” (Common Agreement meeting fieldnotes, 10-15-13, lines 48-49). After watching a teacher come in the mornings and not “see her kids for the first two hours,” Luke thought, “this doesn’t make any sense” (Luke interview, 1-29-14, lines 117-121). He decided that his first major structural change would be to the schedule of the school. While he recognized that he did this for the benefits to his school, he also did it because he likes a challenge. “I think for me more than anything I liked the fact that it was a challenge” (Luke interview, 1-29-14, lines 45-46). As he later said, “I think I like puzzles ...Like this is kind of complicated and I can’t figure this all out so I literally cut out pieces and tried to make it this big puzzle” (Luke interview, 1-29-14, lines 136-138). “It’s kind of fun. It’s like a Sudoku” (Meeting Observation, 2-13-13a, line 208).

Luke also liked the challenge of attempting something different in a school with a traditional funding source and not designated as “innovative” by the District (meaning UH was not released of the organizational, instructional, and assessment mandates of the District). Here he described being motivated by other schools that were attempting to change their uses of time in the schedule. “But I liked the fact that it was in other schools that weren’t getting money” so he decided he wanted to think “about extending the
school day just by getting creative with the schedule” (Luke interview, 1-29-14, lines 48-50). Luke was intrigued by the puzzle of making change through the schedule rather than through new funding or designations.

His first move during the spring of 2012 was to suggest the option of an extended school day at a principal-parent coffee. Out of the 40 parents who attended, there was only one objection to the idea, making it possible for him to say to staff, “hey, our family is kinda behind this. They think this would be a really good idea” (Luke interview, 1-29-14, line 66, 68-69). His next move was to go to the district transportation department to check on busing issues, finding a “green light here” (Luke interview, 1-29-14, line 81). Luke essentially got permission from the transportation department to proceed with his changes.

Luke borrowed an extended day schedule from a fellow Marshall principal who had done a lot of work with a “time collaborative or extended learning opportunity thing” (Luke interview, 1-29-14, line 37) and re-worked it to fit UH. He then went to the union president whose response was “yep, I think this will totally work. You’re staying within the contract, this seems good for kids” (Luke interview, 1-29-14, line 81). Following this Luke went back to the staff three or four times, always with a “values-based” frame, positioning the idea as “I think it’s good for kids. You don’t have to work any harder, but would you like to have your kids have an additional 70 minutes?” (Luke interview, 1-29-14, lines 95-97).

When the staff finally voted on the idea, it turned out to be at least a 70/30 vote or 80/20 (he cannot remember) and as Luke described it, “it was one of those things where
again, where you kind of, you take the vote, felt good, green light” (Luke interview, 1-29-14, lines 100-101). “And I remember just kind of being this—yeah, I mean when I think back there wasn’t anything major to it. It was kind of going through the process, making sure we were communicating with staff. And then what was amazing was green light after green light after green light. So, after year one we extended the school day, and we did it by doing a staggered schedule” (Luke interview, 1-29-14, lines 105-109). At each step of the way in making changes to the schedule, Luke believed he should proceed, and he received agreement or permission or consent. These “green lights” came one after another at each step of the process.

During this first year at the helm of the school, Luke himself thought of the idea for the schedule and drove the process to change the school day. He did go before the stakeholders he knew he should—parents, staff and yet he the work alone. He very facetiously recalled almost two years later, “As a 21st century leader, I’m really proud to say that yes, I did that alone” (Luke interview, 1-29-14, lines 135-136). This sarcasm reveals Luke’s later recognition of his solo leadership during this change effort. Luke was at this time enacting a leadership task (Spillane et al., 2001, p. 24) but not yet moving into what Senge (1990) would call being a leader designer or social architect (p. 10) who could marry vision and infrastructure by opening responsibility for leadership to others (Senge, 1990, p. 11).
The UH Schedule: SY 2012-2013

The new extended school day began in the fall of 2012, and as the staff worked through the challenges of starting off a new school year with a new schedule, Luke decided that the “first challenge was getting everybody on the same page” (Luke Interview, 1-29-14, line 185). This was critical because during the previous school year, SY 11-12, the “message from the committee (Community School Committee) and the staff …was, we’re not on the same page, we don’t really know what the person in the room next to us is doing, how do we get on the same page?” (Luke Interview, 1-29-14, lines 189-192). Luke had also originally received the message from the district that coherence among staff was critical. So, for Luke and the AP, “our main focus was that collaboration to make sure everybody was on the same page” (Luke Interview, 1-29-14, lines 192-193).

Luke decided to do this through the creation and monitoring of the school schedule. When I arrived at UH for my first visit in August of 2012, the first thing Luke showed me was the schedule hanging on the wall in his office. During the previous school year, Luke had successfully changed the school to an extended day schedule. He described the structure, the way all students except K and ECE were staying until 4:00 pm daily and how he had done this without adding time to the teachers’ schedule, thus avoiding contract issues. He showed me the intervention, technology, and independent reading blocks—45-minute periods when paraprofessionals and non-classroom teachers were with students and teachers were released. He explained the elaborate color coding system (See Appendix H for SY12-13 and SY 13-14 master schedules).
On 9-10-12, Luke sat in the teacher meeting room with the Kindergarten team. During the conversation one teacher said, “We have to bring you our schedule because we’ve changed it a little.” This change to the daily schedule was unknown to Luke or the leadership team. In the moment, Luke reacted. “What do you mean you all changed your own schedule?” The teacher responded. “It’s all literacy in the morning, just, we have, there’s a part that you don’t have in your schedule” (Grade Group Observation, 9-10-12, lines 14-16). The conversation that followed shows how Luke responded next.

Luke: “Well, this is information that seems really, really important since we asked you all to not-“
Teacher: “We cleared it with- well, we didn’t clear it. We talked to Kelly about it.”
Luke: “You see how we have a systems problem? You three do something different than everybody else and we’re trying to figure out how to keep your kids and, see what I mean? Makes me nervous.” (Grade Group Observation, 9-10-12, lines 23-29).

The teachers continued to discuss why they had made this change to their schedule. Luke continued to try to understand what happened. This exchange followed.

Luke: “I sent out the master schedule again last night and it’s different than what you all are doing.”
Teacher: “We had a meeting and we talked about it.”
Luke: “Well it’s not on your schedule.” (Grade Group Observation, 9-10-12, lines 50-54).

Finally, Luke ended the conversation in frustration. “Come on, people. That’s the thing we’ve been working on all year is schedules. (I) sent it out last night at …9 pm” (Grade Group Observation, 9-10-12, lines 81-82).
The teachers left to return to class, their schedule alterations still in place. Luke, immediately after the teachers left, said to the three school coaches. “The new one- well no, I mean, I’m happy to go- I’m happy, very happy to go with their schedule. I just wish we knew about it for these types of things” (Grade Group Observation, 9-10-12, lines 93-95). So they’re a traditional…- they’re the traditional grade level. So every time I look at that (schedule) I’ll freak out” (Grade Group Observation, 9-10-12, lines 105-107).

I asked Luke about this session the next day and his overall response was, “I don’t think we have our system quit in place” (Luke Interview, 9-11-12, lines 101-103). I again returned to the topic again ten days later, asking him what he had done to follow up with the Kindergarten teachers. Luke admitted that he did not follow up with them, either in person or by email.

“What happened with the K teachers and the schedule? I moved on. Look at me. Um, I did kind of have a talk with the coaches. Nothing too crazy. I didn’t really, uh oh, I probably dropped the ball and I do know what I’m going to try to do is send out the final, nothing’s final around here, with the para schedule, library schedule, and Playmobile schedule. Talk about that consistency. In that email, I should, no, I will absolutely, convey to teachers the importance of the schedule” (Luke Interview, 9-21-12, lines 92-96).

In the following spring of 2013, Luke realized that he was “down $150,000 and many positions will need to be reduced in order to put forth a balanced budget” (Luke interview, 1-29-14, lines 317-320). He had a narrow window to address staffing and try to move out the teachers who, in his mind were not engaging students, and a schedule with an intervention block that he kept hearing was not working. In SY 12-13, students had been rostered into an intervention period run by paraprofessionals for 45 minutes a
day. “This group (of strong teachers) was saying ‘interventions weren’t working, I’d rather have the time’” (Luke interview, 1-29-14, lines 234-236). Luke was surprised, saying “I think I probably should have known what was going on but the systems were not set up such that I did” (Luke interview, 1-29-14, lines 274-275).

The coaches reported that teachers wanted this change.

Coach 1: “So what the teachers talked about yesterday was, they want to keep their groups during intervention, umm, to keep pulling those small intervention groups when they’ve got time-“

Coach 2: “They themselves, the teachers are psyched about doing the work.” (Meeting Observation, 11-6-12, line 164-167).

Reluctantly, Luke agreed to change the schedule. “There were some strong teachers that really felt like the interventions weren’t as efficient as they wanted, they could do better. And then Anne and Kelly (two coaches) kind of agreed. I imagine Katie (the Assistant Principal) would have agreed as well. And so, I capitulated at some point, right? I said, okay” (Luke interview, 1-29-14, lines 308-312). Luke framed his decision later as “I think it’s very reflective of the school that we’re running in that the schedule has been built and I think it’s been built to support kids, but I think it’s the adult actions that aren’t very effective. I’d also agree that we probably need more resources to help make the adult actions more effective” (Luke interview, 1-29-14, lines 216-221).

He used the impetus coming from the budget cuts and the drive to change the schedule to rethink how he could allocate and use staff. For the schedule planning, he decided to add up the total number of hours he had of teacher time, and the total number of hours of support staff time. He then began playing with schedule options that would allow him to roster all core instruction in the mornings in large uninterrupted blocks and
he began to think about how to staff such a schedule. He could do it if he hired multiple specials teachers in the afternoons to cover the time times for classroom teacher planning and not extending classroom teacher time in violation of the contract.

Luke then returned to a conversation we had earlier in the year—his list of which teachers he would cut if he could. He decided to get very proactive on moving staff based on which teachers were not engaging kids in exciting or rigorous ways. “I’m just coming from a place where, ‘Boy, if you’re not enjoying your job and you’re not, you know, you don’t have the energy, if you don’t have anything, go do something else.’ But that’s me, right?” (Luke interview, 12-17-12, lines 221-225). For Luke, teachers had to be energetic and engaging so that kids would be engaged. “But while this is all happening, our kids are just not real excited” (Luke interview, 12-17-12, lines 232-233). Luke spent the spring of 2013 moving teachers around for the following year, coaching teachers out, and figuring out how to eliminate either teachers or positions.

Luke also got excited about the possibilities of project-based and discovery learning as an instructional way to engage both teachers and students. “Screw traditional reading blocks, writing blocks, social studies, science, let’s combine everything into this amazing experiential learning” (Luke interview 4-15-13, lines 449-461). Luke wanted instruction at UH to be something radically different than it is, especially related to delivery style. “But this is my whole problem with the whole damn system. Like I think we have to just (makes a noise like blowing it up). How do you learn? And you do not learn by sit and get” (Reflection Interview, 2-13-13d, lines 66-76). To avoid instruction
as ‘sit and get,’ Luke is pushing toward a model of integrated discovery learning. And to do this, he needed to build the time into the schedule.

He then returned to the puzzle of the schedule that could be redesigned for the upcoming year. The major change in planning for Luke’s third year, 2013-2014 would be the elimination of the intervention block, increased planning time for teacher teams, as well as reconceptualizing the use of instructional time. Luke engaged the School Leadership Team (SLT) in this process, holding a retreat on March 18, 2013, saying “what we need to do is use the time that we have more efficiently” (Luke interview, 1-29-14, lines 438-439). At this retreat, he gave the SLT members draft schedules and “sent them off in …triads or… pairs and said, ‘come up with—you guys come up with it, help me come up with a schedule because it’s really hard but I think we can do it.’ And what everyone came back with about an hour, maybe two hours later was, ‘Holy shit. This is really, really hard. I don’t know how to do this. I’m not good at this. Let’s do this together.’ And so I think we kind of did it together” (Luke interview, 1-29-14, lines 362-367).

Following the retreat, work on the schedule continued from Luke’s office with large sections of the schedule hanging on the walls and post-it’s moving rapidly between them. The SLT decided upon “huge (205 minutes on average) blocks of literacy. We called it literacy plus. Reading plus, writing plus, social studies plus, science plus” (Luke interview, 1-29-14, lines 384-385). The SLT also decided that students would have 90 minutes of specials every other day so teachers could have 90 minutes of common time at least once a week for “grade-level collaboration” (Luke interview, 1-29-14, line 388).
Luke proposed finding eight specialist teachers who would work predominantly in the afternoons in order to free up classroom teachers in the afternoons. Luke decided to rename specials to essentials, arguing that this time was essential for nurturing the whole child. The team left school at the end of SY 12-13 with a solid draft schedule.

Following a summer of not much activity on the schedule, Luke returned to UH late in the summer of 2013 and sent out the draft schedule to the SLT with an email reading, “I need your help. I’m probably missing something here. Please email me back and let me know if this is going to work” (Luke interview, 1-29-14, lines 421-422). After receiving comments, he directed grade groups to “get together as grade-level cohorts and fill in the white space. The expectation is that you are on the same page as your team, so do not create this on your own. Do it together. Consider this a theme—work together” (Luke interview, 1-29-14, lines 460-462). (See Appendix H for a draft of the master schedule for SY 13-14).

The final schedule for SY 13-14 included 205-minute uninterrupted blocks in most grades (except 5th which ended up in two blocks) for thematic inquiry or discovery learning in some form. Luke’s main criteria was that students be highly engaged. Project-based, hands-on, and discovery learning was encouraged and teachers were encouraged to pick a delivery format that was engaging for them. In addition, students had 90 minutes of essentials every other day and classroom teachers had time to meet in cross grade-level teams, K/1, 2/3, and 4/5. This time would be used to plan, collaborate, work with coaches, and implement some type of professional growth structure, such as lesson study or peer observation cycles.
Presentation of the Major Finding

Assuming Possibility as Stance

The purpose of the research question was to focus research attention on the variables that impacted Luke as he was making leadership choices and decisions. This particular finding was a glimmer in the data, a recurring idea that kept surfacing every time I began to try to articulate what variables were influencing Luke when making choices. As I continued to analyze, I noticed that one variable emerged again and again. Luke certainly made choices as most principals do—because of central office or staff or parent pressure. He made choices because of funding realities, or because of offers he got from outside agencies. But through all of the choices Luke described, there was one variable that began to be noticeable in every choice and decision Luke reflected on.

In this the vignette above, Luke demonstrated something central to his belief system, something beyond his enthusiasm, energy, and excitement. It was something more fundamental in his modus operandi, in his approach to challenge or problems. Luke believed that there are solutions to every problem or situation. He believed that every problem or situation can be tackled knowing a successful outcome is in store. Luke viewed problems and challenges as approachable because multiple solutions are available. He believed that the availability of multiple solutions meant that every problem could and should be tackled. Not only are problems solvable but Luke believed that he could tackle any of them. I named this stance an “assumption of possibility” because Luke faced each problem or situation with the assumption that possible solutions and outcomes exist, no matter what.
In the literature and in common spoken language, this type of stance is often referred to as “optimism” (Hoy & Smith, 2007; Karademas, 2006). Optimism is considered a general outcome expectancy or a general positive “appraisal of the future and of the things to happen” (Karademas, 2006, p. 1287). In other words, optimism refers to the expectation that good things will happen in situations.

