CONCEPTUALIZATIONS AND USES OF THE PENNSYLVANIA FRAMEWORK FOR LEADERSHIP IN THE PRACTICES OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

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CONCEPTUALIZATIONS AND USES OF THE PENNSYLVANIA FRAMEWORK
FOR LEADERSHIP IN THE PRACTICES OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

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DEDICATION

The study is dedicated to my wife Sharon and our three children Isaac, Tobias, and Kara, and to my parents, Willis and Margaret Nolt.

Sharon, you are my best friend and a continual source of support and encouragement. My desired to achieve a doctorate would not have been reached if you had not sacrificed time, energy, and your own dreams. Even with three children under the age of four, you had the mental stamina to enter into this venture with me. I am blessed by your love, your loyalty, your sacrifice, and your dedication to my work. I promise that we will take time to relax and enjoy the next season of our lives together.

To Isaac, Tobias, and Kara, thank you for giving up your father during the times I was writing, studying, and researching for the project. Thank you for being well-behaved children as you roamed unattended in the public library while I read bulk packs nearby. Thank you for making my writing possible by sitting in your own chairs with papers and pencils in front of you doing your own writing. I trust that the shared experience inspires you to become researchers, writers, and thinkers. May we now move ahead with a less interrupted relationship that is focused solely on your growth and learning. Isaac, may your creations and art inspire others. Tobias, may your strong interpersonal skills and empathy lead others to great things. And Kara, may your strong faith and love of expression shine for others.

Finally, to Willis, my father, who by working the family farm for over 55 years, modeled for me that accomplishments are directly related to the hard work, risk and perseverance. And to my mother, Margaret, who made sure my education met my spiritual and intellectual needs even when it meant growth and risk for her. Thank you.
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To the secondary principals across the state of Pennsylvania who took the time to discuss their stories related to the vulnerable topic of performance evaluation. It is their
boldness that made this study possible and will ensure the continued refinement of the processes required to support and effectively evaluate our school leaders.

Finally, to a few unnamed folks who years ago said that I couldn’t go to college because I didn't go to high school. I thank you for making me mad enough to achieve my academic dreams and to inspire thousands of others in the process. The future belongs to the believers, listeners and learners.
ABSTRACT

CONCEPTUALIZATIONS AND USES OF THE PENNSYLVANIA FRAMEWORK FOR LEADERSHIP IN THE PRACTICES OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Dwight E. Nolt
Andrew C. Porter

In 2010, the state of Pennsylvania began the work of creating and adopting a state-wide principal effectiveness plan that mirrored the framework established for the evaluation of teachers. Backed by a series of assumptions about the power of an assessment or evaluation tool to increase the effectiveness of school leaders, a team of educators at the state level reviewed plans from numerous states and districts as well as the widely recognized VAL-ED school leadership evaluation plan to inform the creation of a plan tailored for Pennsylvania school leaders.

The growing focus on evaluation of school leaders was fueled in part by a disconnect between overwhelmingly positive principal evaluations and standardized state assessment scores for student achievement that indicate a disproportionate percentage of “failing” schools. A growing body of research has explored the influences of principal leadership on student performance as well as the theoretical frameworks for effective principal evaluation plans. Less prevalent was research on the influence of an evaluation plan to guide, change or improve the practices of school leaders.

In the 2012-13 school year, over 200 school district, charter schools, Career and Technology Centers, and intermediate units in Pennsylvania agreed to implement the
Principal Effectiveness Plan (PEP), later called the Pennsylvania Framework for Leadership (PFL), for the possible evaluation of up to 1900 school leaders in over 1300 individual school sites. This research was designed specifically to study the influence of the pilot year of the Pennsylvania Framework for Leadership on a group of principals in secondary schools in Pennsylvania by exploring how the principals conceptualized the uses of the plan on their daily practices.

The study was designed to explore qualitative data gathered through 17 secondary principal interviews which were a representative sample targeted from the 117 secondary principals who completed the pilot process and were included in the data set of 484 principal reports submitted to the Pennsylvania Department of Education at the end of the pilot year. In addition, survey data from PDE were used to inform the construction of the interview protocol. Researcher journal and memos were also considered (Maxwell, 2005, p. 96, p. 110, Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 72).
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CHAPTER 1
PURPOSE AND RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

Introduction

The competitive structure of the U.S. Department of Education Race to the Top initiative (U.S. Department of Education, 2010) coupled with the increasing fiscal challenges of states has driven changes to principal and teacher evaluation plans as state departments of education attempt to align their evaluations with federal requirements for funding. In brief, the federal requirements focused state emphases on the following tenets: measures of individual student academic growth in math and reading, implementation of transparent teacher and principal evaluation systems to be completed annually, and the use of evaluation results to inform decisions for the improvement of student academic achievement. In 2010, seeking to align the state-level practices in Pennsylvania to the requirements outlined by the federal government, the state Department of Education undertook a pilot study to design, implement, and evaluate both teacher and principal evaluation systems (Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 2010). During Phase I of the project in school year 2010-2011, four educational entities in the state began pilots to inform the work; Allentown School District, Cornell School District, Mohawk School District and Intermediate Unit 5. The second phase of the pilot, and the focus of my study, set out to engage 119 Local Education Agencies (LEAs), including school districts, career and technology centers, charter schools and intermediate units. This phase, labeled Phase II, had the potential to include 363 buildings and 658 supervisors (Measuring Educator Effectiveness presentation, Pennsylvania Department of
Education, April 30, 2012). In 2012 the state legislature enacted Act 82 which codified the legislative imperative to evaluate educators in the areas of planning and preparations, school environment, delivery of service, professional development, and student achievement. Furthermore, Act 82 required the yearly evaluation of principals by chief school officers or their designees, and mandated that ratings be labeled “distinguished,” “proficient,” “needs improvement,” and “failing.” Distinguished and proficient ratings were considered to be satisfactory while “needs improvement” was considered satisfactory, except that any subsequent needs improvement rating issued by the same employer within 10 years of the first needs improvement rating was to be considered unsatisfactory. A failing rating was unsatisfactory (Educator Effectiveness Administrative Manual, PDE, Revised July 2014, p. 31-32).

In preparation for the work on teacher and principal effectiveness, Team Pennsylvania Foundation and Pennsylvania Department of Education collaborated on a contract with University of Pittsburgh’s Suzanne Lane and Christy Horner to procure their guidance on the sampling scheme for the pilot of the effectiveness plans and their analysis of the current practices in regard to principal and teacher evaluation systems in place across the nation. A report and presentation were provided to a meeting of stakeholders in September 2010 where the team’s input was presented (Lane & Horner, 2010). The principal evaluation systems review and validity and reliability considerations on the design and implementation of the plans were supported with information on five topics: Standards for an Educational Evaluation Process, Validation of Assessment Methods, Characteristics of Effective Principal Evaluation Systems,
Assessment Methods Used in Principal Evaluation Systems, and District and State

In the summer of 2011, the School District of Lancaster, where I served as a high
school principal at the time, began working with District Management Council to refocus
its work by narrowing and clearly defining priorities as a district. The defined priorities
included building leadership capacity within the district. A committee of district and
school level leaders, I being one, formed to identify the innate and teachable
characteristics we seek to develop in our existing school leaders and hope to find in the
school leaders we hire in the future. In the spring of 2012, a team from the Pennsylvania
Department of Education joined us to explore the connections between their work on a
principal effectiveness plan and our internal work in Lancaster. At that time, I became
interested in the future of developing effective leaders through the creation of a
standardized evaluative framework.

Prior to the school year (SY 2012-13), principal assessment and evaluation plans
were in the purview of the local districts in Pennsylvania. By leveraging School
Improvement Grant funding with districts, the Pennsylvania Department of Education
gained commitments from over 150 school districts to use the newly-developed, and then
called, Pennsylvania Principal Effectiveness Plan, with potentially over 1900 school
principals and assistant principals during the school year (SY 2012-2013). Coupling the
known fact that many school leaders receive satisfactory evaluations at the local level,
and the incongruent achievement data attributed to their schools, state policymakers
joined educators in hoping the newly created principal effectiveness plan would bring
about positive changes in the student achievement in the state and created legislation in
the form of Act 82 authorizing a new evaluation system (HB 1901, 2012).

The finalized plan would become the evaluation tool for thousands of principals
with the potential to equip superintendents and other principal evaluators to raise
expectations and focus the work of principals. Furthermore, the principal effectiveness
plan aligned with the new teacher evaluation plan in tying educator practices, in part, to
student achievement. Although not definitive during the pilot year, the attribution of
school academic performance data to principals’ evaluations was later determined to
equate to half of a principal’s performance rating (See Appendix F: PDE 82-2:
Principal/School Leader Rating Form). Specifically, 15 percent of the overall percentage
of the evaluation was aligned to Building-Level Data as reported by the PA School
Performance Profile (see Appendix D: PA School Performance Metric), 15 percent was
drawn from Correlation Data based on teacher-level measures, and a final 20 percent was
pulled from Elective Data, which included measures of student achievement that were
locally developed and selected by the school district from a list approved by the state
Department of Education and published in the Pennsylvania Bulletin by June 30 of each
year (Educator Effectiveness Administrative Manual, PDE, Revised July 2014, p. 31).

During the Phase II period of the implementation, the state piloted what later became the
final plan. However, what was unknown and the purpose of my study were the ways in
which the Pennsylvania Framework for Leadership (PFL) has influenced the
conceptualizations and practices of principals as they make daily choices in the
increasingly complex roles of school leadership. My study captured the ways secondary
principals thought about the PFL within the context of their roles and their daily practices
and gave voice to the participants as they incorporated the PFL into their work as principals.

**Background – Description of the Pennsylvania Framework for Leadership**

The PFL was foundational to my study because it was the dynamics of the 17 secondary principals’ interactions with the PFL that created the experiences the study captured. It is helpful to understand the thoughts behind the creation of the PFL, the domains and components of the PFL and evolving nature of the PFL at the time of the study.

Information released from PDE on April, 2012 gave the following rational for why the state was moving towards the creation of the PFL:

- **Effective school leadership has a direct impact on developing a culture focused on student achievement.**
- **Efforts are continuing in the establishment of a universal evaluation instrument for teachers; Developing a principal tool at the same time helps to ensure overall alignment.**
- **Currently, empirical research on principal evaluation is very thin, which also creates an exciting opportunity for us!** (April 13, 2012 revision PDE PowerPoint)

Several points of significance are present in the rationale for the timing of the PFL creation. It came at a time in the state and nation when a new emphasis was placed on increasing student achievement at a systemic level. Driven by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the supporting No Child Left Behind accountability statutes, states responded by creating systems of transparency to show individual school and district student achievement scores, and explored ways to connect student performance to the evaluation of people in schools who held direct and indirect influences over the achievement outcomes. In Pennsylvania, the Danielson Framework for Educator Effectiveness moved from a teacher development framework used by many
districts to include an evaluative dimension to be used for the growth and evaluation of all Pennsylvania teachers. As mentioned in the previous information, the PFL was created to bring the principal evaluative process in line with the teacher evaluation process. Because the influential role of principals is in their ability to create environments of learning and achievement (Leithwood et al., 2008, p.27), having a principal evaluation plan that supported the specific domains and components deemed important to the roles of teachers was viewed as desirable and as an opportunity for Pennsylvania to contribute to the emerging research on the evaluation of principal effectiveness.

The creation of the plan began in early 2012, was piloted with a group of principals in the 2012-2013 school year, and was fully implemented across all Pennsylvania public school leaders in school year 2014-2015 (see Figure 1).

*Figure 1: Principal Effectiveness Plan Implementation Timeline*

<table>
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<tr>
<th>March–August, 2012</th>
<th>Develop, refine, and implement the Principal Effectiveness instrument</th>
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<td>March 2012</td>
<td>Recruit participant schools/districts for pilot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2012</td>
<td>Train the Trainer event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2013</td>
<td>Complete training for participants</td>
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The PFL, in its structural composition, borrowed the overall domain and supporting component structure inherent in the Danielson Framework for Teachers.

**Domain 1: Strategic / Cultural Leadership**

Domain 1 is labeled “Strategic / Cultural Leadership” and is described as “Principals/school leaders systemically and collaboratively develop a positive culture to promote student growth and staff development. They articulate and model a clear vision of the school’s culture that involves students, families, and staff” (Framework for Leadership, 2016). The domain has the following supporting components:

- Creates an organizational vision, mission, and strategic goals
- Uses data for informed decision making
- Builds a collaborative and empowering work environment
- Leads change efforts for continuous improvement
- Celebrates accomplishments and acknowledges failures

**Domain 2: Systems Leadership**

Domain 2 is labeled “Systems Leadership” and is described as “Principals/school leaders ensure that there are processes and systems in place for budgeting, staffing, problem solving, communicating expectations and scheduling that result in organizing the work routines in the building. They must manage efficiently, effectively and safely to
foster student achievement” (Framework for Leadership, 2016). Following are the supporting domains:

- Leverages human and financial resources
- Ensures a high quality, high performing staff
- Complies with federal, state, and LEA mandates
- Establishes and implements expectations for students and staff
- Communicates effectively and strategically
- Manages conflict constructively
- Ensures school safety

**Domain 3: Leadership for Learning**

Domain 3 is labeled “Leadership for Learning” and is described as “Principals/school leaders ensure that a Standards Aligned System is in place to address the linkage of curriculum, instruction, assessment, data on student learning and teacher effectiveness based on research and best practices” (Framework for Leadership, 2016). The domain is supported by the following components:

- Leads school improvement initiatives
- Aligns curricula, instruction, and assessments
- Implements high quality instruction
- Sets high expectations for all students
- Maximizes instructional time

**Domain 4: Professional and Community Leadership**

The final domain is labeled “Professional and Community Leadership” and is described as “Principals/school leaders promote the success of all students, the positive interactions among building stakeholders and the professional growth of staff by acting with integrity, fairness and in an ethical manner” (Framework for Leadership, 2016). The following components support the domain:
Maximizes professional responsibilities through parent involvement and community engagement
Shows professionalism
Supports professional growth

No specific conceptual framework seemed to be directly associated with the creation of the PFL; however, the early communication from the Pennsylvania Department of Education about the principal effectiveness work referenced similar work that had happened in the states of Colorado, Delaware, North Carolina, Tennessee, Washington and in Pittsburgh Public School District (April 13, 2012 revision PDE PowerPoint). Although only a few of the referenced plans cite the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards, the core properties of the plans mirror many of the six ISLLC standards. The PFL is no exception and has in its four domains components that support the ISLLC standards of shared vision, culture of learning, management, family and community, ethics and societal context (2008).

Also referenced as a guiding document to the creation of the PFL was the Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) Report. The need to have evaluators accredited and reaccredited after a set period of time to prevent evaluator drift was cited as important as was the need to gather input from multiple observers as a means to validate the growth, improvement and evaluation process and to guarantee sustainability and reliability (Kane & Cantrell, 2010).

To learn the expectations for participation in the implementation pilot of the Principal Effectiveness Plan, principals and supervisors attended trainings at their regional intermediate units. In addition to defining the plan and describing how the plan was developed until that point in time, participants also were provided with suggestions that included planning for beginning, middle and end of year meetings between the
evaluator and evaluatee, determining goals and performance expectations, mapping out the artifacts that would be used as evidences of effectiveness, and finally, the procedures for submitting the jointly completed data rubric to the department of education through a website that was provided for that purpose (Principal Effectiveness Phase II PowerPoint: Districts of Central Intermediate Unit #10 - Region 6, 4-20-2013).

In the pilot year of the PFL, questions still existed about how the scope, weighting and measures would be used. It was not clear if the PFL would apply to all principals and supervisors in school buildings or would be adjusted based on a person’s specific leadership role. Would domains have equal weight or would emphasis be placed on those thought to promote the instructional leadership that had grown in prominence in the recent research on school leadership (April 13, 2012 revision PDE PowerPoint)? As will be shown in the finding in Chapter 4, the developing nature of the specifics of the plan impacted how the participating principals conceptualized the PFL.

**Research Setting**

Of the 501 school districts in Pennsylvania, over a third agreed to implement the Pennsylvania Framework for Leadership (PFL) in varying degrees during the 2012-13 school year. Dr. David Volkman, Acting Deputy Secretary for the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, and his team were charged with the creation and training attached to the initial implementation of the plan. Department of Education personnel released the list of these school districts for my study, in addition to the results of the Principal Effectiveness Phase II LEA Survey and principal evaluation data.
My study focused on the influence of the PFL on secondary school principals in Pennsylvania and was able to utilize the data provided from PDE to provide background context in the planning of the methodology and the interview protocol. From the 150 participating school districts, approximately 268 high school principals were candidates to participate in the PFL pilot. The final data set procured from PDE (2014) had 117 secondary principals completing the pilot. The completion rate provided some context to the Phase II Principal Effectiveness Survey by PDE, that had 25 high school principal respondents who identified themselves as participating in the pilot by being evaluated by the PFL. The low response rate by high school principals limited the usefulness of the survey as an additional data source for triangulation with the interview data of the seventeen secondary principals; however, because this data was available prior to the data collection for my study, the data provided a preliminary glimpse of the possible themes that could emerge during the course of my study. Most helpful were the comments to the open-ended fields in the survey. The emerging themes included: Documentation of principal behaviors, broadening scope of principals’ roles, clarification and focus of principal roles, clear expectations and accountability, concerns about time, and questions about the ability of the plan to impact behaviors (Phase II Principal Effectiveness Survey Results, 2013). In addition, of the 117 school principals, 95 were still active in their positions and were accessible through school website emails. The group was contacted through email to ascertain a preliminary willingness to be interviewed. Of the interested responses and through additional phone calls by the researcher to principals who met the school demographic criteria set forth by the research design, 17 principals were selected for interviews. The sample is stratified across school location classification types to add
the context of the principals’ position within the schools’ geographical concentration of learning opportunities and intergenerational school effects (Balfanz, 2000). One-to-one interviews were held in person, on the phone or via video chat.

Research Questions and Their Significance

The study is designed to investigate the following research questions:

1) How do Pennsylvania public secondary school principals conceptualize the uses of the Pennsylvania Framework for Leadership Phase II Implementation (2012-2013) in their practices across varying types of schools?

2) How do Pennsylvania public secondary school principals describe how the Pennsylvania Framework for Leadership Phase II Implementation (2012-2013) has influenced their practices?

The importance of the research questions is multifaceted. In light of the history of principal evaluations and the inconsistent nature in which evaluation plans were designed, used and implemented in the past, the questions sought to determine a benchmark of thought for the new era of state-mandated principal evaluation systems. By pre-determining the leadership characteristics, the PFL takes a bold step towards determining those characteristics that are important emphases of a principals’ roles in effective school leadership. The first research question uncovers from the practitioner level and within the context of secondary schools in Pennsylvania the relationship of their work and the meaning they made of an evaluation tool that was to influence their behaviors in a way that improved the student performance in their schools.

The complex and varied nature of schools is an ever present nuance in conversations about principal roles and the subsequent evaluation of their effectiveness.
What isn’t apparent in the research are the ways the thinking about these differences may impact how principals make meaning of their own evaluation process. The first research question explores this nuance.

The second research question looked directly at the impact, if any, that the PFL had on the practices of the 17 secondary principals in the study and sought to make connections with the principal’s conceptualizations of how student achievement was impacted.

The researcher acknowledges the limitations of the study regarding generalizability from the implementation year of the PFL to its subsequent uses, yet sought to capture the ways principals make meaning of the new policy. The study explored how secondary principals conceptualize that potential value of the PFL to their leadership practices.

The structure of the PFL provides a rather comprehensive listing of leadership actions and behaviors that are thought to be the demonstrated actions and behaviors of effective school leaders. The explicit listing of desired behaviors could impact school leaders in various ways, possibly as new practices to try or as another list of things to ignore. The study explored how the tool has or hasn’t inspired any actions or behavioral changes in leadership practices with the research question: How do Pennsylvania public secondary school principals describe how the Pennsylvania Framework for Leadership Phase II Implementation (2012-2013) has influenced their practices?

The effectiveness of the Pennsylvania Framework for Leadership as a tool lies in the power it is given by the individual school leader to determine how it impacts her work. Because the state is collecting data on the use and usefulness of the PFL pilot
solely by survey, the study gives voice to the actual users of the PFL and provides not just a space for those voices but contributes to the feedback loop between practitioners and state decision-makers.

**Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks**

The study is based on a simple conceptual framework (Ravitch & Riggan, 2012) that comes directly from the literature. Principals in Pennsylvania implement a new evaluation tool, the use of which initiates some changes in their leadership practices, which in turn initiates changes in the practices of the teachers and others in the school community, which finally result in increased student achievement scores (See Figure 2 for a graphic of the conceptual framework and Figure 3 for a simplified version of the conceptual framework).

The conceptual framework recognizes that the PFL is concerned primarily with strengthening the core functions of leaders in schools. “At the core of most definitions of leadership are two functions: ‘providing directions’ and ‘exercising influence’” (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 20). School leaders, through their leadership behaviors and beliefs exert influence, both direct and indirect, on students, teachers, families and the community, themselves, and the culture and procedures of their schools. Through the inter-related tasks of setting the direction of the school, developing people, making the school work on a daily basis, and managing the instructional programs, school leaders seek to change the outcomes of student academic achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 3, 8-9; Waters et al., 2003). The study focuses on the relationship of the first two interactions outlined in the conceptual
framework—the implementation of the evaluation tool, the PFL, and any changes in practices of school principals.

