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# Examining the Kouzes and Posner Leadership Practices of Elementary Principals in Central New York

## Abstract

The study examines the Kouzes and Posner leadership practices of elementary principals. Today there is significant emphasis on principal leadership. Because of the increased accountability for elementary principals, there is an urgent need for a validated, research based leadership framework for elementary principals. The work of Kouzes and Posner is widely respected and applied in business and education and might provide a foundation for a framework of elementary leadership practices. The purpose of the study was to look critically at the Kouzes and Posner leadership practices of elementary principals. The leadership practices of elementary principals were measured using Kouzes' and Posner's Leadership Practices Inventory Self (LPI Self), which examines practices in five areas. Focus groups were facilitated with participating elementary principals to identify how the leadership practices of Kouzes and Posner manifest in practice by principals in their schools. Findings generated a framework for what elementary principals say and do each day as they Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart. Study results outline specific and core leadership practices for elementary principals at a time when elementary principal leadership is at a critical point in educational history. The framework provides a roadmap for elementary principals as they work to implement new educational initiatives.

## Document Type

Dissertation

## Degree Name

Doctor of Education (EdD)

## Department

Executive Leadership

## First Supervisor

Marie Cianca

## Second Supervisor

C. Michael Robinson

## Subject Categories

Education

Examining the Kouzes and Posner Leadership Practices of Elementary Principals  
in Central New York

By

Dean F. Goewey

Submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree  
Ed.D. in Executive Leadership

Supervised by

Dr. Marie Cianca

Committee Member

Dr. C. Michael Robinson

Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. School of Education

St. John Fisher College

May 2012

## DEDICATION

*Examining the Kouzes and Posner Leadership Practices of Elementary Principals in Central New York*, and all that went into its successful completion, is dedicated to the most important people in my life. To my wife, Linda Goewey, who in my darkest hours has always been there to support and encourage me to go on. Her words, strength, and presence have always inspired me to look beyond the storm and see that, we are what we know we are, not what others say we are. To my father, Donald Goewey, who has always been my biggest fan and who gave me a lifetime of example for what a great father, principal, and lifelong learner looks like. I hope this makes you proud! To my sons, Nicholas, Matthew, and Alexander, who have been my beacons of light for the last 22 years. I am more proud of you than any other accomplishment in my life. My families love and encouragement has inspired me to rebuild my professional self-worth. To my mother, Leona Goewey, and my sister, Debbie Goewey-King, I dedicate my dissertation to your memories. I feel your presence every day.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Dean F. Goewey is currently Principal of Minetto Elementary School in the Oswego City School District. Dr. Goewey is Adjunct Professor of Literacy Education in the graduate department of Curriculum and Instruction at the State University of New York at Oswego. Dr. Goewey attended the State University of New York at Oswego and received three degrees from that University. He completed his Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education in 1984. He continued his studies there and received his Master of Science in Reading Education in 1988. Dr. Goewey expanded his graduate work at SUNY Oswego and completed a Master of Science/Certificate of Advanced Study in Educational Administration in 1994. Dr. Goewey pursued his doctoral studies and dissertation at St. John Fisher College in Executive Leadership. He conducted his research by examining the application of the work of Kouzes and Posner to elementary principal leadership practices in Central New York. Under the guidance of Dr. Marie Cianca, he received his Ed.D. degree in 2012.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The journey of completing my doctoral program and dissertation has been a uniquely challenging one. A wonderful cadre of supportive individuals helped to make that journey one that I will treasure forever. I will be eternally grateful for those who assisted, encouraged, and challenged me throughout the process.

First, my deepest appreciation goes to all of my professors in the Ed.D. program in Executive Leadership at St. John Fisher College. My greatest thank you goes to Dr. Marie Cianca, my dissertation chair, for being firm but fair and for knowing when to push me and when to bolster me. I feel so lucky to have had her guidance, encouragement, and friendship. Dr. C. Michael Robinson, my committee member, provided me with a calming balance to Dr. Cianca's intensity and provided great insight and encouragement. I had the perfect committee for me. They recognized my ability to write and the power of applying the work of Kouzes and Posner to the elementary principal. Thank you to Dr. John Travers who introduced me to the work of Kouzes and Posner. I'm not sure he knows how that introduction impacted my dissertation journey.

Thank you to my friend and colleague, Dr. Linda Doty. We shared every minute of the doctoral experience at St. John Fisher College, and we will finish that journey together. I will be forever grateful for her loyalty, support and friendship. To the faculty and staff of Minetto Elementary School, thank you for allowing me the flexibility to be a full time doctoral candidate and your principal. My assignment as your principal confirmed the words of my favorite children's author, Eve Bunting, when she said in her

book, Train to Somewhere, “Sometimes what you get turns out to be better than what you wanted in the first place.”

A special thank you goes to the wonderful principals in Central New York who participated in my study. You have made a significant contribution to scholarship and professional practice at a critical time in public education and leadership. I was proud to be in your company and you should be proud of what you do every day for children. A special recognition goes to my first principal, administrative mentor, colleague and friend, Mr. Gary Roy. His influence on my professional career was considerable. And to my beloved friend, Arpina Amiraian, your memory and your advice to “polish my diamonds”, I apply to my leadership daily.

To Mr. Sam Tripp, my friend and Oswego Board of Education member, words cannot express how grateful I am for what you have done for me. To my sister, Deanna Goewey-Brown, who supported my doctoral journey in so many ways, thank you. And finally, thank you to the School Administrators Association of New York State. In particular, I want to recognize and thank Arthur Scheuermann, General Counsel. His steadfast belief in me as a school leader has sustained me through very difficult professional and personal times. I am a stronger leader because of his example.

## ABSTRACT

The study examines the Kouzes and Posner leadership practices of elementary principals. Today there is significant emphasis on principal leadership. Because of the increased accountability for elementary principals, there is an urgent need for a validated, research based leadership framework for elementary principals. The work of Kouzes and Posner is widely respected and applied in business and education and might provide a foundation for a framework of elementary leadership practices.

The purpose of the study was to look critically at the Kouzes and Posner leadership practices of elementary principals. The leadership practices of elementary principals were measured using Kouzes' and Posner's Leadership Practices Inventory Self (LPI Self), which examines practices in five areas. Focus groups were facilitated with participating elementary principals to identify how the leadership practices of Kouzes and Posner manifest in practice by principals in their schools.

Findings generated a framework for what elementary principals say and do each day as they Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart. Study results outline specific and core leadership practices for elementary principals at a time when elementary principal leadership is at a critical point in educational history. The framework provides a roadmap for elementary principals as they work to implement new educational initiatives.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### Introduction and Purpose

Education is undergoing a significant paradigm change. Modern educators face many issues including the quality of educational opportunities for all children and the educational standing of the United States. In 2009, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) began a new national conversation about educational reform. Part of the ARRA is a \$4.3 billion grant program called Race to the Top (RTTT), which provides an opportunity for states to receive additional school funding through the United States Department of Education. Among other things, Race to the Top requires eligible states to take a critical look at evaluation systems for teachers, administrators, and principals (nysed.gov 2010). Nationally, school districts scrambled to qualify for these monies in part because school budgets are suffering in a struggling national economy. New York State received millions of dollars in RTTT funds, which are intended to enhance and advance educational initiatives within four specific areas including (nysed.gov 2010):

1. Adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college, the workplace and the global economy;
2. Building data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction;
3. Recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most; and

4. Turning around our lowest-achieving schools.

The first area of RTTT places an emphasis on higher standards, and connects student achievement on tests to teacher and principal evaluations. The Federal and State emphasis on test results and performance evaluations has the potential to designate failing principals based on specific criteria in the grant language (NYSED.gov 2010). According to Winerip (2010), the language in RTTT ignores other student criteria such as student disabilities and language barriers. As a result, principals in some states are losing their jobs due to RTTT requirements. For example, a principal in Burlington, Vermont was recently removed because of the principal evaluation component of Race to the Top. The principal was not removed due to any identified incompetence or misconduct. Winerip stated that the principal was removed because under the RTTT initiative, schools with low test scores must remove their principal or forfeit their money under the rules of the grant. Because Burlington stood to lose \$3 million, the principal was removed. Parents, teachers, and children were outraged when the principal that they respected was removed despite the fact that 37 of 39 fifth graders were either refugees or receiving special education services.

Currently, the Race to the Top (RTTT) initiative is dominating legislative policy development in New York State and in the New York State Education Department. In response to the national movement toward higher levels of accountability for teachers and administrators, the New York State Board of Regents (2010) delivered a proposal to the New York State Legislature for sweeping changes to the evaluation process for New York State teachers and administrators in 2010. The bill was endorsed by both the New York State United Teachers (NYSUT), and its largest local affiliate, the very influential

New York City United Federation of Teachers (UFT). The legislation passed on May 28, 2010 and all school districts must implement corresponding changes to the Commissioner's regulations. Additionally, districts have a responsibility to be guided in their implementation by the collective bargaining agreements for teacher and administrator associations that are affected. School districts across New York State are negotiating the rubrics and instruments necessary for principal evaluations.

The inclusion of test scores in performance evaluations is one critical and controversial component of the new legislation. According to the law, student achievement data is a mandatory component of certain teacher and all principal evaluations (NYSED.gov 2010). Evaluations would fall into one of four specified performance categories and a rating in the two lowest categories; ineffective and developing, would require an improvement plan. Two consecutive "ineffective" annual ratings qualify as a pattern of incompetence and could be used as the basis for termination of teachers and principals.

An interesting component of the new performance evaluation language for administrators is that it focuses only on principal evaluations. So far, no other public school administrators are affected by the new evaluation component of the law. These changes, when implemented, will significantly impact principal tenure (NYSED.gov 2010). At the local level, superintendents may need to renegotiate evaluation language and processes with administrator unions. Superintendents will also need to balance the requirements of the new legislation for principal evaluations with maintaining a positive professional relationship with principals.

Principals in New York are at the front of this reframing of the evaluation process. The new RTTT legislation seeks to significantly raise the bar on student achievement, develop performance based rigorous assessments, and build a sequenced, content rich statewide curriculum (NYSED.gov 2010). Student achievement data is to be used to make decisions based on the test results at the elementary level. To address these elements, the role of the elementary principal must shift. There is much greater emphasis on the principal as instructional leader and there is much that principals do and control that contributes to school reform. According to Hall & Hord, (2006) as schools and principals focus on school reform and instructional leadership, they must be aware of the factors that influence the implementation and sustainability of their efforts.

Gareis and Tschannen-Moran (2004), acknowledged that it is widely accepted that good principals are at the center of good schools and that without good leadership that guides the improvement of student success, schools cannot succeed. Principals' sense of efficacy has been studied in research as well. A principal's sense of efficacy is his or her perceived capability to structure a course of action in order to produce the outcome that is desired (Bandura, 1997). Deshler & Tollefson (2006) believe that the most important thing an administrator can do to promote improvements in student learning is to pay relentless attention to the quality of instruction. With the shift toward principal accountability for the improvement and sustainment of positive student learning outcomes, attention to quality instruction is even more important.

Although several studies suggest a connection between the impact of school principals and a school's success at reading and reading achievement test scores, Decman, Mackey, & Pitcher (2006) talk more specifically about the link between

characteristics of principals and actual standardized test scores. They believe that principals need to be instructional leaders and exhibit characteristics of strong leadership. A Kouzes and Posner leadership framework for elementary principals could identify those characteristics. As outlined by Louis & Wahlstrom (2008), many researchers have studied leadership, leadership practices, and the impact of effective leadership on school climate, teacher satisfaction, and student achievement. Bowles & Bowles (2000) have identified the work of two leading researchers, Kouzes and Posner for establishing a set of leadership practices that are widely respected and applied in business and nursing. However, a gap exists in the literature in leadership practices specific to the application of Kouzes and Posner's work with elementary principals. With all the impending changes in principal evaluation, now is a critical time to study how Kouzes and Posner leadership practices might apply to principal practices in schools. The study fills an existing gap between the leadership practices of Kouzes and Posner and their usefulness to the field of education, specifically with the elementary principal. In fact, the practices could become part of the context for principal evaluations especially in the state of New York.

### History and Background of the Principal

To better understand this study, and how the principalship has changed over the years, it is important to understand the historical context of the elementary principal. During the early 1800s, there was a movement towards free and public elementary education. The small, often one-room schoolhouses were supervised by the local communities. Although those original schools were very small, the growth across the country enlarged the one-room school houses to include multiple grade levels. As the

nation grew during the first half of the century, student enrollment increased, and from that grew the need for a change in the one room schoolhouse concept. As students progressed through school, the need for specific grade placements emerged, and eventually, this growth led to the emergence of the principalship.

The Cincinnati, Ohio schools were the first to assign a principal-teacher to each school in response to an enrollment increase. Soon, cities like Boston and St. Louis assigned principals to their schools (Campbell, Cunningham, Nystrand, & Usdan, 1990). Originally, the principals were primarily responsible for maintaining paperwork such as attendance data.