Luke’s assumption of possibility seemed to include an important feature beyond just optimism—it also included the multiple solutions expectancy (my term). In other words, Luke approached situations assuming that multiple options would be possible and that the fun and challenge in the situation, or puzzle, were in the multiple possible options, not just good outcomes. Luke really believed, as Fullan and Miles (1992) say effective leaders often do, that “problems are our friends...because only immersing ourselves in problems can we come up with creative solutions” (p. 2). For Luke, the fun was not always in reaching a particular solution or what he considered a “good” solution, but in reaching a solution and then figuring out how that solution fit into his larger scheme. In this discussion, I refer to moments of a general positive outcome expectancy as optimism and moments that consider multiple possible outcomes the assumption of possibility. However, there are moments in the data when the word “optimism” is used to indicate either position.

Luke was able to notice his own assumption of possibility periodically and here he describes his own way of approaching problems. “So, you know, there’s good in all of this, and I don’t know. I, I love- I haven’t been doing this very long, but I love the idea of getting creative and trying to figure out fun solutions and, you know, so yeah. We’re
down (on scores), but I’m optimistic” (Luke interview, 2-1-13, lines 93-97). This example demonstrates Luke’s focus on possible solutions, his identification of problem-solving as positive, i.e. “fun,” and also his assumption that within the problem of low achievement scores, there are multiple “creative” ways to proceed. This example demonstrates exactly what Hoy & Smith (2007) describe of optimistic leadership combined with the assumption of possibility. “Optimism provides leaders with a perspective in which they look for opportunities in problems and concentrate on possibilities rather than obstacles. Problems are filled with possibilities—just find them” (p. 164).

Luke also portrayed his own personality as one of optimism and assumed possibility. For example, here he described this assumption, “Because honestly it’s just, my personality is such that I’m like- I think, you know, I think that it’s gonna work out” (Reflection Interview, 2-13-13d, lines 15-16). Using a more common frame, Luke said of himself, “Right, and that’s very much focusing on glass half full, focusing on the positive even if it’s small, right?” (Luke Interview, 11-30-12, lines 712-713). In these examples, Luke demonstrated not only his ability to examine his own stance by noticing that no matter the outcome of a situation, he assumes things will work out and by saying that even a very small positive outcome fuels his positive approach.

Luke described or gave examples of this stance on multiple occasions during the study. For example, during the first year of the new extended schedule, SY 2011-2012, the only parent Luke remembered who complained about the new schedule did so
because her son had hockey at 4 pm and school now did not end until 4 pm. She came to
the school in a confrontational mood to argue with Luke. His response was:

“I said, “I’ll tell you what. I would be more than happy, because I think it’s so cool
that your kid is in hockey practice, that you come and you have permission and you
grab your child on any day that you need to take them to hockey practice, because
what a great thing.’ But I kind of had to explain that most of our kids don’t have
hockey practice, believe it or not, and so it’s kind of good for them. But, I do
remember someone asking, like, how about parents, and I was like there’s this one
parent. And they said what’d you do? I just had to make the exception because it
didn’t really matter and legally we were hitting their kids’ hours” (Luke interview,
1-29-14, lines 152-159).

This example demonstrates how Luke was willing to be open to solutions, rather
than having set or rule-bound solutions in his mind prior to entering a situation. Here he
was looking for a solution that would meet both the parent’s need and the school’s. For
Luke, this problem with the parent “…was just not a big deal. Like, we don’t want every
parent lock, stock, and barrel to come in and do all this stuff, but it just wasn’t a big deal”
(Luke interview, 1-29-14, lines 152-159). This example was typical of Luke’s
experiences with problems presented in his leadership. He approached them looking for
options and assuming that some mutually agreeable solution was possible.

Another example of Luke’s assumption of possibility was the way he presented
both the problems he faced and the solutions he devised with excitement and
engagement. When the District Superintendent and CAO visited UH, Luke presented the
work at UH as follows. “And it was great to have about an hour with them to just explain
all of these amazing things that we’re doing; and, you know, we’re in a really, really
unique, great, exciting place. (Luke Interview, 9-11-12, lines 39-42). When the District
leaders visited his school, Luke focused on describing all the possible solutions he had
developed and communicated the fun he was having implementing them, managing for
them the creative tension (Senge, 1990) between his vision and his school’s current
reality.

Luke operated from this place of possibilities, grounded in an optimistic sense
that problems are solvable and he could solve them. In the following section, I discuss
how Luke assumed that others operated from a similar stance of assumed possibilities.

**Expecting an Assumption of Possibility in Others**

Luke’s assumption of possibility did not just extend to problems or situations, he
also tended to assume that others have a similar stance as his. The District’s Assistant
Superintendent described this tendency as follows,

“He came in with a great amount optimism, enthusiasm, and just cheer
that I think on one hand was so different than the previous leader that it
was almost, umm, a challenge for many people. And I think that
optimism- Luke believes every- I think Luke believes everyone should be
optimistic and joyful because of the work and service that they’re able to
do with kids” (District Interview, 8-20-13, lines 109-113).

This outlook on others’ stance meant that Luke thought everyone had a similar
approach to tackling problems as he did. This approach sometimes caused
disconnects for Luke as he learned that others did not always have the same
stance. Here the District’s Assistant Superintendent discussed how this

“I think he really learned that although everyone is in education for very,
umm, individual reasons, having a collective understanding of why we’re
in together is a different story. How do you bring a team together based on
their own individual behaviors, actions, and attitudes? How do you take that and make it into a team that you're trying to create? So I think that was an area that he really... I'm going to say he was shocked by and had to make some adjustments in order to figure out how he's going to create an effective team” (District Interview, 8-20-13, lines 113-119).

Here the Assistant Superintendent pointed out how Luke’s assumption of possibility is sometimes contradictory to those he worked with, and this disconnect was surprising for Luke and caused him to have to revise his strategies and come up with other possible solutions as he was building his team. Luke was himself determined to work through the problem presented by this disconnect, saying “Well, my personality says that I don’t feel hopeless about anyone…” (Luke interview, 10-8-12, lines 650-651). He believed that could find solutions to bring those with differing stances along. This response is consistent with the literature that indicates that optimists have active methods of coping with stress (Scheier & Carver, 1985, p. 240), which would support the notion that assuming multiple possibilities supports one in valuing solution options and adapting as the options narrow down.

**Noticing His Assumption of Possibility**

Part of the constructivist theoretical framework is the act of noticing one’s own thinking (Vygotsky, 1978) and becoming metacognitively aware of thinking transactions (Rosenblatt, 1988). There were moments during the data collection when Luke was able to notice his own stance and think about where it came from and how it was impacting his leadership. He recognized that he had early training in leadership at home and this
training may indeed have impacted the assumption of possibility in his leadership. “You know, I grew up in a house of just a solid example of someone (his dad) that was a pretty strong leader and accomplished a lot, so that just became the norm” (Reflection Interview, 4-26-13, lines 364-367). Because assuming he could be a leader began early for Luke, he also wondered how his early experiences influenced his trajectory. “But like, I’m sitting here trying to think, so I was, you know, captain of the lacrosse team, and the prom king, and the president of the school, so I was doing all those things early in life. So, that must have some sort of influence, right?” (Reflection Interview, 4-26-13, lines 340-344).

Luke was trying to connect early leadership experiences with his current leadership status and in doing so revealed another possible dimension of the assumption of possibility—that families and possibly class status also assume possibility in their members. This relationship was broached by Brungardt (1996) in a research review by stating that “early childhood development, education, and later on-the-job experiences encourage and nurture leadership abilities” (p. 82) and this may have happened in Luke’s case. The debate about whether leaders are born or made has a long history in the literature and most scholars today believe that “many leaders are born with qualities that assist them in leadership effectiveness” (Brungardt, 1996, p. 82). It’s possible that Luke was one of the “born competitors or driven achievers or empathetic people” (Doh, 2003, p. 64).
Wondering about early leadership influences led Luke to the recognition of his positive stance. As he said about himself, “my personality is such that everything is great all the time, you know. Mr. Happy, Mr. Enthusiastic” (2-1-13, line 210). Luke here identified himself in relation to one of Judge et al.’s (2002) factors of personality, agreeableness. But also in his statement is embedded possibility. If everything is great all the time, then things are possible. Here he reflects on himself and the ways he used this optimistic personality during the hiring process as he was trying to engage teachers and bring excited teachers to UH, “Because as much as, you know, we're interviewing them, they're interviewing us, and I'm very, very- I'm big on wooing people during that stage… I'm good at flirting” (Luke Interview, 10-4-13, line 555-558). Luke was not only able to recognize that charm was one of his strengths, he was able to acknowledge that he consciously used his charming, excited, enthusiastic personality as a strategic tool. As a leader, he has identified his personality as a leadership asset and was proactively using it.

Finally, Luke was able to also take two opposite stances and contrast them. In this example, Luke was discussing his situation, attempting to transform a school without having complete hiring and firing discretion. The first statement, a positive stance, is his typical outlook. However, in this example, he was able to turn this around and reframe his situation from a negative stance. “So it’s just, it’s a fascinating- I mean I just, you know, it’s absolutely doing the best with what you can is a positive way of looking at it. And if you wanna get negative I mean it’s just like the ‘how in the hell do you expect me to turn around an incredibly low-performing school with the staff that I currently have?’” (Luke Interview, 4-8-13, lines 520-529). For Luke, this reframing caused no frustration,
it was just a statement of a possible way he could look at his situation. This ability to consciously present his own stance and then the opposite stance demonstrated what metacognition describes as the ability to understand and manipulate our own cognitive processes (Santrock, 2009).

**Assuming Possibility Fuels Luke’s Leadership**

I observed Luke for months wondering how it was that he wandered into this job and was actually able to implement some changes. Luke seemed carefree for someone who had never been a principal, who was young, who came to education with a background in sales, and who had little patience with bureaucracy. I wondered how he would manage the creative tension (Senge, 1990) in himself between the fun, enthusiastic leader and the serious, idealistic leader. One example of how he did this was in his work on the schedule.

To return to the vignette from the beginning of this chapter, Luke knew that the schedule was the core of his leadership, that it messaged what UH as a school and he as its leader valued for students. He described talking about the schedule with the District Superintendent and CAO like this. “But it was really cool to have the top three district people in the building and have this chance, really, to sit down and say, “Here’s our schedule, and this is what we’re doing; and we’re really, really excited.” (Luke Interview, 9-11-12, lines 57-60). Here, Luke was trying to be that designer Senge (1990) refers to and marry the infrastructure with what it represents—the vision.

During his second year, Luke knew that his work as a school leader was still just beginning. “So, we scratched the surface, that’s exciting. But, yeah, you know, we’re
nowhere near where we need to be” (Luke interview, 2-1-13, lines 560-561). However, because of his own stance of assumed possibility, Luke also believed that he was leading the school toward something more powerful than the current model. His task was clear, “And so we’ve inherited this low-performing school- I have inherited this low-performing school and how do you turn it around using, you know, getting as creative as you can using the structures that are in place” (Luke interview, 2-1-13, lines 595-600). Luke believed in the power of possible solutions and the power of moving in a positive direction. “Um, you know, I’m hopeful. I’m hopeful that we’re moving in the right direction because it feels like we are…” (Luke interview, 2-1-13, lines 627-643).

Luke’s belief in multiple solutions and the possibility of positive outcomes was noticed by others. The District Assistant Superintendent said this of Luke:

“‘I think he can do it. Luke to me is someone who has just a lot of untapped potential in his passion and energy. The more he channels it into being an effective leader, I just think the more success he will be- he has such great enthusiasm, you know, that the more people that he gets around him that have that same enthusiasm, I just really see him being able to just reach high levels of achievement for himself and most importantly for his kids” (District Interview, 8-20-13, lines 264-268).

Allio (2005) reminds us that a positive attitude, or “optimism in the face of adversity” is one of the four “tell-tale” traits (p. 1074) to look for in leadership candidates. Luke’s boss identifies Luke’s passion and energy as a leadership strength. He also points out that Luke’s learning how to channel this strength strategically will help Luke grow as a leader. And importantly, the Assistant Superintendent indicates that he views Luke’s future success being tied to this enthusiasm.
Luke’s energy and enthusiasm and his assumption of possibility made the process of extending the school day appear smooth and easy. As Luke remembered it later, “And I think the fact that at every turn it was good for kids and it wasn’t costing anyone any more money, and I was, you know, creative and I, you know, and there just weren’t any major hurdles, right?... But again, you know what’s funny? It just hasn’t ever felt like—there’s never been major, major roadblocks.” (Luke Interview, 1-29-14, lines 89-91, 404-405). Whether there were major hurdles or not, Luke’s perception of the process as being without roadblocks demonstrates how his positive outlook either fueled his success in making the process work or colored his memory of what actions actually took place.

The assumption of possibility allowed Luke to get this change of schedule done and also allowed him to move through the process seeing options as available. “And I remember just kind of being this- yeah, I mean when I think back there wasn’t anything major to it. It was just kind of going through process, making sure we were communicating with staff. And then what was amazing was green light after green light after green light” (Luke Interview, 1-29-14, lines 105-108). Here Luke relates an almost nonchalance by saying “there wasn’t anything major in it”. The process of changing the schedule was just that. A process of following the steps and letting others know. The result, green light after green light, was the consequence of following the steps and assuming it would work.

The research question posits a wondering about the variables that influenced Luke’s choice making. In Luke’s work, he approached every situation as a puzzle, as an
enigma to be explored and solved. He assumed that he would be able to find at least one possible solution to the situation and this assumption influenced his choice-making. Once he started to work on changing the schedule, he found approval every step of the way. This finding directly answers the research question because it identifies a specific variable that repeatedly influenced Luke’s making of choices.

**Discussion of the Finding, the Conceptual Framework, and a Return to the Literature**

*I love the vision piece; I love this idea of aspired reality. I love, you know, where is the school going? What’s the roadmap say? Does everyone own it? I mean, I love that big picture stuff. I just feel like — and maybe it’s just today. Maybe it’s cause I just feel like I’m struggling a little bit (a) wrapping my own head around exactly where we are and where we want to go… I’m just worried about executing. (Luke Interviews, 9-11-12, lines 457-459; 10-8-12, lines 535-542).*

The conceptual framework undergirding this study is summarized as beliefs + support + actions + learning = organizational transformation/outcomes (see Chapter 1), positing that the relationship between beliefs, support, actions, and learning are what result in organizational transformation and improved outcomes. Below I consider two aspects of this relationship based on the finding: beliefs and actions. In chapter 5, I will consider other aspects of the relationship.

**Considering Beliefs**

I began this study with an interest in self-efficacy and beliefs about ability. I had not thought about optimism or beliefs about possibilities and did not encounter literature
on this until after this finding began to present. When I returned to the literature to read about optimism, I discovered connections between optimism and self-efficacy. Optimism refers to a general expectation about positive outcomes (Karademas, 2006) and self-efficacy refers to a person’s belief that they have the ability to perform a specific task (Chemers et al., 2000) and that they can perform that task successfully (Gist, 1987, p. 472).

The literature reveals that optimism allows for a general expectation that a positive outcome will occur (Chemers et al., 2000; Karademas, 2006). Self-efficacy allows for the specific expectation that one will be successful on a specific task (Bandura, 1977; Gist, 1987). In addition, optimists “seem to employ more problem-focused coping strategies” (Karademas, 2006, p. 1282) and this would allow for someone with an assumption of possibility to consider multiple solutions to be a success. Together, these concepts combine to give a person the expectation that s/he will be able to tackle any problem in general, and a certain problem specifically. In examining the examples offered above in the presentation of the finding, Luke was certainly generally optimistic about outcomes and specifically confident that he could find a solution to a problem and be successful tackling it.