The additional complexities of school leadership as represented in the varying socio-economic levels of the student population (see Figure 4 on page 36) are considered in the analysis of the principals’ responses. As shown in Figure 5 (see page 40), the correlation trends between a school’s SES levels and the overall academic achievement scores as represented in the School Performance Profile scores, alluded to very different leadership contexts for secondary principals in these schools. With the advent of an evaluation instrument that seeks to align the performance ratings of principals with the overall achievement their schools, the historical trends that show that higher SES level schools are more likely to have lower achievement scores, one might be able to predict that principals leading higher SES level schools would have significantly different ways of conceptualizing the PFL.

The school types related to their geographic designations (see Figure 8 on page 54) were also considered in the design of the sample, not for analysis purposes, but to demonstrate that care was taken to ensure diversity of this dimension as much as possible in the sample. Additionally, 16 of the 17 principals were leading secondary schools within established school districts, the remaining principal led in a one-school charter context.

The variable of the principals’ time in their roles was also of interest. During the interviews, principals reported their overall years of school leadership experiences as well as their years of experience in their current positions. The data as shown in Figure 7 (see
page 52) was considered in the overall analysis of the findings and proved to be of significance in how the principals framed the PFL within their leadership practices.

*Figure 2: Conceptual Framework*
In a simplified version, the conceptual framework proposes the following:

**Knowledge**

of the Pennsylvania Framework for Leadership

**Implementation**

of the Pennsylvania Framework for Leadership

**Conceptualization**

of PFL by School Principals

School Socio-economic Levels (SES), School Type, and Years of Experience of Principal

Changes in Leadership Practices in Core Functions

Higher Student Achievement Results

**Importance of the Study**

The Pennsylvania Framework for Leadership is an essential component of the Pennsylvania Department of Education’s efforts to strengthen principal leadership of Pennsylvania schools. By making explicit those skills and behaviors borne out of years of research in school leadership and connecting them with the evidence that is relevant to the principal roles, the PFL seeks to position leaders to direct the work of improving Pennsylvania’s schools.
The implementation process of the PFL is crucial to its long-term success and the success of PA schools. By focusing attention of the voices of the principals who are working day to day with the PFL, the study seeks to inform future decisions about the plan and how it should be utilized in subsequent years of implementation. Principals are critical to the success of schools, principals are critical to the success of teachers, and principals are critical to the success of students (Leithwood et al., 2008). Ultimately, children in Pennsylvania need the benefits that come from schools that are led by effective and informed principals. The time is right to hear from those principals about what in the PFL is valuable for their leadership and build from that knowledge evaluations that support the success of all of schools.

Research Design Rationale

The importance of the study rested in the examination of secondary school principals’ ideas around the implementation of a specific measurement tool: the PFL. The study focused on secondary principals’ perceptions and insights as they interpreted the ideas and behaviors suggested by the PFL within the contexts of their daily choices and prioritization of their resource of time. Using a phenomenological perspective (Creswell, 2009), the study sought to capture the insider’s viewpoint. These viewpoints, while perhaps not generalizable to the entire principal population (Emerson et al., 1995), represented principals’ perspectives in numerous and various school settings. The principals’ conceptualizations and interpretations were at the core of the inquiry (Fullan, 2001) and in them lies the value of the study.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Effective school leadership is at the foundation of the PFL. The characteristics associated with effective school leaders are part of the components of the plan and are seen as instrumental in the improvement of schools. The topic of effective school leadership has been the subject of much research in the past decades as more emphasis has been placed on determining the factors that result in higher student academic achievement in schools. Pennsylvania’s alignment of the teacher evaluation process with the Danielson Framework (Danielson, 2007) was seen as a necessary step in the quest to improve its schools because of the teachers’ direct influence on student achievement. A close second step to the efforts was the development of systems that ensure effective leadership of school due to the significant, albeit, indirect impact of school leaders on student achievement. “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). The following is a review of the literature that underlies the theoretical framework of the study (Maxwell, 2005).

History of Principal Evaluation

The school reform movement of the last two decades has recognized that assessment of principal effectiveness can be an important element in effecting the desired
change in schools. The state of Pennsylvania was one of many states that began exploring the implementation of a universal principal effectiveness tool that would align with and support the tasks deemed important to teachers. One doesn’t need to search far to realize that the contexts to the roles of school leaders vary greatly. Thus, the complexities related to the “how”, “what”, and “to what end” of measuring principal effectiveness continue to be the source of criticism in principal effectiveness studies (Heck et al., 1990; Porter et al., 2010; Portin et al., 2006).

The seminal review of literature on principal evaluation by Ginsberg and Berry (1990) uncovered a wide range of evaluation practices in schools and little research to measure the effectiveness of one approach over another. Their later work further defined the weaknesses of research on principal evaluations by lamenting the lack of empirical information about the best practices of principal leadership evaluation. Since the earlier look at principal evaluations, the focus on getting it right has increased. With the placement of the principal as second only to teachers in impacting student achievement, the research focused on determining the “how” and “what” of school leadership.

Some evaluation approaches focused on assessing the important competencies, knowledge, and skills that principals should possess (Thomas et al., 2000). Later, Oyinlade (2006) expanded the research by introducing a method of assessing principal effectiveness using 18 components of “essential behavioral leadership qualities” (p.32). The items were characterized by traits such as good listening skills, good presentation skills, and participatory style of decision-making. It could be argued that the characteristics were reflective of the roles of principals at the time; however, a trend had begun to emerge that placed more and more emphasis on the obligation school leaders
had to the effective leadership of the instructional programs and student outcomes (Leithwood et al., 2004; Hallinger & Heck, 1996).

The shift in what defines the roles of principals from a management focus to accountability focus is apparent in the literature (Catano & Stronge, 2006; Ginsberg & Thompson, 1992; Portin et al., 2006). No longer could principals be building managers with certain qualities, they also needed to be instructional leaders who were in the business of producing specific student achievement. Increased accountability to policy makers, parents, community members, business leaders left districts, schools and principals focused on tangible results. The “what gets measured is what gets done” (Catano & Stronge, 2006, p. 394) motto had begun to influence principal evaluation work. If states could measure what principals do, then perhaps they could influence what principals do. And furthermore, if states could influence what principals do, perhaps they could change the outcomes – student academic achievement.

The standardization of principal evaluation tools sent a powerful message to principals and the public that the security and advancement of principal jobs are dependent upon a judgment of their effectiveness as determine by outcomes. Gone was the era when principal evaluation frameworks were the purview of the local district, to be developed based on the interests and values of the local community. In exchange, the increased attention to the evaluation process resulted in a growing consensus of core characteristics of effective school leadership.
Characteristics of Effective Principal Evaluation Plans

The development and adoption of well-designed and reliable methods of principal evaluation has been a relatively new emphasis in the field of education (Wallace Foundation, 2009). In Pennsylvania, as in many other states, annual assessments of principals were often not required. A recent review of how districts and states evaluate principals found that in a sample size of 44 district and state assessments, nearly half did not provide principals with feedback on how they could improve student learning and strengthen teacher instruction (Goldring et al., 2008; Wallace Foundation, 2009, p. 2). Fewer than half of the principal evaluation plans were not based on state standards, and only a quarter of them were aligned with the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards (Goldring et al., 2008). The study also revealed that little consistency existed on the values placed on the school and instructional domains, indicating that what was deemed important in principal leadership varied widely among districts and states. Furthermore, evidence of validity and reliability of the individual evaluation plans were scarce.

In a 2010 review of principal evaluation system, Condon and Clifford (2010) endeavored to identify systems that were intended to be used as a performance assessment, that had obtained reliability and validity, and that were available for purchase. In work related to the validation of one of the systems—VAL-ED, Goldring and colleagues (2009) found many evaluation plans lacking in their focus on rigorous curriculum and quality instruction. Furthermore, the reviewed plans were deficient in areas of “utility” and “accuracy,” two aspects deemed important for the validation and reliability of the plans. Of the twenty systems reviewed by Condon and Clifford, eight
met the previous criteria, and of those, only two were developed since 2000 and reflected the changing nature of school leadership in recent years (Brown-Sims, 2010)—the Leadership Practices Inventory (Kouzes & Ponser, 2002) and the Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education (VAL-ED) (Porter et al., 2010). Of these two instruments, the intentions for the development of the Leadership Practices Inventory were for a broader scope of leadership applications, not specifically for school leaders, leaving VAL-ED as the only system specifically developed to evaluate school leaders.

The lack of valid and reliable measures of principal effectiveness are what led the state of Pennsylvania to develop the PFL. The PFL seeks to ensure quality leadership in every public school Pennsylvania through the presentation of the look-for evidences of school leadership characteristics. With the following working definition of leadership: “Leadership occurs when an individual’s actions combine, through the mediation of various situational forces, with the willingness and ability of a group to attain some desired purpose” (Wayson, 1979, p. 64), one could hypothesize that school leaders’ actions will appear very different within their specific contexts. For example, Balfanz (2000) in his work that raised questions about the dominant approaches to meeting the student achievement needs of students in urban schools, posits that schools must be contextualized both from geographical and historical contexts within a district and state. It then logically follows that the static nature of the PFL would manifest itself very differently within secondary schools from urban, suburban and rural contexts. “People carve out roles from the reality they see” (Wayson, 1979, p. 75). It is possible that the conceptualizations, uses and perceived impacts of the PFL will vary among principals from geographically varied schools, while continuing to have commonality in promoting
leadership growth. In fact, it is likely that conceptualizations and utilization of the PFL will vary among the principals in the study for a variety of reasons.

The study seeks to explore the realities of the implementation process of the PFL and the experiences principals have during the implementation of the plan.

**Complexity and Multidimensional Nature of the Principal’s Roles**

Numerous studies explore the complexities and multidimensional nature of principal leadership roles in schools and add value to the context of the study through the demonstration of the difficulties associated with determining the actions and behaviors of principals that are most effective in meeting the desired results of school improvement and increases student achievement.

A study in Florida analyzed principals’ daily work, finding 40 different kinds of tasks (Horng, Klasik, & Loeb 2009). Of those varied tasks, nearly 30 percent of the time was devoted to administrative activities such as compliance issues, student supervision and scheduling. Additionally, just over 20 percent of the principals’ allotment of time was spent on personnel and budget matters. The combined percentage of time dedicated to organizational management tasks dwarfs the less than 10 percent of principals’ time spent on tasks deemed as instructional leadership (classroom observations, and professional development). The significant contribution of the study is that it determined that greater time spent on organizational management tasks is associated with positive outcomes as measured by test score gains and parent and teacher assessments of the educational climate of the schools.
Although in contrast to the recent trends to move principals towards more instructional leadership roles, the study finds that principal time spent on day-to-day instructional activities (including teacher observation, coaching and evaluation) is marginally or not at all related to student performance. In fact, the study finds teacher and parent perceptions of a school can be affected negatively in regards to the instructional climate.

Another related study adds that a principal’s sense of effectiveness at these various tasks, not only the allocation of time, may in fact, result in the principal’s actual effectiveness (Grissom & Loeb 2009). The notion of how a principal conceptualizes a task is a determining factor of an actual behavior has relevance to the topic of my research. Could it be that principals who perceive the PFL as a beneficial tool for their own personal effectiveness as school leaders actually find that it does just that? As in the previous study, organizational management emerges from the various domains of a principal’s roles and responsibilities as the most prominent indicator of a principal’s effectiveness as measured by numerous dimensions and constituent perception indicators. In other categories of principal tasks, the relationship between a principal’s sense of effectiveness and positive school outcomes were less prevalent or at times, conversely present. What is perhaps most important is that the study does not show a relationship between a principal’s efficacy towards instructional leadership tasks and school outcomes.

Furthermore, the study by Grissom and Loeb (2009) limits the instructional leadership tasks to those actions that are directly related to the coaching and developing teachers and supporting the curricular needs of a school. What is evident from the study
is that the principal roles are and need to be multifaceted to meet the complexities of leading a school. The study does not contradict the research that supports the importance of instructional leadership roles of principals; however, it does demonstrate the importance of instructional leadership working in conjunction with strong organizational leadership to effectively impact a school. “Effective instructional leadership combines an understanding of the instructional needs of the school with an ability to target resources where they are needed, hire the best available teachers, provide teachers with the opportunities they need to improve, and keep the school running smoothly” (Grissom & Loeb 2009, 32). The research suggests that emphasis needs to be placed on principals’ organizational management skills.

The schools of the principals in the sample of the study vary greatly in terms of student socio-economic levels as reported by the Pennsylvania School Performance Profile website. What isn’t surprising is that research shows that quality principals are inequitably distributed with high poverty, low-performing schools tending to have lower quality principals. A study employing systematic statistical analyses using Texas student growth data, principal fixed effects both with and without school fixed effects, while controlling for principal tenure, provided “alternative measures of principal effectiveness” that addressed “different types of potentially confounding influences (Branch et al., 2009 p.18). The findings showed that the variance in principal effectiveness was nearly twice as great in low-achieving, high-poverty schools, thus supporting the study’s hypothesis that principal skill is more important in the most challenging school settings. The research elevates the importance of principal effectiveness in schools that serve the most disadvantaged students (Branch et al., 2009).
The 17 principals interviewed for my study led a wide variation of schools. Student achievement building level scores as reflected in the School Performance Profile (SPP) for the school year 2012-2013 ranged from the high of 90’s to a low in the mid 30’s with an average of 75 (Pennsylvania School Performance Profile. Retrieved from http://paschoolperformance.org/ on March 16, 2016). The SPP metric determines a building-level “score” by combining numerous school performance factors including student performance and growth on Keystone assessments in Literature, Algebra I, and Science, graduation rates, attendance rates, student enrollment in Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and college credit courses, as well as several other factors (See Appendix D: School Performance Profile Metric for a comprehensive description of the SPP score metrics).

Influence of Evaluation on Practices

The research indicated that evaluation practices have been established based on little understanding of how principal evaluations are related to leadership practices. Moreover, the research literature provides few connections or little guidance regarding whether or how the purpose, focus, or use of principal evaluations are related to leadership behaviors that influence student learning. As a result, there is a need for research on the mechanisms by which evaluations affect leadership and how evaluation strategies can be used to promote effective leadership (Sun & Youngs, 2009).

Recent theoretical work (Portin, Feldman, & Knapp, 2006) suggested that under certain conditions, principal evaluations are likely to be associated with efforts by school leaders to change their practices including the establishment of rigorous goals for student
learning, the implementation of demanding curricula, and the deliberate monitoring and supporting of teachers’ instructional practices. Furthermore, the research supporting the VAL-ED leadership evaluation model has identified a series of leadership activities that could improve student learning (Murphy, Goldring, Cravens, Eliot, & Porter, 2007). Yet little empirical research exists on how the purpose and focus of principal evaluation systems, in general, or the leadership activities they are designed to measure, are related to actual behaviors that occur in the daily actions and choices of principals in their increasingly complex roles.

Influence of Leadership on Achievement

Recent studies point to the importance of principal leadership as a key influence on the academic achievement of students (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). Except for the direct influence teachers have to ensure the success of students, the principals’ role in schools is paramount in bringing the multiple facets of education together to influence learning (Leithwood et al., 2010; Supovitz et al., 2010). The job tasks or lists of responsibilities generally associated with principal leadership prior to the presence of high-stakes testing and systemic accountability included responsibilities for managing school programs, pupil personnel, community relations, physical facilities, and student climates and for coordinating professional development (Ginsberg & Berry, 1990).

Much of the recent literature categorizes leadership practices into lists of behaviors and areas of intentional focus. From these lists, we can see how principals influence their schools and the students in them (Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Leithwood et al., 2004; Waters et al., 2003). The categories in which leaders influence their schools are:
By setting directions,
By developing people,
By making the organization work, and
By managing the instructional program (Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 3, 8-9; Waters et al., 2003).

Clearly, it is critical the principals be not only strong but effective in these four spheres in order for the school to be effective.

In a 2009 study of teacher retention in North Carolina schools, working conditions were shown to have a highly predictive effect on teachers’ intents to remain at or leave a school (Ladd). By defining five domains of working conditions (leadership, facilities, empowerment, professional development and time policies), the study demonstrates that leadership was the most prevalent domain to determine a teacher’s plan to stay or leave the school. In other words, leadership is a critical factor in teachers’ decisions about where they work.

A study in a large urban district in Florida examined principal effectiveness using six years of math and reading achievement data during principal tenure (Beteille, Kalogrides, & Loeb, 2009). The study found that effective principals recruited and retained effective teachers while finding ways to remove ineffective teachers (determined by teacher value added student data). Furthermore, although the study was not able to find significant evidence that teachers improved more quickly with effective principals than with ineffective principals, the study did emphasize that principals have a powerful role in creating staffing environments within their buildings that have a positive effect on student achievement.
Implementation Literature

The stated purpose of the PFL is to improve the practices of school principals and is grounded on the premise that an evaluation tool could be an important component in the process of improving student achievement through improvement in the effectiveness of school leaders and teachers (Clifford, 2012, p. 3; Leithwood et al., 2004). The basis of the thinking is that an effective evaluation tool is instrumental in promoting changes in school leaders’ behaviors, and subsequently, student achievement. Human change/motivation theories (Mahoney, 1991; Locke & Latham, 2002) suggest that the individuals’ decisions to change may or may not be affected by outside forces (such as an evaluation tool) unless they perceive the change as beneficial within their personal value hierarchy (Dwyer, 1991; Fisher & Ury, 1991).

Furthermore, the study is rooted in Weber’s (1947) theories on authority, social action and rationalization and their subsequent applications for analyzing the potential effectiveness of state policies. The policy attributes theory, further developed by Andrew Porter and his colleagues (Porter, 1994; Porter & Brophy, 1988; Porter, Kirst, Osthoff, Smithson, & Schneider, 1993; Schwille et al., 1988), and applied in numerous policy studies (e.g., Berends, Chun, Schuyler, Stockly, & Briggs, 2002; Clune, 1998; Desimone, 2002), places five attributes at the foundation of successful policy implementation. The PFL is a legislation-backed policy and as such is hypothesized to be influential to the extent that it is (a) specific in its desired results, (b) consistent with other policies including those held at the local level, (c) holding authority through expertise, norms and laws, (d) having power through rewards and sanctions contingent upon compliance, and (e) remaining in place over a period of time (Porter, 1994). Being an implementation
year of the PFL, my hypothesis is that principals will have varying conceptualizations of
the policy-backed PFL in each of these dimensions, and as such are likely to report
varying degrees and types of influences from the PFL.
Purposes of the Study

The development of leadership in schools as one key aspect of improving student achievement is critical work at a time when meeting the academic needs of all students in our state has become increasingly important to the future financial success of our students. The work deserves the collective attention of researchers, politicians and practitioners. The importance of my study was anchored in the examination of secondary school principals’ ideas around the implementation of the PFL and offers a look at the PFL from the practitioners’ perspectives. By focusing on principals’ perceptions and insights as they interpret the ideas and behaviors suggested by the PFL within the contexts of daily choices and prioritization of time, my study sought to inform the continued implementation of the PFL. In a more general sense, the study offered others a look at the possible practitioner perspectives on a state-mandated implementation of a universal evaluative tool within established systems that are as diverse as school districts and their individual buildings in Pennsylvania.

Research Design Rationale

Because the study sought to “hear” personal viewpoints, interviews were the primary data collection tool (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Interviews allowed time and space for individuals to share their own thinking about topics. Understanding fully the challenges of self-report, the researcher attempted to mitigate any sense of inaccurate,
exaggerated, or skewed reporting by doing the following suggestions on qualitative interviewing made by Rubin and Rubin (2005). The team suggests that over the course of long and in-depth interview, the researcher can usually determine where a person is exaggerating and what areas he/she is ignoring. Care was taken to inform the interviewees that they do not need to participate in the study and that the study does not seek to “catch them” or place a personal value on their perceptions of the PFL. The study was independent from the PA Department of Education and all data was coded devoid of personal identifiers to promote as much validity in the individual report as possible. Questions were designed in a way that allowed for the verification of what the interviewee was telling, and that permitted the return to contradictory or inconsistent information to fill in gaps of missing material. The fact that the principals had direct access to the information about their practices reduced the need for them to attempt to place others’ perceptions on their responses. Finally, redundancy was built into the interview protocol to allow the information to be elicited from multiple approaches including the encouragement of the interviewees to tell stories from their experiences that demonstrated and substantiated their responses (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p.71-77).

In addition, interviews allowed for the kind of data the study sought—information on the daily nuances and realities of actually implementing a state-disseminated principal evaluation plan. Recent research suggested that school leaders have influence in creating school environments that promote the behaviors and actions by teachers and staff that have shown positive correlations to improvements in student achievement learning (Leithwood et al., 2010; Supovitz et al., 2010). The PFL presented 19 components related to the actions of school leaders that hone in on what principals should do to
develop their schools’ cultures of learning. Because the daily actions and behaviors of principals are the crux on the influence, the study sought to determine if and how the PFL affected the actions and behaviors of the principal.