The principalship has evolved since that time. The principal has taken on a range of roles and responsibilities from building manager to instructional leader (Balcerek, 1999). In the 1960s, principals also became responsible for mandated state and federal programs. Federal entitlement programs included in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and the Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1975 impacted the principalship. For example, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 was a federal statute that included Title I funding for local educational agencies and schools for the purpose of educating low income children. For the elementary principal, Title I funding generated a greater emphasis on student achievement for the most educationally and financially disadvantaged children in the school. Principals hired additional reading teachers and placed a greater emphasis on the instruction and progress monitoring of the children who qualified for reading intervention. Further, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* was a 1983 report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education during the Reagan administration. This report is still considered

a landmark in American educational history. The report contributed to the idea that American schools are failing. Kasper (2005) suggested that the report began a wave of state and federal educational reforms.

In the 1970s and 80s, the role of the principal shifted significantly toward instructional leadership. At this juncture, the principal's role expanded more directly toward the supervision of teachers and students in order to assure quality instruction and student success. During this period, the principal merged the role of building manager with instructional leadership (Balcerek, 1999). The principal was expected to work collaboratively with others in the school community to establish the school's mission and vision. Principals developed and delivered professional development, promoted and fostered shared decision making, facilitated collaboration, and shifted the focus toward higher levels of student achievement (Geocaris, 2004). Yet today's standards for principal accountability for higher levels of student achievement are more intense. These standards are directly connected to principal employment.

#### Problem Statement

Effective leadership practices for elementary principals are more important than ever. Principal salaries, jobs, and the future of their schools depend on it. School reform initiatives like Race to the Top bring requirements that increase accountability with punitive measures specifically targeted to principals. Given this context, Wahlstrom & Louis (2008), point out that the leadership of the principal is a key factor in supporting student achievement and is essential to building successful schools. This increased responsibility and accountability dictates an urgent need for a validated, research based leadership framework for elementary principals. The work of Kouzes and Posner is

widely respected and applied in business and nursing. There is potential for Kouzes and Posner's research to provide a model of leadership practices for elementary school principals.

### Theoretical Rationale

The work of Kouzes and Posner provides a theoretical framework for this study. Kouzes and Posner developed a theory that exceptional leaders apply certain general practices in their work. This study examined the leadership practices of elementary principals and identified a framework for what the Kouzes and Posner leadership practices would be when manifested in the context of an elementary school. Theoretically, these practices could enhance the teaching and learning environment in the school which promotes student achievement.

#### *Understanding the Leadership Practices of Kouzes and Posner*

Kouzes is a widely respected author, scholar, and teacher. He is currently the Dean's Executive Professor of Leadership at the Leavey School of Business in Santa Clara University. Kouzes is also regarded by many, including the *Wall Street Journal* as one of the twelve best executive educators in the United States. Additionally, Kouzes is an experienced and accomplished executive. He dedicated himself to leadership as a teenager and became the Chief Executive Officer of several companies and University programs.

Posner is an internationally renowned scholar, having published more than 85 research articles in journals including the *Leadership Review* and many others. He is currently on the editorial review boards of several academic journals including *Leadership Review*. Posner is Professor of Leadership at the Leavey School of Business,

Santa Clara University with his friend and colleague, Jim Kouzes. He has worked with businesses and organizations including the United States Postal Service and has conducted leadership workshops across the world.

Kouzes and Posner co-authored the best-selling leadership book *The Leadership Challenge*. University of Southern California distinguished business professor, Warren Bennis referred to *The Leadership Challenge* as a brilliant contribution to leadership studies. Additionally, Kouzes and Posner developed the highly respected Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI). This leadership questionnaire assesses leadership behaviors and is widely used in organizations.

Kouzes and Posner (2002a) identified five practices and ten commitments that all exemplary leaders demonstrate. The five practices are: Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart. The five practices of effective leaders outlined by Kouzes and Posner all focus on the development, maintenance, or improvement of an organization's culture.

Kouzes and Posner developed a measurement tool called the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI). This tool measures leadership practices in the five areas outlined in their theory. The purpose of the study was to determine how the leadership practices of Kouzes and Posner appear when applied in the elementary school by principals.

The Kouzes and Posner leadership practices have a theme that supports a positive and collaborative organizational climate and culture. Although there are many leadership theories that could be applied to this study, the work of Kouzes and Posner aligns best with this topic. Kouzes and Posner (2002a), state that the content of leadership has not changed over the past thirty years, but the context has. So, because increased levels of

student achievement and instructional leadership are expected in education today, identifying a Kouzes and Posner leadership practice framework in the context of education contributes to school leadership at a time when elementary principals are being held to very high standards. An elementary principal leadership model contributes to the climate and culture that promotes relentless attention to student achievement.

### Significance of Study

The study contributes to a greater understanding by scholars and practitioners as to which practices enhance leadership in the elementary school. As schools become involved in reform efforts and as the field of education requires higher levels of student achievement and principal accountability, the need for a greater understanding of effective leadership practices of elementary principals becomes more important. The significance of elementary school instruction is well established. Students learn to read in the elementary school so that they can read to learn as they advance in the intermediate grades. Loertscher (2010) reports on meeting the international challenge facing children in the United States. Loertscher looks at the urgency to help children learn to read by third grade so that they can start to read to learn. He reports that by the end of third grade, few students are performing well in reading. Loy (2008) adds a secondary perspective regarding the importance of literacy development in the elementary school so that students can apply those skills at the secondary level, specifically in the teaching of history. Loy recognizes that for many students decoding isn't enough to maintain the levels of comprehension necessary as students read content area text. He recognizes in his paper that students need to learn how to read and want to read in order to apply the basic reading skills learned in the early years in order to apply those skills independently

as they read to learn. Reeves (2008), suggests that administrators need to do more than simply walk through classrooms to monitor instruction. He believes that the principal must know what effective instruction looks like and be aware of the essential elements of literacy. Kaplan (2005) indicated, “successful school leaders invariably have dynamic, knowledgeable, and focused leaders” (p. 1). Sergiovanni (2006), states that schools must provide an appropriate allotment of resources such as money, personnel and time to provide for long term school improvement initiatives. Additionally, Sergiovanni outlines the importance of a school’s culture and structure relative to those school improvement initiatives.

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics of the United States Education Department, eight percent of students between the ages of 16 and 24 are either not enrolled or have not earned a high school or trade diploma (USED.gov 2010). Identifying effective leadership behaviors in elementary principals based on a validated set of practices like Kouzes and Posner makes an important contribution to the areas of personnel, professional development, and leadership development in education. The results of this study, based on the leadership practices of Kouzes and Posner, contribute to a greater understanding of a specific elementary leadership practice framework.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to look critically at the Kouzes and Posner leadership practices of elementary principals. Leadership practices of elementary principals were measured using Kouzes’ and Posner’s Leadership Practices Inventory Self (LPI Self) which looks at practices in five areas: Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act and Encourage the Heart. Focus

groups were facilitated with some of the participating elementary principals to identify how the leadership practices of Kouzes and Posner manifest in practice by these principals in their schools. Ultimately, the purpose of the study was to develop a Kouzes and Posner leadership practice framework for elementary principals.

### Research Questions

The study examined leadership practices of elementary principals based on the leadership practice framework of Kouzes and Posner. The following research questions were addressed in order to develop a leadership framework for elementary principals in central New York:

Q1: How do elementary principals in central New York rate themselves using the Kouzes and Posner Leadership Practices Inventory Self (LPI Self), in the areas of Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart?

Q2: For principals with a high frequency use of the five practices according to the LPI-Self, how do they describe their leadership behaviors relative to these practices and their implementation in elementary schools?

### Chapter Summary

The elementary principal has evolved throughout history. The roles and responsibilities have changed significantly over time as outlined in the literature. History has recorded the significance of the roles and responsibilities of the job of principals and never before has the significance of the job been at the forefront of education as it is today.

The educational system has been engaged in various school reform initiatives. Because of these initiatives and the higher level of accountability for principals, it is more important than ever to have examined a valid and research-based leadership framework like that of Kouzes and Posner and apply it to the leadership practices of elementary principal.

Chapter 2 is a review of the literature. Chapter 2 outlines the relevant literature that applies to this dissertation and study. Chapter 3 describes the research design methodology and describes the research questions, research variables, population and sample, data collection, instruments, and analysis procedures for the study.

Chapter 4 presents results of the study. The chapter describes the process of conducting the research including parts one and two. This chapter illustrates in narrative, tables, and figures the findings for each research question. Additionally, there is a section that illustrates the link between the quantitative and qualitative results of the study. A summary of the results is included. Chapter 5 outlines the implications and findings of the study. Included in this chapter is a discussion of the connections between the Kouzes and Posner leadership practices and those leadership practices identified in the study. The chapter outlines findings that are supported by research, study limitations, recommendations and a conclusion.

## CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### Introduction and Purpose

There are direct connections between student achievement and principal leadership. In fact, the effect of leadership on student achievement has recently been confirmed by Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004). However, little research exists to align principal practices with a validated research-based framework. Chapter 2 examines what exists in the literature regarding principal accountability and student achievement, leadership, and the leadership practices of Kouzes and Posner.

Chapter 2 is organized around five key topics. First, it examines accountability for school leaders today. Second, it reviews the principal's impact on student achievement. Third, it outlines aspects of elementary principal leadership. Fourth, Chapter 2 outlines principals and teacher satisfaction. Finally, the chapter examines research connected to Kouzes and Posner work in business and Kouzes and Posner leadership practices.

The chapter is organized to show a sequence of information from accountability for school leaders in education today, to the principal's impact on school improvement and increased student achievement. It also examines other leadership models, teacher satisfaction and a broad history and critical review of the work of Kouzes and Posner. Within the section on leadership, information is outlined in the areas of instructional leadership, transformational leadership, and the Kouzes and Posner leadership practices

of Modeling the Way, Inspiring a Shared Vision, Challenging the Process, Enabling Others to Act, and Encouraging the Heart.

### Principal Accountability and Challenges

The challenges and responsibilities of principals are at an all time high. Practitioners and researchers agree that the impact that good principals have on school performance is significant. Wahlstrom & Louis (2008), state that principal leadership supports student achievement and is essential to building successful schools. Despite this, state and federal mandates, public scrutiny, and the demands of the job, make leading a school more challenging than ever before.

One most recent piece of legislation is Race to the Top (RTTT). In February of 2009, President Obama signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). This historic legislation is designed to invest in critical sectors, including education. The ARRA lays the foundation for education reform by supporting investments in innovative strategies that are most likely to lead to improved results for students, long-term gains in school and school system capacity, and increased productivity and effectiveness. The ARRA includes the \$4.35 billion RTTT competitive grant, (USED.gov 2010) which is designed to stimulate reforms in state and local districts across the country. This K-12 initiative in education is funded by the ED Recovery Act.

Despite offering a bold reform agenda for education, the legislation is not without controversy. Race to the Top New York includes a requirement to implement an evaluation model where forty percent of selected teacher and principal evaluations are to be based on student achievement test scores. On May 28, 2010, New York State enacted new legislation designed to dramatically change selected teacher and principal

accountability with an evaluation model based on student test scores. In fact, the Race to the Top application states that, “this new law not only fundamentally changes the way teachers and principals are evaluated, but requires that such evaluations be a significant factor in decisions relating to promotion, retention, tenure, and differentiated support and professional development” (p. 150).

Recently, researchers explore the increased level of accountability for school leaders. Torres (2004) analyzes the potential impact of school accountability associated with No Child Left Behind. He references the recent intensified surge in federal government oversight of the operation and practice of public schools in the United States. The No Child Left Behind (2002) legislation included the Reading First initiative that promoted scientific research- based reading instruction for all children in grades kindergarten through grade three in the hopes that all children would be on grade level by the end of third grade. These monies came with greater levels of responsibility and accountability for principals for monitoring and reporting student progress and teacher professional development.

Leone, Warnimont, and Zimmerman (2009) describe many emerging trends in education and their implications for school leaders. The author identifies prerequisite leadership skills and behaviors for principals to successfully serve the needs of students in the future. One skill outlined in the article is the ability to identify new trends. As schools become more racially and culturally diverse, school leaders will be required to consider how testing and test scores impact children from multiple ethnic and racial backgrounds. This change requires principals to monitor the differentiation of instruction, provide multi-cultural education programs, and provide professional development

opportunities that focus on the needs and sensitivities of the underserved. Leone et al. state that as educational standards continue to become more complex, the principal must be the constant navigator who maintains the course and acts as a change agent and excellent communicator.