The discovery of this connection led me straight back to my conceptual framework. In it, I hypothesized that beliefs + support + actions + learning = organizational transformation/outcomes. In developing my conceptual framework, I intended “beliefs” to mean self-efficacy beliefs and beliefs about ability. However, this finding encouraged me to think about beliefs also as stance. In other words, I could
consider the assumption of possibility to be a belief and if so, I wondered how this was influencing Luke’s choice-making and decision-making as a leader. In the previous discussion of this finding, I discussed how the assumption of possibility was fueling Luke’s leadership. My research question was guiding me to consider assumption of possibility as one of the variables that could be influencing Luke’s choice-making in his leadership.

Upon reading about this relationship, I decided to have Luke complete three short tests: The Life Orientation Test (LOT) from Scheier & Carver (1985), the HOPE Scale from Snyder et al. (1991), and the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE) from Shwarzer & Jerusalem (1995). I did this out of curiosity, with no intention of doing any kind of formal analysis of the results. Each text is a short list of 10-12 statements and the respondent answers using either a four or five-point Likert scale (see Appendix G for copies of the tests). The LOT test is a measure of optimism, meaning a person’s favorability to have a positive generalized outcome expectancy (Scheier & Carver, 1985, p. 232). The Hope test measures a person’s sense of hope, defined as a combination of the perception of successful agency related to goals (meaning one feels that one can successfully accomplish a goal) with the perception that there are available successful pathways to reach the goal (Snyder et al., 1991). Finally, the GSE measures a generalized judgment by a person about how efficacious they are. While most consider self-efficacy to be a task specific function (Bandura, 1977), the GSE measures a broader general sense of personal efficacy (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995, p. 440). Figure 10 shows Luke’s results on the three tests.
On these informally administered and analyzed tests, Luke scored the highest on his sense of self-efficacy and the lowest on his sense of optimism. The discrepancy between the scores was a surprise to me; I had expected them to be much closer to each other. In addition, the second layer of the HOPE test is revealing. Luke scored 100% on the Pathway items, indicating that he believes he can find many pathways to solve a problem and 81% on Agency, indicating a lower level of confidence in his sense of meeting goals (Scheier & Carver, 1985). While the literature indicates that “most educators tend to perceive themselves as having low agency” (Elmore, 2005, p. 136), I did not expect this from Luke. I don’t know much about how else to analyze these data beyond my very lay suppositions of meaning.

The most interesting point for me is the discrepancy between the optimism and self-efficacy scores and the HOPE Pathway score. The Pathway score is very consistent with the data discussed in this chapter about assuming possibility, which essentially means assuming and finding multiple pathways to solve a problem. It’s possible that this data point offers some evidence of triangulation (Maxwell, 2005, p. 94; Yin, 2012, p. 94).
104) for the finding above. It’s also possible that the scores indicate a rationale for the
stance I call ‘assuming possibility’. Perhaps what I’m talking about is the LOT score
plus the GSE score. Or perhaps what I’m discussing is actually the HOPE score with its
two factors. However, because I did not do formal analysis of this data, I cannot make
any claims about its usefulness or validity. Having the test results, however, help me
think about my data in more complex and more articulated ways.

Another interesting dimension of this test process was Luke’s response to
completing them. He did the LOT and HOPE tests first and returned them to me with no
comment. Then when returning the GSE, he wrote in his email, “Didn’t like this one. I
think it is the scale and I feel conceited” (Luke email communication, 3-27-14). It
seemed that selecting almost all “exactly true” scores on items like “I am confident that I
could deal efficiently with unexpected events” and “I can solve most problems if I invest
the necessary effort” (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995a—see Appendix G for a copy of the
GSE) made Luke very uncomfortable. He was not similarly uncomfortable with like
questions on the HOPE test but perhaps because there were two factors included together,
places of “conceit” weren’t as obvious.

The final point I discovered upon returning to the literature to examine optimism
was the role of motivation in relation to self-efficacy and optimism. In order to feel
efficacious, a person must have a sense of “personal efficacy in mastering challenges”
(Bandura & Schunk, 1981). Once a person believes s/he has done something that was
successful, interest develops “via satisfaction from success, and an increase in self-
efficacy is developed from a sense of personal causation” (Gist, 1987, p. 476). This high
sense of one’s self-efficacy appears to lead to “self administered reward” (Gist, 1987, p. 476) and “individuals who reward themselves perform better than those who don’t” (Bandura, 1980). In other words, if you reward yourself for your own successes, you are more likely to think you can be successful on the next challenge. Intrinsic motivation is the process of self-rewarding based on success and “extrinsic rewards may reduce an individual’s sense of personal causation and feelings of competence” (Gist, 1987, p. 476). Reading this inspired me to return to the data to a theme that recurred throughout the study— intrinsic v. extrinsic motivation.

This was a recurring point in the data because Luke struggled throughout with his own self-rewarding system and his perception that what he valued in rewards was different from what his staff valued. When asked about what motivated him to strive when he was a teacher, Luke said, “I don’t know. I guess I’m just thinking that wasn’t important for me to have someone come in and tell me I was doing a good job. I mean, you know.” I asked him, “But why not? Why not?” And his reply was, “That doesn’t motivate me. You telling me I’m doing a good job doesn’t motivate me” (Luke Interview, 4-8-13, lines 791-796). In this example, Luke was aware that external praise was not a motivation for him to strive in his work.

Luke believed that people should be motivated by doing their work well and that good work is in and of itself the reward. Luke did not consciously recognize a need in himself for external praise, identifying himself as motivated by his own benchmarks within the work he was doing. This belief in being rewarded by the work itself translated into Luke’s expectations for the teachers who worked for him. “Same things as a
classroom teacher, right? If you’re teaching kids and the kids are growing and becoming more valuable members of society and you’re preparing them better for the challenges, great. If not, do something different” (Luke Interview, 4-8-13, lines 808-811). Luke wanted teachers to feel rewarded and fueled by their work in classrooms, not by their ratings or feedback from his as their supervisor.

This belief often caused frustration for him as he was annoyed by the requests by teachers for feedback from him—wishing instead that they would get their need for praise or feedback from their own sense of good work. Here he described his own internal conflict, demonstrating a moment of attempting to make meaning or sense of his values compared to the values of those in his school.

“You know, I mean, people are really concerned with what the principal thinks, right? But, yeah, I mean, I’m not as concerned. And the truth is, a lot of it is, I was never concerned about a lot of these things even as, you know, even in the business world and even as a classroom teacher because, as long as you’re doing the right things and you’re doing your best, you know, what do you have to worry about right? You can defend yourself if you need to. So I always worry when people are so worried that maybe they’re doing wrong in the first place, right? I don’t know. But, then, I might have a different perspective because I’m a guy that doesn’t really worry about a lot of things” (Luke interview, 12-17-12, lines 118-129).

Luke here struggled to make sense of the pressure he was receiving to observe and give feedback to teachers, noticing that the reason this was frustrating to him was because he himself doesn’t worry and so others’ worrying causes him to question their values.

In his second year, Luke received an evaluation from staff that indicated their desire for him to provide more feedback to them about their practice. In this example,
Luke discussed the difference between his own sense of validation and that he was coming to see his teachers demanding from him.

“Yeah, I don’t know. I guess I need to, you know, a real tight realization about how I feel about it. But I mean the feedback is really, really important. I’m also, and I guess here’s, here’s, here’s me reflecting out loud about it. I as a classroom teacher of course liked feedback. But I’m also the kind of person that’s kind of didn’t need to have that constant, “You’re doing a good job, you’re doing a good job, you’re doing a good job.” Was it validating? Yeah, maybe. But it wasn’t why, it wasn’t what I was working for. I was not working for the principal’s admiration. Um, my value system was just different…

And I’m, I’m not saying right or wrong, but I just know for some people it’s a really big deal for me to go in and say that they’re doing a great job. And I need to do better because that’s that staff I have” (Luke Interview, 4-8-13, lines 781-788).

As Luke talked aloud, he positioned his own needs in contrast to the needs of his teachers. This contrast allowed him to frame their requests in his understanding of a difference in values. This then allowed him to recognize that he needed to provide his teachers with something they need and value, rather than something he needed and valued. This example demonstrates how Luke used the interviews to construct meaning (Fosnot & Perry, 1996) in his leadership, and then to consciously reflect on actions he needed to take. He was constructing knowledge in his own mind but doing it during a social interaction with me, the researcher (Vygotsky, 1978). This examination of his thinking allowed Luke to recognize some choices at hand—namely exactly how to provide teachers with the feedback they want. The leadership practices he needed to enact were a
result of framing the problem aloud, ruminating over possibilities, and then making a choice about how to proceed as a leader.

All of this discussion of motivation and reward is connected back to the conceptual framework. Beliefs about optimism, self-efficacy, pathways to solutions, and intrinsic motivation all surfaced in the data as Luke’s foundational beliefs and serve to further explicate that part of the \( \text{beliefs} + \text{support} + \text{actions} + \text{learning} = \text{organizational transformation/outcomes} \) equation. Belief about ability, which was hypothesized to be critical, surfaced little in the data analysis and reasons for this will be considered in Chapter 5. In the section below, I consider Luke’s actions and his perceptions of his actions toward enacting his vision.

**Considering Actions**

*That’s something that I probably need to focus on more because, you know, I love the big picture stuff. I love the vision. I love the values. I love all that stuff; but, you know, I think we’ve set a nice strategy for the school so that in four years we’re going to be a top school here in (the District). But what does that look like in two months? What does that look like in six months, and how are we measuring and going back, you know, on a smart goal type of thing, you know?* (Luke Interview, 9-11-12, lines 404-412).

The vignette shared earlier in this chapter demonstrates one of the central leadership issues for Luke and his choice-making in leading UH: How would he enact his vision in the day-to-day practices of the school? Was focusing on the schedule enough to embed his vision in the infrastructure of the school? How would he make his expectations known and know that others implemented them with consistency? How
would he institute systems and get others to follow them? What was the accountability mechanism that would ensure his goal—executing the ‘great game plan’?

These questions recurred frequently during our conversations and Luke grappled with them again and again. The questions deal with one of the central functions of a school leader—making the organization work (Leithwood et al., 2004; Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Heck, 1992). The National College for School Leadership (2007) found that “what distinguishes the highly effective leaders is their ability to deploy seemingly ordinary strategies and tactics and execute them to an extra-ordinary degree” (p. 11). Luke identified his challenge as executing the ‘ordinary strategies and tactics’ that would lead to his vision for his students. The central choices Luke was making during the time of the study, about which the research question centered, were how to institute systems that would allow him to answer these questions concretely and with specificity.

These questions are central to the exploration of the study’s research question in considering what variables Luke used to make choices around the execution of systems and structures. In some ways, execution is the subsequent side of choice-making as a school leader—ultimately execution refers to enacting decided-upon choices (Leithwood et al., 2004) through specific actions, as reflected in the conceptual framework beliefs + support + actions + learning = organizational transformation/outcomes.

I spent a lot of time over the course of the study listening to Luke worry about his ability to enact his vision or bemoan his inability to execute his vision in concrete ways. “We have the supports from the district. We have the resources. We have everything we
need for the most part. Now it’s this execution piece; and so, I think, especially after today, how do we set up the system so that we can execute?” (Luke Interview 8-29-12, lines 26-29). In returning on the literature, it was easy for me to position Luke’s reflections within. Senge (1990) says that leaders of learning organizations manage the tension between “where we want to be, our ‘vision’ and telling the truth about where we are, our ‘current reality’” (p. 9). In this example, Luke was struggling to figure out the path between his reality and his vision. He was articulating the experience of not knowing how to use the energy in this creative tension “to move reality more reliably toward (his) vision(s)” (Senge, 1990, p. 9).

In the following example, Luke talks about his sense of a lack of connectivity between the vision, daily life in a school, and strategic governance leadership.

“Actually, here’s something I think is interesting, just thinking out loud and reflecting here with you. I mean, I feel really good about the big picture, three years down the road; systems, are we getting there; are we bringing the right staff on; so that huge part. And then the day to day, we’re really focused on the day to day, but what’s kind of that in between? So where do we want to be a month from today?” (Luke Interview, 9-11-12, lines 396-403).

Luke here shared his perceived lack of success so far in integrating the three roles of a leader of a learning organization, the designer, teacher, and steward (Senge, 1990, p. 9).

In general, Luke believed that as a leader, he would need to make the systems he is striving for the norm, or routine, in his school. “I really like this use of the word routinize, which I’m unfamiliar with… To routinize, you know, we’ve got to work on our routinization here” (Luke Interview, 11-2-12, lines 280-281, 285-286). In this example,
Luke talked about wanting to establish what is called in the literature “order” or the establishment of “a set of standard operating procedures and routines” (Waters et al., 2003, p. 4). Luke knows that he has a vision and he is making choices and decisions daily that are making the school run. His question, about the “in-between,” indicates the current lack of strategic steps that will take him and the school from the day-to-day challenges to the vision. Senge (1990) describes how leaders can influence systems on three levels, the reactive, the responsive, and the generative (p. 12). Luke here has identified that he is operating primarily in the reactive space, focusing more on daily events than “systemic structure” (p. 12).

Luke also eloquently described the experience of being a leader and trying to get himself onto the ‘balcony’ (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002) long enough to be generative. “I mean, as the instructional leader, do we get so bogged down with the minutia and the day to day and everything else that I’m losing sight of the things that I— I mean, I know all these things, I’ve heard all of these things; but why am I losing sight? Why if I lose focus on a few of these things, then, you know, it gets taken off in 12 other directions?” (Luke Interview 10-8-12, lines 442-448). This frustration appears to be a very real example of why learning “governance” is so critical for leader and organizational success (Hallinger & Heck, 2010, p. 657).

Luke conveyed his frustration with wanting to act and getting off task once again, “I feel like sometimes it’s hard because there’s so many of these things to think about; and, really, this is the bottom line, right? I mean, I feel like I know all these things somewhere in my brain. I know these things in my heart, same thing as my brain. I
know these are things that I should be doing; but how do I, every single day, remind myself to do all these things that I need to do?” (Luke Interview, 9-29-12, part 2, lines 23-30). Luke wondered how to keep track of what to do once he’s identified actions to take. “But how do I remember all of these things, and how do I act upon all of these things, you know?” (Luke Interview, 9-29-12, part 2, lines 34-35). He was often trying to grapple with the tension of leading toward a vision within a system that privileges the daily emergency.

Sometimes during the interviews, Luke almost talked to himself, urging himself to focus on actions or giving himself a pep talk to do something not just for the purpose of the action, but for the fact of actually doing something. “Yeah, do something Luke, do something… I mean I think yes, I do need to actually take some sort of action and let them know but it’s not just to let you know, but to actually more importantly take some sort of action” (Luke Interview, 8-8-13, lines 406-408). This kind of vocal self encouragement serves as an example of how participation in the interviews gave Luke the chance to step out of his own mind, and use the reflection space to engage with himself metacognitively (Rosenblatt, 1988).

As I listened to these reflections over and over, I realized I could easily believe them and go along with the narrative that Luke was building about himself. In fact, they in some ways triangulate what the previous section’s discussion revealed. While Luke may have scored 100% on the Pathway items, indicating that he believes he can find many pathways to solve a problem; his lower score of 81% on Agency may reflect his lower level of confidence in his ability to actually enact one of those pathways (Scheier
& Carver, 1985). A review of the leadership literature confirmed that inaction is an all-too-common manifestation of disconnects in leadership (Leithwood et al., 2004; Waters et al, 2003). And Luke himself was describing repeatedly his own feelings of inaction.