The research plan also included analyzing the results of the state administered Phase II Principal Effectiveness Plan Survey. These results served as context and to situate the interview data (Miles & Huberman, 1994) within a larger framework of how principals across the state responded to the survey. The survey data allowed for some triangulation and validation of the interview data (Maxwell, 2005); however, it served primarily as context and background to the individual responses.

Participant Selection

The selection of participants for the study began with the 484 principals and assistant principals who completed the PFL implementation year process and had evaluation data submitted in the Spring of 2013 to PDE by their school districts. Thus their information was reflected in the acquired PDE data set (PDE data set, 2013). From the initial list 484 school leaders, I filtered out the assistant principals, principals of intermediate unit schools and career and technical centers due to the uniqueness of the inter-district role they fulfill, elementary principals and middle school principals. In the few instances where high schools included middle school programs, the principals remained in the population. The remaining 117 secondary principals was the population from which I pulled my sample.

The deliberate selection of participants focused the study on a cohort of principals who were part of pilot districts that have completed the Phase II implementation process,
and it also utilized the PDE data set in a helpful way. The study was limited to principals in secondary buildings, including middle school/high school combinations where they exist in districts. I pulled from my own interests and experiences for the decision as well as Hallinger’s research on principal leadership in which he posits that secondary schools which are often larger and more complex organizations, require substantial adaptation in instructional leadership (Hallinger 2005 p.12). The decision offered more variety in the ways principals conceptualized and used the PFL. Also, in most cases, the secondary buildings are isolated in their existence within the community, i.e., relatively few Pennsylvania districts have multiple high schools that function within the more collaborative, inter-district networks of many elementary schools. Furthermore, secondary schools more frequently encompass a larger community than the neighborhood elementary schools resulting in more diversity of learners, more complexities of teacher certifications and course offerings, more state indicators of school success; thus, they are arguably more dependent on leaders with a range of leadership skills and attributes.

I included secondary charter school principals in the participant selection for two reasons. First of all, charter schools are a growing reality in the public school system structures in many of Pennsylvania’s urban centers (i.e., schools with higher SES percentages). Their exclusion would limit the representation of principals in these areas. Second, the PFL was designed to be an effective tool in all settings, not just the traditional school structures. The choice added a certain texture to my study.

By targeting a representative sample from the population of 117 principals based on the schools’ student SES percentages, I ensured that my sample included leaders across the spectrum of secondary school leadership, some with the complexities of grant-
funded programing and its many leadership implications as well as districts with broader local tax bases and the ensuing conditions that resulted in less dependence on federal and state revenue sources. In a comparative analysis of school SES percentages with the schools’ PA Performance Profile Score, a similar stratification of school contexts existed (see Figure 5 on page 40). My research design included interviews of at least 17 secondary principals based on the school SES context (see Figure 4: Interview Sample Compared to Population Stratification by SES), grouping them into five groups (<10%, 10-24.9%, 25 – 49.9%, 50-74.9%, >75%) that mirrored the categorization of schools used in the analysis of the PISA scores (Riddile, 2010). The study was based on the interviews of 17 secondary principals with each school SES stratification being represented by four participants, except for the less than 10 percent SES group which due to a population size of two, had only one participant in the study.

Figure 4: Interview Sample Compared to Population Stratification by SES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SES RANGE (%) PISA</th>
<th># of Schools</th>
<th># principal interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;10%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-24.9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-49.9</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-74.9</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;75%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>117</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sample Rationale

The relationship of school context and the principal leadership roles has been a prominent part of the research in the last decades. The initial research on instructional leadership focused primarily on the schools in need of reform (Harris, 2002). The schools’ contextual differences were often minimized in findings that chose to highlight the policy and training needs related to school leadership (Hallinger, 2005). Hallinger further posits that effective school leaders must be responsive to the changing needs of their school context, and in a “very real sense” are shaped by the context of their schools (Hallinger, 2005, p.235).

By envisioning school improvement as a journey, David Jackson (2000) and Michael Fullan (2002) suggest that the type of leadership that is appropriate to a certain stage of the journey may, as the school context changes, become a limiting or even counterproductive force. Thus, “Schools at risk” may initially benefit from a more forceful top-down approach focused on instructional improvement. The principal would typically set clear, time-based, academically focused goals in order to get the school moving in the desired direction, and would take a more active role in tasks designated as steps towards these goals. Research shows that authoritarian forms of leadership are most prevalent in schools of need, particularly in the early stages (Gray, 2000).

In their review of the literature on the effects of principals on school improvement, Heck and Hallinger conclude that studying principal leadership without reference to the school context relegates the study as “virtually meaningless.” They cite the school context as a source of opportunities, resources, and constraints that the principal must understand and address in order to lead. Further defined, these contextual
variables of interest to principals include student background, community type, organizational structure, school culture, teacher experience and competence, fiscal resources, school size, and bureaucratic and labor features of the school organization (Bossert et al., 1982; Hallinger & Heck, 1996a, 1996b). The variation of the SES composition of a student population reflected numerous like variables, creating very different contexts to a principal’s leadership. The PFL was to increase the effectiveness of principals across all schools in Pennsylvania in schools that are widely varied making the use of a school’s SES as an important variable in designing the sample.

Finally, although a principal’s years of experience or time in leadership of the building were not be part of the selection criteria, I included questions in the interview protocol that ascertained information about longevity in their roles. The information played an important role in the analysis of the interview data.

**Sample Size**

Qualitative research by design seeks to go deep in the investigation of a phenomenon under study. When it comes to sample size there are advantages and disadvantages gained by the sample size. Although there is no set standard for how large or small a sample size should be for qualitative research that is based on in-depth, open-ended interviews with participant, sample size is significant. Bertaux (1981) argued that fifteen participants was the smallest acceptable sample size in qualitative research. Creswell’s (1998) recommended between five and twenty-five interviews for a phenomenological study. In the Consensual Qualitative Research model presented by Hill and team for use in studies that seek to provide “vivid, dense and full descriptions in
the natural language of the phenomenon” being studied, a sample size of 8-15 was recommended. Moreover, Hill argued that this approach was “especially useful in the early stages of research on previously unexplored topics” (Hill et al., 1997, p.518). The sample of my study represented just under 15 percent of the population of secondary principals who participated in the PFL pilot. Although not representative of all the nuances that are likely present in the population, the sample afforded the opportunity of the researcher to capture the individual voices associated with their experiences with the PFL. By choosing to vary the selected principals by school SES context (see previous Figure 4: Interview Sample Compared to Population Stratification by SES), the study mirrored the SES framework used to report the PISA data and ensured that the sample represented the varying cultures of secondary schools in the state. The deliberate stratification of participants in the sample of 17 principals ensured that leaders of schools at each increment of SES percentages were present in my study.

A comparative glimpse of the SES and SPP contexts of the school represented by the population and those schools represented by the sample principals further showed the shared context in this regard (see Figure 5: School Performance Profile Scores (SPP) and Percentage of Student Population Receiving Free/Reduced Lunches(SES) (2012-2013) of Schools Represented by Sample, page 40).

To choose the sample for the research and to “bound” the data set (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 27), a list of all Phase II participating school districts in Pennsylvania was procured from the PA Department of Education. The list included the names of the participating schools, the schools’ grade configurations and principals’ names. The list
was then placed into an Excel file and merged with a file of the geographical classifications of all Pennsylvania schools available through the department of education website to show the schools status in one of the following 12 designations: Town: Remote, Town: Fringe, Town: Distant, Suburb: Small, Suburb: Mid-size, Suburb: Large, Rural: Remote, Rural: Fringe, Rural: Distant, City: Small, City: Mid-size, City: Large. A third merge added each school’s 2012-13 total student population and the percentage of the population qualified to receive Free or Reduced Lunch as reported in data retrieved through the PA Department of Education website.

The data list was then sorted by school grade configuration to identify a cohort of high schools represented in the Phase II implementation of the PFL. Using the Pennsylvania School Performance Profile data, the schools’ School Performance Profile (SPP) numbers were added to be used later as evidence of the complexity of school context that the sample represented (See Appendix D: School Performance Profile Metric
for a comprehensive description of the SPP score metrics).

From the population list of 117 secondary principals, email addresses for 95 principals were procured from the specific school websites and in a few cases by calling the schools directly. Of the 22 inaccessible principals were numerous principals who were no longer in the positions they held in the 2012-2013 school year or who were not accessible due to various leave of absences. Several were in interim or acting roles. Emails were sent to 95 principals with a brief researcher introduction and an invitation to participate in interviews about the PFL. On the initial email, four “no thank you” response emails were received and eight principals voiced their initial interest in participation. The remaining 83 principals did not respond. In early 2014, follow-up emails were sent to the unresponsive portion of the population and an additional six interviews were scheduled. There were no “no thank you” responses; however, again 77 principals did not respond. For the remaining three interviews, I made targeted phone calls to the principals of schools that fulfilled the criteria of the demographics of the schools that were not yet represented according to the sample design. The final three interviews were concluded in late spring of 2014.

**Data Collection Plan**

An important dimension of collecting volumes of interview data lies in the data management system used to track what research and analyses have occurred (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 45). To manage the data over time while also fulfilling my responsibilities as a school district leader, I created the *Data Collection “Index”* that allowed me to return to the study with a clear sense of the next steps in the progress of
the study. The process included ensuring all data was readily accessible, consistently formatting of files and using file names and codes that assisted in a clean and fluent navigation of the many components of the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 45). I used an electronic data collection “index” to keep track of the data collection process – a type of “running record of events” (Anderson et al., 2007, p. 208). My data collection “index” tracked the following data: date, participants, event type, length, location, if a recording was done, were transcriptions submitted and complete, were memos complete.

**Figure 6: Data Collection Timeline**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>December</th>
<th>January</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal Interviews</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey Analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Completed prior to Interview Protocol</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memos</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection “Index”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data Analysis Plan**

Principals were interviewed using a semi-structured format that guaranteed that each principal was asked open-ended questions where the interviewer has little control over the principals’ responses (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). All interviews were audio recorded with the participants’ permission, and transcribed through a transcription service (Rev Transcription Services). Data analysis was ongoing and iterative (LeCompte & Schesul, 1999). Transcripts were read as they were received from the transcription service and memos were written to capture emerging themes and note the initial
comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Transcriptions were then coded according to the general descriptive categories and recurring ideas from the fieldnote memos (Emerson et al., 1995; Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; LeCompte & Priessle, 1993). The initial codes were tested against subsequent data, which led to refinement through the deleting and combining of coding categories and the addition of new codes as recurring ideas emerged. The final codes were reviewed by a fellow researcher, not associated with the study who was experienced in principal supervision and had a doctorate in school leadership, to minimize any personal interpretation and to ensure that the ideas and themes emerged directly from the data (Emerson et al., 1995).

Data Management

Information from principals was coded for the data analysis using the Dedoose, online data tool (dedoose.com). Each principal was given a number eliminating the need for the use of identifying names. During all phases of data collection, the data remained confidential. Pseudonyms were used for the schools represented by the principals. When sent to the transcription service, interview audio files included no names on any of the files. No information from the data sets was or will be shared with anyone, federal, state, district, or local.

A letter of informed consent was signed by each participant in the study (see Appendix B). Principals participating in the study were informed that they may withdraw from the study at any time with a written request. The researcher explained in writing and verbally that participation is voluntary and that there are no risks from participation.
All collected data, including audio files, notes, interview transcripts, journals and memos were housed on the researcher’s computer for five years and then destroyed (5-10 years as cited by Creswell, 2007, p. 91). The computer was backed up regularly to avoid loss of data. Participants were permitted to request transcript copies if desired. Any identifying information in publications that could have arisen from the study remained anonymous, unless written consent was given by the participant.

The above-mentioned procedures fulfilled the requirements of the Institutional Review Board at the University of Pennsylvania.

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

There were multiple ways in which my role had the potential to influence the study. I am a practitioner who used the PFL to evaluate principals during the period of time in which I was conducting the study; however, all participants were from districts other than where I worked, and none were evaluated by me. Additionally, I sat on the early committee that worked to develop the PFL and thus had background knowledge related to the evaluation tool. I also have over ten years of school leadership experience as an assistant principal and principal myself and bring my experienced lens to the work.

I was mindful of my role as researcher and fellow practitioner, and adhered to scripted questions and probing questions during the interviews. The interview protocol was predetermined and each interview followed the same protocol. Because the goal of the interviews was to collect data from the participants, not to engage in a dialogue, my own experience impacted the data only in the instance where participants projected meaning on me as researcher. However, interviews are small moments where
relationship-building, or at least connection is important, especially in establishing a risk-free safe space to share personal ideas and my background certainly contributed to making those connections.

With a personal goal to continue to lead schools and also to work with developing school leaders in the future, I was intrigued by the attempt to leverage wide-scale change through the creation of an evaluation instrument. My personal experience as a principal formed my understanding, of course, that regional, district, and individual users likely have a significant impact on the ability of the tool to leverage change. While I brought my background to each interview, I was careful to check my personal beliefs at the door.

“Instruments of the research and the research relationships are the means by which the research gets done” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 83). Care was taken to allow the research instruments to “do” the research. In soliciting the participants, I was upfront, and made guarantees of privacy and confidentiality, important in reassuring the principals that they could speak freely with me. The message was restated repeatedly that no individual information will ever be given or shown to anyone besides myself and the interviewee, and as Rubin & Rubin (2005) remind us, “it is imperative to keep that promise” (p. 98). The informed consent form (Creswell, 2007, p. 89) included reiterations of these promises and gave the principals contractual assurance that I will adhere to the agreement. 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 B for a copy of the consent form).
It was also important to be upfront with the purposes of the study. I showed the principals the research questions and described the final product of the study. Their willingness to be involved was based on the transparency I promised in regards to showing them any of their own data and my analysis of it. I may be interested in using my research in further research, or in writing about what I’m finding—in articles, journals, and other mediums. My hope was that an “ongoing feedback loop will generate mutual understanding” (Anderson et al., 2007, p. 162) between the participants and me, allowing us all to benefit from the study. Transparency was intertwined with the recognition that both parties, the researcher and the participants, had stakes in the research process and findings, whatever the outcomes may be. Whatever threats to validity that this may have created were taken into account during the entire research process.

Additional threats to validity included my own bias and assumptions about the PFL and the capacity of a framework to affect change in the practices of school leaders. I certainly had my own opinions and expertise around principal evaluations and the role of accountability in changing behaviors, and was mindful that the study was not about my own methods or opinions of principal evaluations, but about discovering the many perspectives of the participants. The interviews and observations of the data were conducted with a strong sense of objectivity and non-judgmental responses. Care was taken to use standard responses during the interviews that allowed for a systematic and consistent “drilling down” on the participants’ responses. For example, many participants took advantage of the interview process to express their personal feelings about the PFL and the state of public education in general. Several principals commented at the end of
their interviews that the process was cathartic in nature because it allowed them to express their views of a tool that many felt was politically positioned, externally mandated, and lacked transparency in its intent. Although the opportunities existed for me to reciprocate, I relied on the pre-established probing questions to encourage the principals to further define their statements. In order to avoid taking a reflexive stance in analyzing the data (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. By making explicit my own goals, biases, and assumptions about the interviews in writing, I was mindful of any impact these may have on my thinking about the data. Included were other memos based on the issues raised in Zeni’s (2001) Guide to Ethical Decision Making (p. 153) that allowed me to capture other thoughts during the data gathering process. It wasn’t surprising that I interviewed leaders who were inspirational to me and I found myself connecting with the way they spoke about their schools, their students and their personal growth. I found myself wanting to visit their schools, to engage in wider discussions of ideas on how to improve the experiences of principals, teachers and students. In practicality, the memos assisted me in framing the task at hand while providing a reflective sounding board for me as the researcher. Ultimately, I know that my positionality and my role and professional relationships with any of individual participants rendered me not neutral (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 3), but an adherence to process allowed me to explore, pursue, and articulate as much “indigenous meaning” (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 12) from the data as possible.

Other opportunities for researcher bias came during the analysis phase of the study. Predetermining codes and/or emphasizing certain viewpoints is one way
researchers can influence the way analysis is applied. However, having an outside researcher with no connections to the study, yet with practical experience in qualitative research and coding of interview data related to school leadership, review the coding helped to ensure that I remained as unbiased as possible. In addition, memos (Maxwell, 2005) helped provide spaces to sort out bias and to examine the influence of the researcher on the analysis and findings of the data.

Researching within the structure of the University of Pennsylvania’s Mid-Career doctoral program afforded the opportunity for peer review of the interview protocol and the coding system. Interview questions were explored and practiced to measure their effectiveness to inform the research questions of the study. The presence of experienced researchers who have guided many others in the qualitative research process was not only helpful, but also ensured a sense of internal consistency and reliability of the study. Furthermore, the guidance was invaluable in helping to avoid pitfalls of validity and reliability of the instruments and processes used to arrive at the findings of the study.

Because the coding process was ongoing during the data collection process, and done in its initial phase, solely by the researcher, an additional spot check of the data and codes was done by an outside researcher who is well-versed in qualitative research and also in the daily functions of school leadership. Although this didn't provide comprehensive assurance that no biases were present in the coding of the data, it did add a level of inter-rater reliability by showing that the codes elicited the same data as acquired by the researcher.
The study makes no claims to be universally generalizable. It was concerned solely with the experiences of the 17 interviewees. As such, the validity of the study lays in the ways they describe their experiences and beliefs (Emerson et al., 1995).
CHAPTER 4
INTRODUCTION / PURPOSE

Chapter 4 describes the data collected from the seventeen in-depth interviews of secondary school principals in Pennsylvania who participated in the implementation pilot of the Pennsylvania Framework for Leadership. The details of the sample are explained, and primary themes, which emerged during the data analysis, also are presented. These themes and the subsequent sub-themes evolved from the inductive analysis described in Chapter 3.

As themes arose from participants’ responses, three central findings, and subsequent sub-findings evolved (see Figure 9: Propositions and Supporting Themes on page 55).

The researcher identified particular themes through the data analysis process. Immediately following each in-depth interview (see Interview Protocol, Appendix A), the researcher used Rev.com, an online resource, to transcribe the interview data. As the data was compiled and reread using Dedoose.com, the qualitative data organization tool, the researcher identified issues, such as how principals described their understanding of the PFL or how principal described the connections of the PFL with their daily use of time. A list of broad categories was established (see attached coding sets, Appendix C). The formulation of coding categories was a means of organizing the descriptive data. Subsequent iterations led to initial patterns and the development of other categories and subcategories. In the process, codes were merged, modified, and discarded as patterns emerged and themes were identified.
Thirteen themes reflected the patterns that continued to repeat as the researcher continued to interview (see Figure 9: Propositions and Supporting Themes on page 55). Ten of the identified themes were grouped into three primary propositions and are described in the findings in this chapter. The remaining themes informed the Future Direction section of Chapter 5.

Previous research on school leadership placed principals’ influence on schools behind only the teachers of the school-based variables affecting the student achievement outcomes. Within the realm of in-district influence, the school leaders possessed important opportunities to improve the academic and cultural impact of the school on the live of students, through the creation of systems and environments that make it possible for teachers to effectively instruct students (Leithwood et al., 2008). With the premises that an evaluation tool can both focus and strengthen the role of the principal in schools, the study sought to answer the following research questions:

1) How do Pennsylvania public secondary school principals conceptualize the uses of the Pennsylvania Framework for Leadership Phase II Implementation (2012-2013) in their practices across varying types of schools?

2) How do Pennsylvania public secondary school principals describe how the Pennsylvania Framework for Leadership Phase II Implementation (2012-2013) has influenced their practices?

Sample Summary

The sample was chosen from the 117 secondary school principals in Pennsylvania who participated in the Principal Effectiveness pilot in school year 2012-2013 and whose districts fulfilled the requirements of submitting the data to the Pennsylvania Department
of Education to be included in the state-wide data set. The 17 participating principals represented schools in 14 Pennsylvania counties with a slight concentration of three principals from one county with a large urban center. Except for three principals from a

---

**Figure 7: Sample Demographics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants by #</th>
<th>School SES Percentage Range</th>
<th>Years in School Leadership</th>
<th>Years as Principal in building as of 2012-13</th>
<th>School Geographic Delineation Codes (2009-2010)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P11</td>
<td>0-9.9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Suburban: Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P8</td>
<td>10-24.9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Suburban: Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P9</td>
<td>10-24.9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>City: Small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P16</td>
<td>10-24.9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Rural: Fringe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P14</td>
<td>10-24.9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Suburban: Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P12</td>
<td>25-49.9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Suburban: Mid-Size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>25-49.9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Rural: Fringe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5</td>
<td>25-49.9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Town: Distant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P13</td>
<td>25-49.9</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Rural: Fringe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>50-74.9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Suburban: Small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P15</td>
<td>50-74.9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Rural: Fringe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>50-74.9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>City: Small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P10</td>
<td>50-74.9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Suburban: Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P7</td>
<td>75-100</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>City: Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P17</td>
<td>75-100</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>City: Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>75-100</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>City: Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6</td>
<td>75-100</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>City: Small</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Medium Mean       | 14                          | 10.2                        | 9.75                                        | 4.6                                           |
large district with multiple high schools, each principal represented a single district for a total of 15 different school districts.