Pepper (2010) makes a case for the need for a critical look at leadership styles. She cites the requirement to rate school performance based on student test scores and the teacher and principal evaluation requirements. She suggests that, rather than improving student performance, the threat of corrective actions for poor test scores in addition to an increase in public scrutiny furthers a high stakes, high stress educational environment. Pepper suggests that never in the history of education has the school principal's job been more important and more difficult. Principals are responsible for increased test scores while managing the traditional principal role of responding to students, staff, and parents. Pepper further discusses different styles of principals. Again, although most research doesn't point to a direct relationship between principal leadership and student achievement, Pepper does show significant indirect connections between principal leadership and student achievement due to the principal's interactions and influence on teachers. Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) found that school leadership is second only to teacher direct instruction in its contribution to what students learn in school. Pepper further outlines transactional and transformational leadership styles and reinforces the need for a balance in school leadership today.

Whitehead (2009) reflects on the development of a guide for administrators on school leadership. Whitehead discusses conversations with colleagues about the impact school leaders have on student achievement. These colleagues agree that regardless of

the level, school principals are significant in facilitating their schools realizing their goals. However, the changes and challenges for principals are starting to put a burden on schools and their leaders. Whitehead describes the day-to-day role of the principal changing in order to conform to these changing demands. She describes a report that was released and presented in August of 2008 by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) on school leadership. The report outlined a crisis in school leadership that is driving concerns about the ability to recruit and retain quality school leaders.

School accountability and principals' job responsibilities are the focus of an article by Cooley and Shen (2003). The authors cite that the responsibilities of principals are continuing to escalate as calls for higher levels of accountability are made by state and national officials. Cooley and Shen outline the public's need for instant gratification when it comes to school reform and that the principal is in the eye of the storm when it comes to an expectation for increased student achievement. They state that accountability has long been the hallmark of education. The authors make the point that principal accountability used to involve a more general management approach including budget planning, maintaining strong teacher relationships, and being the instructional leader. The focus is now on accountability for student outcomes. Cooley and Shen also emphasize that student achievement targets, standards and assessments, and the public sharing of test results to the media place increased pressure on principals.

Algozzine and Lyons (2006) agree that the call for accountability in American schools has increased the responsibilities of educational leaders. Their article describes a study of principals' perceptions of a statewide accountability program in North Carolina.

A survey was used to solicit principals' perceptions on the key issues of the accountability program. Participants were selected randomly from urban, medium, and small school districts. Algozzine and Lyons suggest that as mandates grow, the roles and responsibilities of elementary principals increase.

### A Principal's Impact on Student Achievement

There has been a rediscovery of the school principal according to Barth (2001). Barth confirms a disproportionate influence that principals have on teaching and learning. He also outlines why so many principals are resistant to professional development opportunities despite the growing emphasis on their time and resources as they relate to instructional leadership and student performance. Barth refers to principals as people who run things and, because of that, they are resistant to being run. Principals are sensitive to attempts to remediate them through deficiency models of professional development. He further discusses a model of professional development for principals at Harvard that supports and enhances their leadership skills by providing opportunities for collegial support and reflection. The Harvard Principal's Center was created with a guiding belief that by replenishing the professional lives of principals, the experiences of their students would also be enriched.

The effect of leadership on student achievement is confirmed by the work of other researchers in education. Leithwood and Wahlstrom (2008) review four articles, all with leadership in their titles. The four articles in this review are from a 5-year research project funded by the Wallace Foundation. This mixed methods project looked at the nature of successful educational leadership and how leadership eventually leads to improved student learning. The first article examined the nature of teachers' trust in

leaders, and their sense of shared efficacy. This article is helpful in understanding how teachers are influenced by leadership practices and how those practices influence instructional practices. Leithwood and Wahlstrom also reviewed an article about school principals' sense of collective efficacy. The third article defines collective leadership and the influence it has on student learning. The fourth review examines the leadership-followership relationship. Leithwood and Wahlstrom believe this review contributes to current understandings of leadership.

Miller (2010) describes the critical need for courageous leaders in education today. As a former principal and current leadership professor at St. Cloud University in Minnesota, he reflects on the necessity for courage in today's school leaders. In addition to loyalty, integrity, honesty, intelligence, and tolerance, he believes that today's principals must have the courage to align their decisions to their school's goals and mission. He states that they must be able to ask tough questions and guide genuine acceptance of all students. Miller believes that principals need to put students first even when it makes adults uncomfortable. He further states that school leaders must identify strong teachers and encourage teachers to disagree and work toward common goals.

May, Supovitz, and Sirindes (2010) examined student achievement data from an urban mid-sized school district in the southeast to study the effects of principal leadership on teacher's instructional practices and student learning. This study applied a multilevel structured equation model to look at the relationships between student learning and the theorized dimensions of principal leadership. Using student achievement data from 2006-2007, the researchers focused on student records for students in grades K through 8 as well as standardized test scores. Their findings provide new contributions to

the stream of hypothesized relationships between leadership practice and student learning. These findings further indicate the importance of principals' work for student learning because of their indirect influence on the instructional practices of teachers.

Hallinger and Heck (1998) conducted a review of research from 1980 through 1995 that looked at the relationship between principal leadership and student achievement. It is noted that the period from 1980 to 1995 was one of considerable activity in research, policy, and practice in educational administration. The review yielded information that describes how principals' leadership influences student learning outcomes including school goals, organizational structure, and particularly, the principal's role in facilitating the school's direction with mission, vision, and goals. Hallinger and Heck state that the overall pattern of results supports the belief that principals wield a significant, though indirect effect on school effectiveness and student achievement. They state that while the indirect effect is relatively small, it is statistically significant and is supportive of the notion among educators that principals contribute to school effectiveness, including student achievement. This indirect effect can make a compelling case for the importance of elementary principal leadership practices in connection to their focus on instruction.

Davis, Bickman, and Hallinger (1996) confirm what practitioners and parents have long believed, that there are effects that principals have on the learning climate, educational programs and work place practices in schools. By using principal and teacher questionnaires and student achievement data, the researchers examined relations between school context variables like parent involvement, principal gender, teaching experience, instructional leadership, and school mission. This study focuses on the very

narrow criterion of student test performance for defining effectiveness of leadership. The results suggest that although there is no direct effect of principal instructional leadership on student achievement, principals do have an indirect effect. They can influence school effectiveness by the actions they take to impact a school's learning climate.

### Principal Leadership

The role of the elementary principal has been evolving from building manager to instructional leader (Reeves, 2008). A building manager focuses on tasks like budget, personnel management and student discipline, while an instructional leader models, measures and evaluates the instruction in the school. Reeves suggests that administrators need to do more than simply visit classrooms and monitor instruction. Reeves further suggests that the principal must be able to recognize and articulate what good instruction looks like and be aware of the essential elements of literacy in the elementary school.

Likewise, school districts implement instructional frameworks based on standards of instruction. Instructional frameworks such as methods frameworks, materials frameworks, and literacy frameworks should guide everything that is done in the elementary classroom (Weaver, 2006). In New York State, materials and methods of instruction are being aligned to the teaching standards outlined in each content area. Deshler & Tollefson (2006) believe that one critical job of the administrator is to promote improvements in student learning by paying relentless attention to the quality of instruction. This attention to the quality of instruction establishes the principal as the instructional leader. Mitchell and Castle (2005) believe that the most important strategy of instructional leadership is the promotion of professional dialogue. DuFour (2007)

supports the idea of professional dialogue in a professional learning community. The establishment of a community of learners is enhanced by professional dialogue.

Decman, Mackey, and Pitcher (2006) suggest that beyond knowledge as instructional leaders, principals should also possess other characteristics of strong leadership. They emphasize that there are three concepts that enable an elementary principal to influence the school's reading program and test scores. These concepts are principal visibility, educational background, and the principal's role as an instructional leader. Their study used field notes, observations, and teacher and principal interviews. The data was triangulated and four composites emerged. These composites were analyzed within the standards established by the National Association of Elementary School Principals and then linked to three years of second grade test scores.

Transformational leadership is the practice of leading an organization through a process of positive change or transformation. In education, it refers to school reform or improvement. Griffith (2004) looks at the direct effect of principal transformational leadership to school performance and states that staff descriptions of principal behaviors fall into three components of transformational leadership. These components are inspiration, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation. Further, Griffith describes an indirect effect of principal leadership on certain student achievement. Additionally, he looks at the factors that are present in the principal-teacher interactions and how those relationships impact classroom instructional practices. The study gathered data from a survey of 4,165 teachers across the United States. Griffith determined that shared leadership, professional community and the presence of teachers' trust in the principal supported the instructional variables. So, although there is no direct link

between principal behaviors and student behavior, there appears to be a connection between principal-teacher interactions that has a positive impact on learning outcomes.

### Principals and Teacher Satisfaction

Because principal-teacher interactions are important in the quest for student achievement, this section outlines research on principals and teacher satisfaction. Some studies focus on commitment to the profession and connections to essential elements of job experience that contribute to that commitment and ultimately satisfaction with the profession. Most importantly, studies suggest a connection between the practices of principals and teacher satisfaction. Additionally, some studies found that variables within the profession contribute to the satisfaction and dissatisfaction while others found that variables such as gender and competency levels also make contributions toward satisfaction.

There is research regarding the role that principals play on the levels of teacher job satisfaction. Bogler (2001) sought to determine how teachers perceive their principals. Bogler wanted to determine if the teachers in the study regarded their principals as transformational or transactional leaders. The ultimate goal of the study is to examine the effects of three variables on teacher satisfaction; leadership style, teachers' perceptions of their job, and principal decision making. A quantitative questionnaire using a Likert type scale was distributed to 930 teachers. The results provide information on teacher perceptions about the variables listed. The theoretical transformational leadership framework for the study is in the area of leadership and teacher satisfaction. Bogler applies the work of Burns (1978) in the arena of transformational leadership, highlighting the idea that transformational leadership

suggests that the leader and the follower inspire each other in a way that creates a positive and productive bond. Transactional leadership refers to an interaction between the leader and follower in their roles respectively in a non-binding way. Again, in the area of teacher satisfaction, Bogler references and applies the work of Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman (1959), and more specifically, Herzberg's Motivator-Hygiene Theory. The study describes the literature that supports the connection between job satisfaction and transformational leadership. The study sampled 930 teachers. They use the Multi-factor Leadership Questionnaire (Bass, 1985). Of those sampled, there was a usable return of 80%. Participants were teachers in kindergarten through grade 12 classrooms. Random sampling was done in sub-categories of rural, urban and suburban. Respondents were asked to respond in reference to their current principal. A quantitative questionnaire using Likert scales included questions in several subcategories. Categories include principal leadership style relative to transformational and transactional, decision making and their own perceptions about their occupation and their satisfaction in a variety of ways as they apply to teaching. The results of the study suggest that the greater the teachers' perception that their work was genuine and professional, the more they perceived their principals to be transformational leaders and ultimately the more satisfied they were.

Some studies extend the field of research to include additional theories and hypotheses. Dinham and Scott (2000) point out that most models of teacher satisfaction post-Herzberg have basically focused on two domains of teacher satisfaction/dissatisfaction. In the study, Dinham and Scott sought to illustrate a third

domain in the arena of teacher satisfaction/dissatisfaction. The outer domain focused on intrinsic and extrinsic rewards that impact satisfaction.

Based on the work by Herzberg, Dinham and Scott (2000) examine teacher satisfaction, mental stress, and motivation and commitment to teaching. An instrument was developed by the researchers that contained the following items; demographics, orientation and preparedness for teaching, satisfaction/dissatisfaction with teaching, commitment, general health, as well as a place for open comments. Over 1000 teachers in New Zealand and England were surveyed in this study. Separate teams conducted random samples in each country. The results indicate that not unlike the work of Herzberg et al. (1959), teachers are most satisfied by intrinsic motivators related to teaching, such as student achievement, professional growth, and collegiality. The major reasons for teacher dissatisfaction were intrinsic matters like negative community attitudes toward teachers, levels of increased responsibility, and the continual changes in the field. In the study, the Herzberg Two-factor Theory of teacher satisfaction and the Sergiovanni work were reinforced regarding factors contributing to satisfaction and dissatisfaction in that they are completely different yet not opposite conditions. The study also indicates that there has been a decline in teacher satisfaction levels.

There is research that examines teacher empowerment and the connection to satisfaction. Davis and Wilson (2000) conducted a study of principal empowerment of teachers and decision making, and the negative effect on teacher motivation and job stress. The purpose was to look at how principals' empowerment relates to teacher motivation, job satisfaction, and to determine if there was a relationship between teacher empowerment behaviors and job stress. The population of participants was public school

teachers and principals from Washington State. Forty-four schools participated in the study and 77% percent of the teachers were female. Forty-four principals participated and 37% of those were female. Teacher surveys were mailed to each lead teacher and that teacher distributed the surveys to each teacher in the building. The teacher survey was designed to measure four variables including principals' empowering behaviors, job satisfaction, motivation, and job stress. Each principal also completed the survey. The PEB (Principal Empowering Behaviors) survey was scored on a seven point scale to measure motivation. Davis and Wilson made a connection between teacher motivation and job satisfaction. Further, a greater connection was made between teacher intrinsic motivation and higher levels of teacher satisfaction.