However, what I also realized was that Luke was completely missing the fact that he had already executed a major cornerstone of the strategic implementation of his vision—changing the schedule. The schedule eventually contained long interrupted periods of time that could be used for project work, expeditionary work, or any type of teaching and learning that looked and felt different from the status quo Luke was trying to get away from. And, as described in the vignette, Luke continued to make changes and refinements to this change increasingly based on feedback and stakeholder input—meaning he instituted a radical structural and systemic change with support of the critical members of his community—teachers, staff, and parents.

Oddly however, the new schedule was never an ongoing topic of Luke’s reflections about his actions nor was it the driver of strategies to get to articulating the steps ‘in-between’ today and the vision. In fact, unless asked directly, Luke rarely mentioned the schedule when he talked about his own leadership actions or enactment of his vision. This omission is extremely curious. Perhaps it represents Luke’s tendency to remain in the weeds of daily school life, or his preference to talk theoretically, or his discomfort with talking about specifics. Perhaps it represents an inability to recognize his own moments of efficacy. Perhaps it demonstrates the real disconnect for Luke between strategic moves and daily actions. Or perhaps it represents his penchant for depersonalizing his own influence—often sounding like he was sharing sound-bites
rather than personal reflections. Whatever the reason, this lack of connectivity between the major action Luke executed toward implementing his vision and his view of his everyday tasks and efficacy remains a major disconnect.

The vignette in this chapter depicted a moment when Luke thought that he, as a leader, had made a structural change clear—he constantly updated teachers with the latest iterations of the schedule and assumed that circulating a document of the new version was what was needed to enact the schedule. The Kindergarten teachers’ changing of their own schedule highlighted what remained an ongoing issue for Luke. In order to systematize the schedule and other new structures in the school, he would need to develop ways to monitor and support implementation of those structures on a regular basis.

Luke experienced at the moment of the vignette one of the great challenges of being a leader. Telling people what to do doesn’t mean they will do it. Building a structure for what to do doesn’t mean that it will happen. People need support in enacting the kind of change Luke is striving for. Fink and Resnick (2001) point out that one characteristic of the effective principals they studied was creating systems where “accountability and professional support are …intimately joined” (p. 606). The District Assistant Superintendent said of Luke’s attempts to initiate changes,

“So last year, I think I really saw him take more ownership with that (instruction), and that came out from him either being more involved in some of the literacy activities, and knowing exactly what teachers were expected to do, so that he could understand what those processes look like all the way to getting updates from the coaches around who is doing what, how is it going, and what kind of support they needed. I think that was a
big learning because previously I think he just kind of gave assignments and tasks to people and just expected them to do it. I think he can do that to a certain point, but because the school wasn't and still is in need of a lot of work to approve student achievement, the leader really needs to be involved at a deep level to know what's going on. You can’t leave things up to chance…” (District Interview, 8-20-13, lines 43-53).

The world of school is a complex and layered place and from a constructivist stance, the norm is a process of vacillation (Dewey, 1916). As the researcher, I was in turn fascinated and frustrated by Luke’s thinking. He was alternately self-reflective and deflective as he talked. In keeping with constructivist principals, his meaning-making was sometimes iterative (Fosnot & Perry, 1996) and I could see when he was constructing new knowledge and ideas and building consciousness around what he needed to do as a leader. Other times it felt as if Luke was talking in circles, exploring ideas for his leadership but not doing more than just talking hypothetically and in many ways, depersonalized.

As I struggled to find the heart of his thinking, I often was frustrated at my role as listener, wanting instead to just tell him what to do, or tell him to stop talking about what he should or could do and just do it, or point out all the things that really didn’t make sense in his narrative. My own realizations of what I could and could not offer to the conversations were moments of meaning making for myself. My own metacognition about my role and the ways in which my listening was supporting or hindering Luke’s thinking was a further example of a constructivist layer of the data collection process (Santrock, 2009).
As Luke was learning, it is complicated to lead an organization toward a vision and even more complicated to execute actions on a systems level than on an individual level. The District Assistant Superintendent described Luke as a “visionary leader” (District Interview, 8-20-13, line 56) but also pointed out that “often, I feel like the vision is ahead of where many people are” (District Interview, 8-20-13, line 56). Execution includes getting others (such as the Kindergarten teachers) to implement new actions, and creating an organizational system in which the changes become the norm rather than the exception (Leithwood et al., 2010). But perhaps a critical component of execution is actually recognizing, acknowledging and then using the actions you have taken. Luke’s inability to not just value but to use the schedule changes he did execute effectively as a center point around which to organize and catalyze other shifts and changes may or may not result in getting the school closer to the vision. As Fullan and Miles (1992) remind us, “change is a journey, not a blueprint” (p. 1). Luke is certainly but whether he can turn his changes into an actual blueprint remains to be seen.

In relation to the conceptual framework, \( \text{beliefs} + \text{support} + \text{actions} + \text{learning} = \text{organizational transformation/outcomes} \), Luke was able to take action, whether he acknowledged it or used it or not. When I returned to the literature to think about this further, I didn’t encounter literature addressing whether a leader’s perceptions about his actions influences the effectiveness of those actions. This is certainly an area that needs further exploration.

This chapter included many sections: background on University Heights, an introduction to Luke, an articulation of Luke’s vision for University Heights,
a vignette, the presentation and discussion of the major finding in multiple sections, followed by a discussion of the finding in relation to the conceptual framework and literature. The next chapter includes implications of the study and final reflections.
Chapter 5: IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY AND FINAL REFLECTIONS

Purposes of the Study

In the field of K-12 schooling, school leaders not only matter but have the potential to impact student learning in profound ways (Hull, 2012; Leithwood et al., 2010a). Nationally, student outcomes within the U.S. schooling system and as they leave our high schools have received tremendous amounts of scrutiny and publicity in recent decades. Some of this pressure is coming from the increasing use and influence of high-stakes test results as proxy measurements of success of both schools as organizations and principals and teachers as effective practitioners (Leana, 2011). Not only is the job of school leadership highly pressurized, but nationally, we are becoming hard pressed to find enough people who want to be principals, who are effective principals, and who remain in the role of principal for the long term (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012; ERS, 1998).

School districts around the country are trying to solve these problems by building deeper principal pipelines, by offering training and support to principals, or by working with certifying organizations such as universities to attempt to strengthen the pre-service training principals receive (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). The principal in this study was a novice, in his second and third years as a principal, with no formal experience as an administrator prior to his principalship. He had received intensive district training and support prior to his principal position and spent a year as an apprentice principal. In this study, I attempted to observe and listen to this principal’s thinking while he was learning to lead, in practice, (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007), in his natural setting (Yin, 2012, p.
5), primarily through unstructured interviews and observations. This constructivist
design was intentional in order to capture an essentially constructivist process—the
principal’s thinking aloud, along with his meaning and sense-making of his experience
learning to lead and what variables influenced his choice-making.

To guide the research, I used this research question:

• *What are the contextual and mediating variables that influence a novice principal’s choice-making in a watched school in need of improvement?*

This question was designed to focus data collection and analysis on the principal’s
process of moving from ideas to choices and to surface some of the variables that
influenced him while moving through this process. Guided by a transactional
(Rosenblatt, 1988) and iterative relationship with the literature, I was able to wade
through the data and find some clarity and coherence which turned into the findings. The
major finding from this study was:

1. The principal demonstrated an assumption of possibility as his foundational
   method of operation.

In the following sections, I explore some of the significant implications of this
finding for theory, practice, and research in three sections. I include a final vignette, an
epilogue on Luke’s dance with the UH schedule, in the Implications for Practice section.
The last section in the chapter contains my reflections on the process and results of
conducting this study.
Implications for Theory

I just, I think there’s a lot of value in speaking out loud to a speakerphone, which is, you know, knowing you’re on the other end, and then recording the conversation myself and having the time to just kind of go over it. Because otherwise I don’t think I would have the time to stop and think. So I mean I think the biggest benefit to me of these conversations is just the think time...Reflection...Because that’s where the learning’s coming from.

(Luke Interview, 4-26-13, lines 231-240)

‘Constructivism’ is often used as an umbrella term that encompasses theories ranging from such fields as Rousseau-ian 18th century philosophy, to Deweyan 20th century philosophy, to Piaget’s individual cognitive ideas to Bruner’s discovery learning to Vygotsky’s sociocultural approach (Duffy & Cunningham, 1996). For the purposes of this study, I chose to focus on these commonalities between the theories: “learning is an active process of constructing rather than acquiring knowledge; learning is activity in context; learning is situated; learning involves a process of discovery; learning involves ‘disequilibrium,’ ‘perturbation,’ or ‘puzzlement’ as a stimulus for the individual’s learning; and learning occurs as people participate in shared endeavors” (Duffy & Cunningham, 1996, p. 2-7).

In some ways, qualitative research has a built-in constructivist foundation because it asks open-ended questions, seeks to study meaning from the participant’s point of view, involves emerging knowledge and meaning, and requires participation of the researcher, examination of personal values and stance, and collaboration within the research (Creswell, 2009, p. 16-17; Emerson, 1995). This study certainly did all of these things. The design was configured such that the data collection and meaning making by
both the principal and me as the researcher were the actual research and analysis processes.

Taking the constructivist tenets outlined above into account led to the design of this study, an exploration of one person’s learning over time with multiple opportunities to talk, reflect, and construct meaning by engaging in interviews and reflections (Creswell, 2009). The hope was that those opportunities would allow Luke the time and space to discover his thinking, to notice moments of disequilibrium and to construct knowledge related to his own leadership. Periodically, I used semi-structured interviews and the critical incident protocol (Flanagan, 1954; Maxwell, 2005, p. 80), but generally the interviews and observations were open in order to “support that construction…of knowledge” (Duffy & Cunningham, 1996, p. 2) and allow for a grounded discovery process where both Luke and I could develop and discover theories in the data (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 143).

I will discuss the implications for theory in four sections. These sections are presented as follows:

- **Researcher’s Theoretical Stance**: In this section, I discuss my own theoretical stance in constructing and conducting this study, and the benefits and limitations of this stance.
- **Benefits and Burdens of the Theoretical Framework**: In this section, I discuss ways the theoretical framework proved to be a benefit and burden to the study.
- **Rival Explanation for the Major Finding**: In this section, I consider rival theoretical explanations for the finding.
- **Contributions to Existing Theory**: In this section, I ask a question of constructivism and consider implications for the theory.
Researcher’s Theoretical Stance

It is important to acknowledge that I brought my own theoretical variables with me to my own choice-making within this study. I do believe that ability is mutable and that people are inherently capable of increasing their capacity, intelligence, and knowledge (Bandura, 2000; McCormick, 2001). I believe this about myself and I believe it about Luke, and I believe it about each and every person at UH, staff, students and families. This belief led me to design this study around the constructivist paradigm which privileges knowledge construction, on-going sense and meaning making, and active participation in expanding one’s own knowledge and knowing of one’s own knowledge (Duffy & Cunningham, 1996). I say this to acknowledge the possibility for a theoretical bias both in the design and in the evaluation of the findings. I also say this to reinforce the importance of “seeking of rival explanations” (Yin, 2012, p. 14) and using them to analyze the findings and my own reflections about the findings.

Benefits and Challenges of the Theoretical Framework

Benefits of the Theoretical Framework

During the interviews, Luke had the luxury of what he referred to above as “time to stop and think” (Luke Interview, 4-26-13, lines 231-240). This indicates that the interviews were in and of themselves a time for Luke to think deeply about himself, his leadership practice and also to step outside of himself and try to sort out his thinking from his thinking about his thinking (Rosenblatt, 1988). The thinking Luke did was not always productive or directly related to concrete action items. As Dewey (1933) said,
“reflective thinking is always more or less troublesome because it involves overcoming the inertia that inclines one to accept suggestions at their face value; it involves willingness to endure a condition of mental unrest and disturbance. Reflective thinking, in short, means judgment suspended during further inquiry; and suspense is likely to be somewhat painful” (chapter 2). While I do not know if Luke’s reflections were painful, they certainly caused him to have many moments of confusion, insight, frustration, and clarity over the course of our conversations.

The point of this study was to give one person the chance to think aloud, in essence to surface Luke’s voice by giving him space for the meaning-making that is usually internal to be shared with a “fully-present listener” (Bloom et al., 2003, p. 6). The benefit of using a constructivist theoretical framework is that it values the messiness of open-ended conversations and the emerging of “the multiple truths apparent in others’ lives” (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 3).

Challenges of the Theoretical Framework

The data collection process also allowed me as a researcher to be reflective which meant that I was also frustrated, bewildered, or clear in turn. My greatest frustration was listening to Luke talk again and again about what he needed to do, what he could do, what he should do and never much about what he actually would or did do. While I had no claim to being a “fly on the wall” (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 3), I was trying to just listen and record Luke’s thinking and trying not to respond with advice, guidance, or direction. I was trying to support his construction of knowledge and not communicate
my own knowledge (Duffy & Cunningham, 1996, p. 2). During most of the interviews and observations I attempted to use non-committal and non-judgmental responses (my most common response was “ok”) as a way to indicate a response without partiality.

Despite my best intentions, my frustration did come out during one of our conversations. I remember it specifically because it was at the time in the study when I thought I would stop collecting data and because of that, I felt suddenly liberated to say what I was actually thinking. I allowed myself to step out of the listener role and voice my feeling that Luke talked about ideas a lot and never got to action items. Here is the moment during a conversation about what Luke would do to provide feedback to teachers when I did not keep my frustration to myself, “So, whenever we talk about it you always say, ‘I don’t know. I’m going to have to figure it out.’ We haven’t ever gotten to the point where you’ve actually, at least that I know of, tried a strategy” (Luke Interview, 8-8-13, lines 398-401). After this ‘talking to,’ Luke’s response was to talk to himself. “Yeah, do something Luke, do something. I agree. I’m kind of with you. I mean I think yes, I do need to actually take some sort of action and let them know but it’s not just to let you know, but to actually more importantly take some sort of action” (Luke Interview, 8-8-13, lines 406-409). At this moment, I pushed Luke to actually admit to himself, almost literally by talking to himself, that he needed to take action not just as a response to teachers, but for the public fact of taking action as a leader.

This example illustrates one of the tensions I experienced related to the theoretical framework. I intended the study to be a place for Luke to learn aloud and intentionally
developed the relationship and design in that way. I would listen and observe by “engaging in some activities and relationships rather than others” (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 3). When observing at UH, if the coaches or teachers or assistant principal asked me questions, advice, or guidance, I offered responses because I knew that was expected of me to “become a member of that world” (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 2) where I was seen and presented as a knowledgeable resource. During interviews and reflections with Luke alone, if he asked me questions, advice or guidance, I would offer reflective responses to get him to construct his meaning and “seeking to understand and challenge” his thinking (Duffy & Cunningham, 1996, p. 2). This deliberate positionality perhaps limited the nature of the research. As mentioned above, “learning occurs as people participate in shared endeavors with others” (Duffy & Cunningham, 1996, p. 6). Luke and I were sharing the time and space to talk. We were sharing a reflective conversation. But we were not sharing the same role within that conversation, Luke was the out-loud thinker and I was the listener.