Of the sample group, seven principals possessed more than 10 years of school leadership experience (see Figure 7: Sample Demographics on page 52). Of the group, one outlier had 33 years of school leadership experience with the closest comparison being 10 years of experience. Ten principals from the sample group had less than 10 years of school leadership experience, with two having under five years of experience.

The years of experience in current principal roles ($x = 4.6$) in comparison to years in school leadership overall ($x = 10.2$) revealed that many principals were relatively new to their present positions. Fourteen of the principal had five years or less in their present roles, with ten of the 17 principals in their present roles two years or less.

One of the sample principals led a building that included grades 6-12, one led a 9-12 public charter school, and all others led grade 9-12 public high schools. The gender ratio was six females and 11 males which is within 5 percentage points from the national numbers reported in 2012. (Characteristics of Public and Private Elementary and Secondary School Principals in the United States: Results from the 2011–12 Schools and Staffing Survey – 30 percent female). However, compared to the population that was only 16 percent female, the sample had a significantly higher representation of females.

The building geographic categories included a range of City: Large, Mid-size, and Small, Suburban: Large, Mid-size, and Small, Rural: Fringe and Town: Distant (see Figure 8: Geographical Category Comparison of schools represented by the Population and the Sample Principals on page 54). Building student populations ranged from a high of 2570 student to the low of 159 students with the average size being 1005 students. Although
not all types of communities, school population sizes, and principal years of experience are represented, the methodology sought to represent a variety of school and principal contexts in the study. In the analysis of the data, care was given to the variables of school SES levels and the principals years of experience in relation to the individual principal’s conceptualizations of the PFL.

Figure 8: Geographical Category Comparison of schools represented by the Population and the Sample Principals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographic Category</th>
<th>Schools of Population (n=117)</th>
<th>Schools of Sample (17)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City: Small, Mid-Size, and Large</td>
<td>21 (18)</td>
<td>6 (35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural: Distant, Fringe, and Remote</td>
<td>35 (30)</td>
<td>4 (24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban: Small, Mid-Size, Large</td>
<td>37 (32)</td>
<td>6 (35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town: Distant, Fringe, and Remote</td>
<td>24 (20)</td>
<td>1 (6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Findings Introduction

The analysis of data from interviews of 17 secondary principals in Pennsylvania schools stratified by the Socio-Economic Status percentages as reported on the PA School Performance Profile for 2012-13 supported three primary propositions that answer the research questions of the study (see Figure 9: Propositions and Supporting Themes on page 55). Each proposition is described with supporting themes. The analysis supporting the propositions relied on the instances, both overtly spoken about and
referenced in context, that were present in the interview transcripts of each principal (see Figure 10: Positive Instances of Themes by Participants on page 56).

Figure 9: Propositions and Supporting Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Propositions</th>
<th>Supporting Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Secondary principals conceptualized the PFL as a catalyst for providing clarity of performance priorities, promoting self-reflection, and focusing attention on the scope of the principals’ work.</td>
<td>(1.1) The PFL helped principals with the prioritization and balance of complex tasks of school leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.2) Goal-setting: The PFL promoted goal-setting within established and expanded roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.3) Self-reflection: The principals expressed how the PFL encouraged self-reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. In conceptualization of the uses of the PFL, secondary principals identified incongruence between the perceived assumptions and the expressed realities of school leadership</td>
<td>(2.1) Autonomy: The PFL assumed that a school leader had the autonomy to make the changes that were attributed to his/her performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.2) The PFL assumed school leaders had the time to do all the tasks they knew to do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.3) What do the students say? Are school leaders improving their lives? And other measures that allowed principals “to sleep at night”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Compliance to the PFL was prevalent throughout the comments of the principals and was a strong component of the conceptualization that principals had of the PFL</td>
<td>(3.1) The behavior of documentation of evidence promoted self-reflection, which resulted in changes in principals’ practices.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the first proposition, many of the principals interviewed conceptualized the PFL as a catalyst for providing clarity of performance priorities, for promoting self-
reflection, and for focusing their attention on the scope of their role as a principal. An incongruence between the principals’ perceived assumptions about the PFL and how they

**Figure 10: Positive Instances of Themes by Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>SES Grouping</th>
<th>Proposition 1 and Themes</th>
<th>Proposition 2 and Themes</th>
<th>Proposition 3 and Theme</th>
<th>Total Positive Instances by Participant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Secondary principals conceptualized the PFL as a catalyst for providing clarity of performance priorities, promoting self-reflection, and focusing attention on the scope of the principals’ work.</td>
<td>In conceptualization of the uses of the PFL, principals identified incongruence between the perceived assumptions and the expressed realities of secondary school leadership.</td>
<td>Compliance to the PFL was prevalent throughout the comments of the principals and was a strong component of the conceptualization that principals had of the PFL.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P11</td>
<td>0-9.9</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P8</td>
<td>10-24.9</td>
<td>x x x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P9</td>
<td>10-24.9</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P14</td>
<td>10-24.9</td>
<td>x x x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P16</td>
<td>10-24.9</td>
<td>x x</td>
<td>x x x</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>25-49.9</td>
<td>x x x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5</td>
<td>25-49.9</td>
<td>x x x</td>
<td>x x x</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P12</td>
<td>25-49.9</td>
<td>x x x</td>
<td>x x x</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P13</td>
<td>25-49.9</td>
<td>x x x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>50-74.9</td>
<td>x x x</td>
<td>x x x</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>50-74.9</td>
<td>x x x</td>
<td>x x x</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P10</td>
<td>50-74.9</td>
<td>x x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P15</td>
<td>50-74.9</td>
<td>x x x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>75-100</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6</td>
<td>75-100</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P7</td>
<td>75-100</td>
<td>x x x</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P17</td>
<td>75-100</td>
<td>x x x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Positive Instances by Theme: 12 12 9 9 8 8 14
expressed the realities of their day to day actions as a school leader was prominent in the
interview data and is the substance of the second proposition. As a third proposition,
compliance to the PFL was a strong component of the conceptualization principals had of
the PFL, and as a result, evidence of changes of practice were apparent. The supporting
themes for each proposition are described to capture how the principals in the different
types of schools and with varying years of leadership experience conceptualized the PFL.
These patterns of qualitative significance are presented in the following paragraphs (Yin,
2004). In each finding section, the data are organized by groups of principals in relation
to their schools’ SES statuses. The organization aids in the readability of the analyzed
data and also supports the Chapter 5 implications.

The second research question of the study is answered in the summary paragraphs
of each of the finding sections. In the analysis of how principals overtly described the
influence of the PFL on their practices or when changes to practice were referenced
contextually care was taken to show how actions compared across the different types of
schools and in regards to principals’ years of experience.

Finding 1.0: Overview

To set the stage for the evidence and discussions of how principals conceptualized
the PFL as a catalyst for personal goal-setting, prioritization and balance of the complex
tasks of a secondary principal, and self-reflection, I first show, in a more general sense,
how the principals perceived benefits in the PFL.

One of the four principals in schools with SES rates between 75 and 100 percent,
spoke of the PFL as beneficial in his planning and self-reflection processes. The
principal conceptualized the tool as a building-level, principal-involved, aspect of the district comprehensive planning process (Principal Interview P17, 2014). He was clear to articulate that although he saw benefits of the PFL in his personal planning, he first anchored his goals on school-level data and then used the tool to help align his leadership emphases on identified needs. The inter-relatedness between setting the direction of the school and developing people, in this case himself, emerged in this principal’s conceptualization of the PFL (Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2004; Waters et al., 2003). What doesn’t appear to be clear to this principal was the purpose of the PFL. Was it a school improvement tool or a principal development tool that sought to prepare school leaders to improve their schools? The lack of clarity of the PFL’s purpose and how it was to be positioned within the daily work of principals added to the varied conceptualizations and uses of the PFL.

Of principals in schools with a more moderate SES rate of 50 to 74.9 percent, all perceived the PFL as having a focusing effect on the various roles of principals, helping to create a “uniform system” of “important areas of the principal job” (Principal Interview P3, 2014, lines 87-89). One principal defined this as the PFL’s influence to balance the day-to-day immediacy of the principals’ role with the less immediate aspects of school leadership. She stated that principals “go about our days, and we manage our time. We look at teaching and learning, and we forget the extra stuff, like the community, the finances... until we have to address it with a budget or community meeting” (Principal Interview P10, 2014, lines 167-169). A principal in her first years of the principalship, described the PFL as “lists of job responsibilities” with an opportunity to see what effective performance of the responsibilities looked like (Principal Interview P10, 2014,
These principals were deliberate in separating the compliance dimensions of the PFL from the opportunities they had to use it for self-reflection, to “find their own areas of weakness and work on them” (Principal Interview P4, 2014, lines 105-106) and by seeing opportunities to “grow without anybody to tell them where they need to grow” (Principal Interview P4, 2014, line 104). When viewing the PFL as a compliance document, the principals were less likely to define it as a tool for ongoing reflection, but rather a document that “sleeps” on the bookshelf or in the file cabinet (Principal Interview P3, 2014, line 272). Within this group, there was skepticism in the ability of an external accountability measure to change the culture of an organization for the better. However, they did view the PFL as beneficial in helping them as school leaders “to figure out what that motivator piece is” (Principal Interview P3, 2014, lines 170-171). In other words, these principals used the PFL as a reference point for determining what work got their attention, and at times, they found that it expanded the scope of their actions as a school leader. Making the organization work and managing the instructional programs are seen as two of the primary responsibilities of school leaders (Leithwood et al., 2004). The principals acknowledged that the PFL, by defining components of Domain 2: Systems Leadership and Domain 3: Leadership for Learning, created an opportunity for them to leverage the specifics of the PFL to motivate or lead their staff in actions that directly influence student learning outcomes.

Furthermore, the principals in schools with a more moderate SES rate of 50 to 74.9 percent, acknowledged that the roles of principals have changed significantly in the accountability and the scope of the principals’ work. Each described how they attempt to balance crisis situations with staff, students, and community, to problem-solve without
additional resources as a variable, and to create and sustain the urgency needed to meet the increasing expectations for student academic performance. The complexity of the principal roles was apparent as the principals sought to fulfill the necessary managerial tasks of their jobs while also attempting to function in the transformational leaderships roles of developing others, developing a shared vision and then championing that to the wide interests of school stakeholders.

Three of the four principals interviewed from schools with SES percentages between 25 and 49.9, viewed the PFL as beneficial in their leadership. In addition to seeing the qualities of the PFL to assist with planning, focus and self-reflection, half of the principals perceived a benefit in the “risk protection” that came with the transparent goal-setting and mutual understanding of the complex tasks that principals encounter when attempting to change the culture of their organizations. One principal appreciated, not just the opportunity to hear how he was doing from his supervisor, but also to be given the opportunity “to present and defend” what he does in his performance review meetings (Principal Interview P2, 2014, lines 74-75). Moreover, his experience, although not successful from a goal attainment perceptive, was acknowledged for the risk and effort on his part by his supervisor (Principal Interview P2, 2014, lines 302-303), an action that was perceived by the principal as helpful in his leadership development.

Another of these principals spoke specifically of the conditional aspect of the PFL’s influence on the work of school leaders. He stated, “If you commit yourself to professional growth and improvement, this is a mechanism, this is a tool, that I think will contribute” (Principal Interview P5, 2014, lines 235-236). Albert Bandura (2000) explained how “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). This sense of self-efficacy in individual leaders to conceptualize the PFL as beneficial in their growth was present and contributed to how the principals chose to view the PFL. Rather than focusing on the unanswered questions about the PFL and how it might be used in the future to support or “blame” principals for the diversity of student performance scores across schools, principals with a belief that they could continue to learn and develop, created ways for the PFL to benefit them in their work and personal development (Bandura, 1977; Bandura, 1993; Locke et al., 1984).

The five principals in the schools with SES levels below 24.9 percent did not perceive the PFL as a benefit, but rather spoke of the PFL as “forcing” goal-setting, and as “expanding” the awareness and scope of the principals’ roles. The principals were suspect of any relationship between the PFL’s perceived purpose to encourage self-reflection and its ability to affect the day-to-day performance of themselves and other school leaders. Although four out of five principals in the group acknowledged the self-reflection that came from the process of using the PFL, their approach was more attuned to thinking about ways to document what they were already doing or reflecting on the rubric as a way to ensure that they focused appropriate attention on the various aspects of their roles. The principal of a large suburban school with 12 years of leadership experience stated that “I see...all the different things that are considered within the Principal Effectiveness Plan and realize there are some things that I’m not hitting” (Principal Interview P14, 2014, lines 133-136).
Of the 17 principals in the sample, nine viewed the PFL as overall beneficial to them in improving their practices. Of those who perceived the PFL as beneficial, three quarters came from the schools with moderate SES levels between 25 and 74.9 percent. Subsequently, the polar ends of 0-24.9 percent SES and 75-100 percent SES school principals showed a greater skepticism toward the PFL with only one of nine principals viewing the PFL as overall beneficial. More revealing was that none of the five principals in schools with SES levels less than 24.9 percent spoke of overall benefit of the PFL in relation to their practices in leading schools. The principals with the most years of leadership experience were less likely to embrace the PFL as a beneficial addition to their development as a school leader or in guiding their daily practice of school leadership.

Next, each of the three following sub-finding sections focuses on themes in the principals’ conceptualizations of the PFL as it supports their efforts as a school leader. The first section discusses how principals perceived the PFL as it relates to clarity of performance priorities and a categorical framework for focusing attention on the scope of work while principals target the daily and local contextual needs of their schools. The second section explores how principals conceptualized the PFL as a catalyst for personal goal-setting and subsequent monitoring of those goals. The final section captures how principals thought about PFL as a motivator for self-reflection.

**Finding 1.1: Clarity and Prioritization**

One theme to emerge in the principal responses for how the PFL was beneficial in influencing their practices was that it provided clarity of performance priorities and a
categorical framework for focusing attention on the scope of the principals’ work. Inherent in the theme was the acknowledgement by principals that the immediate demands of the daily and local contextual needs of the school consumed unbalanced amounts of their time. As in previous sections, principals’ responses are explored by grouping of school SES levels.

Beginning with principals in schools with SES rates between 75 and 100 percent, two of the four principals viewed the PFL as having the potential to clarify their roles and to provide a framework for thinking about their tasks and responsibilities. However, they did not use the PFL in this way. On the contrary, the principals were explicit about prioritizing the work based on the needs and problems that they perceived in their schools and communities. This was best summed up in the comments of a principal of a large city school. He stated,

> When I am making plans, long-term plans, either for the school year or how I project things out, just trying to incorporate whatever best practice is on the instructional side, to the climate side, to however we get parents involved...where I say, ‘Oh, I need to reference Domain 1C.’ No, it’s not that (Principal Interview P17, 2014, lines 162-167).

In their conceptualizations of the PFL, the principals viewed the PFL as secondary to what they perceived to be the immediate needs of their school and community. Finding 2 (see page 78) further develops the idea of the PFL as incongruent with the daily responsibilities of secondary principals.

Three of the four principals from schools with SES between 50-74.9 percent perceived the PFL as adding a significant dimension of clarity to their job performance priorities. Of these three principals, one, who was in the midst of her second year as a school leader, said the PFL “clearly defined what I needed to do. Like this is what is...
expected of me.” She further stated that the PFL made principals “more aware and cognizant of every role we have in education” (Principal Interview P10, 2014, lines 275-276). She perceived the PFL as having a balancing quality between the day-to-day reactionary mode of many school principals and what she called the “extra stuff”, such as the principals’ roles in the community and for planning for longer-term budget implications. “We kind of get lost in our world until we have to address it (the extra stuff) with a budget or community meeting,” she stated (Principal Interview P10, 2014, lines 169-171). A second principal in the group who had three years of experience leading a small city school acknowledged that the PFL sought to bring uniformity across the state in the roles of principals, but that “it’s going to be up the principals to figure out how to navigate through their own internal challenges within the district” (Principal Interview P3, 2014, lines 282-283). The principal also perceived the PFL as helping to balance the day-to-day realities of the school principals’ work and the need for principals to demonstrate instructional leadership by being in classrooms daily to give input on the instructional experiences that are being created by the teachers (Principal Interview P3, 2014, lines 96-98). A third principal who led a Rural: Fringe school described the PFL as a “framework of how to do our jobs and everything we should be doing from public relations, to creating a vision, to monitoring progress and handling problems” (Principal Interview P15, 2014, lines 90-92). As the others, he also acknowledged that the PFL helped him keep the scope of his responsibilities in focus. “It really gives you an idea of what you need to be doing or should be doing so you don’t forget about something that you put aside because it is not a high-priority item,” he commented (Principal Interview P15, 2014, lines 93-97).
One principal with 11 years of overall school leadership experience and two years at the helm of a small suburban high school interacted with the PFL only in the summer prior to the start of the year. And although she spoke of its power to focus her attention on the broad scope of her job responsibilities and performance goals, she perceived the day-to-day responsibility of running a school as superseding any influence of the PFL. “Once the school years starts, I don’t think, I just do my job,” she commented (Principal Interview P4, 2014, line 207).

Of the principals from schools with an SES between 25 and 49.9 percent, only three of four spoke of the PFL as influencing the clarity of performance priorities and as a categorical framework for focusing their attention on the scope of the work. Within the context of five years of experience in leading a high school in a small, remotely located town, one principal stated,

*Having this specific document has made me more aware of the specific nature of my job in terms of organizing how I think about my job. I started thinking about the things I do in terms of labels or categories. I don’t think that is a bad thing. I think it helps me in terms of organizing my day and organizing my time. It helps me maintain a little bit of focus on some of those things that aren’t always easy to manage, the cultural things, that we certainly impact as building leaders* (Principal Interview P5, 2014, lines 238-244).

A second principal, who was in his second year of leadership of his building, spoke of the ways that he and his supervisor used the PFL framework to collaboratively review priorities from the previous year and to determine the district and building priorities for the coming year (Principal Interview P2, 2014). Because the goals were ultimately included in his evaluation, care was taken to “fit” the priorities into the domains of the PFL. A third principal who was in his second year of leadership saw the PFL as
clarifying his role in that it helped “point out parts of our job where we could be doing more or we could be doing better” (Principal Interview P12, 2014).

Four of the five principals from schools with SES between 0-24.9 percent also perceived the PFL as having an influence on how they viewed the scope of their work. Although one commented that the PFL increased his understanding of the instructional leadership role of his job, the majority of the comments were that the PFL helped the principals see a broader scope of their leadership. “It is encompassing a much broader base of school stakeholders directly in the inner workings of the school than what my philosophy typically lends to,” commented one principal who completed the fourth year as the principal of a large suburban high school (Principal Interview P14, 2014, lines 92-97). Another of the group, a leader in her second year as the principal of a rural school, stated that the PFL “helped or forced me to utilize this to set some goals and some vision” (Principal Interview P16, 2014, lines 167-169). Yet another principal felt that the PFL pushed him to be a better communicator to the various stakeholder groups in his school and community, and helped him be “more aware of everything” that he does in relationship to his roles as a principal (Principal Interview P8, 2014, line 210). Although not expanding the scope of the principal’s role in her mind, a final principal from the group who had 11 years of experience, five at her current building, stated, “I think it just breaks down what it is that we’re supposed to be doing. I do find it aligned with my personal views of what a principal should be doing” (Principal Interview P11, 2014, lines 76-78).

Only one principal in the group perceived the PFL as limiting the scope of her work. An experienced leader with 21 years at the same high school, and over 30 years of
school leadership overall, she cited the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards as being a more accurate reflection of what principals do in their daily, monthly, yearly roles. “I believe that they (the creators of the PFL) tried to boil those (the ISLLC standards) down and put them into the new principal evaluation tool, but personally I think they missed the boat in a lot of areas,” she stated (Principal Interview P9, 2014, lines 110-112).

Twelve of the 17 principals conceptualized the PFL as having some influence or potential effect on how they prioritized their performance goals and thought about how to approach the responsibilities associated with school leadership. Although there were consistent nuances from the principals across the different school contexts, difference emerged more prominently between principals based on their years of experience as leaders. When the viewpoints of the principals with the most years of experience were juxtaposed with the ideas expressed by those newer to school leadership, it was apparent that the latter tended to speak about the PFL as a tool for prioritizing their work more readily than the principals who were in leadership roles longer.