Humor is an area that is not common in the research as it applies to teacher job satisfaction or leadership in general. However, Hurren (2006) designed a study to examine the connection between school principals' usage of humor as perceived by the teachers. Most people think that a bright sense of humor is a positive attribute. However, humor is not typically studied with any seriousness. Because there is limited research on a direct link between principals' humor and teacher job satisfaction, this study reviews the relationships between principals' humor and school climate and culture which have been shown to have an effect on teacher job satisfaction. The study was designed to look at principals' overall frequency of humor as perceived by the teachers and the relationship to teacher job satisfaction. The study uses quantitative methodology as it looks at humor in different size groups. Using a structured questionnaire, the study uses a five-point Likert-type scale to determine levels of teacher job satisfaction as it related to humor. Four-hundred seventy-one usable participant surveys were returned

(71.5%) in the study. It used the Teachers' Job Satisfaction Scale (Evans, 1990) which was developed by Virden Evans in 1990. The results of the study support the hypothesis that a principal's use of humor contributes to overall teacher job satisfaction. In all venues studied, the teachers show a higher job satisfaction when principals share a variety of humorous comments within a 30 minute period than when no humorous comments are shared by the principals.

Perrachione, Peterson, & Rosser (2008) focuses on teacher retention by looking at how teachers' influences and experiences impact their decisions to stay in classroom teaching. Additionally, the author examines the relationship between job satisfaction and intrinsic and extrinsic variables. The conceptual framework of the study is around the idea that teachers' job satisfaction, intrinsic and extrinsic motivators, their level of commitment to stay in teaching, and certain demographic variables have a direct link to retention in the profession. Each of these studies found that there are facets, elements, and or motivators that contribute to satisfaction, dissatisfaction and the probability of retention. Ellis and Bernhardt (1992) and Perrachione et al. (2008) also show that extrinsic variables like teacher support and student behavior influence teacher job satisfaction. However, extrinsic factors like low salary, parent problems, and class size also influenced teachers' dissatisfaction. Perrachione's findings support previous Herzberg work on how the intrinsic motivator factors support one's contentment. Principals' behaviors can contribute to that satisfaction by offering intrinsic motivation.

#### History of Kouzes and Posner Research

In 1983, Kouzes and Posner began a research project out of a desire to learn what people did when they were at their best at leading others in many situations. This

research was the beginning of what would become the book, *The Leadership Challenge*. Kouzes and Posner interviewed managers from excellent companies. They hoped to discover patterns of success. This research led to the development of a personal-best survey that included thirty-eight open-ended questions.

Over the next five years, Kouzes and Posner administered over 500 surveys. During that time, additional research was done with a group of 80 managers which included interviews and a survey. This group consisted of middle and senior managers of organizations. Over the years, Kouzes and Posner have expanded their research and work to include community leaders, church leaders, government leaders, and school leaders.

This research and the analysis of the personal best practices of leaders in a variety of fields led to the development of the five practices of exemplary leaders and eventually the book, *The Leadership Challenge* and *The Leadership Practices Inventory*.

*Kouzes and Posner in Business.*

The work of Kouzes and Posner has been applied in business in a variety of contexts for many years. A review of the references to the work of Kouzes and Posner in the literature provides insight their theory and its application in the workplace. The application of their leadership theory and leadership practices illustrates the depth and breadth of the recognition of their work by researchers and in business.

Hautala (2006) studies the relationships between personality and transformational leadership as described by the leaders themselves and the subordinates. In a quantitative study of 439 leaders and 380 subordinates, a convergence of leaders and subordinates perceptions of transformational leadership in the workplace is examined. In the study, a

modified Kouzes and Posner's (1998) Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) is applied. Hautala believes that the Kouzes and Posner LPI effectively represents the main ideas surrounding transformational leadership in the study setting.

Bryman, Stephens, and Campo (1996) examine leadership in the context of police work. Their quantitative study examines leadership and the impact on the field work of officers. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a sample of officers. Although the Kouzes and Posner Leadership Practices Inventory was not utilized, Bryman et al. cite the Kouzes and Posner leadership theory as significant in the area of transformational leadership.

Healthcare cites the work of Kouzes and Posner frequently. McNeese-Smith (1995) looks at leadership of healthcare managers. She wants to know if certain leadership behaviors make a difference and if they make an impact on job satisfaction, productivity, and organizational commitment. McNeese-Smith applies the Kouzes and Posner conceptual framework derived from their model of leadership behaviors. She believes that nursing administrators either focus on management tasks, or on their vision of nursing leadership. She sought to determine if the use of certain leadership behaviors by department managers make a difference in the areas of employee outcomes, job satisfaction, productivity, and commitment to the organization. She found that there were specific leadership behaviors based on the five leadership practices of Kouzes and Posner in nursing that predicted productivity, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. She reports that her research shows a consistent, positive, statistically significant correlation between the employees perception of his/ her manager's use of the five

leadership behaviors listed above and the employees job satisfaction, productivity, and organizational commitment.

Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991) cite the early work of Kouzes and Posner (K&P) in a study that examines which leadership traits really matter in business. The study outlines critical leadership traits for business leaders. Kirkpatrick & Locke apply the leadership knowledge of leaders in the field and list K&P with other experts in leadership like Ralph Stogdill, Frank Slater, and Warren Bennis. Kouzes and Posner report that the values managers admire most in their supervisors are integrity, including truthfulness, character, and conviction. K&P report that honesty is essential to leadership.

Similarly, Popper, and Zakkai (1994) argue for a new definition of the attributes and effects of leadership in their article on transactional, charismatic, and transformational leadership. They apply the work of the leading writers in leadership to each of the areas of focus for the article. The work of Kouzes and Posner was referenced in their outline of transformational leadership. Popper & Zakkai apply the Kouzes and Posner transformational leadership theory to the business context and focus on the leader's perception of his or her role in changing the organization.

Gabris, Grenell, Ihrke, and Kaatz (2000) look at some of the effects of administrative leadership and governing board behaviors. The article examines local government leaders and studies how administrative leadership makes a difference on perceived success rates of managerial innovation. In the article, Gabris et al. cite the leadership work of Kouzes and Posner. Specifically, they cite the Kouzes and Posner work around the idea that leadership success is related to how it is perceived by the

follower. In this case, it is found that the higher the perception that the government leader is a credible leader, the higher the likelihood that the innovation would be perceived as successful. The work of Kouzes and Posner is outlined in the company of other leadership researchers such as Warren Bennis and Stephen Covey.

The idea of leadership credibility and board relations in local government is outlined in an article by Gabris, Golembiewski, & Ihrke (2001). They explore the association between administrative leadership, elected board behavior, and administrative innovation. They conduct an analysis of what leaders do, the roles they play, and the functions that they serve. Gabris et al. describe the need for a robust leadership model for business and government and how the study is based on the work of Kouzes and Posner, who target particular facets of effective leadership, particularly credibility. Gabris et al. base the leadership credibility section of their study on the K&P leadership practices and associated ten commitments and recognize that these practices are widely applied in business.

The conversation regarding leadership is evident in other countries. Tirmizi (2002) looks at the development of a model for leadership research and development in Pakistan. In the description of the model, Tirmizi describes the work of Kouzes and Posner, specifically the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) and its widely applied and respected application in the West.

#### *Kouzes and Posner in Education*

There are limited references to Kouzes and Posner in education research. Belew-Nyquist (1997) examine teachers' perceptions of effective school leaders and examine

data from elementary teachers in Washington using the Characteristics of Admired Leaders survey, which was developed by Kouzes and Posner (1993).

Some studies center on leadership in charter schools. Patterson (2002) studied to determine if charter school and traditional public school principals' leadership differed. Patterson applies the Kouzes and Posner Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI-Self) with charter and traditional public school principals. He used the LPI-Observer with teachers in those schools.

Similarly, Binger (2003) examines the relationship between the leadership practices of charter school principals and student performance in those schools. Five charter schools were examined in Minnesota. The cooperating principals completed the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self (LPI-Self). Some teachers completed the Leadership Practices Inventory-Observer.

Wallace (2006) investigates the effect teacher leadership has on classroom effectiveness and student achievement. Data was collected in five alternative schools in North Carolina using the Kouzes and Posner LPI-Self by teachers and the LPI-Observer by students. Further, Balcerek (1999) sought to look at principals' effective leadership practices in high and lower performing schools in North Carolina. Balcerek utilizes the Kouzes and Posner Leadership Practices Inventory- Self for principals from both school types and the Leadership Practices Inventory-Observer for teachers from each school type. Balcerek's findings indicate the importance of the principalship to the success of children's' experiences in both high and low performing schools.

## Kouzes and Posner Leadership Practices

Louis and Wahlstrom (2008) describe the leadership of the principal as a key factor in the support of student achievement. As outlined in the literature, the history of the principal has been influenced by time and experience as the educational paradigm has evolved. Gareis and Tschannen-Moran (2004) state, “Good principals are at the center of good schools and that without good principal’s leadership, schools cannot succeed.” (p. 573). Kouzes and Posner (2002) identified five leadership practices and ten connected commitments that effective leaders have. The next sections outline their five practices in detail and illustrate how these practices can be related to the job of the elementary principal.

### *Model the Way*

To model the way, effective leaders develop and understand their own voice. Leaders know and articulate their morals, values, and beliefs. A leader who models the way uses his voice to share his unique vision rather than the ideas or vision of others. These leaders demonstrate a strong work ethic while modeling a commitment to mission, vision, and goals. They set examples for those with whom they work. While modeling the way, effective leaders cultivate and facilitate a culture where people are loyal and committed to the organization. They take pride in their work and the work of their coworkers (Kouzes & Posner, 2002).

### *Inspire a Shared Vision*

Effective leaders share their personal beliefs while working with colleagues to build and nurture a shared vision that focuses on the future and not just the present. They value all constituents and work with them to envision a future picture of the organization

that reflects that shared vision. These leaders are passionate examples of collaboration and hope. As Kouzes and Posner (2002a) stated, “To get extraordinary things done in extraordinary times, leaders must inspire optimal performance-and that can only be fueled with positive emotions” (p. 31). Great leaders use the power of energy and motivation to inspire those around them. They work long hours and sometimes endure personal sacrifice to inspire those around them to do the same in the name of a shared vision.

Several researchers have spoken to the idea of shared vision. They describe building this vision with various stakeholder groups including parents, community, students and staff. They talk about the vision informing the direction that the school or organization takes toward continuous improvement (Jarnagin, 2004; Kent, 2004).

#### *Challenge the Process*

Challenging the process is a skill that great leaders have. They look for new and creative ways to make change and improve the organization. These leaders have no fear of taking chances when the opportunity for success is within reach. Challenging the process involves reevaluating, questioning, and not accepting what is the norm. As leaders take risks, they encourage their employees to do the same. Great leaders set higher expectations than what is already achieved in the organization. Leaders must build a commitment to the challenge of reaching new heights while supporting their constituents during the journey (Kouzes & Posner, 2002).

#### *Enable Others to Act*

Effective leaders enable those around them to take the initiative with a spirit of collaboration and shared vision. They believe that there is power in building on the

strength of each other. Kouzes and Posner (2002a) stated that, “Collaboration is the critical competency for achieving and sustaining high performance” (p. 242). These leaders establish and model a climate of trust and this trust fosters a culture of interdependence.

### *Encourage the Heart*

While encouraging the heart, effective leaders are in tune with the needs, efforts and successes of those around them. With an emphasis on the shared vision and goals of the organization, these leaders celebrate victories and the contributions of others. These celebrations symbolically represent the strength of the organization and create fond memories that create loyalty to the organization and a dedication to those shared goals and vision (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). As the leader focuses on the shared vision and initiatives in the school, the recognition of the accomplishments and contributions of those in the school is so important.

### Chapter Summary

In the midst of the most significant school reform movement in our state’s history, the public demand on principals is at an all time high. Political pressures connected to funding and principal evaluation systems make the job significantly more challenging. Cooley and Shen (2009) cite that the responsibilities of principals are continuing to escalate as calls for higher levels of accountability are made by state and national officials. High stakes accountability through student test results underscore the other pressures associated with the elementary principalship. Student performance is at the center of this reform and research states that teachers have the most significant impact on the achievement. Additionally, research makes a case for principals making an impact on

teacher motivation, satisfaction, and performance. May, Supovitz, and Sirindes (2010) believe that principals' work contributes to student learning because of their indirect influence on the instructional practices of teachers.

This dissertation focused on the leadership practices as described by Kouzes and Posner (2002). The study sought to determine what leadership practices are utilized by elementary principals. Much research has been done on leadership practices in general. The dissertation focused on how the specific leadership practices of Kouzes and Posner are applied by principals in the elementary school. It examined how the leadership practices of Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart manifest themselves in practice by elementary principals in elementary schools. Using the Kouzes and Posner Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) and elementary principal focus groups, a framework for elementary leadership practices based on the work of Kouzes and Posner was developed.