If I had constructed my role differently and had seen it as teaching or coaching, then I would have used my responses to challenge, question, scaffold Luke’s thinking in different ways. I would have been more purposeful in leading some of the interviews and reflections, inquiring at the “leading edge” of (Luke’s) thinking and by attempting to facilitate disequilibrium” (Duffy & Cunningham, 1996, p. 16). It is possible that accepting that different way of participating in the research would have yielded rich evidence of learning growth quite different from the current study.
The consequence of choosing not to enter the dialogue in that participatory way meant that often Luke and I did not get to action items. Luke was comfortable talking theoretically and I was comfortable listening theoretically, as we noticed about ourselves in the moment following the previous example.

Suz: “Because you and I can talk about theories all day.”
Luke: “And we do.”
Suz: “We’re good at that, right.” (Laughs) (Luke Interview, 8-8-13, lines 409-411).

It is certainly possible that my understanding of the theoretical construct I had designed in this study inhibited the potential of the conversations to push Luke’s learning from the abstract to the concrete. I was somewhat passive during the interviews and reflections as I attempted to “develop an ongoing relation…and observe all the while…and write down in regular, systematic ways what (I) observed and learned” (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 1). In retrospect, my false sense of positioning myself only as listener in an effort to create a “studied neutrality” (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 66) was a faulty construct, given that “no field researcher can be a completely neutral, detached observer, outside and independent of the phenomena” (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 3). I think that I could have been more active and leaned into my potential role while still remaining in keeping with both ethnographic methodologies and constructivist theories.

Rival Explanation for the Major Finding

As discussed in the presentation of the findings, constructivist meaning making was part of actually noticing, discovering, or locating the findings. I did understand the
finding to be a result of the process of making meaning of the data. And I did understand
the finding to be a result of a meaning-making process that Luke was undergoing (Duffy
& Cunningham, 1996). For example, in noticing that Luke assumed possibility and this
assumption was fueling his enactment of his vision through the schedule changes, I was
able to understood Luke’s process from a knowledge construction point of view. Luke
made meaning of his context and realized that a new schedule would support his work to
enact his vision. When talking to stakeholders in his community he developed new
understandings about the purpose and support he received, so he assumed possibility and
went to see if the union would support him (See Vignette 1 for the full description of
Luke’s process). He developed new ways of thinking about his goal—that it was good
for kids” and then went with possible solutions to see if the bus system would support
him. He developed new meaning there with that permission, thus fueling new knowledge
about next steps and the possibilities that permission engendered. At each step in the
process, the knowledge he generated helped him figure out how to position his argument
to the next stakeholder and he combined this with his own belief in his self-efficacy. By
the end of the process, he was able to articulate his goals and the change to the schedule
using the knowledge he had generated along the way, including the values context, the
‘good for kids’ context, and communications context he had learned along the way.

In order to seek “rival explanations” (Yin, 2012, p. 14) for the findings, I did
consider alternate theoretical frameworks as possible explanations for the findings
(Creswell, 2009). In doing so, I realized that there was an alternate theoretical
explanation for the first finding that would also explain how Luke navigated the process
of changing the UH schedule. Considering a behaviorist stance allowed me to see an alternate explanation for Luke’s continued success in making changes. After all, behaviorism considers a “system of behavioral responses …in the effect of reinforcement, practice, and external motivation” (Fosnot & Perry, 1996, p. 8). Behaviorism posits that changes in behavior are achieved by externally rewarding certain behaviors and discouraging others (Fosnot & Perry, 1996, p. 9). It is perfectly plausible to assume that Luke’s continued success at implementing schedule changes were due to the fact that each time he tried to make a new change, he was rewarded with permission. These continued rewards encouraged him to try again, and then again. In this scenario, it would not be Luke’s meaning making or knowledge generation that were fueling his effort, it would be his previous experiences of reward for his behavior.

It is also possible that it was a combination of these two frameworks, knowledge generation and reward for behavior, that supported Luke’s efforts to change the schedule. Within the scope of this study, I did not explore in order to distinguish or determine this. However, it might be possible to do this by observing and listening to Luke when he does encounter a roadblock. What he does after something stops his successes would give insights into what is driving him—his own beliefs about his self-efficacy and how this roadblock is integrated into his understanding of his self-efficacy, or his behaviorist response to success. No such roadblock appeared during the course of this study.
Contributions to the Existing Theory

One area in my work on this study which may offer a contribution to the theory is my wondering about is the correspondence between Vygotsky’s (1978) theory of the Zone of Proximal Development and Senge’s (1990) theory of creative tension. As I speculated in previously, there seem to me to be some parallels between Vygotsky’s ‘actual developmental level’ and ‘potential developmental level’ and Senge’s ‘current reality’ and ‘vision.’ Senge (1990) says that the current reality is the place where we are “telling the truth about where we are” (p. 9) and Vygotsky (1978) calls the actual developmental level as the point where one “can do such-and-such independently” (p. 33). Both involve an honest assessment of the current mastered set of skills and functions. ‘Vision’ for Senge (1990) “comes from seeing clearly where we want to be” (p. 9) and the potential developmental level for Vygotsky (1978) characterizes the potential functions “that will mature tomorrow” or “prospectively” (p. 33). Of course, these terms are referring to different entities, Senge to an organization and Vygotsky to a child.

What I am wondering here is if the notion of working slightly above one’s current developmental level and being guided and scaffolded through that zone applies to other constructs beyond the individual. If these parallels persist, then perhaps there are ways to think of organizations constructively, as entities working in their own ZPD, constructing their own knowledge as they learn and make sense of the world, learning through social and cultural processes (Duffy & Cunningham, 1996, p. 6). This is interesting to me because if this is a possible frame, the role of the leader (and other organizations or
people) vis-a-vis the organization becomes one similar to the teacher of a child, focusing on “aiding or providing the scaffolding for the learners rather than telling the learner” (Duffy & Cunningham, 1996, p. 16). This is an area I would like to explore in further depth in future research.

In the following section I discuss implications for research as a result of this study in three sections.

**Implications for Research**

In this section, I discuss how this study is situated in relation to the relevant literatures in the following three sections.

- **Contributions to the Existing Literature:** In this section, I consider the study’s contribution to the existing literature,
- **Limitations of the Research:** In this section, I discuss limitations of the study, in its design, analysis and uses.
- **Implications for Research:** In this section, I discuss implications for additional research in several research fields.

**Contributions to the Existing Literature**

*Leaders need to believe in themselves and their abilities to succeed. Then convince others that they can and will succeed. Believe in yourself and so will others.*

(Hoy & Smith, 2007, p. 163).

The conceptual framework that grounded the early thinking and development of this study hypothesized this relationship between a school leader and his leadership:

*beliefs + support + actions + learning = organizational transformation/outcomes.* This conceptual framework was developed as a result of experiences I had while working with
school leaders to focus, frame, and direct their transformation efforts and as a result of reading in multiple literatures. I was especially interested in the connection between beliefs about ability (Bandura, 1977) and the ways in which school leaders made choices, and the ways those choices resulted in some kind of systemic change. In the above equation beliefs and supports are variables that influence actions and learning. Actions are certainly the result of choices and decisions. Thus, in order to explore the connection between those beliefs and resulting choices,

I used the research question to guide the data collection and analysis in this study: *What are the contextual and mediating variables that influence a novice principal’s choice-making in a watched school in need of improvement?* Using this question allowed me to gather and reflect on data that was open and rich and deep with some purpose and focus. The major finding in many ways was an example of what I read in the self-efficacy, school leadership, leadership learning, and systems analysis literatures. In several cases, the findings and analysis here added complexities and layers to the literature and these additions will be discussed below.

**Self-Efficacy, Optimism, and Assumed Possibility**

I began the study with an interest in self-efficacy and the ways in which self-efficacy influences school leader effectiveness. I posited that beliefs about one’s ability to handle a task influenced the choices, learning and actions a school leader takes and what the leader believes he can accomplish with his specific skill set (Chemers et al., year; Gist, 1987). I also posited that beliefs about ability are critical to a leader’s (or
anyone’s) understanding of their ability to impact the learning of others. (Bandura, 1993; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008).

In Luke’s thinking over the course of the study, I encountered multiple examples of the ways in which he believed he could handle tasks. The vignettes demonstrated this about a specific task Luke attempted—changing the schedule structure at UH. Luke believed he could accomplish most specific tasks he faced—certainly a positionality that demonstrates self-efficacy. This was corroborated by Luke’s score of 95% on my informal administration of General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE) (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995). Luke’s persistence in making changes to the schedule over a period of time straddling three school years also demonstrates the connection between a strong sense of self-efficacy and the length of time a person will persist in attempting or completing a specific task (Bandura, 1977; Bandura, 1993; Locke et al., 1984).

There were other examples when Luke’s self-efficacy was obvious. When Luke described bringing two fighting parents into his office for a talking to, or when he had to put a teacher on administrative leave prior to her arrest, or when dealing with letting a teacher go, or hiring a teacher, I noticed that his level of excitement and ability to be direct and describe concrete action steps increased dramatically. I said to him, “Your voice changes when you talk about that kind of stuff” (Luke Interview, 2-1-13, lines 284). Luke’s response was, “Well, …, I like that stuff” (Luke Interview, 2-1-13, lines 285). After describing what he did or needed to do, he usually ended the story with a line like he did with this story, “It was fascinating. That was a good one, that was a good one” (Luke Interview, 2-1-13, line 420) or “I thoroughly enjoyed the conversation” (Luke
interview, 11-30-12, line 8). Luke felt efficacious in these instances and this translated into his energy in talking about the actions he took.

As was discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 4, Luke’s sense about his self-efficacy was less assured when approaching a less defined, more nebulous task—such as enacting a vision for the school. “I mean, but I, you know, I like to think I'm a systems person. I like to think I'm good at fixing things, but let's be honest, you know, no. It's just- there's just so much going on that it's really, really hard to be great at all of these things, right?” (Luke interview, 10-4-13, lines 413-415). Once again, Luke is voicing his reservations about knowing exactly how to enact his vision given the complex nature of his role. This confirms what was articulated in the literature, that self-efficacy is a specific task outcome expectancy (Bandura, 1993; Gist, 1987), and that different beliefs are involved when a person is considering generalized or less specific outcome expectancies (Roux, 2010) as Luke was doing here.

I encountered fewer examples of Luke’s beliefs about ability. He certainly had a general sense of hope that all of his students can become “world citizens” and “problem-solvers” (Luke Interviews, 8-8-12, 11-2-12). He was less sure about how his current students will do in terms of reaching that vision. “But, you know, um, I, I still don’t think even if you, you know, squeezed everything you could possibly squeeze out of this, you know, out of this shoot type of thing we’re still not gonna be knocking it out of the park. These kids are not all gonna be proficient, ready to, you know, have the skill set to problem solve, you know, out in the world. They’re not gonna be this next generation of super world citizens which I am envisioning” (Luke interview, 2-1-13, lines 627-643). Of
course, Luke is a realist too and knows that the school he is imagining is not his current reality (Senge, 1990) at UH and thus his skepticism may not be a sign that he doesn’t believe the current UH students will be the ‘world citizens’ of his vision, but a sign that he is acknowledging where the students are in relation to his vision for them.

Central to Luke’s vision and ambitions for UH were his beliefs that a different kind of learning could happen at University Heights, as a neighborhood school with a neighborhood population. Luke was not interested in becoming an “innovative” school or receiving dispensations from district mandates. Luke believed that the type of education he envisioned for the students at UH should be accessible to all children. “It’d be a lot easier to just say, alright, guys next year we’re gonna go for Innovative Status, and that means we get more control and we get control over hiring and we can control our programming and we’re gonna kinda change this to an expeditionary school and that’s the way we’re going.” But I don’t think that’s the answer for the city” (Luke interview, 2-1-13, lines 661-667). Luke steadfastly believed that he can build the school where students will leave as ‘super world citizens’ right in the UH neighborhood with the families and children who make up the UH community.

When discussing the teachers who work at UH generally and in relation to specific traits Luke is looking for in teachers, his view on ability is also slightly murky in the sense that he wants to believe people can improve and yet acknowledges that there are certain people that are a better fit for his bus than others.

“Look, what’s really hard here is I’m the general manager of a baseball team…And you somehow want me to win with the team that I currently
have assembled but you’re not going to allow me to trade anybody or, you know, make any sort of managerial moves and it’s just going to be really, really hard to win this season with the team we have. And it’s just, you know, I just think it’s kind of funny in terms of, like, you know, you can’t really have a year that’s considered a building year, right? I mean like on a sports team, you know? (Luke interview, 4-8-13, lines 76-86).

Here Luke articulated his strategy to counsel out people who are on the wrong bus (Collins, 2001) rather than coaching them to improve. This may mean that he does not believe people’s ability is mutable (Bandura, 2000; McCormick, 2001; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008). This may be because what he is considering a good fit is related to personality and interest in the vision more than ability to accomplish or learn specific tasks. The qualities Luke looked for in new hires were excitement, passion, high energy and engagement levels—all of which are personality traits (Bono & Judge, 2004; Judge et al., 2002) rather than behavior or habits. As he said here, “- I think the technical piece is that he needs to- we can move that technical piece, right? That's the easier one. That adaptive piece- to get someone to believe?... To drink the Kool-Aid. To buy what you're selling. To believe in your religion. Is way more important” (Luke interview, 10-4-13, lines 577-581).

So, this study contributes to the efficacy literature an example of a leader who is exploring how efficacy works in his life as a leader. How does he reconcile specific task self-efficacy with his frustration trying to be self-efficacious on his larger task? How does he reconcile a belief that everyone can learn with the realities of the ways his current students and teachers have been supported or taught? These questions remain unanswered from this study. As with many beliefs, there is a difference between those beliefs and
how they manifest in our work, how they hold up when colliding with the complex realities of daily life. It may be that the lack of clarity on Luke’s part is due to the fact that beliefs and actions aren’t always directly or causally related, at least in ways that can be gleaned from open interviews and observations.

As I explored these constructs and thought about how Luke’s beliefs were impacting his choices, I began to explore optimism and its connections to efficacy. Luke was certainly optimistic about most things, even readying for the time when his vision is enacted. “Um, but, you know, it is what it is and I think you just kinda have to take the long view and know that these things happen and eventually you’ll kind of get the, the team or staff that you want” (Luke interview, 4-8-13, lines 88-91). Another time, Luke expressed his optimism about new hires and his work getting the right people on the UH bus. “So, I'm still confident in the people we've hired. I feel good about that” (Luke Interview, 10-4-13, line 305). Luke’s “Mr. Happy, Mr. Enthusiastic, everything’s great personality” (2-1-13, line 210) was his typical stance.

The place where this study contributes to the literature by adding a layer is in the area I called ‘assumed possibility’ in the study. Optimism is described as a generalized capacity (Roux, 2010) and the literature shows that “optimism enhances success” (Hoy & Smith, 2007, p. 163). Optimism includes the belief that people are capable, that the future is positive, and the strong belief that things are going to be good or become better (Hoy & Smith, 2007; Karademas, 2006). Optimism is a general outlook expectancy (Karademas, 2006, p. 1287), meaning that it is not usually considered related to accomplishing specific tasks. In other words, optimism is a “positive view of life” (Hoy & Smith, 2007, p. 163).
In this study, I theorized that Luke had something beyond optimism, beyond just assuming something a good or better outcome. This extra something was the assumption not only that something good would happen but that multiple possibilities were contained in any situation or challenge, and that any number of those possibilities would be a positive outcome. Luke believed that “problems are our friends because only by immersing ourselves in problems can we come up with creative solutions” (Fullan & Miles, 1992, p. 2). In fact, Luke seemed to believe that any one of those solutions would be a positive outcome because having an outcome was the next piece of the puzzle. Any result was progress and could be framed as helping to add another piece to the larger puzzle (Luke interview, 1-29-14, lines 136-138). This assumption of possibility or assumed possibility emerged as the major finding in response to the research question. I argued that the assumption of possibility was one of the variables influencing Luke’s choices, and even fueling his efficacy and outlook. Luke relished problems as full of potential and appreciated the art of approaching problems and “concentrating of possibilities rather than obstacles” (Hoy & Smith, 2007, p. 164).