The research of human change and motivation suggests that individuals’ decisions to change may or may not be affected by outside forces unless they perceive the change as beneficial within their personal value hierarchy (Dwyer, 1991; Fisher & Ury, 1991). The presence of the PFL as a new variable in the experiences of the pilot principals surfaced the internal shifts or challenges that occurred in each principal’s personal value hierarchy. Some principals appeared to have a easier time positioning the PFL in their work, while others, wrestled more openly, as they determined where on their personal value hierarchy, the PFL and its components would ultimately reside.
For five of the participants in the study, the sense that the PFL offered any benefit in how they prioritized their goals and how they thought about their work as a principal was not mentioned in their responses. Rather than engage with the details of the PFL, it seemed that these principals determined that it was easier to rely on their previously established personal value hierarchy to inform their work as a school leader. The implementation theory literature suggests that a policy is more likely to be influential if it remains in place over a period of time, holds authority through expertise, norms and laws, is specific in its desired results, and has power through rewards and sanctions contingent upon compliance (Porter, 1994). Principals in the study had varied levels of understanding on why the PFL was created and how it was ultimately to be used. It was not surprising that principals did not unanimously embrace the possible benefits that they could derive from its ability to provide clarity of their performance priorities and to provide a universal framework for how principals focused their work.

In addition to the sub theme of how the PFL was beneficial in influencing principal practices through providing clarity of performance priorities and as a categorical framework for focusing attention on the scope of the principals’ work, a theme of personal goal-setting and subsequent monitoring through evidence compilation was also prominent in over two-thirds of the principals’ responses. The next section explores this theme.

**Finding 1.2: Goal-setting and Monitoring**

The second emerging sub theme in Finding 1 was present in the responses of principals across the different school types and principals’ years of experience. The
principals conceptualized the PFL as a catalyst for personal goal-setting and subsequent monitoring of their actions through evidence compilation. Out of the sample of 17 principals, 12 framed the PFL as a tool for personal goal-setting and subsequent monitoring through evidence compilation. Patterns emerged. Most principals referenced a joint goal-setting meeting with a supervisor; however, others recalled a self-guided process where they referenced the data, both anecdotal and formal, from the previous year, and then codified their goals for the upcoming school year. Examples of the personal goals that emerged were usually limited to three or less and included such examples as: encouraging professionalism in the staff, developing ways to support the district goals, leading school initiatives, minimizing the interruption to the school day, celebrating successes, and building stakeholder coalitions around school goals (Principal Interview P17, 2014; Principal Interview P4, 2014; Principal Interview P10, 2014; Principal Interview P2, 2014). The words of one principal captured the approach that these principals took to the process. He stated, “If you commit yourself to professional growth and improvement, this is the mechanism, this is the tool, that I think will contribute” (Principal Interview P5, 2014, lines 335-337). Beginning with the mindset that the PFL was a tool that supports personal growth, the principals identified the connections between what they knew to be a growth need for themselves and their school community and the items in the rubrics of the plan. One principal framed the PFL as “an evidence-based tool that principals take charge of...” (Principal Interview P9, 2014, lines 53-55). The principals were able to see the “evidences” of their daily actions and the connection with the PFL.
As in previous sections, principals’ responses in the next section are explored by grouping of principals by school SES levels.

Only one of the four principals in schools with SES levels higher that 75 percent perceived the PFL as a catalyst for personal goal-setting. The principal, the leader of a large city high school in his second year, said that the PFL gave “focus on some things” that he needed “to look at or work on.” He described how the goal-setting aligned with “what your data is telling you” and how it supported the overall district goals (Principal Interview P17, 2014).

Each of the four principals from schools with SES rates between 50 and 74.9 percent conceptualized the PFL as a catalyst for personal goal-setting. A third year principal of a small mid-state city school expressed that the PFL helped him and his team “get back to the relentless focus of ‘we are needed in classrooms pervasively on a daily basis’ regardless of how insane our days are” (Principal Interview P3, 2014, lines 221-222). Another principal, who was new to her small suburban school, used the PFL to set her goals related to Domain 4: Professional and Community Leadership when she observed a building culture that needed standards of professionalism re-established in staff to staff relations, and in regards to the teachers’ approach to their job responsibilities and their interactions with the community. Although she viewed her previous experiences in school leadership as equipping herself to affect change in the culture of her new building, she also spoke of the PFL as helpful in finding her own “areas of weakness” to be developed (Principal Interview P4, 2014, line 105). Another principal in the group, who perceived herself as a new principal, described the goal-setting conversations she had with her supervisor at the beginning of the school year and how the
PFL helped to “describe what I needed to do” and what “is expected of me” (Principal Interview P10, 2014, lines 247-248). The fourth principal, a leader in his tenth year, referenced the rubric of evidences provided by PDE that supported the PFL and described how it directed his goal-setting. He stated, “It really gave you an idea of what you needed to be doing or should be doing so you don’t forget about something that you just put aside because it was not a high-priority item” (Principal Interview P15, 2014, lines 95-97).

Of the four principals from schools with SES rates between 25-49.9 percent, three cited the PFL as having influence in their process of setting personal goals. A principal with nearly a decade of experience leading a high school in a remotely located town in the state commented that the PFL expanded his goal-setting to emphasize not only instructional leadership, but also to balance it with the importance of effective organizational leadership (Principal Interview P5, 2014). Furthermore, the principal viewed the PFL as not only supporting the planning of his goals, but also in adding a level of personal accountability. He stated, “There are days where it’s tempting and it would be really easy just to coast a little bit and this (the PFL) definitely provides some accountability” (Principal Interview P5, 2014, lines 287-289). A principal in his second year of leadership at his school defined how the PFL was a reminder of the goals he set out to achieve over the course of the year. “I would be on a daily, or weekly, or monthly basis, at least, conscious of what I set out as my goals versus just doing my own thing and be graded on it at the end of the year” (Principal Interview P2, 2014, lines 394-396). The principal of a mid-sized suburban school stated that the PFL “helped me create one of my
personal goals – to do a better job celebrating the accomplishments of our staff”

(Principal Interview P12, 2014, lines 66-67).

For the principals in schools with the lowest SES levels, the conceptualization of
the PFL as a catalyst for personal goal-setting was prevalent in the responses of all but
one of the five principals. One principal who was in her second year of the principalship
stated:

*It did drive some of my goal-setting. I took what some of our district/high school
building goals were, and then looked at the domains, and then I tried to wrap it
all together...I think it...helped or forced me to utilize this (the PFL) to set some
goals and some vision* (Principal Interview P16, 2014, lines 168-169).

She further explained that she began to think about her actions in terms of the
components of the PFL as a type of ongoing goal-setting measure. Another principal in
the group, said that after he created his goals, he was “more aware of everything” that he
did (Principal Interview P8, 2014, lines 201-202). The other two principals viewed the
PFL as a reference guide when creating goals to check for “what is missing” in their
desire to make sure they are doing what they can and not just what fits within their
personal view of what an effective principal does (Principal Interview P11, 2014, line 98;
Principal Interview P14, 2014, line 132).

As the research suggested, the daily work of principals can be skewed toward the
issues that have immediacy, and many times, are managerial in nature. Without an
understanding of collectively held goals for improvement, principals are likely to devote
their time, deliberately or not, to organizational management tasks such as compliance
issues, student supervision and scheduling, and budget and personnel matters as
suggested by Horng, et al, (2009). The PFL recognized the management dimension of
the principals’ roles in Domain 2: Systems Leadership; however, by weighting the
domain equally among the four domains, one could assume that a quarter of a principal’s time would be dedicated to the related components allowing, at minimum, an equal amount of time for tasks deemed as instructional leadership. Horng and her colleagues (2009) show the importance of organizational management task in relation to positive outcomes as measured by student test scores, yet other research reinforces the importance of principals as instructional leaders with deliberate actions and time being devoted to the development of a culture of learning and achievement in schools. The goal-setting, supported by the PFL, allowed principals and their supervisors to construct plans for how principals’ time was used.

The final sub theme describes how principals conceptualized the PFL as a catalyst for self-reflection. The sub theme of self-reflection was prominent in 9 of the 17 principals’ responses. The finding distinguishes between how principals described their self-reflection in relationship to the PFL and the practice of self-reflection as was less directly evidenced in the actions they described. The latter is expounded on in Finding 3.

Finding 1.3: Self-Reflection

Out of the sample group of 17 principals, 9 referenced the self-reflective behaviors they employ as a result of interacting with the PFL. Championed as an integral component of personal growth (Clark, 1992), principals’ reflective practices did not appear to be a naturally occurring aspect of a principals’ regular day-to-day routines. On the contrary, principals referenced many challenges that interfered with the practices of self-reflection, and furthermore, they noted the absence of self-reflective components from previous evaluative processes. A second-year principal commented:
I think it’s the first time that I really feel that it makes an administrator take a look at themselves. It rewards them for the things that they are doing. It recognizes those, but it also points out some areas, or lets an administrator look into himself and find some areas where ‘I can do better.’ You can be a tremendous, distinguished school administrator and still do better (Principal Interview P2, 2014, lines 242-243).

Many of the principals approached personal growth from a problem-solving aspect, asking themselves questions such as “Where am I having an issue or problem that I’m going to improve?” (Principal Interview P6, 2014, lines 146-147), “What’s most important? Okay, how are we doing? We’re not doing well. Why not?” (Principal Interview P3, 2014, lines 229-232), and “Am I meeting the things that are needed for my building?” (Principal Interview P2, 2014, lines 147-148).

The practice of self-reflection inherently involved the principal in the evaluation process, placing some of the meaning-making of the components and suggested tasks in their control. One principal spoke of the ownership of her own growth when she described her perceptions of the PFL. In her words, the PFL was

\[ to\ make\ them\ (principals)\ reflect\ more\ and\ so\ they\ more\ or\ less\ can\ grow\ without\ anybody\ having\ to\ tell\ them\ where\ they\ need\ to\ grow.\ They\ truly\ do\ a\ true\ self-reflection.\ They\ can\ find\ their\ own\ areas\ of\ weakness\ and\ work\ on\ them \]

(Principal Interview P4, 2014, lines 103-105).

As in previous sections, principals’ responses are explored by grouping of principals by school SES levels.

One of the four principals in school with SES rates between 75-100 percent spoke of the PFL as promoting self-reflection. The principal, with just over a year experience in his building, saw the PFL as contributing to his success by promoting daily reflection about his work. “If you think about your practice on a regular basis and what you do, it just makes sense,” he stated (Principal Interview P17, 2014 lines 168-169).
Three of the four principals from schools with SES rates between 50 and 74.9 percent conceptualized the PFL as a catalyst for reflection. The principal of a rural high school with 10 years of experience perceived the PFL as causing “administrators to become more reflective on their behavior and the initiatives that they started” (Principal Interview P15, 2014 lines 185-187). Furthermore, he stated that the PFL became the tool that helped him reflect on what he had accomplished and to determine the needs for planning for the future of his school. The principal of a high school in a small Pennsylvania city was more personal in his responses, saying that “it was more effective for me to do as a self-reflection tool. I feel like I knew my work better than the ... no disrespect to my superintendent, I felt I knew my strengths and where’s my growth” (Principal Interview P3, 2014, lines 60-63). The third principal in this group referenced the self-reflection that came from the PFL process as a tool for balancing how she prioritized the use of time in her second year of leadership. “So when I sat down to do my self-reflection, it was, ‘Eww, I should’ve worked on this a little bit more this year. Eww, I should have spent more time on this.” she said (Principal Interview P4, 2014 lines 206-210).

Of the principals from schools with an SES between 25 and 49.9 percent, three of the four principals spoke of the PFL as influencing the practice of self-reflection. “You have a real great chance to self-reflect, and look at, and compile, and see, ‘Am I meeting the things that are needed for my building?’” stated a second-year principal of a rural high school (Principal Interview P2, 2014, lines 147-148). Another principal in this group with five years at the helm of his school mentioned that the PFL was influential to his reflective practices, albeit, on an annual timeframe. “This is a tool that each year
causes me to reflect on what I’m doing and whether I can and how I need to recalibrate… It is a good mirror in that sense,” he said (Principal Interview P5, 2014, lines 290-293).

The third principal in this group was complimentary of the evaluation rubric aspect of the PFL because it forced him to be reflective about what he did and how he did it (Principal Interview P12, 2014).

Only two of the five principals from schools with SES between 0-24.9 percent directly referenced the self-reflection promoted by the use of the PFL. One principal, the leader in his fourth year at a large suburban high school, commented that “When reflecting about my own practice, I see all of the different things that go into…, all the different things that are considered within the principal effectiveness plan” (Principal Interview P14, 2014 lines 131-135). He used the components of the PFL as a reminder of the many tasks he needed to focus on as a leader. The second principal in this group referenced the practice of reflection as a secondary action that occurred after he had compiled the evidences of his own performance as a leader. He was able to use the documentation as a point of reflection as he viewed his progress toward future goals (Principal Interview P8, 2014).

In summary, while three quarters of the principals perceived the PFL as directly promoting self-reflection, the majority of the principals in the group were in schools with SES levels in the mid-range between 25 and 74.9 percent. Of the nine principals who described the PFL as a tool to encourage self-reflection, six were in their second year of leadership in their present positions. One could surmise that the less established a principal was in his school, the more likely he was to view the PFL as guiding force in how he thought about his own performance. Although many of these principals had
leadership prior to their present roles, one could also speculate that as with the newness of many roles, there is a renewed sense of performance accountability on the part of the principal and the supervisor. The research noted the shifts of the roles of principals from a management focus to an accountability focus (Catano & Stronge, 2006; Ginsberg & Thompson, 1992; Portin et al., 2006). Principals used the PFL to think about their performance within the context of the core characteristics of school leadership.

Finding 1.0: Summary

The first finding answered the research question, How do Pennsylvania public secondary school principals conceptualize the uses of the PFL in their practices across varying types of schools? by showing that principals viewed the PFL as a catalyst for personal goal-setting, prioritization and balance of the complex tasks of a secondary principal, and self-reflection. The researcher anticipated a greater variation of responses among principals based on their different school types as determined by the SES levels of their student populations; however, except for the less prominent presence of responses about goal-setting and self-reflection in the principals in schools with 75-100 percent SES levels, this variable didn't result in significant differences on how principals perceived the PFL. What was evident was that principals with an established leadership presence in their schools, were less likely to embrace the PFL as beneficial in promoting personal goal-setting, self-reflection, and prioritizations of responsibilities. In fact, many in this group spoke of the PFL as secondary to their own judgements of their school needs and the behaviors they chose to meet those needs.
Whether or not principals perceived the PFL as overall beneficial, the data showed that each had an awareness of underlying assumptions the PFL made about the work of a secondary school leader. Individual principals viewed the impact of the assumptions differently. While many of the principals reflected in Finding 1 viewed the assumptions as an inherent part of any tool and chose to mitigate the negative effects of the assumptions through personal choices about the use of the PFL, other principals saw the assumptions as limitations and/or barriers to the universal and personal benefit of the PFL to help principals grow in their abilities to manage schools effectively.

Finding 2.0 further answered the first research question. By showing the principals’ perceptions about the PFL’s assumptions, one better understands how principals conceptualized the uses of the PFL in relation to their responsibilities as a school leader.

Finding 2.0: Overview

In conceptualization of the uses of the PFL, principals identified incongruence between the perceived assumptions of the framework and the expressed realities of secondary school leadership. Sub-findings of the finding include: (2.1) Autonomy: The PFL assumed that principals had the autonomy to make the changes that were attributed to their performance; (2.2) The PFL assumed that principals had the time to do all the tasks they knew to do; and (2.3) what I chose to call the “Student Effect.” In other words, what role did the principals’ perceptions of their influence on students have in their conceptualization of the PFL as a tool to measure their performance? Principals asked questions such as, “Am I improving students’ lives?” and “What are the actions
that I do for students that allow me to ‘sleep at night.’” Again, organized based on the SES levels of the principals’ schools, the next sections explore the perceived incongruence of the PFL in relation to the realities of the principals’ work as discussed by the 17 secondary principals in the study.

To set the stage for the deeper, more specific look at the sub-findings, I first explore the overall sense of incongruence that the principals attributed to the PFL by looking at three prominent themes that emerge; the problems of the one-size-fits-all nature of the PFL, the perceived disconnect that principal pre-service training programs have with the scope of the PFL, and, finally, the perceptions of the inability of the PFL to create the urgency needed to improve student outcomes. The three themes provide context to the sub-findings by demonstrating how principals were trying to “fit” the tool into their daily routines as school leaders. In each principal interview there was evidence of a desire to connect the PFL with the realities of the day to day tasks; however, the contextual thinking from many of the principals showed what they perceive as tangential barriers to the effectiveness of the PFL to affect change in their leadership.

**One Size Doesn’t Fit All**

The principals of schools with SES levels between 75 and 100 percent perceived their school context as a key part of the use of PFL for their own growth and evaluation. A principal in her second year of leadership of a high school in a large Pennsylvania city captured this idea in her comments:

*It looks so different depending on where you are, whether that’s an urban school district, a suburban school district, rural school district, whether it’s a small school, a large school. It looks so different. And so, I look at this instrument as policy makers sort of trying to legitimize the position in itself (Principal Interview*
Furthermore, principals cited the assumptions the PFL made about the starting point of the principals’ work. For example, by requiring principals to know how to use data to inform decisions precluded that a school infrastructure existed for receiving and disseminating data while also having the contractual leeway to create opportunities for teachers to learn how to use data in meaningful and effective ways in their classroom instruction.

Another principal in the group placed the PFL within the dynamic context of the other variables that were part of his experiences as a principal of an urban high school, yet that are not necessarily part of the principals’ roles in schools in other geographical regions. He commented on the frequent addition of new students as one example.

*When you are trying to build an academic culture of safety and you’re constantly trying to incorporate new students into that, it is very, very difficult, and trying to get some consistency in the classroom as a teacher. You have new students come in that may not be in the same place where you were, so how do you get that student caught up or how do you make them feel like they’re a part of the class? It’s very difficult* (Principal Interview P17, 2014, lines 87-92).

Additionally, the principal placed the PFL within the larger context of fiscal hardship, stating that the PFL “has been implemented at the same time where we lost resources. So we are being evaluated with the Principal Effectiveness Tool during a major crisis in South Central School District 1” (Principal Interview P17, 2014, lines 284-288).

Although many of principals spoke of challenges their schools have faced in the year of the PFL implementation, the levels of severity or causality of the events varied greatly from school to school. From changes in juvenile detention policies in a nearby

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1 All names are pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality.
facility that affected enrollment, to pervasive reductions in resources, to highly public student tragedies, to school mergers, principals were not short on examples of why their individual school’s cultural context was unique. In the perceptions of the four principals in schools with SES levels between 75 and 100 percent, the assumption that “It’s a level playing field” was problematic. “School data can be used for you or against you depending on the type of school” (Principal Interview P17, 2014, lines 48-52) stated one principal. With the lack of knowledge of how the final numbers of a principal’s evaluation would ultimately be used, many principals were skeptical that the PFL would be used equitably across the various school and community contexts. Another principal in the group spoke of the degrees of involvement his school must explore to ensure successful students. He stated:

_There are many components that go into a successful student. Sometimes schools are able to serve as surrogates in those areas so that the kid can be successful, and sometimes we’re unable to do that, probably because of relationships, connections or whatever. Maybe just the situation’s too great to overcome_ (Principal Interview P7, 2014, lines 211-215).

Again, there was a realization by the principals that although they have influence to affect student achievement results, there were perceptions of vastly different contexts from school to school.

Yet another principal raised the complexities of the internal staff culture of the school as another variable that can be very different from school to school. She commented:

_One of the things that it (PFL) doesn’t put as a top priority is the importance of teachers... in the sense that what is that relationship that the leader needs to either nurture or seek in that teacher to create an effective school_ (Principal Interview P1, 2013, lines 158-161).
The principal, although in her second year of leadership in her building, had a keen understanding of the indirect impact that her leadership had on students and the importance of her role in developing teachers and the environment for learning.

What was apparent by the comments the four principals of schools with SES levels between 75 and 100 percent was that the academic success of students and a principal’s path for developing and maintaining a culture and infrastructure for ensuring student success can be very different from principal to principal, school to school, and district to district.

All principals in schools with an SES level of 50 to 74.9 percent perceived the PFL as making assumptions about the roles and responsibilities of principals that are incongruent in numerous ways with the expressed realities of their jobs. Again the general themes to emerge are the one-size-fits-all nature of the PFL. The words of one of the principals who led a large urban high school for nearly four years captured the sentiments of the group. He stated that the PFL “assumes that that the internal structures of the district are all the same.” In reality, he stated, “There are some very real variables that are different if you look at just the differences of communities across the state” (Principal Interview P3, 2014, lines 197-198).

The overall theme of one-size-doesn’t-fit-all was less prevalent in the comments of the principals in schools with lower SES levels; however, it was still present. Of the nine principals in schools with SES levels lower than 50 percent, seven referenced the incongruence of the PFL due to the one-size-fits-all nature of the framework. Nuanced in their responses were several dimensions of thought. One idea to emerge was that the PFL did not take into account the many leadership configurations of schools (Principal
Interview P10, 2014, lines 158-160, Principal Interview P13, 2014, lines 82), that the grade levels of the buildings were not reflected in the constructs of the framework (Principal Interview P13, 2014, lines 235-238), that the PFL did not account for the immediate areas of focus, many times non-instructional, that some high schools needed when new leadership entered the building (Principal Interview P9, 2014, lines 64-65, Principal Interview P12, 2014, lines 141-143), that the equal weighting of each domain was, in reality, reflective of the percentage of effort and focus a principal placed on that domain, and finally, that the behaviors set by the PFL were, in fact, the behaviors that principals within the specific contexts of their schools should be obligated to fulfill (Principal Interview P8, 2014, lines 159-161). In other words, principals questioned the relevance of the PFL to their unique situations and filtered their views of the PFL through their own experiences. At times, frustration was apparent in the principals’ responses to the one-size-fits-all nature of the PFL. One participant, who was relatively new to leadership of his rural high school, vented that he felt the creators of the PFL were “trying to fit us all into this mold.” and “that’s very frustrating” (Principal Interview P16, 2014, lines 218-219, 58-59).