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

As schools in New York State continue to undergo significant reform, principals are being held to higher levels of accountability. A research based framework for leadership practices of elementary principals could be helpful in addressing this change. In addition, this study addresses the gap between the leadership practices of Kouzes and Posner and their application to the field of education, specifically with the elementary principal. Kouzes and Posner (2002) identified five leadership practices of effective leaders. The five practices are: Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act and Encourage the Heart. This study sought to establish a framework for how these leadership practices are applied by a principal in an elementary school.

Effective leadership practices for elementary principals are more important than ever, and principal salaries, jobs, and the future of their schools depend on it. School reform initiatives like Race to the Top bring requirements that increase accountability with punitive measures specifically targeted to principals. Given this context, Wahlstrom & Louis (2008) point out that the leadership of the principal is a key factor in supporting student achievement and is essential to building successful schools. This increased responsibility and accountability for elementary principals dictates an urgent need for a validated, research based leadership framework for elementary principals. The work of

Kouzes and Posner is widely respected and applied in business and education and has, in this study, provided a framework of elementary principal leadership practices.

The study examined the leadership practices of elementary principals based on the leadership practice framework of Kouzes and Posner. Additionally, the study generated a framework of elementary principal leadership based on the work of Kouzes and Posner.

The following research questions were addressed:

Q1: How do elementary principals in central New York rate themselves using the Kouzes and Posner Leadership Practices Inventory Self (LPI Self), in the areas of Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart?

Q2: For principals with a high frequency use of the five practices according to the LPI-Self, how do they describe their leadership behaviors relative to these practices and their implementation in elementary schools?

In a study that looks at the application and utilization of specific leadership practices, a sequential mixed methods design was most suitable. According to Creswell, et al. (2003), this design involves an initial phase of quantitative data collection and analysis, followed by a phase of qualitative data collection and analysis. In this study, The LPI was used in the initial phase followed by qualitative focus groups. According to Creswell, the combination of narrative and numerical data in a single study is becoming widely accepted and applied in social and human sciences. The mixed method approach can offer greater breadth and depth of results. This study included the application of one survey instrument. Additionally, focus groups were conducted with some study participants based on the results of the survey instrument. This method applied a

quantitative design for the first part of the study and a qualitative design for the second part of the study. The mixed methods design was appropriate because the study sought to measure the frequency of specific leadership behaviors of principals and then to develop a framework of how those behaviors look and are applied in the elementary school.

### The Research Context

The study took place in central New York. Like most central New York counties, the county in this study enjoys many cultural attractions and a diverse range of socioeconomic communities. There are 17 public school districts in the focus county. There are nine suburban school districts with a total of 39 elementary schools, seven rural school districts with a total of 11 elementary schools, and one urban school district with 15 elementary schools. However, the sampling of schools for the study focused only on the suburban and rural districts and the 50 elementary schools from those districts. Miles & Huberman (1994) endorse random sampling as it provides the probability that each individual in the targeted population has an equal chance of selection.

### *The Research Participants*

For the quantitative section of the study, elementary principals were sampled from across central New York public school districts. The survey instrument was administered all 50 elementary principals from the suburban and rural districts. A 75% return rate was sought for the survey instrument. A 78% return rate was gained. For the qualitative section of the study, five focus groups were conducted based on the data gathered from the analysis of the survey instrument. One focus group was conducted based on the results of the inventory for each of the five Kouzes and Posner leadership practices. The

number of participants for part two of the study was determined by the results of the Kouzes and Posner Leadership Practices Inventory-Self.

An introductory letter of invitation was mailed to the participants in the first part of the study. This letter (Appendix A) outlined the study and the activity that participants were asked to complete. Each potential study participant was called by the researcher to encourage their participation. After obtaining a commitment from participants, a participant packet was mailed, which included a self-addressed return envelope, an assurance of confidentiality, and the survey instrument (Appendix B). All materials are included in the appendices.

#### Instruments Used to Gather Data

Kouzes and Posner developed a measurement tool called Kouzes' and Posner's Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) Self (Appendix B). This self-assessment tool measures the frequency of use of the five leadership practices of Kouzes and Posner as outlined in their theory. The survey looks at leadership behaviors in five areas: Model the way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act and Encourage the Heart.

Using qualitative and quantitative measures, Kouzes and Posner (2002a) developed the five leadership practices measured by the LPI. The five practices grew out of Kouzes' and Posner's case study work, which incorporated the Personal-Best Leadership Experience questionnaire and includes 38 open-ended questions. Additionally, they conducted various interviews which contributed to the refinement of the LPI. After conducting various psychometric processes, the LPI was completed (Kouzes & Posner, 2002b).

The LPI-Self consists of 30 statements based on a 10-point Likert scale ranging from (1) Almost never engages in the behavior to (10) Almost always engages in the behavior. The survey takes approximately 10 minutes to complete.

Reliability infers the extent that an instrument yields the same result across time and items. Generally, reliability coefficients higher than 0.80 show that the instrument is reliable (Kouzes & Posner, 2002b). The LPI has a reliability coefficient (Cronbach Alpha) that ranges from 0.75 to 0.87. Many researchers have used the LPI with similar reliability (Kouzes & Posner, 2002b).

Validity refers to what extent an instrument measures what it claims to measure. Regarding face validity, Kouzes and Posner (2002b) indicated that individuals who have completed the LPI found the instrument to correspond with their beliefs about excellent leadership practices.

Five focus groups were conducted based on the results of the LPI-Self. Focus group members were chosen based on their responses related to the five practices. Principals who scored in the high range for frequency of engagement, 70%-100%, for each leadership practice were invited to participate in a focus group. Some participants were invited to participate in more than one focus group. Focus group questions (Appendix C) were developed in order to solicit responses from study participants about their leadership practices in their schools. The goal was to facilitate a discussion to uncover specific leadership behaviors, actions, traditions, and procedures that can be replicated in practice by other principals. This study was confidential but not anonymous because study participants interacted with other study participants in focus groups.

## *Focus Group Protocol*

### Focus Group Model the Way

1. What does model the way mean to you as an elementary principal?
2. Describe some behaviors that you exhibit that model the way in your school.
3. How do your behaviors that model the way impact student achievement?

### Focus Group Inspire a Shared Vision

1. What does inspire a shared vision mean to you as an elementary principal?
2. Describe some behaviors that you exhibit that inspire a shared vision in your school.
3. How do your behaviors that inspire a shared vision impact student achievement?

### Focus Group Challenge the Process

1. What does challenge the process mean to you as an elementary principal?
2. Describe some behaviors that you exhibit that challenge the process in your school.
3. How do your behaviors that challenge the process impact student achievement?

### Focus Group Enable Others to Act

1. What does enable others to act mean to you as an elementary principal?
2. Describe some behaviors that you exhibit in your school that enable others to act in your school.
3. How do your behaviors that enable others to act impact student achievement?

### Focus Group Encourage the Heart

1. What does encourage the heart mean to you as an elementary principal?
2. Describe some behaviors that you exhibit that encourage the heart in your school.

3. How do your behaviors that encourage the heart impact student achievement?

#### Procedures for Data Collection and Analysis

The following steps were used to complete the study:

1. Request permission for the study from the St. John Fisher College Institutional Review Board;
2. Purchase the Leadership Practices Inventory Facilitator's Guide;
3. Develop qualitative focus group interview protocols (Appendix C);
4. Identify the specific study participants;
5. Mail an introductory letter of invitation (Appendix A) to the participants and informed consent will be gained and returned to the researcher;
6. Conduct follow-up phone calls 2 weeks after the initial mailing to increase participation;
7. Coordinate the distribution of the survey instrument including the preparation of a survey packet that contains the instrument, accompanied by a cover letter outlining the directions for completion and return to the researcher;
8. Mail, or in some cases deliver, the survey packet (Appendix C) to participants that includes the LPI-Self and instructions;
9. Conduct follow-up phone calls 2 weeks after mailing if packets are not returned to increase participation;
10. Organize focus groups according the results of the survey instrument;
11. Mail focus group letters of invitation (Appendix D) to the participants and gain informed consent;
12. Conduct five focus groups based on the LPI-Self results (Participants may be

included in more than one focus group depending on individual LPI results. Focus groups will be held in central New York.)

The invitation letter (Appendix A) gave comprehensive information regarding the study and provided details regarding the college affiliation, purpose, participation requirements, informed consent form, and directions for completion and submission. Additionally, it clearly articulated an assurance of confidentiality but not anonymity. Study results will be made available to study participants at the completion of the study. After the study is complete, confidentiality will be maintained. All survey and focus group data will be held in a secure, locked cabinet for 5 years with the researcher.

The data generated by the responses to the Leadership Practices Inventory were analyzed in relation to each of the research questions. The LPI computer software program on a compact disc was used to generate reports that summarized and analyzed the data from the questionnaires, by practice, behaviors, and percentile rankings.

Focus group data were generated based on the conversations and questions within each group. Patterns of behaviors and practices were coded. Lists of practices and behaviors were generated for each of the five Kouzes and Posner practices. The results of the focus groups were used to generate an elementary leadership practice framework for central New York.

## Chapter Summary

The purpose of this study was the development of a research based framework for elementary leadership practices based on the Kouzes and Posner leadership practices and theory. Chapter three illustrates the methodology for a study of Kouzes and Posner leadership practices of elementary principals. It includes topic background, context,

participants, data gathering instruments, and analysis. Kouzes and Posner's Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) Self was utilized. Additionally, five focus groups were conducted with study participants based on the results of the LPI-Self. The study took place in central New York school districts in rural and suburban communities. After collecting data, data analysis was conducted to identify if relationships exist between the six variables identified and research questions one and two. A leadership framework for elementary principals in central New York based on the Kouzes and Posner leadership practices was developed.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

### Introduction

Effective leadership practices for elementary principals are more important than ever and principal salaries, jobs, and the future of their schools depend on it. School reform initiatives like Race to the Top bring requirements that increase accountability with punitive measures specifically targeted to principals. Given this context, Wahlstrom & Louis (2008), point out that the leadership of the principal is a key factor in supporting student achievement and is essential to building successful schools. This increased responsibility and accountability dictates an urgent need for a validated, research-based leadership framework for elementary principals. The work of Kouzes and Posner is widely respected as applied in business and education. There is potential for the Kouzes and Posner work to provide a foundation for a framework of elementary principal leadership practices. Kouzes and Posner have identified five leadership practices and ten commitments of exemplary leaders as indicated in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

*Kouzes and Posner Leadership Practices and Commitments*

Practice	Commitments
Model the Way	Clarify Values by finding your voice and affirming shared ideals
	Set the Example by aligning actions with shared values
Inspire a Shared Vision	Envision the Future by imagining exciting and ennobling possibilities
	Enlist Others in a common vision by appealing to shared aspirations
Challenge the Process	Search for Opportunities by seizing the initiative and by looking outward for innovative ways to improve
	Experiment and Take Risks by constantly generating small wins and learning from experience
Enable Others to Act	Foster Collaboration by building trust and facilitating relationships
	Strengthen Others by increasing self-determination and developing competence
Encourage the Heart	Recognize Contributions by showing appreciation for individual excellence
	Celebrate the Values and Victories by creating a spirit of community

The study explored the application and utilization of specific leadership practices gleaned from principal responses on Kouzes and Posner's Leadership Practices Inventory-Self. A sequential mixed methods design was applied by examining the major themes associated with the leadership practices of elementary principals in Central New York. The LPI-Self was sent to every elementary principal of suburban and rural districts in the central New York area. After analyzing the results of their responses on Kouzes and Posner's Leadership Practices Inventory-Self, participants were selected for five focus groups.

The Leadership Practices Inventory contains thirty items that provide valid and reliable feedback about leadership behaviors. The instrument was administered to identify focus group participants to discuss and describe the Kouzes and Posner leadership practices as implemented in an elementary school. Figure 4.1 illustrates an overview of the items in the Leadership Practices Profile-Self that measure each of the practices.

Practice	Practice Statements
Model the Way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sets a personal example of what is expected</li> <li>6. Makes certain that people adhere to agreed-on standards</li> <li>11. Follows through on promises and commitments</li> <li>16. Asks for feedback on how his/her actions affect people's performance</li> <li>21. Builds consensus around organization's values</li> <li>26. Is clear about his/her philosophy of leadership</li> </ul>
Inspire a Shared Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Talks about future trends influencing our work</li> <li>7. Describes a compelling image of the future</li> <li>12. Appeals to others to share dream of the future</li> <li>17. Shows others how their interests can be realized</li> <li>22. Paints "big picture" of group aspirations</li> <li>27. Speaks with conviction about meaning of work</li> </ul>
Challenge the Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Seeks challenging opportunities to test skills</li> <li>8. Challenges people to try new approaches</li> <li>13. Searches outside organization for innovative ways to improve</li> <li>18. Asks "What can we learn?"</li> <li>23. Makes certain that goals, plans, and milestones are set</li> <li>28. Experiments and takes risks</li> </ul>
Enable Others to Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Develops cooperative relationships</li> <li>9. Actively listens to diverse points of view</li> <li>14. Treats others with dignity and respect</li> <li>19. Supports decisions other people make</li> <li>24. Gives people choice about how to do their work</li> <li>29. Ensures that people grow in their jobs</li> </ul>
Encourage the Heart	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Praises people for a job well done</li> <li>10. Expresses confidence in people's abilities</li> <li>15. Creatively rewards people for their contributions</li> <li>20. Recognizes people for commitment to shared values</li> <li>25. Finds ways to celebrate accomplishments</li> <li>30. Gives team members appreciation and support</li> </ul>

*Figure 4.1.* Overview of items in the LPI that measure each of the five practices.