This theorization contributes to the literature by adding a layer to the current research on optimism and self-efficacy. I found some mention of this possible layer in the two additional tests I informally administered to Luke, the Life Orientation Test (LOT) of optimism (Scheier & Carver, 1985) and the HOPE Scale of Agency and Pathways (Snyder et al., 1991). The Agency construct refers to a confidence in meeting goals. Luke scored lowest on this, perhaps consistent with his concern about executing his vision. The Pathways construct is consistent with my idea of assumed possibility as it
refers to finding multiple pathways to solving a problem. Luke scored 100% on the Pathway items. I hypothesized that my idea of assumed possibility is similar to the HOPE construct, or it could be a combination of several of these four constructs—GSE, Agency/Pathways, and LOT. At this time, my hypothesis is not fully developed and is certainly untested. This is an area that should be explored in future research that concerns the relationships between beliefs, actions, and school leadership.

**Adding Voice to Existing Literatures**

This study contributes to several other bodies of literature beyond efficacy and optimism. While the leadership literature is wide, for this study I read in the domains of efficacy of school leaders and efficacy of specific school leader practices. The research in these bodies of literature felt very flat and dry to me, often consisting of long lists of leadership traits (Carson & Earley, 2010; Kelloway & Barling, 2000), or desirable leadership personality characteristics (Fullan, 2001, 2005; Goleman, 2000; Senge, 1990, 2006; Bono & Judge, 2004; Judge et al., 2002), or leadership practices and behaviors (Hogan & Kaiser, 2005; Goleman, 2000; Grissom & Loeb, 2011; Leithwood et al., 2010a; Waters et al., 2003), or claims about effective leaders (Leithwood et al., 2008; NCSL, 2007) (see Chapter 2 for examples of those lists).

What I did not read in any of these domains was the actual voice of principals. I found a few accounts that included principal voice (for example, Reeves & Burt, 2006 included actual quotes from principals; Lortie, 2009 included quotes from principals in the early chapters; Morris et al., 1984 included vignettes of principals’ work) but not
many. For me, this was a gaping hole in the literature. Leadership is something hard to pinpoint and hard to describe. I understand the entire genre of leadership literature to be an effort to articulate something about effective leaders such that the rest of us can try to become an effective leader or we can identify effective leadership or effective leadership potential in others. Hearing Luke describe the complexities, challenges, and rewards of his job was deeply gratifying, humbling, frustrating, and inspiring. While the principalship can be lonely and isolated (Lortie, 2009; Lytle 1996), it can also be highly rewarding (NCSL, 2007). Including principal voice in the research and literature would enrich, enhance, deepen, stimulate, and motivate others and remove some of the isolation found in the position. As mentioned above, often school leadership literature contains dry lists of qualities or habits or practices or traits. Principal voice is not only real and personal and honest, but it is also humanizing in a field that can feel flat and depersonalized. This study offers an opportunity for a principal’s voice to infuse the literature with the authentic successes and challenges that are found in the field.

Another body of literature I explored for this study was that of school leader development. Learning to lead in schools is a critical skill that is becoming more and more scarce (BLS, 2012) and more and more needed nationally (Norton, 2002). The school leader development literature contained specific suggestions for best practices: hands-on opportunities, on-the-job experiences, learning while practicing, experimentation, lots of repeated practice, peer support, coaching/mentoring, and lots and lots of time spent in reflection (Allio, 2005; Boyatzis & McKee, 2005; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Wallace Foundation, 2010, Kelloway & Barling, 2000; Mendels,
2012). As was the case within the school leader efficacy literature, I found few moments when school leaders’ actual voices were included in the descriptions of how best to support leader development. Browne-Ferrigno & Muth (2003) and Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) state that the best leadership learning occurs in the field, during real, practical, experiential work—the latter being the source for the title of this study—“learning leadership practices in practice” (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007, p. 8). This study provides a rich example of a leader doing just that—learning to lead while leading, supported by taking the time to make his decision making more “transparent” (Kelloway & Barling, 2000, p. 358) while developing social intelligence and self-awareness (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005; Goleman, 2000). This was the work Luke did throughout the study and his out-loud thinking provides a narration of leadership learning in practice.

**Limitations of the Research**

This study had an unstructured design (Maxwell, 2005) that included some practitioner research methods and some ethnographic methods as part of the data collection methods. This study was intended to witness and observe a unique phenomenon (Yin, 2012, p. 7), one person as he went “about (his) everyday li(fe)” (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 1) as a school leader and try to capture his own words about his experiences and thinking. The study design focused on an individual as the unit of analysis (Yin, 2009, p. 29) as it explored Luke’s reflections and out-loud learnings. Because the study focused solely on Luke as the participant and all primary data collected was from him, the scope of the study really only included Luke’s words and the “reactive
effects” (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 3) those words had with me, the researcher. I did collect some additional data that would allow for systematic triangulation (Maxwell, 2005, p. 94). The interview with Luke’s supervisor, the District Assistant Superintendent, document data I collected, and my own memo and research journal writing (Maxwell, 2005) allowed for some moments of triangulation. However, I did not include data from those people in the system that Luke was actually leading—teachers, parents, and students—meaning that I did not collect data that would allow me to “squar(e) the finding with others it needs to be squared with” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 267). Thus the study is limited by possible threats of bias and validity (Maxwell, 2005, p. 114).

The study design was intentional to allow time, space, and focus to be on a close exploration of Luke’s learning. However, this design brought with it many inherent limitations. My positionality as a researcher and increasingly as a mentor added layers of complications related to my own biases, assumptions, and as I found progressively more over time, my wishes for Luke. I found myself wanting him to be successful, hoping he would behave in certain ways that I thought would be more effective, in essence rooting for him. This research involved “both being with other people to see how they respond to events as they happen, and experiencing for oneself these events and the circumstances that give rise to them” (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 3). While being able to experience for myself Luke’s daily practice and his reflections was a strength of the study, it also presented opportunities for my own bias to enter the analysis.
This is of course, a huge limitation to this type of research. There were multiple opportunities for my ideas to influence the interpretations of Luke’s words. One way this was possible and in fact, happened, was in the selection of the data, what I chose to “leave out,” what I chose to “present” or “frame” (Emerson et al., 1994, p. 9). These inclusions and omissions occurred in bounding the data set, selecting and reselecting the coding sets, using which literatures, and as a result heading toward which findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994). While the conceptual framework and research question guided the study, I made multiple choices along the way that led me to this concluding place. As I presented and discussed the finding, I found myself wishing for more knowledge about multiple fields because I saw so many moments where additional knowledge would have helped me understand and analyze the data in other ways.

Another limitation of this research was the bounding of the data set (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In an effort to make the study manageable, I only included 18.35 hours of recordings in this current study out of a total of 55 hours collected. This means that there is a vast amount of data with cursory analysis attached to it that could be used for additional research. This bounding had the potential to limit the findings as it allowed for large swaths of data that may have demonstrated very different features of Luke’s learning and learning. That there is so much unanalyzed data means that there are possible alternate or rival findings that are undiscovered at this time.

A final limitation of the research relates to its applicability and generalizability. Unstructured designs are not considered statistically generalizable (Maxwell, 2005, p. 80) and this applies to this case. However, this study can be considered analytically
generalizable and hopefully will be useful to districts, schools, school leaders, and situations in which the conceptual claims might be similar (Yin, 2012, p. 18).

**Implications for Additional Research**

**Additional Research on this Data Set**

Given the limitations, what then does this mean for additional research? I certainly believe that follow up is warranted for additional analyses of the larger data set I collected as well as for future research in related fields. Within the larger data set, there is rich data related to literatures I did not consider. I think the process of analyzing this data set considering other literatures would surface other interesting and revealing findings. Domains that peeked through in the data and merit further exploration include the ways in which Luke used language. I noticed that Luke switched between first, second and third person when talking about himself. I know this represented something in his thinking but an analysis of this something was not part of this study. Gender and power were also sub themes in the study and while, several times I contemplated further exploration of them, I ended up not including this analysis within the boundaries of this study. In addition, mentorship and the experience of being mentored was a part of the data that was left unexplored. I did include some mentoring literature in the research for the study but because the entire data set is an example of mentoring, this could be much more deeply explored.

There are other areas of literature that could contribute to further analysis. Luke spent much of his time focused on relationships. This could be further explored by
moving into the research on the importance of trust in schools. As Luke said during his third year, “I think what was interesting was I personally feel like I might have had more trust in the staff at the end of year two” (Luke interview, 1-29-14, lines 233-234). This was one of the few mentions of trust in the study and yet given the importance of trust in the realm of school leadership (Bryk et al., 2010), its absence was noticeable.

Understanding Luke’s focus on relationships from a trust perspective would be a valuable exercise.

A final area that might merit analysis with this data set is that of indirect influence and collective efficacy. Given what is known about how “school leaders improve teaching and learning indirectly and most powerfully through their influence on staff motivation, commitment and working conditions” (Leithwood et al., 2008, p. 27), Luke’s learning in relation to that indirect influence could be considered. This ties directly into an underutilized construct in the current study—that of a leader’s impact on the collective efficacy of groups within the organization. Leaders are most effective when impacting collective efficacy (Grissom & Loeb, 2011; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Marks & Printy, 2003; Robinson et al., 2008; Supovitz et al., 2010) and I did not concentrate on this dimension in this analysis of the data. This data set has the potential to enrich any number of areas of research.

Additional Research for the Field

There were also many areas of the data and findings where future research could be directed for great benefit to the field of school leadership. I will mention three of those
areas here. The first is additional exploration into the vision/execution disconnect. As discussed in Chapter 4, Luke worried about how to marry his vision and its execution from the first day. As he said here, “What you’re trying to do is something really exciting and visionary and yet you’re dealing with the constraints of the system you have, the poverty, the pedagogy of poverty that is built into that system, the- everything about it. So how do you do that, get creative given the restraints that you’re facing?” (Luke interview, 2-1-13, lines 627-643). I assume that Luke is not alone in the field of school leaders in wishing he knew better how exactly to enact his vision. There is literature on the intention/action gap or intention/habit disconnect. It seems that further understanding how this gap manifests for school leaders and how a school leader could bridge this gap would be hugely beneficial to the field.

The second area I discovered in the study that warrants future research is the experience of ‘not knowing’ as a school leader. When reflecting on one teacher who made significant improvements in his mind, I asked Luke, “So how did she get better?” His response was “I don’t know. I should ask her… I had lots of conversations with her about such things…but how did she actually learn to do it? I don’t know” (Luke Interview, 10-4-13, lines 693-695, 709-711). This state of ‘not knowing’ about one dimension or about multiple dimensions of practice perhaps has huge ramifications for school leaders in terms of confidence, self-efficacy, and even success in remaining in leadership positions. Study into this domain would contribute to the understanding of school leadership and school leader development.
The third area I believe poses great benefit is that of analyzing performance based on constants. In some ways, effectiveness assessments and performance evaluations of schools, school leaders, and teachers are intended to seek constants. However, they are often constructed as long lists of variables which evaluators check off if present and note if absent. The lists are so long, they can make it extremely difficult to capture what people are doing well and what they do consistently well over time. The vignette in this study, an example of a constant, has led me to believe that we might be better off seeking constants and then only assessing those constants over time, leaving variables at the side. After all, we can measure growth in relation to constants and we have a limited capacity to juggle multiple constants simultaneously. Research into this construct as it relates to school leaders could have great benefit for the field.

The Importance of Voice

The final area I recommend is a plea to future researchers. What this study demonstrates is that there is great power and learning to be gained from hearing a person’s voice. This study was designed to pursue “indigenous meaning” or an “understanding of what ...experiences and activities mean(t) to” Luke (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 12). The goal was to capture someone “speak (ing) in (his) own voice” (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 13), to privilege one learner’s voice and in doing so, really be able to explore a learning journey from the inside. Since hearing someone talk is different than hearing someone’s voice, it was the work of the data analysis that surfaced Luke’s
voice. Surfacing and retaining this voice is critical in the field of school leadership. The role of school principal is under great scrutiny and has lost some of its reputation as principals have been relegated to being “line managers” or “super teachers” (Leana, 2011, p. 32) but not often leaders of learning organizations (Senge, 1990, 2006). Schools need principals who are “strategic thinkers and leaders who will be able to meet the adaptive challenges” (NCSL, 2007, p. 19)—“problems whose solutions are not yet known” (Fullan, 2005, p. 45) or which do not have “easy answers” (Fullan, 2001, p. 2). And we know that principals are isolated in their work (Lortie, 2009; Lytle, 1996) and thus do not often get the chance to share their practice or hear others share. In order to learn from principals, we need to hear principal voice, and not just from those principals who are already effective leaders but from those learning and struggling with the issues that are common to us all. I encourage future research into principal leadership and learning to include the voices of principals.

In the following section, I discuss implications of this research for practice, including for the school leadership field and for the setting of this study—University Heights and Luke as the leader of UH. I begin with a vignette—an epilogue or postscript on Luke’s schedule change process. The vignette is followed by two sections: Implications for the Field and Implications for the Setting.
Implications for Practice

_I mean the schedule’s pretty important, you know, and that really symbolizes for you, you know, how important you feel certain things are, right?_

(Luke Interview, 4-15-13, lines 201-203).

In this section, I discuss how this study is situated in relation to practice in the following three sections.

- **Vignette: Postscript**: In this section, I offer a glimpse into Luke’s continued work on the schedule for UH.
- **Implications for the Field**: In this section, I discuss implications for the field from this study.
- **Implications for the Setting**: In this section, I discuss implications for the setting, University Heights, from the study.

**Vignette: Postscript**

In January of Luke’s third year, SY 13-14, he once again returned to the schedule to think about the following year. He decided that it was time to think about another major change to the schedule—moving to year round schedule. He broached the idea with his leadership team and began to play around with various ways he could configure the time. He knew that he needed to set the stage for this and work with the two most important committees at UH, the School Leadership Team (SLT) and the Community School Committee (CSC) (Luke Interview, 1-29-14, lines 449-450). He knew that he needed to be politically savvy about such a major decision. And he knew that he needed to be creative so that he wouldn’t violate the teachers’ contract but would still be able to staff a year round schedule.
In late January, Luke went to the District Assistant Superintendent to introduce the idea. Once again, Luke encountered a green light. “And so John yesterday gave permission… and he said, look if you would like to- don’t worry about the money part” (Luke Interview, 1-29-14, lines 507). Not only did he get permission to try to implement such a schedule, but he also got permission to be creative in figuring out how to staff the school. He decided to do this by counting teacher time in minutes rather than days and attempting to spread out his teacher time. “Teachers, you have a 184-day contract. Don’t care about that anymore. What I do care about is 184 times 8. That’s the number of hours I have to work with” (Luke Interview, 1-29-14, lines 510-512). This type of time reallocation would allow Luke to use teacher time differently and creatively. He hoped to be able to come up with a schedule that he could fit into his budget and that would keep UH students in school year-round, with no more than two week breaks at a maximum.