In addition to the one-size-fits-all concern of the principals, a second theme provides further context to the sub-findings that demonstrate how principals were trying to “fit” the tool into their daily routines as a school leader. Principals voiced what they viewed as a lack of alignment between principal training programs and the scope and expectations of the PFL. Although the implementation design noted an alignment of the PFL and the Pennsylvania Inspired Leadership Program, none of the 17 principals interviewed mentioned the trainings.
Principal Training Alignment

Principals of schools with SES levels between 75 and 100 percent perceived that the PFL extended beyond the scope of pre-service principal training programs or job embedded training opportunities for principals to ensure that the skill levels were present in principals to embrace the scope of the work and attain levels of proficiency. One principal’s impassioned statement was emblematic of the concerns raised by the emergence of the PFL. She stated that the PFL assumed

*that school leaders have been trained on budgeting, that they have the skills to communicate, that these things are being offered in pre-service programs, that they know how to use data or they have effective systems ... and when I say systems, I'm not talking about systems as they're talking here in this document. But like, the equipment, the technology to pull that data in their school* (Principal Interview P1, 2013, lines 164-169).

The principal added that the PFL assumed that school leaders “have the opportunity for professional growth and whether or not that's in-service and how often that's happening and being afforded by the district or how, you know, whether or not the district pays for those opportunities or even partial” (Principal Interview P1, 2013, lines 171-174).

Of the 13 other principals who were interviewed from the other SES groups, three spoke of the perceived lack of training for school leaders in the skills required to meet proficiency in the components of the PFL. One principal referenced the years of training behind the effective implementation of the Danielson Framework for teachers, and then cited the varied nature of the roles of principals as demanding a much more targeted training format than that accompanied the PFL implementation. Yet another principal expanded the idea of training to include the fact that many principals have skills they do exceptionally well, while lacking in others. He perceived the PFL as having the power to
expose. “It does not allow you to be skilled in just one area and get away with it,” he said (Principal Interview P5, 2014, lines 161-162).

A third theme provides further context to the sub-findings that demonstrate how principals were trying to “fit” the tool into their daily routines as school leaders with the responsibility to improve student academic outcomes. Principals lacked confidence in the PFL as a tool for creating the needed urgency to improve school systems to the degree that will result in improved student achievement.

**Urgency for Change**

Creating a culture of change is a growing role of secondary principals as systems work to meet the accountability requirements for student growth and achievement. Skepticism of the PFL to actually motivate school leaders to drive change in schools was nuanced in the responses of numerous principals. The responses of one principal who connected his perceptions of the PFL directly to his mission to improve his school and the student achievement scores captured the sentiment of the others. The principal spoke of his understanding of the purpose of the PFL to affect change; however, he stopped short in viewing the PFL as the catalyst for school improvement. He stated, “The plan itself is not going to create the level of internal accountability that’s needed within a school. It is not going to create that urgency that’s needed. That has to come from within” (Principal Interview P3, 2014, lines 157-158). The principal alludes to the importance of the district-wide systems, not just the actions of principals, in the development of effective learning environments. One of the stated purposes of the PFL was to create an alignment between Danielson Framework for Teachers (2007) adopted
by the Pennsylvania Department of Education for teacher evaluation and the accountability of school principals (April 13, 2012 revision PDE PowerPoint). The implementation research suggests that it may take time for the implementation of the PFL to reach a level of effectiveness (Porter, 1994; Porter & Brophy, 1988; Porter, Kirst, Osthoff, Smithson, & Schneider, 1993; Schwille et al., 1988).

Finding 2.1: Autonomy

In addition to the general themes of how the PFL was incongruent with the perceived realities of the principals’ roles in schools, the assumptions of principal autonomy, time and the “student effect” are the content of the following sections. In each sub-finding section, the data are organized by groups of principals in relationship to their schools’ SES statuses. The organization aids in the readability of the analyzed data and also supports the Chapter 5 implications.

The data from the 17 principal interviews showed that secondary school leaders identified incongruence between the perceived assumptions of the framework and how they spoke of the realities of their leadership contexts. Principals had much to say about how they felt the PFL made an assumption that they had autonomy to make the changes in their schools that were attributed to their performance. As in previous sections, the principal responses are viewed by their membership in the SES bands of the schools they led.

Three of the four principals from schools with an SES of 75-100 percent viewed the perceived autonomy of the principals’ roles by the PFL as part of their conceptualization of the plan. The only principal who did not speak of assumptions of
autonomy was the leader of a single entity charter school which had oversight provided by a board; however, did not have the complex context of a larger district with other schools and other leaders. The inherent assumption of principal autonomy in the PFL appeared in principal comments such as: “I was not in control of my budget” (Principal Interview P1, 2013, line 181); “That leaders are hiring their own staff versus the staff being appointed to their buildings” (Principal Interview P1, 2013, lines 170-171); “I wanted to schedule students to be able to afford them an opportunity to have internships or for teachers to have time to collaborate and those things were not afforded to me” (Principal Interview P1, 2013, lines 181-184); “Basically you’re dealing with personalities, you’re dealing with circumstances, and certainly we can’t allow circumstances to be barriers, but at the same time, we can’t ignore that some circumstances make it more challenging to get the results that we need” (Principal Interview P7, 2014, lines 171-174); and finally, “There are so many different variables that you can’t control in your school, and in a school like this it goes up and down so much” (Principal Interview P17, 2014, lines 147-150).

The degrees of autonomy of the principals’ roles were perceived as a significant factor in how the PFL was conceptualized by principals in schools with an SES of 75 - 100 percent. Principals worked within larger contexts of school districts while feeling the responsibility for the outcomes as determined by student academic achievement in their individual buildings. Important variables including decisions about resource allocations, budgeting, staffing, programs and scheduling, were rarely solely or directly in the hands of principals. Furthermore, there was a realization that any one of these decisions, when made in order to change directions from the established culture of a school building,
could become all-consuming for a school leader, taking considerable time as coalitions were built among stakeholder communities and as planning took place to implement and to sustain the desired change. Without levels of internal trust in school systems, regardless of principal autonomy, schools are not likely to see the sustainable change in their learning environments that could lead to improvements in academic achievement for students.

Three of the four principals of schools with 50-74.9 percent SES perceived the PFL as making assumptions about the autonomy they had to make decisions that affect their performance on components of the framework. One principal with 13 years of leadership experience, three of which were in the small city high school where I interviewed him, stated that the PFL assumed that “the principal has the resources to implement effective change” and that he “is part of a system where they have control of the decisions that need to be made” (Principal Interview P3, 2014, lines 187-189). One principal who further defined her role as a Turn-around Officer within the parameters of the School Improvement Grant commented, “I supposedly had the final decision, but I didn’t. That kind of went to central office” (Principal Interview P10, 2014, lines 159-160).

As in the previous group, three of the four of the principals in schools with an SES level of 25-49.9 percent felt that the PFL made assumptions about the autonomy they had to affect change in their schools. One principal with over 20 years in leadership of her school commented that the PFL “puts an expectation on thoughts that we’d have more freedom and more power over our building than we do” (Principal Interview P13, 2014, lines 153-154). Another principal in the group who was in his second year of the
principalship saw the autonomy of the principal in relationship to his ability to focus his efforts on specific components of the framework. He stated that based on the titles of the domains, there was an assumption “that there’s a whole lot of instructional leadership going on.” He further clarified:

*That’s not always the case which is unfortunate. I do nothing in the fourth quarter other than making testing schedules and making sure I have all my ducks in a row if the state comes in for a PSSA audit or a Keystone audit. I mean that’s all we are doing* (Principal Interview P12, 2014, lines 133-139).

The five principals in schools with SES levels below 24.9 percent did not mention assumptions about principal autonomy in their perceptions of the PFL. The absence of the perceptions in their comments suggested, however slightly, the notion that the context of schools was a determining factor in how principals chose to think about the plan. The comparison graph of school SES levels and the SPP scores (see Figure 5 on page 40) highlights that principals in schools with SES levels below 24.9 percent were likely to experience less pressures on them as leaders due to the higher academic performance of students in their schools even though each school is likely to have other unique challenges for the leader.

**Finding 2.2: Time**

The second emerging sub theme in Finding 2 was present in the responses of principals across the different school types. In many ways, principals conceptualized the PFL as making assumptions about time. The sentiment was that the PFL unrealistically assumed that the principals had the time to do all the tasks they know to do to improve their schools. The element of time in the prioritization of the versatile roles and
The responsibilities of principals is not surprising nor was the emergence of time as a factor related to perceptions about the PFL.

For the principals in schools with an SES of 75-100 percent, the theme of time in direct relationship to the PFL was not present. Yet, for the principals in schools with an SES of 50-74.9 percent, three of the four spoke of the gap between knowing what to do and the time to do it. “It’s what we should be doing, but we don’t have the time to do,” commented one second-year principal (Principal Interview P4, 2014, lines 120-121). She added that the PFL assumed “that we have the time to…if we want to be at the distinguished level, is that we have the time and the help, the resources to be able to do everything that we need to do to be distinguished” (Principal Interview P4, 2014, lines 133-135). Another principal, who had a decade of school leadership in his building, framed the element of time in the context of principals taking care of themselves versus attending to the day-to-day demands of the job.

We were so busy worrying about other things that we do not always thinks about our own welfare. There are things that, you know, we should take 20 minutes a day to say, OK, well, do I have this and this? Because I know this will be coming up but as far as this evaluation goes, and the principal effectiveness. Most principals neglect themselves quite a bit (Principal Interview P15, 2014, lines 138-144).

Time as a theme emerged with two of the four principals in the 25-49.9 percent SES schools. The principal in his second year at a mid-sized suburban high school realized where his time should be focused; however, his willingness to get at “leadership” roles versus the “management” roles was lost in the day-to-day demands of his work (Principal Interview P12, 2014, line 171). A second principal in the group also spoke of the challenges of keeping a balance of her time between the “management details” and the responsibilities that result in transformative changes in her school. Even with 20
years of experience as a leader in the same building, she felt the PFL was unrealistic
about the use of her time to do the things she knew to do.

The theme of time surfaced again with three of the five principals in schools with
SES levels of 24.9 percent or less. A principal in her second year of leadership of a rural
high school commented that “the assumption is that we have the time to do what the state
wants us to do which takes away from other things in our building” (Principal Interview
P16, 2014, lines 126-128). Another principal in his fourth year at a large suburban high
school perceived an imbalance of the expectations with regard to the components of the
plan. He stated, “I think the amount of time expected for some of the other facets of the
principal responsibilities can be so consuming it’s somewhat regardless of your concerns
for the building management and the school safety of the building” (Principal Interview
P14, 2014, lines 109-112). A third principal of the group who was in her fifth year as the
principal of a small urban school stated that “an understanding of the daily work of a
principal is nowhere reflected in the tool.” She clarified that she receives “150 or more
emails per day” in addition to the multiple phone calls she tries to handle in a timely
manner. Add to that the meetings “with parent groups who are unhappy...with parents
who are unhappy...with kids who are unhappy.” She emphasized her thoughts by saying
that “none of those things are really reflected in there except under one possible part... of
Domain 4” (Principal Interview P9, 2014, lines 114-121). The sentiment was that the one
component in Domain 4 could be construed as occupying an inordinate percentage of a
principal’s available time, thus creating unrealistic expectations. In case there was any
doubt, she stated that the PFL “assumes that we have a lot more time on our hands to
reflect on what we do than we actually have” (Principal Interview P9, 2014, lines 130-131).

The principal’s role has been described to include 40 different tasks that demand attention during any given day (Horng, et al., 2009). One can understand the perceptions of principals about a lack of time as they meet the daily challenges of addressing all the separate tasks while also comparing their performance against a comprehensive set of core behaviors that are inherent in the PFL. What is of note is that the principals in the schools with the highest SES rates, did not include the incongruence related to time in their responses. Could it be that they have become accustomed to functioning in a daily environment where the needs are so great that they have learned to celebrate what did get accomplished rather than what didn’t get done? Do school systems with higher need students develop different perceptions of time in relation to meeting the needs of students? Or are school leaders who accept the challenges of higher need schools entering with or adapting to a different set of skills? And what, if anything, does this say about the leadership behaviors needed to improve schools by creating the conditions for increased student achievement?

Finding 2.3: The “Student Effect”

The last sub theme related to the perceived assumptions of the PFL was what I chose to call the “student effect” because of the way the principals spoke of a dimension of their work that was held in reverence by them. Many positioned the PFL and any influence it might have on them as secondary to the “student effect.” The “student effect” as I define it are the less quantifiable aspects of the principals’ roles that were
closely attuned to what the principals described as the reasons why they chose to lead schools. Questions of “What do the students say?” “Am I improving their lives?” and “What allows me to sleep at night?” were frequently mentioned by principals in relation to their own ideas of their success. The “student effect” phenomenon was perceived to supersede any ratings that came from the PFL.

The PFL and the principals’ perceptions of how they measure their own success was prevalent in all the groups of principal interviews, and was consistently viewed as being separate in the minds of the principals from the external ratings coming from the PFL. As an example, a principal in his fourth year at a large urban high school put it this way, “At the end the day if I know that I did the best I could for the kids that I serve then I put my head on my pillow at night and go to sleep just fine” (Principal Interview P7, 2014, lines 242-243). As in previous sections, responses of each group of principals by SES levels of their schools are explored in the coming paragraphs.

The principals of schools with SES levels between 75 and 100 percent had the most to say about the incongruence of the PFL and the “student effect.” The words of a principal of a large urban high school who was completing his second year captured the positioning of the PFL in relation to what he saw as indicators of success for him. He stated:

*The Principal Effectiveness Tool is fine but it still doesn’t address the needs of the kids that will never quite fit perfectly into those little boxes that sometimes we want our kids to fit into. You need schools and I think there needs to be some leeway for schools like Western Ridge High School or any other comprehensive school across the state where you have, sometimes, a more challenging population* (Principal Interview P17, 2014, lines 339-345).

He added that within this context the PFL was

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2 All names are pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality.
not really going to alter my decision-making process outside what I would normally do for my students or my staff on any given day. I think if what you do is in the best interest of your students on any given day, nine times out of ten you’re going to fall into one of those domains solidly into at least the proficient column (Principal Interview P17, 2014, lines 265-270).

The principal further elaborated on the context of the “student effect” and the close relationship of the PFL and student achievement scores. He stated:

I have some students here that may never ever passed a Keystone, but maybe they didn't go to school for the first eight (years) - off and on or whatever - and they're here, now they get here and they go to school, they're trying to be involved in things and they're kind of on the right path, but because of whatever academic deficiencies they have or gaps in their knowledge, they may not ever pass a Keystone, so if that counts towards me as failing, but when you meet this individual child, I can't quite capture that, but you realize that you've turned that- your school has helped play a part in turning that student's life around (Principal Interview P17, 2014, lines 127-135).

A second principal in the group, also a leader of a large urban high school, gave his passionate response about how he saw the “student effect” coming into conflict with any evaluation on his performance by the PFL. Again, we see the incongruence of the PFL and his perceptions of the “student effect.” He stated:

I'll tell you the things that I evaluate myself on. Earlier, when we were talking, I told you we had a hundred percent college application acceptance. That was a damn good year, all right? Those are the things. The fact that my one year at Central Township3 where we reduced serious incidents and disciplined infractions, in the one year, like sixty-five percent. We just hit a major ... and then obviously we continued to grow upon that. I think we saw an eighty-some percent reduction. The year that I got there, there was twenty-nine PDS4 infractions. By the time I left, my last year, we had six. Those are the things that I evaluate myself on and judge myself on. And at the end of the day, if I know that I did the best that I could for the kids that I serve, then I put my head on my pillow at night and go to sleep just fine (Principal Interview P7, 2014, lines 233-243).

The same principal added:

3 All names are pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality.
4 Persistently Dangerous Schools designation by Pennsylvania Department of Education.
Go ask the kids. Ask the kids if I'm making a difference in their lives. If that answer is no, then it's time for me to go, because then I would say that I'm failing. Not just because of a score I get on some type of plan that a bureaucrat thought up (Principal Interview P7, 2014, lines 316-319).

A third principal, like the previous two in the group, led an urban high school. She commented that the PFL is “not the way I lead. I lead with my heart. I lead with compassion and I lead, lead with love. This here, this document is sort of an afterthought about how can I make sure that I'm in compliance” (Principal Interview P1, 2013, lines 235-237).

Although the “student effect” was most prevalent for the principals in schools with the highest SES levels, the incongruence was seen by other principals as well.

One of the principals of schools with SES levels between 50 and 74.9 percent commented on the incongruence of the PFL and the “student effect.” She viewed what she did on a daily basis in her building to support teachers in developing the skills to positively affect students and the subsequent impact of that on students as superseding any importance of the PFL process. She stated, “I would be doing that regardless of what the tool is showing” (Principal Interview P3, 2014, lines 243-245).

Two of the four principals of schools with SES levels between 25 and 49.9 percent also spoke of the incongruence of the PFL and the “student effect.” The principal of a rural high school who had been in the role over 20 years placed the tasks she did managerially to create an environment where her teachers and students were supported by a smooth running building as evidence of her success. She commented that a principal could be doing many of the components of the PFL; however, “people aren't going to follow you” if the principal fails to build supportive relationships with staff and students.
Another principal in the group placed students squarely in his perceptions of his success. In comparing students to the PFL process, he stated, “I’m really more concerned at the end of six years that the 420 students who were here during that time have moved on to be productive members of, not only my community, but your community, and everywhere else” (Principal Interview P2, 2014, lines 198-201).

Two of the five principals of schools with SES levels between 0 and 24.9 percent also spoke of the incongruence of the PFL and the “student effect.” One principal in her second year alluded to the importance she placed on the relationship she had with the students. She commented:

*When I am with the kids and the staff, that’s when I learn about what’s going on in the building, and who needs help with kids and staff, and support, and who is doing a great job, but I get constantly pulled away from that especially in the head principal’s role* (Principal Interview P16, 2014, lines 100-104).

Although not necessarily directly affecting students, her actions revealed where she perceived value in regard to her leadership actions. The second principal of the group, who was in the fifth year of leadership of her building, commented that despite the many components of the PFL and the complex roles of the principalship, she was “still going to be at football games on Friday night and basketball games on Tuesday and Thursdays and Fridays” (Principal Interview P9, 2014, lines 183-185). She viewed the public support of the students by attending school events as an action that she was committed to doing as a non-negotiable in her leadership. And although she did not say that the other components of the PFL of less importance in her work to set the conditions for student success in her school, she did reveal the importance she attributed to the “student effect” as a factor in
her own perceptions of her leadership and the actions that determine her effectiveness and success.

**Finding 2.0: Summary**

The principal role is complex and multidimensional in nature, and a principal’s effectiveness is contingent on the perceived success of the many stakeholders in a school system. Although it is difficult to attribute the perceptions of incongruence to actual components of the PFL, and most likely inappropriate to do so, it is important to validate and understand the complexities in which the evaluative tool resides. The contexts are individually unique in their composition and the study captured a glimpse of time in the evolution of a group of leaders’ acceptance of the use of a state-mandated evaluative tool. Schools are part of larger systems and the perceptions about autonomy that surfaced by the introduction of the plan may be mitigated in the future as districts become more aligned through the mandated comprehensive planning processes and the transparency of the school superintendent goals.

Principals were likely always aware of the time limitation involved in their roles; however, the interviewed principals perceived a new dimension to the lack of time issue. The PFL with its requirement for explicit documentation of the evidences of effectiveness, added new “desired results” to the evaluative process of many school leaders. Although the relationship between the supervisor and principal will always play a crucial role in the evaluative ratings of a principal, the PFL, by standardizing the components deemed important, made the process transparent and interpretable by a
broader stakeholder group. Time now became equated with the principals’ abilities to produce measurable results with proved effectiveness.


**Finding 3.0: Overview**

Thoughts of the PFL as a compliance document were prevalent throughout the comments of the interviewed principals and were a strong component of the conceptualization that the principals had of the framework. In both the principals who viewed the PFL as beneficial in their own growth and those who viewed the PFL as an intrusive external force that added to the many responsibilities of their roles, the behaviors associated with compiling the evidences of their work in relation to the components of the PFL were a real part of their collective experiences and revealed changes in their behaviors as school leaders.

As context to the third finding, the principals interviewed had diverse understandings and views about the purpose of the PFL. What was not present was an overriding understanding of how and why the PFL came about, a condition that likely
impacted the divergent ways that principals made sense of the PFL in their daily work.