The study addressed the following research questions:

Q1: How do elementary principals in central New York rate themselves using the Kouzes and Posner Leadership Practices Inventory Self (LPI Self), in the areas of Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart?

Q2: For principals with a high frequency use of the five practices according to the LPI-Self, how do they describe their leadership behaviors relative to these practices and their implementation in elementary schools?

#### Process

The Kouzes and Posner Leadership Practices Inventory-Self was sent to elementary principals in a large county in central New York. The leadership survey completed by the principals measured the frequency of use of the five leadership practices of Kouzes and Posner. There were 17 school districts in the county and 50 elementary schools in those school districts. In some school districts, a comprehensive application process was required to gain permission to conduct research. After the initial mailing of the LPI survey and informed consent form, follow up phone calls were made to each potential participant.

After data collection, survey data was scored and analyzed using the Leadership Practices Inventory scoring software. The software analyzed the 30 statements on the instrument and marked the responses on a ten-point scale from 1 representing *almost never*, to 10 representing *almost always*. For each statement on the survey, participants indicated the frequency with which they engaged in the behavior. The computerized scoring software provided a report for each participant that showed the national percentile

rank of their frequency of engagement for each of the five leadership practices of Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart.

Focus groups were conducted with study participants based on the results of their LPI survey. After the survey reports were generated, an analysis generated a list of principals that scored in the high range, 70%-100%, for frequency of engagement in each of the leadership practices measured by the instrument. Principals who scored in the high range for frequency of engagement for each leadership practice were invited to participate in a focus group. One focus group was conducted for each leadership practice examined. After focus group recordings were transcribed, coding was completed. Focus group transcripts were analyzed using inductive coding, including horizontalization for the identification of themes.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into three sections. The first section illustrates the findings to research question one. The second section illustrates the answers to research question two as it applies to the five leadership practices examined. The final section compares the similarities between the Kouzes and Posner behaviors to those leadership behaviors identified by study participants in the focus groups.

#### Research Question One

How do elementary principals in central New York rate themselves using the Kouzes and Posner Leadership Practices Inventory Self (LPI Self), in the areas of Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart?

The study focused on elementary principals in central New York. There were 17 public school districts in the focus county. There were 9 suburban school districts with a total of 39 elementary schools, 7 rural school districts with a total of 11 elementary schools, and one urban school district with 15 elementary schools. A total of 50 LPI-Self instruments were sent to study participants. The urban school district with 15 elementary schools did not participate in the study. There was a response rate of 78% which means that 39 surveys were returned. Of the 39 study participants, 8 were from rural districts and 31 were from suburban school districts. Table 4.2 illustrates the percentages of participating principals from rural and suburban school districts.

Table 4.2

*Percentage of Participating Principals from Rural and Suburban Schools*

School Type	Number of Participants/	
	Total Number of Schools	Percentage of Participation
Rural	8/11	73%
Suburban	31/39	79%
Total	39/50	78%

Respondent scores were reported out within a normal distribution that identifies percentile ranges of low, moderate, and high frequency of application of the leadership practices. The LPI scoring software generated reports on participants based on their responses. These reports were used to select potential focus group participants. Individual LPI reports indicated a frequency of engagement score for each leadership practice. A frequency of 0-29% was considered low engagement, 30-69% was

considered moderate engagement, and 70-100% was considered high engagement. For the purpose of identifying qualitative focus group participation, principals who scored within the high range in the normal distribution for that leadership practice were included.

After all survey reports were completed, an analysis generated a list of principals who scored in the high range (70%-100%) for frequency of engagement in each of the leadership practices measured by the instrument. After identifying participants for each of the leadership practices, a host principal was secured for each focus group. An attempt was made to host each focus group in a district with more than one qualifying principal for that group.

Survey results of study participants indicated to what degree respondents engaged with each of the five leadership practices. Nineteen respondents had an LPI percentile ranking between 70 and 100 for the practice *Model the Way*. This represents the highest percent (49) of qualifying participants of the five practices. Fifteen respondents had an LPI percentile ranking between 70 and 100 for the practice *Inspire a Shared Vision*. Twelve respondents had an LPI percentile ranking between 70 and 100 for the practice *Challenge the Process*. This represents the lowest percent (31) of qualifying participants of the five practices. Seventeen respondents had an LPI percentile ranking between 70 and 100 for the practice *Enable Others to Act*. Fourteen respondents had an LPI percentile ranking between 70 and 100 for the practice *Encourage the Heart*.

Table 4.3 illustrates the number and percentage of qualifying participants for each of the five leadership practices. The Table also indicates the number of qualifying participants (scoring between the 70% and 100%) from rural and suburban schools by

leadership practice and the number of actual focus group participants. There were 39 or 78%, total respondents in the study.

Table 4.3

*Number of Qualifying Participants for the Five Focus Groups*

Leadership Practice	Number of Qualifying Participants			Percentage of Qualifying Participants	Number of Actual Focus Group Participants
	Rural	Suburban	Total		
1 Model the Way	3	16	19	49%	3
2 Inspire a Shared Vision	1	14	15	38%	3
3 Challenge the Process	0	12	12	31%	4
4 Enable Others to Act	4	13	17	44%	3
5 Encourage the Heart	3	11	14	36%	5

Of the 39 study participants that completed and returned the LPI survey instrument, 18 or 46%, qualified for more than one focus group. Additionally, five or 13%, qualified for all five focus groups in the study. In the narrative section of research question two, participants are identified by letters. For example, the first respondent for the first leadership practice will be labeled participant 1a.

Research Question Two

For principals with a high frequency use of the five practices according to the LPI-Self, how do they describe their leadership behaviors relative to these practices and their implementation in elementary schools?

### *Model the Way.*

Three major themes emerged from focus group Model the Way: Say and Do What You Believe, Build Trust, and Communicate. The first theme was the most prominent. Within this theme there was significant discussion by focus group participants about the importance of the principal exhibiting what they believe with their actions and words. Articulating what they believe and leading by example were essential to modeling the way.

The second major theme was Build Trust. This theme emerged around the idea that without trust, the school cannot be lead. Principals that build trust enjoy the support and productivity of their staff.

The last theme was Communicate. This theme identified the many ways that principals communicate with their staff and the importance of communication. Participants report that communication is far more than sharing procedural information. Communicating is more about focusing conversations on important issues and interacting with staff and students. The next several pages identify and describe each of the themes, substantiated by quotes from participants.

Table 4.4

*Themes for Research Question Number Two: Model the Way*

Number of Themes	Themes	Sub-themes
Theme #1	Say and Do What you Believe	Provide Professional Development Recognize Experts in the School Know That You Can Do It Focus on Instruction Have High Expectations
Theme #2	Build Trust	Understand the School Culture Make Staff Feel Supported
Theme #3	Communicate	Share Valuable Information Make Meaningful Connections

*Say and Do What You Believe*

The first theme illustrates how important it is for principals to say and do what they believe as they model the way in their school. Participants revealed that principals that model the way exhibit what they believe by their actions and words. Participant 1a said, “You know what you believe about education, our role, our purpose and it’s a real solid core of that belief. You know you have the strength of I believe that this is doable, I believe that we can do it.” These leaders understand that staff members are watching what they do in their interactions with students, parents, and staff. Principals that model the way share their vision with actions. They work long hours, show no favoritism and show that students are number one. Participant 1a stated that “You have to, you know, if

you're going to talk the talk, you better be able to walk the walk." Study participants indicated that principals that model the way articulate what they believe. These principals ask teachers to do more than they may even think they can do. Principals that say and do what they believe, provide professional development, build trust, and communicate regularly and effectively.

*Provide professional development.* Study participants indicated that principals that model the way provide professional development. These principals utilize faculty meetings to focus on instruction and professional development. They share professional articles with the staff. Providing professional development does not always come in the form of in-service. Sometimes these principals share research in the form of articles. They also share what they believe verbally. Participant 1b stated "I would use a weekly faculty notice and include links to web links, newspaper articles, and professional journal articles." Further, participant 1c stated "We also get to meet, you know, we have built-in weekly meetings with every grade level." Participant 1c continued to share that "we also have a half day a month basically that we can use." This participant explained how these meeting opportunities were used for in-house professional development.

*Recognize experts in the school.* Participating principals said they model the way by recognizing experts in their school. They talked about how important it is when providing professional development and in building climate and trust, to recognize experts in the school. These participants believe that it is important to show teachers that they are the experts and to showcase that expertise. They do this by not looking outside for experts. They show them that they are the experts and they have conversations with them about their instruction. They ask teachers what they think. These principals value

the input of their teachers and they celebrate their accomplishments. Participant 1a said “I think you really need to look and assess your own staff and see, utilize that as resources. I think we always think we have to go outside to get the experts and I know what has been successful is to celebrate but also share the accomplishments of staff and that I think is important when you have your staff meetings.” Participant 1b stated “You establish trust and show that folks you can do this, you really are the experts.”

*Know that you can do it.* Study participants stated that principals that model the way make staff feel comfortable and supported. They described ways that principals do this. Principals make staff feel comfortable by making personal connections to them with their actions and words. Participant 1c stated “When I meet up with them in the hallway I ask how their husband is or wife or children.” These principals show their teachers that they are the experts. They hold them accountable, but show them that they will support them in the process. These principals empower their teachers to take risks and chances and show them that they believe in them. They also make them believe that they can do better. Participant 1a stated “It empowered them to take a risk, to take a chance, to take a chance on a new paradigm and that it was, she believes we can do it, maybe we can.” They ask teachers what they think and show them that they value their input.

Participating principals state that elementary school leaders that model the way know what they believe and that it is doable. One study participant said “I think they saw a new vision for themselves. They had a new belief and it was empowering for them. It empowered them to take a risk to take a chance, to take a chance on a new paradigm and that it was, she believes in me.”

*Focus on instruction.* Principals articulate what they believe by focusing conversations on children and instruction. They share research and what they believe. Principals that model the way articulate what they believe by talking about things that make it possible for kids to learn. Participant 1a said “Whenever I have conversations with teachers, I mean it’s, you know, I really somehow talk about instruction and kids.” Participant 1c stated that when speaking with teachers he reminds them to “remember what our strength is, quality instruction, quality learning.” These conversations reinforce the mission in the school and inspire a shared vision for student success. Participant 1b said that “at one of the first staff meetings we had I asked them to tell me all of the things that make it impossible for children to be learning.” By identifying those obstacles, it became clearer to chart a path toward success. Participant 1b further stated “These are the things we’re going to pay attention to, all of these other things they’re done, they’re off the table, they’re not an excuse. The kids deserve better than that.” These conversations establish that there are no excuses. And, participant 1b stated that by having conversations about what the teachers thought of their teaching and their school, “they thought they could do better.”

*Have high expectations.* Participants frequently talked about the importance of sharing high expectations. They articulated in their conversations and stated that in holding teachers to high standards and expectations, it is essential to model the behaviors and expectations you expect. Participant 1a stated “I’m the quickest one to the broom and dust pan. They’re watching you, they’re always watching you.” Participants talked about the importance of sharing their knowledge about education and kids with their teachers. Participant 1c stated that “I shared what I believed about education and it

started with here's what I know about schools. Here's what the research says, and this is what I believe about us and where we can go and what we can do." Participant 1b said that you must "establish trust and show the folks you can do this, you really are the experts, and again hold them to expectations maybe that they even doubt themselves."

### *Build Trust*

The next theme illustrates how important it is for principals to build trust in their school. These principals build trust with their actions and words. They do it by setting examples and supporting their staff while they take risks. Participants revealed that principals build trust by celebrating the accomplishments of teachers, understanding the culture of your school and by making the staff feel supported. Participant 1b said "When you establish trust you can hold them to expectations maybe that they even doubt themselves. You have to hold them accountable but also celebrate in those accomplishments." Principals that build trust celebrate the accomplishments of their teachers. Participant 1c stated that it is important "to celebrate but also share the accomplishments of staff."