“So I’m going to use hours, and now all of a sudden instead of scheduling you for 8 hours, I’m going to schedule you for 6 hours. And it’s going to be 6 hours 4 days a week…. And then it’s going to be 8 hours on that fifth day for getting together or 8 hours for two days a week…. Which buys me 6 hours a week. So then I can take those 6 hours and I can expand your year by 4 weeks. And then if I need to get some additional money and pay half of the staff to come back on certain times, great. But what I need to do is figure out that teacher part and then I can figure out that partner part” (Luke Interview, 1-29-14, lines 514-523).

So once again, toward the end of his third year, Luke returned to the puzzle of valuing, messaging, and planning to enact his vision, using the schedule as his medium.

This vignette demonstrates something important for the work of school leaders. Change is the norm so within change, leaders need to learn to have focus and be dogged
about their commitment to that focus. Luke demonstrated a persistence through the schedule story and his determination to change the schedule, to use the schedule to symbolize what is important at UH, and his view of the schedule as a vehicle toward enactment of his vision are models of the way a school leader attempts to use structural changes to implement change.

The following section is a discussion of the implications of this study for the field.

Implications for the Field

*I mean, honestly, I mean, I’ve been through a lot of training in the last two years. I’ve been gifted more amazing, awesome leadership training and reflection than anything; but I just don’t know how to pull it all together all the time.*

(Luke Interview, 9-29-12, part 2, lines 41-42).

Unstructured qualitative designs are not considered statistically generalizable (Maxwell, 2005, p. 80) and this study is no exception. However, I hope that this study will be considered analytically generalizable to other schools, school leaders, and situations in which the conceptual claims might be similar (Yin, 2012, p. 18). It is true that no other school in the U.S. will find itself in the exact circumstances with the exact context that UH did, and it is certainly true that no other principal is exactly like Luke with his particular characteristics and challenges. But it is also true that many other school leaders are striving to do what Luke is trying to do at UH, transform a low-performing neighborhood elementary school into a different place for teachers and staff, for students and families. In this, Luke was both unique and commonplace in the world.
of schooling today, making this study a highly interesting and also highly representative case. I hope that the implications discussed here will have widespread use in the field.

**Patience and Commitment to Support and Longevity**

Luke’s district has one of the most developed principal pipelines of any large urban district and Luke has received all the training they have to offer (Mendels, 2012; Wallace Foundation, 2013). While that support certainly has helped situate him to the job, he still struggles to figure out how to translate his goals and dreams and vision for his school into reality on the ground. While this is not news to the field of educational and school leadership, that Luke continues to struggle or feels like he is struggling is a testament to the amount of work that needs to be done to bridge the gap between training and support of new and novice principals and their successful daily practice. Luke was learning “leadership practice in practice” (Darling-Hammond, 2007, p. 64); he had daily opportunities for hands-on trial and error and to practice leadership behaviors (Matthews, 2012); he had several mentors, both formal and informal (Allen et al., 2008); through this study he had huge amounts of time to reflect (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005); and I would argue that he has the four indicators for successful school leadership: strong motivation, positive attitude, morality, and the potential for growth (Allio, 2005; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Wallace Foundation, 2010). He certainly had much of the support for success that the literature recommends.

There are several possible implications for the field from Luke’s experience of learning in practice. The first is that principals need this kind of support. As Luke himself said, “I think I recognize that, I just, uh, you know, I know I’m growing from the
conversations so I think that part’s really important” (Luke Interview, 4-26-13, lines 248-250). The opportunities to reflect on his practice in a safe, risk-free space allowed Luke to express with candor his ideas and thoughts. This is critical for principals who are leading in an emotionally charged fishbowl which leaves them constantly exposed and vulnerable to a wide variety of stakeholder pressure (Lortie, 2009, p. 169-72). A safe space to think with a partner is crucial to supporting principal’s thinking in ways that allow for “disequilibrium, perturbation, and puzzlement” (Duffy & Cunningham, 2009, p. 6) without penalty.

The second implication is that even with all of the supports, being a principal is just incredibly hard work. We must support the work of the principal and perhaps the lesson is that we, on the outside, have to be patient. The District Assistant Superintendent (AS) described that patience during our conversation.

AS: “I would identify Luke as a developing effective school year. I believe he's in the process of becoming an effective-

Suz: “So when would you identify him as effective? What would he need to do?”

AS: “I would say, I would see him as being effective when, umm, the school has definitely raised their levels of achievement, and are having continual improvement year-to-year. I would also see there is some stabilization with his staff now, that he's able to keep people in their positions, and people want to stay there, and are inspired to be there, and I think that takes time. I think one of the things that I've been thinking a lot about is I really do- I shouldn’t say, I’m starting to- the question I have in my head is, "How long does it take for a principal to be effective?" Some research talks about five to seven years in order to make the change. I'm really leaning towards that. I think that principals need to be in their building for a minimum of five years and really to see the results of their work, it’s probably seven if not more” (District Interview, 8-8-20, lines 194-206).
The educational landscape doesn’t value patience at this time. Turnover rates at elementary and secondary schools hover around 50% during a 10-year period and are much higher in high-poverty schools (ERS, 1998). Turnaround principals are becoming more and more prevalent (Norton, 2002) as the agitation about the quality of U.S. schools increases. And yet, the lesson of this study is patience. Not only do we need principals who have all the qualities and practice the behaviors that populate those long lists (see the Implications for Research section for examples of those lists), we need principals who are going to commit for the long haul and districts that will support them through, knowing that there will be ups and downs. What Luke is doing essentially is trying to get UH to “reinvent (itself) into new ways of being” (Wise & Jacobo, 2010, p. 159) and that is not an overnight task.

**Consider Optimism, Self-Efficacy and Assumed Possibility**

The National College for School Leadership (2007), in a summary of a five-year research investigation, says that successful school leaders need to be “contextually literate,” and that the enactment of leadership practices that are responsive to the environment is what’s most important. In other words, “it is not only what you do as a leader, but *how* you do it that makes the difference in any given situation and environment. There is no one way to lead a school. Leaders must act in ways that meet the needs of the schools they lead” (p. 5). If this is the case, then lists of leadership practices are less helpful, what will matter for a novice school leader is being able to flexibly select practices and enact them with “repeated and dedicated practice” (Allio,
For this reason, an implication for the field from this study is the consideration of optimism, self-efficacy, and assumed possibility. All three offer windows into the “how” of leadership enactment. Self-efficacy is critical because it demonstrates stance toward accomplishing specific tasks, something leaders in spades. Optimism is also interesting, perhaps less critical but important it has the benefit of being able to be “learned and enhanced” (Hoy & Smith, 2007, p. 163). Assumed possibility is useful because it seems to combine optimism, self-efficacy, and available possible pathways to solutions (Snyder et al., 1991). The lesson we can all take from Luke is that his ‘green light’ experience may have been unusual in the way he encountered so many open doors within a bureaucratic system. However, it may also have been unusual because so few people have the combination of optimism, self-efficacy and a sense of pathways and so don’t even try what Luke tried. It would be interesting to see what would happen in school districts if more principals followed Luke’s example. All three of these stances should be considered for school leader development and school leader selection.

Seek Constants Not Variables

A final major implication for the field from this research is the idea of seeking constants instead of variables. Often times, schools can look chaotic, filled with environmental turbulence, emotional upheaval, an uncertain future and little evidence of causal relationships (Lortie, 2009). As Luke himself described, “just in general, the reason why these conversations are so hard is that you don’t see causal relationships
between what you do really, a lot” (Luke interview, 2-1-13, lines 530-532). Often the consequences or rewards in teaching and learning do not surface for years so immediate gratification is rare.

Viewing such organizations or people within them to assess effectiveness is no easy feat and has led to multiple forms of evaluation and assessment structures. What I’m suggesting in this study is that we simplify ‘looking’ for effectiveness. Instead of trying to categorize all the ‘good’ or effective things a teacher or principal does in order to capture a snapshot of effectiveness, let’s look for a few things the teacher or principal does well and track their progress on these few practices over time. This approach would allow us to find a focus while looking, perhaps in concert with goals, and with this focus for looking, support practitioners in being equally focused. Let’s encourage hedgehogs instead of foxes (Collins, 2001). Let’s look for constants to be our north stars. Perhaps we can switch the question in our schools from ‘What’s broken and how can we fix it?’ to ‘What’s working and how can we do more of it?’ (Heath & Heath, 2011). Perhaps by looking for constants, we can learn to do this. In the following section, I discuss implications of the study on the setting—University Heights and Luke himself as the school leader.

Implications for the Setting

*I am most worried that we’re not going to execute on the things that are totally executable... I mean, we have, bottom line, great game plan. Are we going to go out and execute it?*

(Luke Interview, 9-11-12, lines 451-453, 465-466)
The bottom line of systems thinking is leverage—seeing where actions and changes to structures can lead to significant, enduring improvements. Often leverage follows the principle of economy of means: where the best results come not from large-scale efforts but from small well-focused actions.

(Senge, 2006, p. 114)

Luke is now in his third year at University Heights. Over 80% of the staff are new to the school or to teaching and were hired by Luke and his School Leadership Team. In February of 2013, the school moved from an Orange Rating (34-39%) to a Yellow (40-50%) rating (Luke interview, 2-1-13, lines 74-83). In October 2013, Luke announced that “we’re one point away from being a Green school (51-79%)” (Luke Interview, 10-10-13, line 38). Luke assured me on that same day that UH will be a Blue school (80-100%) soon (see Appendix A for a copy of the District’s rating system). In the spring of 2014, Luke found out that he “was one of 11 principals in the District to have been rated 100% effective by my staff” (out of around 170 schools) (Luke, email communication, 3-24-14).

Did the school reach a tipping point, as Luke thought? Are they any closer to realizing the vision of being a place of discovery learning while developing strong world citizens? Even Luke still isn’t sure. “I mean, someone kind of said, ‘What I see it as is Luke is making these changes so that in the next few years the school is actually ready to make that philosophical change.’ Which I thought was an interesting insight because I really haven't seen it that way, right?” (Luke interview, 10-4-13, lines 617-620). Over
the course of the study, Luke tried to hold true to his constants—his vision and the
schedule. It remains to be seen if these items can prove to be the leverage Senge refers to
as part of systems thinking.

This study holds multiple implications for University Heights and for Luke as the
school leader. The first is that Luke is used to having a thinking partner. This study
provided him with the opportunity to have regular, private, safe moments of reflection
that are now gone. As he said to me during my last trip, “C’mon where’s the
conversation? Where’s the questions? Watcha got?” (Luke reflection, 4-8-14). He’s used
to this time and has used it to learn and grow as a leader. This is going to be a critical
practice to continue moving forward (Hopkins-Thompson, 2000, p. 32). Next year,
Luke’s Assistant Principal will be in a new school and between these two changes, Luke
will lose two important sounding boards. It is vital that he find a thinking partner to
continue his reflective work.

Secondly, Luke is much more aware now of his own strategic thinking and of the
strategic thinking that will be required to move the school along. The questions about
enactment and execution remain. However, I hope this study encapsulates some of the
thinking and execution that has happened and seeing it collected here will be
confirmation of the hard work that has happened. It isn’t often that a leader has the
chance to have someone recording his words for such a duration and in this study, Luke
has a record of his hard work and his thinking. Hopefully this map of the journey will
encourage and support Luke to continue the work he’s doing.
Third, Luke is ready to move to the next stage of execution. Luke and I had a shorthand during the study for discussing the work: infrastructure + culture = sustainable organizational change (Luke Interview, 10-10-13, line 13). Luke has been building both the infrastructure and the culture and the work continues. He has new people on the bus (Collins, 2001). He has resources, creativity, determination, optimism, self-efficacy, and an assumption of possibility. Luke knows he’s ready for the next stage, the driving of the bus, and has even described it himself.

“Well, no, I think we're okay on the values, and I think we're okay on the rah, rah, ree, and I think we're okay on that part. But I agree that the systems, and forget the word systems, the understanding of how we become better at teaching, how- you know, what is our norm for focusing on student learning, and how do we get people to do things we want them to do? That's the thing that's going to move the bus, right?”

(Luke Interview, 10-4-13, lines 771-775).

As both Luke and DuFour (2002) have described, “I feel strongly about that that we need to stop looking at if teaching is taking place and instead looking at learning taking place” (Luke interview 9-11-12, lines 249-252). As seen in the example above and in many examples during this study, Luke is a learner and values learning above all. So, it makes sense that he’s reached the point of articulating student learning as the next step in his leadership plan. “I mean I really think I can finally say after three years that I understand where we’re going, what we’re doing, and that, you know, we have, we have this cycle, right? And we’re going to be focused on the student learning first and foremost” (Luke interview, 10-15-13, lines 62-64).
This is possibly a very strategic choice and would fit Senge’s criteria for leverage. Wise and Jacobo (2010) point out that for effective school leaders, “the vision of student learning becomes the central, unifying element around which the participation of all stakeholders as equal partners in the arenas of leadership and management is integrated to meet the vision” (p. 167). I know that Luke sees student learning as the path toward his larger vision. “We believe we can create better world citizens. How are we gonna do that? We’re going to do that by focusing on students’ learning” (Luke Interview, 10-10-13, lines 16-17). I hope that this study will be a reminder of this path, or a course correction if needed to remain on this path, to turn student learning into the new constant for Luke and the University Heights community. After all, at the end of the day, the point of all of the work Luke is doing is the students, their learning, their experiences, and the open possibilities in their lives.

**Final Reflections**

*For me ultimately, the most important school leadership job is building and maintaining a system that supports teachers in become active agents in their own professional learning and risk takers in sharing their assumptions and biases, that supports their continuous growth, and supports using authentic student learning as the core goal and resource of their own efficacy—it’s formative leadership, I suppose. As I listen to, watch, and think with this principal, this is heart of our inquiry.*

Simons Memo, 2-6-13

For the past two years, I have boarded a plane headed toward a large urban city across the country from where I live. Many things in my life have changed during this time—I moved across country twice, my family configuration changed, I began and now
end this study. One of the things that remained steady during this time was my travel to
visit University Heights and Luke.

My conversations with Luke have been a rhythm in my life, and I don’t know yet
how to get out of that rhythm. As mentioned above, on my last trip to visit UH, Luke
asked me where the tape recorder was, saying “C’mon where’s the conversation?
Where’s the questions? Watcha got?” (Luke reflection, 4-8-14), both of us attempting to
recalibrate to a new norm without our regular meetings. I know that I will miss talking
with Luke and suspect that we will continue in some fashion. We are friends now and it
is hard to stop talking to friends. I’m also connected to the others at UH, and I hope to
remain in contact with them as well.

Despite missing the regularity and the actual conversations, I am also incredibly
relieved the study is over. The greatest liberation has come with the lifting of my
“listening” role. Since the data collection ended, I have wrestled with a discomfort when
talking to Luke and being actually able to say what I think, rather than listening and
responding with my stock “ok.” But that discomfort is nothing compared to the release
of being able to fully participate in the now shared conversation and actually say what I
think and want.