During the time of the study, the state Department of Education, in efforts to support lower performing schools, released School Improvement Grants funding to schools. Many principals viewed the PFL as a necessary step by districts to ensure the continued flow of these funds into their schools to support their local improvement efforts. The notion that the PFL was an extension of political wrangling and an attempt to “fix” what was perceived by political leaders as what was wrong with public education was another view held by principals. Any trust that the PFL was created to support the principal’s personal growth and skill development was absent from the principals’ conversations.

As a type of counterpoint to the first findings, the data in the third finding showed that if principals conceptualized the PFL as an external accountability tool, they were more prone to view the framework as a compliance checklist and evidence documentation tool, distinguishing this as only loosely related to the sense of urgency and transformational work they were attempting to do in their buildings and community.

What is evident and perhaps the most meaningful contribution of the study to the larger body of research on the ability of an evaluation instrument to change leadership practices were the end behaviors that principals arrived at, albeit, through divergent conceptualizations of the PFL. Although principals were quick to give their opinions of the PFL and offer their support or criticism of the framework, principals spoke of the expansion of their awareness of the roles of their jobs and referenced actions that they took as a result of participating in the pilot year of the PFL implementation. As in
previous sections, responses of each group of principals by SES levels of their schools are explored in the coming paragraphs to set the context for Finding 3.

The principals in schools with SES levels of 75-100 percent all conceptualized the PFL as a checklist and evidence documentation framework with varied connections with what they perceived to be their day-to-day responsibilities. All were cognizant that their involvement in the pilot was directly related to their respective districts’ resource needs and the district’s choice to pursue School Improvement Grant funds. The principals each saw their involvement, not as part of a plan to improve their practices, but as a necessary compliance to ensure the continued access to the additional funds for their schools. The sentiment of these principals was captured best in the following quote from one of the principals:

*We kind of had very little choice. We were a School Improvement Grant school, and we were pretty much told that if we want to maintain and keep those funds for the School Improvement Grant, that we pretty much had to participate in the pilot* (Principal Interview P7, 2014, lines 84-87).

One principal in her second year of leadership of her urban high school demonstrated her compartmentalization of the process as a compliance action in her comment that after “checking off” an item on the list, she could then “go and do what really needs to happen” (Principal Interview P1, 2013, lines 262-263). Another principal, the leader of a charter high school and also in his second year, showed that his involvement with the PFL was mostly for compliance purposes. He stated that he went through the year generally the same as the previous years, but in response to the completion of the numerical evidence he said, “the way that they (the evidences) were reported, I guess, was different” (Principal Interview P6, 2014, line 58).
Yet another second-year principal in the group reacted more viscerally to the compliance aspects of the PFL. He stated:

*Moving forward, I'm probably not going to allow it to guide and dictate what I do. In all honesty, I think I probably would prefer to hang up my career and move on to something else if I got to a state in my career when I was just worrying about a template and trying to score the highest I could score on it. Basically, I don't think that would make my career, what I'm doing, fun. It's not why I went into education* (Principal Interview P7, 2014, lines 303-308).

Principals in the 75-100 percent SES group acknowledged that the PFL forced them, for compliance reasons, to keep the framework as a working document. Although many principals desired dialogue and collaboration with their supervisors, there was a sense from one that the evidence gathering helped to take “the opinion of somebody’s view on how you perform as an administrator” away from a relational process and to “tie it to observable behaviors similar to the teacher effectiveness tool” (Principal Interview P6, 2014, lines 39-40).

Furthermore, a principal in the group with nearly four years of experience at his urban high school lamented that

*for it to have been an effective pilot and effective involvement, I would have needed a superior to be guiding me along the way and kind of working with me to set my goals and focus on the standards and have the conversation and obviously, at the end, could critique and give feedback so we could cultivate at it and change it for the following year* (Principal Interview P7, 2014, lines 269-273).

The call for a more defined understanding of the role of the supervisor in the evaluation process and growth of a principal was not isolated to just one principal. The implication chapter of my study develops the idea further; however, the relationship and at times, tension, between the principal and supervisor was present in the principals’ conceptualizations of the PFL. The PFL was viewed as a reference point to help inform the principals’ supervisors of the tasks that the principals had done. One principal role
played a response he had with his supervisor. "No, I've done that and here's evidence that I've done this," he stated (Principal Interview P17, 2014, lines 186-188).

Like the principals in the previous group, all principals in schools with an SES level of 50-74.9 percent, viewed the PFL as a framework for documentation for compliance purposes. From a tool for intra-district accountability (Principal Interview P10, 2014, lines 219-220), to a rubric for tracking compliance (Principal Interview P3, 2014, line 159), the PFL’s compliance quality was prevalent in how the group of principals thought about the PFL. “I think it’s a good rubric; it’s not a transformational tool,” commented one principal who had 13 years of experience, three in the school he led when he participated in the study (Principal Interview P3, 2014, lines 183-184). Another principal, who had a decade experience in his high school, placed the process of documentation above the deeper understanding of how actions associated with the specific components of the PFL impacted the day to day progress of students. He stated that documenting the evidences was the “major challenge. Not so much the domains or the components, or understanding them or even carrying them out. It was more making sure that we were documenting it and how we document it” (Principal Interview P15, 2014, lines 75-78).

Three of the four principals in the schools with SES levels of 25-49.9 conceptualized the PFL predominately as an evidence compilation tool. The outlier placed the evidence process secondary to the relationship with his supervisor. In his view, the PFL was the catalyst for guided conversation rather than a compliance checklist of evidences and furthermore, by nature, it removed some of the “capriciousness” from his evaluation (Principal Interview P5, 2014, lines 260-262). One principal in the group
commented that he didn’t think about his job any differently than he did the previous year without the PFL; however, he added that he did a much better job in documenting what he did and what particular domain that action corresponded with on the PFL (Principal Interview P12, 2014, lines 50-52). He further elaborated, “I'm spending more time talking about what a good job I'm doing and less time having to actually go out and do that good job.” He described the process as “just one more hoop that we have to jump through” (Principal Interview P12, 2014, lines 207-210).

Another principal, one with over 20 years in leadership of her high school, spoke of the components of the PFL as “too general about having ideas and not enough about implementing them” (Principal Interview P13, 2014, lines 219-220). She chose to ignore the components of the PFL and to rely on her own experience. It was clear that she positioned her knowledge of school leadership as separate from the components of the PFL. She described the principal’s role as having “too many details” to fit the components of the PFL, and lamented the equal weighting of each of the components as being inadequate to capture the nuances of effective school leadership. Although she completed the checklist process, she did so purely to fulfill her obligation to the process (Principal Interview P13, 2014, lines 89-92).

The same theme in how principals conceptualized the PFL was present in the responses from three of the five principals in the 0-24.9 SES schools. Here was what they had to say in regards to the PFL as an evidence documentation tool. “When things came up along the way, I tried to print and file them so that I could create a better picture of really what I do on a day-to-day basis” stated a principal of a large suburban school (Principal Interview P8, 2014, lines 192-197). Furthermore, the principal added that the
practice of compiling paper copies of his actions was helpful to later substantiate actions that corresponded with the components of the PFL. The new behaviors didn’t appear to be connected with school leadership decisions, but rather were more aligned with how those leadership choices were documented.

Another principal in the group stated:

*I am one of those people, I'll give 100 percent until the day I die but I think it will force us to think ... 'If I am being evaluated on this and my boss is forced to evaluate me on this, how am I going to reach each of these components? I think it will force me – I hate to say it – to try to be creative to meet these components’* (Principal Interview P16, 2014, lines 199-202).

Again, the function of making certain that the documentation of evidence was in place superseded the behaviors that directly related to the effective leadership of schools.

Perhaps the behaviors were symptomatic of the first year of implementation of a plan that was clouded with unanswered questions of how it would be used, what it meant to the future of principals’ careers and development, and who ultimately saw the numbers related to the evaluation of the principal. In the culture of mistrust that existed in many schools and with the state education system in general, it was not surprising that the vulnerability needed for personal growth was lacking in responses.

A third principal in the group was also cognizant of the documentation needs related to the PFL. She shared that a new importance now existed and that was the preparation needed for the evaluation process. She cited that although she was very good about having meetings on a routine basis with her administrative team and guidance department, she now needed to ensure that she had the meeting agendas and meeting minutes in place to be used in her own evaluation (Principal Interview P11, 2014, lines 135-139). She further stated:
The assumption is that you can rate somebody simply on that rubric. I don't know if that really pulls away all the layers of what a person is doing in terms of the human relationships in the building, and their relationships with the kids, and those kinds of things (Principal Interview P11, 2014, lines 191-194).

Once again, a principal conceptualized the day to day routines, behaviors and actions of a school leader as separate from the process of meeting the requirements of the PFL.

The behaviors associated with documenting the evidences of a principal’s effectiveness are not the core behaviors that research suggests are imperative in the improvement of schools and student academic achievement; however, they were representative of other changes that were occurring with the interviewed principals as they incorporated the PFL into their experiences as school leaders. Although many principals spoke of behaviors driven by compliance, thus supporting the “what gets measured is what gets done” motto, Finding 3.1 reveals the emerging changes that were occurring in the core leadership practices (Catano & Stronge, 2006, p. 394).

**Finding 3.1: Compliance**

Finding 3.1 explores the following: The behavior of documentation of evidences promoted reflection, which resulted in changes to practices aligned to the components of the PFL, regardless of the principals’ perceptions of the PFL.

What was apparent from the data of the principals was that the PFL implementation added a dimension to roles of the 17 school leaders who participated in the study. With some taking overall ownership of the process and making the most of the tool to meet their own desires and needs for grow in their effectiveness as a leader, and for the others who conceptualized the PFL as an external and somewhat unwelcomed addition to their already complicated roles as school leaders, nearly all of the principals
spoke of changes that occurred as a result of the increased obligation to document the work that they were doing. The behaviors associated with documenting the evidences that aligned to the components of the PFL promoted a level of reflection about the work principals did that may have previously been non-existent or less structured. The end result of the reflective practices, regardless of the overall acceptance or criticism of the PFL, was the greatest contribution the study made to the research on the impact evaluation tools can have on the practices and behaviors of participants.

The next section presents the data from the principal responses in regards to the sub finding. As in previous sections, principals’ responses are explored by grouping of principals by their school SES levels.

Three of the four principals in schools with SES levels of 75-100 percent attributed new behaviors to their reflections concerning the new principal evaluation process. In keeping the PFL as a working document, one principal stated, “It forced me to have vision and goals” (Principal Interview P1, 2013, lines 196-197). Another principal likened the process to the teacher effectiveness tool in that it helped him envision the observable behaviors that needed to be part of his actions and that contributed to a general sense of knowing he was completing his job appropriately (Principal Interview P6, 2014, lines 39-40). The principal expressed the ownership and direction he had of his actions by having the domains of the PFL readily available to him over the course of the year. Working through the different domains, he stated, “was an easy way to keep myself on target” (Principal Interview P6, 2014, line 165). For the third principal in the group, the reflection that happened on a regular basis as he prepared for future conversations with his supervisor about the performance had an impact of his
actions. Although there was universal agreement that many "good" principals are doing many of the behaviors that are suggested in the domains of the PFL, the availability of the components added a focusing quality to what principals chose to emphasize. Now it is "just making sure that you capture it and provide evidence" (Principal Interview P17, 2014, lines 178-184).

In the group of principals from schools with SES levels between 50-74.9 percent, the same theme appeared. One principal stated that the power of the PFL was the reflective thinking that happened from the frequent interaction with the PFL through the evidence compilation process. He further defined the tool as a "good rubric" that was limited unless it was connected to the reflective leadership needed to be transformative (Principal Interview P3, 2014, lines 183-184). As in the previous group, the knowledge that evidence of effective behaviors for each of the domains needed to be available as part of an evaluation conversation with a supervisor had the impact of keeping the PFL "on the forefront" of the minds of the principals as they led their schools (Principal Interview P10, 2014, line 171). Another principal described the documenting process as a "major challenge" but he was reflecting on the components of the PFL and was working towards ensuring the presence of the needed evidences in his actions as a leader (Principal Interview P15, 2014, line 75).

From the four principals from schools with SES levels between 25-49.9 percent, the principals recognized the self-reflection that the documentation process promoted. "I think I can come up with tons and tons and tons of things where it (the PFL) motivated me to do something to put in the evaluation," one principal commented (Principal Interview P2, 2014, lines 262-263). Another saw the reflection process of the PFL as
having the power to “help superintendents help principals grow” (Principal Interview P4, 2014, lines 58-59). Another added that “it makes you be a lot more reflective than we would typically be” (Principal Interview P12, 2014, lines 185-186). The fourth principal in the group expressed that the clear and organized way the PFL demonstrated the core practices of the principal’s job, helped him strategize how to achieve the related components (Principal Interview P5, 2014, line 107).

In the group of principals in schools with SES levels between 0-24.9, the theme of reflection about the components of the PFL was present in the conversation of three of the five principals. One principal, like many others, developed a practice of printing and filing evidences that aligned to the components of the PFL. He described the practice as creating a “better picture of really what I do on a day-to-day basis.” He was able to use the clarity of his performance as “a reflection point moving forward” (Principal Interview P8, 2014, lines 192-197). For another, the process of documenting evidences of his leadership, created the conditions where he would challenge himself to achieve changes into the next school year (Principal Interview P8, 2014, lines 98-99). One final principal in the group appreciated the guidance from the Department of Education on what was important for her to be doing in her roles as a school leader. As a result, she felt that she was more deliberate about choices in regards to her performance (Principal Interview P11, 2014, lines 135-139).

**Finding 3.0: Summary**

The purpose of the educator effectiveness initiative in Pennsylvania was to establish a universal evaluation instrument for both teachers and principals that had an
overall alignment that promoted the core leadership and teaching practices that were known to develop cultures in schools that focused on student achievement. In this final finding, evidence of an emerging movement toward these practices by the principals suggests that over time, the presence of the PFL will be instrumental in bringing about the desired practices in school leaders. With 14 of the 17 principals referencing ways that their involvement in the PFL pilot changed, focused, and motivated them to approach their responsibilities differently, the renewed attention of school leaders on a set of universal core practices was starting to take root.

Chapter 4 presented and discussed the findings of the study as obtained from the analysis of the interviews of 17 Pennsylvania secondary principals across a diverse sample of schools. The propositions, the themes which supported the propositions, and the number of participants who supported those themes were summarized in Figure 9 (see Figure 9 on page 55).

The next chapter summarizes the findings of the study in relationship to the research questions. Implications of the study, suggestions for future implementations of evaluative tools, limitations of the study, and direction for future research are discussed.
CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In the preceding chapter, I analyzed interview data to identify how Pennsylvania public secondary school principals conceptualized the uses of the Pennsylvania Framework for Leadership in their practices across varying types of schools. Furthermore, how Pennsylvania public secondary school principals described the Pennsylvania Framework for Leadership’s influences on their practices during the pilot year of the tools’ implementation was also discussed.

In Chapter 5, the most significant findings are highlighted, the implications of the study are discussed, suggestions for future implementations of evaluative tools are offered, limitations of the study are given, and direction for future research is framed.

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the qualitative data from the 17 secondary school principal revealed significant findings that answer how principals conceptualized and used the PFL in their work.

The first finding showed that principals who viewed the PFL as overall beneficial also were more likely to develop ways to use the tool as a motivating factor in setting personal growth goals for themselves, as a catalyst for self-reflection, and a reference point for the prioritization and balance of the complex tasks of a secondary principal. The sense of a principal’s efficacy, as in the Grissom and Loeb research, appeared to be a variable in the ways these principals adapted their behaviors to align with the scope of the domains and components of the PFL (2009). In other words, the principals set out to make the PFL an effective contribution to their leadership development and thus found
productive ways to have it do just that. In light of the second finding that highlighted the ways principals perceived the PFL as being incongruent with the realities of their positions, the principals experienced shifts in their personal value hierarchies in varying degrees and likely at different times in the process. For many of the principals, the ability to fully leverage the instrument as a catalyst for personal growth and development was clouded by the lack of implementation clarity. Whether or not principals heard the intended purpose of the PFL, there was evidence that skepticism and impartial information pervaded the implementation process. Perhaps the juxtaposition of the PFL pilot with the School Improvement Grant accessibility added to the principals’ feelings of ambiguity about the process and potential outcomes. Or maybe it was the timing that coincided with decreasing revenues to schools that had the effect of accentuating the complexity of the school leaders’ jobs. Whatever the reason, there was no shortage of potential barriers to acceptance of the PFL as a viable tool in the support of effective school leadership.

The second finding revealed the details of the incongruence between the perceived assumptions about the instrument by principals and the expressed realities of their daily practices of school leadership within the diverse contexts of their schools. Here the story the principals painted revealed the complexity of their thoughts about the PFL. Regardless of how principals had engaged with the PFL and how they found meaning in regards to their personal growth, goal setting and reflection, they portrayed the PFL as making certain inherent, dissonant, assumptions about their work. Namely, that principals had autonomy to make the decisions that affect their performance, that principals were in contexts where an adequate availability of time existed to achieve
proficiency of the stated goals, and that the components of the PFL were aligned to the personal values of principals in regard to students and student success.

The final finding came as a type of counterpoint to the first finding. Thoughts of the PFL as a compliance document were prevalent throughout the comments of the principals and were a strong component of the conceptualization that the principals had of the PFL. In both the principals who viewed the PFL as beneficial in their own growth and those who viewed the PFL as an intrusive external force that added to the many responsibilities of their roles, the behaviors associated with compiling the evidences of their work were a notable part of their collective experiences. Even those principals who viewed the PFL as only loosely related to the sense of urgency and transformational work they were attempting to do in their buildings and communities also demonstrated a level of self-reflection and subsequent behavioral shifts in response to the PFL. What was evident, and perhaps the most meaningful contribution of the study to the larger body of research on the ability of an evaluation to change leadership practices were the behaviors that each group of principals arrived at, albeit, through divergent conceptualizations of the PFL.

Implication of Findings

The principals interviewed for the study were interacting with the PFL for the first time and most were not directly involved in the decisions made in their school districts to include them in the pilot of the PFL. The study captured the thoughts and understandings of the principals at a time when they were sorting through the available and emerging information about the pilot process and making sense of the longer-term impacts of the
new PFL on their careers, their schools and their professional growth. With this context in mind, the implications and findings may not generalize to the new realities when the PFL is fully operational across teams of school leaders state-wide. Yet, the insights of the principals captured in the findings of the study create an opportunity to delve into the emerging culture surrounding the PFL and to assist in the development of the steps needed to ensure the long-term success of the instrument as a catalyst for leadership development and school improvement.

**School complexities and SES levels.**

The design of the study was deliberate in ensuring a representative sample of principals from schools that represented a full range of SES levels. From the five schools with SES levels below 25 percent to the schools with levels near 100 percent, the hypothesis of the study was that the SES levels of the schools that the principals led would be a variable to show patterns of perceptions about the PFL by the principals. Although some notable differences in a few specific ways were present, SES levels of the schools that the principals led were not a significant variable in determining how principals conceptualized and used the PFL. Each principal approached the PFL from his/her personal context as a leader. Principals framed the tool within the social, political, and historical contexts of their schools, using the components both actively and passively as a catalyst for choosing and documenting their behaviors as a leader. Because the PFL attributes student academic achievement to the evaluative ratings, those principals in the higher SES level schools will find it more difficult to achieve ratings comparable to their counterparts in the lower SES schools with the historically higher
student achievement scores. This may not have been on the minds of the principals at the
time of my study due to their limited understanding of how the results of the PFL would
ultimately affect them as leaders, but could likely drive continued revisions of the
principal evaluation process and instrument in Pennsylvania.

**Implementation clarity.**

The implications of the findings of the study ultimately point to a need for a
deliberate plan of implementation that makes as explicit as possible, the scope, use and
the intended impact of the PFL on the subjects of the instrument. Many school leaders
rise to their roles as principals because they exhibit certain skill sets that help them make
meaning of the complexities of schools with their divergence of academics, human
resource dimensions, and the social and political context of working within a larger
community. That skill set allowed many of the principals in the study to take ownership
of the PFL and to make it work for them. Despite what was perceived by many of the
principals as a nebulous implementation of the PFL, the findings showed the capability of
the principals to take care of themselves and to find opportunities for personal growth in
the PFL pilot experience. However, this point does not mitigate the inadequacy of the
implementation to optimize the potential for professional growth of principals by
ensuring a collective understanding of the intentions and uses of the instrument prior to
their experiences with it. The principals’ responses raised many questions about the PFL
and its future. Does the PFL promote levels of professional trust in school systems?
Should the PFL be used within or outside the context of a community of learners? In
other words, what is the relationship of the PFL to the individual’s growth and what is the
relationship of the PFL to the continued improvement of a school community (DuFour et
al., 2015)? Should the PFL promote the conditions or impetus for open and honest dialogues that are foundational in creating the cultures that influence student achievement (Bryk & Schneider, 2002)?

In the research on implementation theory, the importance of an instrument’s specific desired results and its consistency with other polices including those at the school district levels were cited as paramount in the effective implementation and sustained success of an initiative (Porter, 1994). The voices of principals who have first-hand experiences with developing cultures of learning are best positioned to contribute to the implementation process, and to the refinement of the PFL so that, moving forward, the PFL is viewed as promoting the behaviors that help schools arrive at cultures of healthy, vibrant learning.