*Understand the culture of your school.* Study participants talked about the critical importance of understanding the culture of the school that you lead. Participant 1c stated "I think it has a lot to do with being aware of the culture of your building and where they are, you know, where they're starting from." Participants talked about how important it is to understand the culture before building a new vision to move the school forward. Participant 1a stated "Well that's modeling the way; it's building a culture or an environment that says we believe that you can do great things." Understanding the culture of the school establishes a sense of respect for where they have been according to

participants. Participant 1b said that talking about where the school had been and about instruction, teachers became motivated to talk about the future. He stated “They thought they could do better. They started talking about instruction like they didn’t do before and they care about being better.”

*Make staff feel supported.* This theme resonated throughout this leadership practice focus group. Participants talked about how principals that model the way work hard to make their staff feel supported. In making them feel supported; they naturally work to make them feel comfortable and appreciated. Participant 1a stated “These principals also help the teachers see a new vision for themselves and know that they can improve. Participant 1c said that it is important to make “People feel that they’re supported but they also know that anything you ask them to do you would do yourself.” Participants stated that by showing teachers that you believe in them it gives them a sense of confidence and the will to try to move forward in a positive way without fear. Participant 1c said “I empower them to take a risk, to take a chance, to take a chance on a new paradigm and that it was, she believes we can do it, maybe we can.”

### *Communicate*

The theme of Communicate was strong in this focus group. Participants talked about the power and value of communication between the principal and the staff. They shared that communication is important in terms of sharing valuable information that contributes to the overall function of the organization. More importantly, communication also is about how the leader makes meaningful connections with the staff. These connections have power in terms of building trust and sharing vision.

*Share valuable information.* Participants talked about the ways that they communicate for the purpose of sharing valuable information with staff that contributes to the overall effectiveness of the organization. They also talked about the importance of not wasting the time of staff with unnecessary meetings. Participant 1b stated “staff meetings, try not to have meetings for meetings sake, but purposeful.”

*Make meaningful connections.* Participants articulated ways that they use communication to make meaningful connections with their staff. Participant 1a stated “I put all of the staff in my Blackberry as a contact so I can send a text or great link and everyone gets it immediately.” This is an example of using communication by technology to share professional information while making a personal connection to staff. Participant 1b made the point that face to face communication is best. He further shared an experience that illustrated the power of face to face communication and respect by saying “I’ll never forget my first team meeting we sat around in our conference room and the first thing I said was what do you think.” Participant 1b followed up with “I philosophically believe that you don’t get your best performance from people when you don’t value their input.” The *Model the Way* focus group date generated three major themes; Say and Do What You Believe, Build Trust, and Communicate. The next leadership practice is *Inspire a Shared Vision*.

#### *Inspire a Shared Vision*

Three major themes emerged from focus group *Inspire a Shared Vision: Visibility and Rapport, Communicate, and Support Change*. The first major theme was Visibility and Rapport. Within this theme, participants discussed how important it is for the elementary leader to be visible in order to inspire a shared vision. Participants talked

about the importance of the principal exhibiting an understanding of the culture of the school. They also shared the importance of celebrating the success of the staff and the inspirational effect of doing so.

The second major theme was Communicate. This theme generated three sub-themes. The first area discussed by focus group participants was the importance of generating dialogue with staff. Participants also discussed the importance of providing and supporting professional growth through professional development initiatives. The principal participants also shared the idea of giving teachers a voice. In giving teachers a voice and by generating professional dialogue, teachers have greater buy-in and are more likely to share the leader's vision.

The third theme was Support Change. This theme focused on the importance of supporting the change that may result from inspiring a shared vision. There were two sub-themes including the importance of focusing on instruction. Participants discussed the importance of keeping the focus of the school on instruction and focusing on students.

Table 4.5

*Themes for Research Question Number Two: Inspire a Shared Vision*

Number of Themes	Themes	Sub-themes
Theme #1	Visibility and Rapport	Understand the culture Celebrate Success
Theme #2	Communicate	Generate Dialogue Provide Professional Development Give Teachers a Voice
Theme #3	Support Change	Focus on Instruction Focus on Kids

*Visibility and Rapport*

The first theme illustrates how important visibility and rapport is for principals as they inspire a shared vision in their school. Participants revealed that principals that inspire a shared vision utilize a variety of strategies and behaviors to improve the visibility and rapport that is so important. In addition to sharing the importance of understanding the culture of the school and celebrating the success of staff, participants listed a number of other behaviors that contributed to the establishment of rapport with staff. Participants talked about the power of visibility for a leader. Participant 2d stated that in building visibility and rapport “I think visibility is critical. You have to be out and about.” Participant 2b concurred that “Visibility is the key...if you’re in the classroom and they’re comfortable, I think they feel as though you’re giving credibility to what

they're doing.” Additionally, participants talked about the critical importance of reaching out to those professionals in the organization that are highly respected and positive as you inspire a shared vision. These are the teachers that will help to make the vision a reality. Participant 2b stated “Another big factor is maturity of staff...you informally talk to people, get their feedback and even share how you're feeling and see how they react to it.” Sometimes the reactions of veteran staff can be a gauge for the feelings of the staff in general. Participants also talked about the added value of focusing on staff that is positive and enthusiastic. Participant 2c said “We all know who the go-getters are in the buildings and so if you can get them on board they help to get the others on board.” Additionally, participants talked about the importance of a principal to be visible in the school and in classrooms in order to maintain a focus on students. Participant 2a stated “I think visibility is critical. I go in and read in the classrooms.” This illustrated the importance of linking visibility with a focus on students and instruction.

*Understand the culture.* Study participants indicated that principals that inspire a shared vision understand the culture of their school. Participants again talked about the importance of tapping into veteran staff. They talked about the need to gauge the audience in the school. Participant 2b said “I think you have to be conscious of what your population is, who you're talking to.” Participants talked about the importance of understanding the history of the school. They underscored how that understanding is critical to moving any school forward as they inspire a shared vision. Participant 2b stated “I think once you have an understanding of where they come from I feel more comfortable in just starting a conversation and generally talking to them about some

things that, you know, I think we should look at.” Participant 2b reinforced the idea that a school’s history plays an important role in its future.

*Celebrate success.* As leaders inspire a shared vision by building visibility and rapport, they also celebrate success. This sub-theme focused on the importance of recognizing and celebrating the success of the students and staff. Participant 2b stated “I think it’s important to celebrate the accomplishments throughout the year.” These celebrations can be private or more public. Participant 2a described how she celebrated success in a more private way, “We have pat on the back postcards that can be sent home.” Or sometimes these celebrations and recognitions occur in a more public yet intimate setting. Participant 2c stated “Sometimes we share successes at a little luncheon or we’ll have a little breakfast to acknowledge their efforts and share those things.” More public celebrations were shared. Participant 2b described how she went around the building and took pictures of different activities and then used them to make a slide show, “It was only about five minutes and it had inspiring music with it and they sat and watched it and they saw the kids working in the rooms, and they saw the activities, the they saw the bulletin boards in the rooms and things like that.” Participants described their experiences with celebrations and recognition.

### *Communicate*

The next theme that emerged was Communicate. As principals inspire a shared vision, participants believe that communication is important. Study participants shared how important communication is by describing the ways they communicate and what they communicate about. Participant 2c stated “Communicate as often and effectively as you can.” Participants talked about three sub-themes including *generating dialogue*,

*providing professional development, and giving teachers a voice.* They further described examples of how these important tasks are accomplished.

*Generate dialogue.* As principals inspire a shared vision, they generate dialogue according to participants. Participant 2b stated that it is important to encourage the sharing of ideas. She further stated “We just have so much expertise among us right within our building I think it is important to share.” Participant 2a said this about communicating about students “Offer an opportunity for them to have a professional conversation about kids; I see your kids did really well...how did you teach that?” Participant 2a stated “Get their input about where they think they should go and what are the areas for improvement.” Relative to conversations between the leader and teachers, Participant 2b described how a conversation might look with a teacher in private, “What can I do to help with the challenges that we have?”

*Provide professional development.* As principals inspire a shared vision, participants outlined the importance of providing professional development to teachers. This professional development builds the foundation for the initiatives that are part of that vision. Participant 2b stated “I try to provide them with some staff development whether it’s an article or websites.” Participant 2a talked about how important it is to build a schedule that provides common planning times for professional development through dialogue. Participant 2a stated “I think it’s a priority to support, the schedule has to support changes that you’re going to make.” Participant 2c talked about professional planning meetings that are held in his building that focus the collective intelligence of many staff member on a single problem. This participant called these CIQ meetings,

which stands for collective intelligence quota meetings. This concept aligns with the earlier theme of looking for experts in your building.

*Give teachers a voice.* Participants talked about the importance of giving teachers a voice as they inspire a shared vision. This voice comes in the form of professional conversations, a focus on student achievement, and a critical look at the needs of the school. Participant 2b stated “I know it’s just a little piece of the pie about the common vision, but when you start to have those professional conversations, they feel like they’re really kind of in control of the direction.” There were many other ways that principals give teachers a voice as they inspire a shared vision. Some leaders like to ask teachers their opinions. Participant 2b stated “Once I have a better understanding of where they come from...talking to them about some things that, you know, I think we should look at.” Participants try to focus this teacher voice on topics around students and student achievement. Participant 2c talked about individual accountability that supports building level initiatives or issues “What can we do to help with the challenges that we have?”

### *Support Change*

The third theme was *Support Change*. Participants talked about the importance of the leaders showing teachers with words and actions that they will support the change that is part of the shared vision. This support can come in the form of conversations with staff about where they are and where they want to be. Participant 2c stated that they do this by “Asking the staff, getting their input you know about where they think we should go and what are the areas for improvement and what do they need help with.” These important conversations can take place during grade level meetings and collaborative planning opportunities if available. Participant 2a stated “You look at your means to

communicate as often and effectively as you can and I think the grade level team meetings are a great way.” Participants said that a principal who supports change as they inspire a shared vision polishes their diamonds and celebrates the success of staff.

*Focus on instruction.* Participants stated that principals that inspire a shared vision do so by focusing on instruction. As instructional leaders, they felt that elementary school leadership should be focused on students and student achievement. Participant 2b reflected on the importance of talking about student achievement data in a non-threatening way. She stated “They want to know what their data is so you know, you have to have those conversations and you have to start with the less threatening stuff.” Participant 2a further stated that it is important to ask teachers to illustrate patterns of achievement as well as plans for improvement. She stated “We use feeder cards that show scores and data on it, but it also tells whether or not we’ve gone to a Response to Intervention meeting and if there’s been an intervention plan.” The conversations that need to occur only happen when certain elements are in place according to participants. One element was discussed by participant 2a who said “We give our teachers a 50 minute common block of planning time twice a month.” These blocks of time are further talked about by participant 2c who stated “With the learning communities we try to create the common assessments and take a look at the data.” Participant 2b talked about the importance of celebrating the instructional accomplishments of staff by stating “The professional development is successful because the teachers are very much a part of it and I think it’s important to celebrate the accomplishments and not just in May or June but throughout the year.”

*Focus on students.* As principals inspire a shared vision through supporting change, participants said that they focus on students. As they outlined the importance of focusing on instruction, they constantly talked about focusing on students, too. Participant 2a stated “We do a pretty good job with recognizing kids and celebrating their successes. We have a wall of fame and character coupons.” Participants said that leaders focus on students by talking about student achievement and by providing opportunities for teachers to talk about students and student achievement. Participant 2a stated “I want them to know overall how that class did last year on the ELAs and math, and about the kids that are in their particular class.” Participant 2a described “You’re talking about data at your team meetings...it’s about the data and RTI and making sure that everyone is where they need to be.” The Inspire a Shared Vision focus group generated three major themes; Visibility and Rapport, Communication, and Support Change. The next leadership practice is Challenge the Process.

#### *Challenge the Process*

Two major themes emerged from focus group *Challenge the Process*: Support New Initiatives, and Always Expect More. The first major theme was Support New Initiatives. Participants talked about how important it is for the elementary leader to support new initiatives as they challenge the process. Participants also talked about the importance of the principal not being afraid to make change as they support new initiatives. Change requires confidence and the ability to establish trust with the team that will help make the change in the school. There were two sub-themes within the theme Support New Initiatives: Talk about New Initiatives and Don’t be Afraid to Make Change. The second major theme was Always Expect More. This theme generated one

sub-theme. Focus group participants discussed the importance of establishing trust. Participants also discussed the importance of looking for opportunities to challenge the process and make improvements that are good for children.

Table 4.6

*Themes for Research Question Number Two: Challenge the Process*

Number of Themes	Themes	Sub-themes
Theme #1	Support New Initiatives	Talk about New Initiatives Don't be Afraid to Make Change
Theme #2	Always Expect More	Establish Trust

*Support New Initiatives*

The first theme is around the idea of supporting the initiatives that are necessary to challenge the process. Participants talked about change requiring supporting initiatives that move the organization forward and creating new initiatives. In order to create and support the implementation of new initiatives, the principal needs to have a vision. Participant 3d stated “What I think is important is to make sure that the system is purposeful. I think it’s important that you don’t continue to do it because it’s been done but you just make sure that what’s being done is purposeful.” This purposeful change is prefaced by building trust and relationships according to participants. Participant 3b stated ‘It’s important to establish trust and I think you can get that trust by eliminating things that aren’t purposeful so they know that you value their input and their time.’ Sometimes these new initiatives are born of conversations with teachers. Participant 3a

stated “I think it’s sometimes easier if they initiate some change.” They further shared feelings about strategically avoiding creating anxiety in teacher, “Be sensitive to the anxiety of the teachers, you certainly don’t want to be doing things that are going to increase their anxiety.”