I began this study with two primary interests—to understand more about self-
efficacy and its related construct—beliefs about ability, and to understand more about
how one actually learns to become a strong school leader. Both of these interests were
deeply personal. I have long wondered how believing that developing smartness is an
inherent or mutable capacity impacts one’s ability to lead, either a classroom or school.
This interest arose as I struggled to understand what I see in schools, particularly those in large urban centers with predominantly minority and poor children. What I have seen in school after school are nice, kind, lovely teachers and principals who have terribly low and even minimal expectations for children, socially, intellectually, and emotionally. Even including the factors everyone tries to use as rationale or blame, such as economic levels of families, or education levels of mothers, or poor conditions in the schools, did not help me explain the fact that the low expectations are rampant.

As I tried to reconcile the experiences I was having in schools, I could not help but believe that pity had overwhelmed people’s hearts and common sense and had severely lowered expectations. This view of low expectations, while possibly done because of some seemingly altruistic purpose, had become the new norm to which everyone calibrated. And recalibrated lower and lower. When I heard the line, ‘What about the kids who were just born dumb?’, something caught inside my chest. Perhaps it was not just pity that was causing the low expectations, perhaps it was a deep belief about ability that was causing school people to underestimate children’s potential and purpose. Hearing this comment caused such an uncomfortable dissonance in me that it resonates to this day.

The second thing I was struggling with was much more straightforward. I came to the University of Pennsylvania hoping someone would be able to give me the outline to becoming an effective school leader. After all, wasn’t that the point of doing an educational leadership doctoral program? I was hoping that this study would generate a nice how-to manual for learning leadership. I was hoping that this study would teach me
the exact steps it takes to becoming an effective leader in school settings. I was hoping that I would be able to capture the roadmap that I was so longing for. At the time, I was not feeling very strong as a leader and I wanted a leadership GPS. I wanted to use this study to develop that GPS.

As might be expected, I have had neither of my initial questions answered. I do not know exactly how beliefs about ability influence school leaders and school leader learning. I certainly don’t have that leadership GPS. I do, however, have much more. I have some complex answers to my research question. I have a new understanding of how complex, multi-faceted, and truly powerful learning in practice is. I have a renewed sense of deep admiration for the people who do this important job of school principal. I have a different sense of my own interests, expertise, relational sense, and curiosity. I have a real and enduring wondering about what I have called formative inquiry, or the process of inquiry leadership using formative assessments of self and others, assessed against constants. I have real clarity on the power and strength of constants and not variables. I have new theories to think about, assumed possibility and organizational ZPD. But most of all, I have confirmation of an idea from Michael Fullan. “Information becomes knowledge through a social process, and knowledge becomes wisdom through sustained interaction” (Sparks, 2003, p. 57). This study, if nothing else, has given me a window into this process described by Fullan. Luke and I developed knowledge, individually and shared, through the social process of interview, observation, and reflection. I hope that our sustained interaction has left us both a bit wiser.
APPENDICES

Appendix A: District’s School Performance Framework

- **Distinguished (80-100%)**
  
  Schools rated Distinguished are exceeding district expectations and have very high ratings in both Academic Growth and Academic Proficiency.

- **Meets Expectations (51-70%)**
  
  Schools that Meet Expectations are performing at the level that the district expects and have high ratings in either the Academic Growth or Academic Proficiency category, or the school has good ratings in both categories. Schools with this rating that have seen a decline in student performance from previous years receive increased instructional supports, such as assistance with enhanced training for staff.

- **Accredited on Watch (40-50%)**
  
  Schools are rated as Accredited on Watch when they are performing below the district’s expectations. Improvement is needed on either Academic Growth or Academic Proficiency measures. Schools with this rating receive intensive instructional supports, such as enhanced, targeted training for staff, consultation on curriculum and assistance using data to increase student achievement. Accredited on Watch schools that show a lack of improvement from previous years may be subject to interventions, such as replacement of staff or changes in the academic program.

- **Accredited on Priority Watch (34-39%)**
  
  Schools rated Accredited on Priority Watch are performing significantly below expectations and are expected to dramatically improve student achievement. Accredited on Priority Watch schools receive intensive instructional supports, such as enhanced, targeted training for staff, consultation on curriculum and assistance using data to increase student achievement. These schools are subject to interventions that may include changes to academic programs or school staff or implementation of school-turnaround strategies.
Accredited on Probation (up to 33%)

Schools rated Accredited on Probation are performing significantly below expectations and are expected to dramatically improve student performance. Accredited on Probation schools receive intensive instructional supports, such as enhanced, targeted training for staff, consultation on curriculum and assistance using data to increase student achievement. Accredited on Probation schools require additional budget review, and the district provides additional financial resources and strategic planning supports to help the school improve. These schools are subject to interventions that may include changes to academic programs or school staff or implementation of school-turnaround strategies.
## Appendix B: Total Field Data Collected

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**TOTAL HOURS OF RECORDING**: 55.05
Appendix C: Leadership Effectiveness Conceptualization Interview Protocol

1. How do elementary school principals conceptualize effective principal school leadership?
   • Please describe effective school leadership. What do you think it is?
   • What makes it effective?
   • What does effective leadership mean in schools?

2. How do elementary school principals conceptualize which practices identify a principal as “effective”?
   • In order to be an effective principal, what practices does one need to follow, implement, have in place?

3. How does an individual principal ascertain if s/he is an effective school leader?
   • How would you know if you were effective?
   • What criteria do you notice or pay attention to that helps you know if you are effective or not?
   • What instruments do you use to identify your level of effectiveness?
   • What benchmarks or milestones are useful to you in knowing if you are effective or not?

4. How did you learn to be a principal?

5. Do individual principals self-identify as “effective” or “ineffective”?
   • Do you consider yourself an ineffective or effective leader?
   • Why?
## Appendix D: Coding Sets

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<td>Luke’s statements about delegation in leadership, distributive leadership</td>
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Appendix E: Anderson et al.’s Initial Analysis Questions

Inquiry Questions:
1. What do the data tell you in terms of the research question so far?
2. Have you gotten the question “right” or as you go about your inquiry, do you discover a layer underneath the original question that more accurately reflects what it is you want to know?

Methods Questions:
1. Are the methods catching the particular kinds of data you want and filtering out data that are not relevant at this time?
2. Do they still seem the most appropriate, given the evolution of your research question?
3. Are they doable in terms of your work routines?
4. Do I need more of the same data, or do I change what I am doing?

Closing Questions:
1. Has the flow of new information diminished?
2. Are new insights no longer coming with the analysis of the data?
3. Are the data seemingly repetitious?
4. Does it feel familiar in terms of the territory the data are covering?
5. Are we satisfied with where the research has taken us in terms of the original question or puzzle we were trying to solve?
6. Have we come up with solutions that seem to be effective?

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5 Anderson et al., 2007, p. 212-215.
Appendix F: Informed Consent Form

Title of the Research Study: Learning to Lead in Practice

Co-Investigator and Emergency Contact:
Suzanne Simons (study contact)
215-783-0930, suzsimons4@gmail.com

Dr. Sharon Ravitch (research advisor)
3700 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104
Phone: 215 898 5003 Email: ravitch@gse.upenn.edu

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Your participation is voluntary, which means you can choose whether or not to participate. Before you make a decision you will need to know the purpose of the study, the possible risks and benefits of being in the study and what you will have to do if you decide to participate. The researcher (Ms. Suzanne Simons) is going to talk with you about the study and give you this consent document to read. You do not have to make a decision now; you can take the consent document home and share it with friends and family.

If you do not understand what you are reading, do not sign it. Please ask Suzanne to explain anything you do not understand, including any language contained in this form. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and a copy will be given to you. Keep this form. In it you will find contact information and answers to questions about the study. You may ask to have this form read to you.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of the study is to learn more about how one principal integrates the supports he receives into his school transformation plan, what the influence of informal 1-1 mentoring is on his plan, and how his learning maps onto his execution of the plan. This study is a research project that will gather data from one principal in an attempt to understand how one learns to be an effective school leader.

1. How does a second year principal integrate the supports and resources he receives into his school transformation plan (strategy)?

   a. What is the influence of the informal, one-on-one mentoring he receives on his school transformation plan (strategy)?

2. How does the principal’s integration of his learning map onto his execution of his transformation plan of organizational and instructional systems in a watched turnaround school?
Why was I asked to participate in the study?

You were asked to join this study because you are the principal attempting to transform your District school.

How long will I be in the study? How many other people will be in the study?

The study will take place over from January to June 2013. You will be the only person in the study. The AR coach and the District Assistant Superintendent may be interviewed for this study but only for data to contextualize the primary data collected from you.

Where will the study take place?

The study will take place at University Heights, on the phone, and in other locations as mutually agreed upon for interviews, possibly coffee shops or bookstores.

What will I be asked to do?

You will be asked to meet with Suzanne twice a month for an interview lasting approximately 1 hour. In addition, Suzanne will come to UH for two days per month to observe you as you work.
  • You will be asked to record two digital journals per month, focusing on the learning you are doing as well as the influence of the informal mentoring.
  • You will be asked to take a leadership assessment three times over the course of the study. In addition, Suzanne may follow up with you periodically for member checks—where you will have a chance to verify or edit data and/or findings.
  • You will be asked to share documents with Suzanne: emails, leadership logs, school data, and state test scores.
During interviews and observations, Suzanne will audio-record at various times. She and her research advisor, Dr. Sharon Ravitch, will be the only ones who have access to the audio-recordings.

Throughout the duration of the study, you may also be asked to do a follow-up interview or respond to clarification questions with Suzanne. The follow-up interviews will take place at a time and location that is convenient for you or by phone and will last approximately 15 minutes to one hour.

If you feel uncomfortable with any question, you do not have to answer it. If you would like Suzanne to turn off the audio recorder at any time, she will.
What are the risks?

There are no significant risks to participating in this research study. You do not have to participate in the study or any part of it unless you choose to do so. If you feel uncomfortable during any part of an interview or conversation, you can leave or skip a question.

How will I benefit from the study?

You will be asked to talk about your leadership practice, how you are learning to lead, how you have developed as a leader, and what your goals as a leader are. You may find sharing your experiences and learning with enjoyable, interesting and even useful. Your experiences in this study have the potential to impact educational research and practice, specifically in the areas of school leadership development, leadership efficacy, and leadership education.

What happens if I do not choose to join the research study?

You may choose to join the study or you may choose not to join the study. Your participation is voluntary.

When is the study over? Can I leave the study before it ends?

The study is expected to end in June 2013. You have the right to drop out of the research study at anytime during your participation. If you no longer wish to be part of the study, please contact the researcher, Suzanne Simons, and inform her that you no longer wish to be in the study.

It is possible that this study may be extended and included as part of a larger research study. If this happens, you will be asked if you would like to join a larger study and have your data included in that larger scale research study. You may choose to join that study at that time or you may choose not to join that study. Your participation is voluntary and you may drop out of the research study at any time during your participation.

How will confidentiality be maintained and my privacy be protected?

Suzanne will make every effort to keep all the information you share during the study strictly confidential, as required by law. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Pennsylvania is responsible for protecting the rights of research volunteers like you. The IRB has access to study information. Any documents you sign or any documents with your name on them will be kept in a secure place in Suzanne’s home office. These documents will be kept confidential. All the documents will be kept for five years and then destroyed, unless otherwise specified by you. Audio-recorded observations and individual interviews will be kept on Suzanne’s computer. Audio-
recorded files will be transcribed by a transcription service. Once they are filed on Suzanne’s computer, all files will be password-protected. These sound files will be kept for five years and then destroyed, unless otherwise specified by you. Suzanne will make every attempt to keep your responses confidential in both the storage of the data and anything she writes unless you specifically agree to having your real name used. You will be given a pseudonym so that you remain anonymous in written accounts of the study group. Suzanne will remind you at each interview about the consent agreement and confidentiality agreement so that you have the opportunity for input each time you talk with Suzanne.

Who owns the data?

All data collected during the research study through observation, interview, and document review will be owned jointly by you and Suzanne Simons and may be used by either party going forward. All data developed during the research study through notes and analysis will be owned by Suzanne Simons. Any writing or publications that result from this study will include your name as a co-author upon request.

Will I have to pay for anything?

There are no costs associated with participating in this study.

Will I be compensated for participating in the study?

There is no compensation for participating in this study.

Who can I call with questions, complaints or if I’m concerned about my rights as a research subject?

If you have questions, concerns or complaints regarding your participation in this research study or if you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you should speak to Ms. Suzanne Simons (primary researcher) or Dr. Sharon Ravitch (research advisor). Their contact information is at the top of this form. If either of these individuals cannot be reached or you want to talk to someone other than those working on the study, you may contact the Office of Regulatory Affairs with any question, concerns or complaints at the University of Pennsylvania by calling (215) 898-2614.
Participant Consent Agreement

I have read the above information (or it has been read aloud to me). The study has been explained to me. My questions have been answered.

When you sign this document, you are agreeing to take part in this research study. If you have any questions or there is something you do not understand, please ask. You will receive a copy of this consent document.

Signature of Participant
_____________________________________________________

Print Name of Participant
_____________________________________________________

Date _____________________________

Researcher Confidentiality Agreement

When you sign this document, you are agreeing to keep all data gathered during this research study confidential. You will not use names or any other identifying information when writing about this interview unless you have the expressed permission from the participant. You will destroy all written and recorded data once the research study is complete.

Signature of Researcher
_____________________________________________________

Print Name of Researcher
_____________________________________________________
Appendix G: GSE, LOT, and HOPE Tests

General Self-Efficacy Scale\(^6\)

(Measures self-efficacy)

Response Format

1 = Not at all true    2 = Hardly true   3 = Moderately true   4 = Exactly true

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<td>I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals.</td>
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<td>I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events.</td>
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<td>Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort.</td>
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<td>I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities.</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions.</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>If I am in trouble, I can usually think of a solution.</td>
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<td>I can usually handle whatever comes my way.</td>
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Life Orientation Test Scale\(^7\)
(Measures optimism)

Please respond to the following using this 4-point scale. Write your response next to the sentence for each item.

\[ 4 = \text{strongly agree} \quad 3 = \text{agree} \quad 2 = \text{neutral} \quad 1 = \text{disagree} \quad 0 = \text{strongly disagree} \]

1. In uncertain times, I usually expect the best.
2. It's easy for me to relax.
3. If something can go wrong for me, it will.
4. I always look on the bright side of things.
5. I'm always optimistic about my future.
6. I enjoy my friends a lot.
7. It's important for me to keep busy.
8. I hardly ever expect things to go my way.
9. Things never work out the way I want them to.
10. I don't get upset too easily.
11. I'm a believer in the idea that "every cloud has a silver lining".
12. I rarely count on good things happening to me.

\(^7\) Scheier & Carver, 1985.
HOPE Test

Measures hope in two parts.
1) Agency is one’s feeling that one can successfully accomplish a goal.
2) Pathways is the perception that there are available successful pathways to reach the goal.

Directions: Read each item carefully. Using the scale shown below, please select the number that best describes YOU and put that number to the right of the sentence.

1 = Definitely False   2 = Mostly False   3 = Mostly True   4 = Definitely True

1. I can think of many ways to get out of a jam.
2. I energetically pursue my goals.
3. I feel tired most of the time.
4. There are lots of ways around any problem.
5. I am easily downed in an argument.
6. I can think of many ways to get the things in life that are most important to me.
7. I worry about my health.
8. Even when others get discouraged, I know I can find a way to solve the problem.
9. My past experiences have prepared me well for my future.
10. I've been pretty successful in life.
11. I usually find myself worrying about something.
12. I meet the goals that I set for myself.

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8 Snyder et al., 1991.
### Appendix H: UH Master Schedules

#### UH Master Schedule SY 12-13
Draft 9-5-12

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