**Consistency over time.**

A second implication, also a dimension of implementation theory, was the need for consistency of the plan over time. The principals were, in large part, completing the requirements of the PFL for compliance reasons. Because none of the principals had an understanding of how districts or more importantly, the Department of Education, would be using the numerical values that came from a principal’s individual scores, there was a lack of trust and a divided focus at best, in the views of the PFL as a tool for professional growth. In the years following the pilot, clarification on how the rating would be attributed to principals was developed (see Appendix F); however, the opportunity to capitalize on a wider base of principal support for the plan may have been lost in the
implementation. Maintaining an iterative focus on the improvements of the PFL in the coming years is important for its success.

The interviewed principals each spoke passionately about the ongoing work of improving their schools and gave details of how they were being strategic in their approaches to ensuring success for their students and teachers. The principals had a desire to become more effective leaders and more effective in their roles to impact student learning. Many embraced the PFL pilot participation and sought to learn the new scope of their position when the components opened new dimensions to their roles. For the others who showed more resistance to the PFL, there was evidence in their completion of the pilot that, at a minimum, they had worked to fulfill the obligations they had to the PFL implementation. Many expressed the benefits or desires to dialogue about their professional learning and performance with their supervisors, and hoped that eventually a level of collaboration would exist, more prominently, in the process. In the instances when the dialogue didn’t happen, principals were uninterested and expressed detachment from the ratings that were attributed to them by their supervisors. The principals wanted others to personally invest in their development and when the PFL was viewed as a checklist that would tally their performance worth, their skepticism and caution grew. The supportive dynamic between the principals and their supervisors was an important variable for principals. The isolation of the principals’ work was real to the participants (Lortie, 2009; Lytle, 1996) and many had a desire to see the PFL process as remedying factor in this regard. The cathartic feeling mentioned by many of the participants in regards to the interview process spoke to the emotional positioning they had in regards to their involvement in the PFL process.
The Department of Education has a continued obligation to help principals and their supervisors develop a common understanding of the evaluative process and the practices that promote the optimal learning and growth opportunities for principals, and consequently, the continued success of communities of learners in school systems. As was evident in the data related to the years of experience of the interviewed principals in their positions at the time of the study and their subsequent changes in positions in the time following the interviews, the pool of Pennsylvania high school principals will continue to evolve as new, less experienced, leaders choose to take on the challenge of school leadership. Each new principal deserves to capitalize on the lessons learned in the implementation years of the PFL, to have a tool that has purposeful clarity and alignment to the behaviors most needed in school leaders, and that is consistently in place, allowing for strategic personal growth over time.

**Alignment of the Pennsylvania Framework for Leadership.**

Prominent in the findings of how principals conceptualized the PFL was that the plan was not aligned to the realities of secondary school leadership. The PFL and its components need to align to the realities and scope of a principal’s role in order to position the tool to assist in the work of improving schools through the development of principals. I am not suggesting that principals become solely responsible for determining the practices and behaviors that will improve schools. I am suggesting, however, that a collective understanding of the best practices and behaviors is a needed step in the development of an evaluative tool that has the depth of credibility needed be accepted as
viable contributor to the growth of school leaders and subsequently improvements in student outcomes.

**Creating the context for success.**

The need for job-embedded professional learning opportunities for principals that allow them to learn in the contexts of the local settings, within the time constraints of their days, and with the collective goals of self, school, and community as the focus of their growth was another implication of the findings. Principals viewed their experiences in their individual schools as unique to the dynamics of district leadership, geographical contexts, and historical cultures of the building they were leading. They were keenly aware of the relational dynamic of the staff and the tedious “dance” needed to bring about change on a personal level with the other personalities that comprise the building culture. The Pennsylvania Department of Education moved to align the components of teacher and principal effectiveness within the Pennsylvania Inspired Leadership principal induction course, yet none of the interviewed principals mentioned their participation or knowledge of this support (April 13, 2012 revision PDE PowerPoint). Numerous questions remain in this regard: What are the mechanisms to engage principal preparation programs, as well as programs that prepare the leaders who supervise principals in understanding the PFL and the processes that promote its effective use? What role does the network of intermediate units across the state fulfill in this work? How is a consistent and supportive message about the PFL ensured in an implementation that seeks to effectively reach nearly 500 educational entities across the state?
Principal Voice: Getting it, using it.

The data from the principal interviews about the PFL demonstrated the power and learning to be gained from hearing people’s voices within the context of their schools. The study set out to capture the conceptualizations of the PFL in the voices of the leaders who were closest to the experiences created by its implementation (Emerson et al., 1995). School principals, perhaps even more so in secondary schools, are increasingly scrutinized in relation to student achievement benchmarks. Principals have been consigned to being “super teachers” (Leana, 2011, p. 32) rather than the more important designation as leaders of learning organizations (Senge, 1990, 2006) and don’t often get to voice their thoughts about their practices and how external variables impact how they approach their jobs. In order to develop the optimal evaluative instrument and tool for principal growth, the principal voice with the nuances brought on by years of experience and the diverse contexts of the schools they lead must be heard. I encourage future research in principal effectiveness to seek out the voices of principals to capture the dynamics in relationship to the prioritization of time and resources, the challenges and vibrancy of meeting the growth needs of teacher, students and communities, and the evolving political textures of the field of education. Only then can we ensure that the related instruments will not limit, but will promote the “strategic thinking” and adaptability needed for principals to success in leading schools (NCSL, 2007, p. 19).

Each of these implications points to the need for the continued systematic maintenance of the PFL over the coming years. With a large group of principals across all types of schools in the state, as well as their supervisors, having interacted with the PFL, the time is right to continue their engagement for improving the instrument.
Although the mediums for dialoguing openly about the PFL each have their detriments and benefits, a series of focus groups, surveys, and webinars concerning the PFL would allow for input about the deliberate modifications to be made to the principal evaluation process and the PFL instrument to increase its validity in quest for school improvement. The investment of resources of time, funds and personnel must go beyond the initial allocation for the PFL creation and use. The challenge that lies ahead is the improvement and sustainability of the PFL. Resources must be dedicated to strengthen the PFL to make it transformative in schools and to deepen the principals’ and supervisors’ interactions with the PFL in ways that equip them to build the cultures of learning that result in improved student achievement.

Limitations of Study

The one snapshot nature of the study has limitations. To assess the full impact of the study on implementation theory, the study would need to return to the principals frequently as they complete year one of the pilot and then move into the subsequent years with the same plan, an action that would, in fact, be difficult in light of the frequent movement of secondary principals into new roles. At the time of publication of the study, at least half of the principal participants had moved into different school leadership roles, interestingly, none of the principals in the highest SES schools remain in those positions.

Another limitation of the study is the self-report nature of how the PFL was impacting their behaviors associated with school leadership. As in any evaluation process, the relationship dynamic between the supervisor and the one being evaluated has
a prominent role in how the process is perceived. The study does not gather the perspective of those individuals who are in the supervisory role of the principals. Could the perspectives about reflective practices, growth and changes in behavior be different? Likely so. And what does that say about whether or not an evaluative tool can be used, in fact, to change behaviors?

Ultimately, schools are looking to become more effective in meeting the academic growth targets set by the state. The study does not measure changes in student academic achievement in relationship to the perceptions and conceptualizations principals have of the PFL. Again, to gather such data, a study would require a more comprehensive sample to create a cohort of secondary school leaders who were in positions of leadership with a duration long enough to establish the changes that they see as necessary. As made apparent in the second finding of the study, this action is also contingent upon the principals being given or taking authority for their autonomy.

**Future Directions**

One of the glaring needs for the implementation of a school leadership evaluation is to plan with implementation theory in mind. In other words, rather than viewing the actual use of the PFL as the pilot of the plan, the implementation of such a framework needs to consider the importance of a knowledge building phase that establishes a clear purpose for the plan, that communicates suggestions of protocols related to the plan that would help to define the roles of the supervisor and the principal in the process, and that shares practices that build the trust needed to create the environments that promote the professional growth of school leaders. The principals understood the Act 82 context of
the PFL and viewed the state-mandated principal evaluation as a practice that would remain a part of the principal leadership roles in Pennsylvania. However, the data demonstrated that there was a professional unease with the approach.

The problem of the numerous and varied roles in school leadership which includes the assistant principal roles, and the secondary and elementary principal roles is one that future direction of any study should explore more deeply. The study focuses on secondary school principals as they attempt to make meaning of the PFL. Conceptualizing the PFL in relation to their roles in schools was inconsistent at best, yet, a much wider scope of the principals’ job exists when one considers the roles of assistant principal, and elementary principals.

Ultimately, school leadership is about ensuring the success of students both academically and socially. Future studies that explore the possible relationship between the PFL and the improvement of student perception data and student academic performance over time in schools presents itself as a logical next step to this work. This not only offers a glimpse of the PFL outside the context of its implementation years, but also focuses the attention on the mission to improve schools by improving the effectiveness of the people who lead them.
Appendix A
Pennsylvania Framework for Leadership (PFL) - Study Interview Protocol

1. Did you participate in the PFL this year? In what ways? District training? State training?
2. Did you participate in the PFL Phase II Survey online?
3. Tell me what you know about the Pennsylvania Framework for Leadership. How well would you say you know the plan?
4. Describe briefly the evaluation tool used in previous years. How is the PFL the same or different?
5. What in the PFL would be or could be useful for a principal to know about or do? What in the PFL isn’t useful for a principal to know about or do?
6. How do you see the PFL informing your practices? Explain your response in the context of your school.
   a. How did participating in the PFL influence your daily practices? Give an example of a time that this occurred.
   b. Can you describe any positive influences of the PFL on your daily practice as a principal? Give one example. Why was this a positive influence?
      i. Probe: What was the effect on teachers?
      ii. Probe: What was the effect on parents?
      iii. Probe: What was the effect on students?
      iv. Probe: What other effects did this positive influence have?
   c. Can you describe any negative influences of the PFL on your daily practice as a principal? Give one example. Why was this a negative influence?
      i. Probe: What was the effect on teachers?
      ii. Probe: What was the effect on parents?
      iii. Probe: What was the effect on students?
      iv. Probe: What other effects did this positive influence have?
7. Do you think differently about your role as a principal because of the PFL process? Describe how or why not.

8. Tell me about a result of an action you took this year related to your participating in the PFL. Why did you identify this result to talk about?

9. Tell me about a practice that changed this year as a result of the PLF. Why was this significant to you?
Appendix B
Informed Consent Form


Co-Investigator and Emergency Contact:
Dwight Nolt (study contact)
Phone: 215-495-7603 Email: dwightnolt331@gmail.com

Dr. Andrew Porter (research advisor)
3700 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104
Phone: 215-898-7014 Email: andyp@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 (Mr. Dwight Nolt) is going to talk with you about the study and give you the 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 Dwight to explain anything you do not understand, including any language contained in the form. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign the form and a copy will be given to you. Keep the form. In it you will find contact information and answers to questions about the study. You may ask to have the form read to you.

What is the purpose of the study?

The study focuses on conceptualization and uses of the Principal Effectiveness Plan on the practices of secondary school principals in Pennsylvania. A growing focus on evaluation of school leaders is fueled in part by a disconnect between overwhelmingly positive principal evaluations and standardized state assessment scores for student achievement that indicate a disproportionate percentage of “failing” schools. A growing body of research has explored the influences of principal leadership on student performance as well as the theoretical frameworks for effective principal evaluation plans. Less prevalent is study of the influence of an evaluation plan to guide, change or improve the practices of school leaders. The importance of the study rests in the examination of secondary school principals’ ideas around the implementation of a specific measurement tool: The Principal Effectiveness Plan. The study will focus on principals’ perceptions and insights as they interpret the ideas and behaviors suggested by the Principal Effectiveness Plan within the contexts of their daily choices and
prioritizations of time. Using a phenomenological perspective (Creswell 2009), the study will seek to capture the insider’s viewpoint. These viewpoints, while perhaps not generalizable to the entire principal population (Emerson et al., 1995), will represent principals’ perspectives in numerous and various school settings made explicit by the SES percentages of the student population.

**Research Questions**

The study is designed to investigate the following research questions:

1) How do PA public secondary school principals conceptualize the uses of the Pennsylvania Framework for Leadership Phase II Implementation (2012-2013) in their practice?

2) How do PA public secondary school principals describe how the Pennsylvania Framework for Leadership Phase II Implementation (2012-2013) has influenced their practice?

**Why was I asked to participate in the study?**

You were asked to join the study because you are a principal who participated in the Phase II year of the Pennsylvania Framework for Leadership.

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

The study will take place from November 2013 to June 2014. You will be one of numerous persons in the study.

**Where will the study take place?**

The study will take place at mutually agreed upon common location, on the phone, and/or via Skype.

**What will I be asked to do?**

You will be asked to meet with Dwight for an initial 1-2 hour interview. In addition, Dwight may follow up with you periodically for member checks—where you will have a chance to verify or edit data and/or findings.

During interviews, Dwight will audio-record the conversation. He and his research advisor, Dr. Andrew Porter, 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 Dwight. 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 Dwight to turn off the audio recorder at any time, he will.

**What are the risks?**

There are no significant risks to participating in the 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 in the context of the new state accountability tools, and will grow your knowledge of the Pennsylvania Leadership Framework. You may find sharing your experiences and learning enjoyable, interesting and even useful.
Your experiences in the study have the potential to impact educational research and practice, specifically in the areas of school leadership development, leadership evaluation, 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 2014. 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, Dwight Nolt, and inform him that you no longer wish to be in the study.

It is possible that the study may be extended and included as part of a larger research study. If that 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?
Dwight 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 Dwight’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 Dwight’s computer. Audio-recorded files will be transcribed by a transcription service and all names and school names will be disguised with pseudonyms. Once documents and audio recordings are filed on Dwight’s computer, all files will be password-protected. Written and sound files will be kept for five years and then destroyed, unless otherwise specified by you. Dwight will make every attempt to keep your responses confidential in both the storage of the data and anything he 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.
Dwight 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 Dwight.

**Who owns the data?**
All primary data collected during the research study through interviews will be owned jointly by you and Dwight Nolt and may be used by either party going forward. All data developed during the research study through notes and analysis will be owned by Dwight Nolt.

**Will I have to pay for anything?**
There are no costs associated with participating in the study.

**Will I be compensated for participating in the study?**
There is no compensation for participating in the 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 the research study or if you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you should speak to Mr. Dwight Nolt (primary researcher) or Dr. Andrew Porter (research advisor). Their contact information is at the top of the 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.

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**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 the research study. If you have any questions or there is something you do not understand, please ask. You will receive a copy of the consent document.

Signature of Participant
Print Name of Participant
____________________________________________________

Date _____________________________

____________________________________________________

Researcher Confidentiality Agreement

When you sign the document, you are agreeing to keep all data gathered during the research study confidential. You will not use names or any other identifying information when writing about the 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 ________ Dwight Nolt_____________

Date _____________________________

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### Appendix C

#### Coding Sets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coding Set #</th>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>FULL TITLE</th>
<th>DEFINITIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1-P17</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>Principal’s statements about autonomy, specifically that the plan assumes that he/she has the autonomy to make the changes that are attributed to his/her performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AI</td>
<td>Assumptions/Incongruence</td>
<td>Principal’s statements about the incongruence between their perceived assumptions of the plan and the expressed realities of secondary school leadership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Consistency</td>
<td>Principal’s statements about the need for consistency of the plan over time. A desire for a revisionist approach with the plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>Principal’s statements about the role and desire for dialogue and collaboration about their performance and growth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DF</td>
<td>Documentation/Checklist</td>
<td>Principal’s statements about the PFL as a checklist and evidence documentation framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>G</td>
<td>Goal-setting</td>
<td>Principal’s statements about personal goal-setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Numbers</td>
<td>Principal’s statements and questions about what will the numbers mean? “Will it mean I am effective as a leader or a &quot;fit&quot; for the context of my school?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PF</td>
<td>Priority/Focus</td>
<td>Principal’s statements about clarity of performance priorities and a categorical framework for focusing attention on the scope of the work while the principal targets the daily and local contextual needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RC</td>
<td>Reflection:Change</td>
<td>Principal’s statements about the behavior of documentation of evidence that promotes reflection, which resulted in a desire to change practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Self-reflection</td>
<td>Principal’s statements about self-reflection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>Student Effect</td>
<td>Principal’s statements about students. What do the students say? Is he/she improving their lives?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Principal’s statements about time to do all the tasks he/she knows to do.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TE</td>
<td>Teacher Effect</td>
<td>Principal’s statements about teachers. What do the teachers say about his/her leadership?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX D:

Pennsylvania School Performance Profile Descriptions

How are school scores calculated?

The PA School Performance Profile provides a quantitative academic score based upon a
100-point scale, using the following source data, when available:

Indicators of Academic Achievement 40%

- Percent Proficient or Advanced on Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA)/Pennsylvania’s Alternate System of Assessment (PASA/Keystone Exams in Mathematics/Algebra I, Reading/Literature, Science/Biology)
- Percent Competent or Advanced on industry certification exams [NOCTI (a job ready assessment for career and technical center students) and/or NIMS (National Institute for Metalworking Skills certification)]
- SAT/ACT College Ready Benchmarks

Indicators of Closing the Achievement Gap – All Students 5%

- Percent of required gap closure met in Mathematics/Algebra I, Reading/Literature, Science/Biology

Indicators of Closing the Achievement Gap – Historically Underperforming Students 5%

- Percent of required gap closure met in Mathematics/Algebra I, Reading/Literature, Science/Biology for historically underperforming students (economically disadvantaged, English Language Learners, students with disabilities)

Indicators of Academic Growth / PVAAS (40%)

- The PVAAS growth index representing the school’s impact on the change in academic achievement levels of groups of students from year-to-year in each of the assessed content areas.

Other Academic Indicators (10%)

- Cohort graduation rate
- Promotion rate
- Attendance rate
- Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) or college credit
- PSAT/PLAN Participation

Extra Credit for Advanced Achievement (up to 7 points)

- Percent Advanced on PSSA/PASA/Keystone Exams in Mathematics/Algebra I, Reading/Literature, Science/Biology
- Percent Advanced on industry standards-based competency assessments [NOCTI (a job ready assessment for career and technical center students) and/or NIMS (National Institute for Metalworking Skills certification)]
- Advanced Placement achievement (scores 3 or higher) and International Baccalaureate achievement (scores 4 or higher)

Scores are calculated based upon defined weighted data elements. If a school has insufficient data to calculate a representative score, the display area will reflect that circumstance and adjust total points accordingly.

APPENDIX E

Aggregate Sample Principal Ratings by Domain 2012-2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain 1</th>
<th>Domain 2</th>
<th>Domain 3</th>
<th>Domain 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend:
- Distinguished
- Proficient
- Needs Improvement
- Failing
- Not Rated
### APPENDIX F

**PDE 82-2: Principal/School Leader Rating Form (7/2014)**

#### (A) Principal/School Leader Observation/Evidence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Earned Points</th>
<th>Max Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Strategic/Cultural Leadership</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Systems Leadership</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Leadership for Learning</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Professional and Community Leadership</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### (B) Multiple Measures - Building Level Data, Correlation Data, and Elective Data

1. Observation/Evidence Rating
2. Building Level Rating (or substitute)*
3. Correlation Data Rating (or substitute)*
4. Elective Rating (or substitute)*

#### (C) Final Principal/School Leader Effectiveness Rating - All Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Earned Points</th>
<th>Max Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Observation/Evidence Rating</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Building Level Rating (or substitute)*</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Correlation Data Rating (or substitute)*</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Elective Rating (or substitute)*</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Conversion to Performance Rating

- 0.00 - 0.49: Failing
- 0.50 - 1.49: Needs Improvement
- 1.50 - 2.49: Proficient
- 2.50 - 3.00: Distinguished

A performance rating of Distinguished, Proficient or Needs Improvement shall be considered satisfactory, except that the second Needs Improvement rating issued by the same employer within 10 years of the first final rating of Needs Improvement where the employee is in the same certification shall be considered unsatisfactory. A rating of Failing shall be considered unsatisfactory.

### Certification

I certify that the above-named employee for the period beginning and ending has received a performance rating of:

- Distinguished
- Proficient
- Needs Improvement
- Failing

resulting in a final rating of:

- Unsatisfactory
- Satisfactory
- Proficient
- Failing

I acknowledge that I have read the report and that I have been given an opportunity to discuss it with the rater. My signature does not necessarily indicate that I agree with the performance evaluation.

Date: [Signature of Employee]

---

*Substitutions permissible pursuant to 22 Pa. Code §§ 19.2(IV)(a)(6), (b)(4), (c)(3), or (d).*
References


DuFour, R., DuFour, R., & Eaker, R. (Originally Published 2008; Updated 2015). In Revisiting Professional Learning Communities at Work (pp. 1–9). Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.


Phase II Principal Effectiveness Survey Results. (2013) (data provided to Dwight Nolt by Pennsylvania Department of Education).