*Talk about new initiatives.* Participants shared the importance of talking about new initiatives as they challenge the process. These participants believed that principals need to have a vision as they challenge the process. Participant 3d stated “You have to have good vision, you know where you’ve got to go and you challenge yourself on those ideas.” Study participants talked about the importance of allowing teachers to initiate change and the power of cognitive coaching. Participant 3c stated “They have an idea in mind and I think one of the things that I do is go through the cognitive coaching process...asking probing questions and clarifying.” Participant 3b further stated that “I’ll put suggestions in there and talk about what it is going to look like. We talk about what they want to do and what they would expect and what impact it would have.” Sometimes these conversations require questioning between the principal and the teacher to challenge the process. Participant 3a talked about the importance of “challenging in a respectful manner.” He further stated “Question why do we do this. Is it instructionally sound, and of course you have to be respectful of their investment.” Participants talked about coaching teachers to challenge the process by encouraging them to question as well. Principals that challenge the process encourage their teachers to talk about initiatives. Participant 3d stated “Challenge them to think outside the box more, to look at things differently.” Participants talked about focusing conversations around initiatives that they can control. Participant 3c said “Let’s talk about things we can control.”

*Don't be afraid to make change.* The idea that principals who challenge the process need a vision continued through this sub-theme. Leaders who have a vision will be more likely to not be afraid to do what is necessary to make change. As previously discussed, these study principals reiterated the importance of making sure that the new initiatives are purposeful. Additionally, study participants talked about the importance of being strategic through starting small. Participant 3c stated “You need to be strategic...and you might start with some small high impact (changes) that you know are going to have wide spread support.” Participants talked about the need for a principal to be comfortable and willing to stand up for what they believe. Participant 3b stated “I think you have to have your own beliefs and have a real strong foundation to stand by.” Participant 3d further stated “You have to be comfortable standing up when you know sometimes what you're saying is not popular but its right.” Participants all agreed that principals that challenge the process by making change need to look at problems as opportunities.

#### *Always Expect More*

The next theme is that principals that challenge the process always expect more. These leaders don't accept the status quo. They are looking for continuous improvement in their teachers, students, and school. Participants described what principals do as they challenge the process by always expecting more. There were conversations about principals having high expectations for their school. Participant 3b stated “I think one of the things is you're never satisfied. There's always room for improvement. I think a good leader always finds an area to improve and move their people toward that.” Participants also talked about strong principals standing up for what they believe and

understanding that sometimes that may not be popular with the masses. Again, participant 3d stated “You have to be comfortable in your own skin. You have to be comfortable standing up when you know sometimes what you’re saying is not popular but its right.” Principals that always expect more are hardest on themselves according to participants. Participant 3a stated “You really have to be hardest on yourself.”

*Establish trust.* One sub-theme of this theme is establishing trust. Study participants talked about how important it is for principals that challenge the process to establish and maintain trust. They described many ways that these principals do that. Participant 3b stated “It is important to establish trust.” Study participants talked about eliminating initiatives that are not purposeful so that there is room for the implementation of new innovative initiatives. This practice alleviates teacher stress and builds trust. Participant 3c stated “They’ve got to trust you as a staff, and even more important I think the parents have to trust you.” Participant 3d added “We’ve got a lot of engagement with families...they really need to believe and the community needs to believe in their schools to make sure that they support and you know what you’re doing is right and that you care about their kids just as much as they do.” Participants shared how important it is to show the teachers that you are connected to them and that you are supportive in order to build that essential trust. Participant 3a said “Let them know that you support them, you share their frustrations, and you feel their pain.” The Challenge the Process focus group generated two major themes; Support New Initiatives and Always Expect More. The next leadership practice is Enable Others to Act.

### *Enable Others to Act*

Two major themes emerged from the focus group Enable Others to Act transcripts: *Eliminate Obstacles*, and *Build Trust*. The first major theme was Eliminate Obstacles. Participants shared how important it is for elementary leaders to eliminate the obstacles that get in the way of enabling teachers to act. These obstacles get in the way of teachers moving forward in a positive way with students and prevent the school from continuous progress according to participants. Participant 4b stated “My role is to make sure the teachers have the tools and the resources they need to be successful and then try to isolate them as much as possible from the things that don’t matter.” There were three sub-themes within the theme Eliminate Obstacles: Foster Communication, Promote Professional Development, and Focus on Children and Instruction.

The second major theme was Build Trust. This theme generated one sub-theme: *respect teachers*. Participants discussed how importance it is to build trust in your school. Principals that enable others to act build trust and also trust those in the school. One way that these leaders show trust and build trust is by respecting teachers and exhibiting practices that honor teachers and the organization. Participants talked about how the establishment of trust encourages teachers to take action toward new and better things. Participant 4b stated “Once you have the trust you can do those things because they’ll know and it’s a matter of I’m surprised we didn’t do it before.” Study participants shared examples of how they respect teachers with their actions and words. They described the things that principals say and do that show respect for teachers and build trust in the process.

Table 4.7

*Themes for Research Question Number Two: Enable Others to Act*

Number of Themes	Themes	Sub-themes
Theme #1	Eliminate Obstacles	Foster Communication Promote Professional development Focus on Children and Instruction
Theme #2	Build Trust	Respect Teachers

*Eliminate Obstacles*

The first theme is around the idea of eliminating the obstacles that get in the way of enabling others in the school to make change that affects children. Participants talked about eliminating obstacles and those practices that prohibit progress. Participant 4c stated “A big part of my role is to just make sure the teachers have the tools and resources they need to be successful...so they can just focus on the things that are genuinely going to affect the students in the classrooms.” Conversation centered on the idea that principals can do many things that cost nothing to make it possible for teachers to do well and feel supported and respected. Participant 4a stated “There are things that you can do as a principal that do not cost anything, like copier codes or the code to access the building.” Participants talked about making teachers jobs’ easier so that they can focus on more important issues that affect children.

*Foster communication.* One sub-theme of eliminating obstacles is the importance of fostering communication. Participants talked about ways to foster communication and what to focus that communication on. Participant 4c talked about the importance of

providing teachers with opportunities to talk and work collaboratively stating “We work with grade level teams, school based planning teams...and we are able to accomplish what we wanted to as a goal.” Participants described that providing these collaborative conversations fosters opportunities for teachers to focus on what’s most important; students and instruction. Participant 4b stated “I think having those conversations helps to reinforce to them that you come with your expertise.” Participant 4a stated “We use grade level conversations that are called congruence days where the reading team and all the teachers and I would sit and talk about students.” Participant 4c said “Let’s have those individual conversations...sharing of ideas...that time is so important and it’s all about children.” Participant 4c said “It’s about the conversation.”

*Promote professional development.* According to study participants, principals that enable others to act promote professional development. They recognize that professional development provides teachers with the tools to make positive change. Some professional development comes in the form of the leader sharing, promoting and modeling as the instructional leader. Participant 4a stated “I try to always think of everything from the teachers’ perspective. One of the most important pieces is modeling.” Additionally, participants talked about how important it is for principals to show their support of professional development. Participant 4c stated “When it comes to initiatives, if we do professional development, I like to go with my teachers....or sit in the workshop, not just send them.” Discussion focused on the importance of providing instructional resources that support initiatives for teachers. Participant 4b stated “A big part of my role is to make sure the teachers have the tools and the resources they need to be successful.” Study participants also talked about how important it is to encourage

teachers to assist in the development of professional development and the solution to problems with instruction and student achievement. Participant 4c stated “The teachers need to be a part of designing the solution to the problems and that it’s not a matter of just you deciding what direction to go.”

*Focus on children and instruction.* According to study participants, principals that enable others to act also focus on practices that place the focus on children and instruction. These principals recognize that schools are about children, not adults. There was discussion about the current stresses and challenges associated with elementary school teachers and principals. Participant 4a stated “We’re going to have challenges ahead too with accountability and what’s being told to us and I think that...yes we need to move forward but...it’s not about you, it’s about moving the students forward.” Participants agreed that each student needs to be looked at individually and that decisions should be made with the best interest of children at the forefront. Participant 4b stated “Look at students, every student as being an individual that learns in a different way.” Participant 4c said “I think your decisions...not always easy...are truly student centered. People respect you when they know you truly are making that for the best interest of children.” Study participants talked about the importance of empowering teachers to make instructional decisions. Participant 4b stated that when inquiring of a teacher if the use of a certain intervention kit was the best way to meet the needs of the students, the teacher responded “No, I have my own toolbox of tools that I would like to use.” Participant 4b responded “You need to trust what you know is best. I will support that.”

### *Build Trust*

The second major theme for the leadership practice of enable others to act was build trust. All participants agreed that building and maintaining trust is essential for an elementary principal that has a desire to enable others to act. They explained why building trust was so important and how to build it. Participant 4a said “You have to have trust before you move forward.” Participants emphasized how important trust is now with the accountability for teachers and principals. Participating principals talked about how important it is for principals to build trust through their actions and words. They listed ways by which principals build trust. Participant 4c stated “People respect you when they now you truly are making decisions in the best interest of children.” Additionally, participants talked about how building a community can increase trust that the principal is there to stay and for the right reasons. Participant 4b said “It’s just nice to keep people involved so it’s like a community and build that trust level.” Participating principals continued to talk about the school community. Participant 4c stated “I think it’s really important that they know that you care about them and that, you know, that just makes the whole partnership a lot easier if there’s that sense of trust,”

*Respect teachers.* According to participants, principals that enable others to act build trust by respecting their teachers. They described with many examples how they respect teachers with their words and actions. Participants described the practices and behaviors that principals say and do that show respect for teachers and help enable them to make positive change. Participants talked about the importance of seeing things from the teacher’s perspective and respecting them as individuals. Participant 4b stated “Each teacher is different and they all have their different strengths and teach in different ways.

It is important that you still support them in their different strengths and not try to make them conform.” Participants talked about the importance of establishing a climate of comfort. These principals encourage teachers to ask questions and for assistance and welcome their ideas. Participant 4c stated “You don’t need to take ownership. Let it come from them...you’re asking them for their stamp and it becomes theirs and they’re so much more receptive.” The idea of caring was raised many times by participants. They described ways that a principal can show that they care. Participant 4a stated “Think about their wellness and everything to that affect.” Study participant also talked about others ways that principals respect teachers. Participant 4b said “Just be consistent and fair. Confidentiality is the other piece.” Teachers want to be successful and that success should be celebrated according to participants. Participant 4c stated “I think its human nature that people want to be successful. When people work together they are successful and you have to take time to celebrate those successes.” The Enable Others to Act focus group generated two major themes; Eliminate Obstacles and Build Trust. The last Kouzes and Posner leadership practice is Encourage the Heart.

### *Encourage the Heart*

The last focus group generated one essential theme: Build a Community. Within this theme, there were four sub-themes: communication, recognition, highlight accomplishments, and make personal connections. Participants talked about what principals do and say in their schools that encourages the heart. They talked about how essential it is for principals to build school communities that foster collaboration, student achievement, and personal connections. Principals that encourage the heart focus on people not programs. Participants said that principals that encourage the heart build a

community by being visible in the building. Participant 5c stated “Take that morning time and making sure you got in someone’s room while they’re starting their day, just talking, not always about work, just to make that connection. They also talked about the importance of hiring the right people to fit into the community you want to build.

Participant 5a said “Go back to the hiring process when you have an opportunity to hire a candidate and hire somebody that I think is going to be upbeat, positive and more curious about their work ethic. You want people that love their jobs and that are happy and empowered and not afraid.” Participant 5a said “Personnel is one of the most important things we do because it’s your opportunity to be an architect of the climate and environment of your school forever.” In building a community, participants talked about the importance of sharing informal, professional times with staff. Participant 5c stated “Prior to our professional development at the building, we had a luncheon and it was great...just that building a sense of community.” Participant 5a followed “We really like Friday breakfasts...it has helped bring a sense of community to the school.”

Table 4.8

*Themes for Research Question Number Two: Encourage the Heart*

Number of Themes	Themes	Sub-themes
Theme #1	Build a Community	Communicate Provide Recognition Highlight Accomplishments Make Personal Connections

### *Build a Community*

The essential theme of the Encourage the Heart focus group was Build a Community. Focus group participants talked about the importance of creating a community of learners and teachers that focus on students and student achievement while recognizing and supporting individuals professionally and personally. Participants outlined the practices and behaviors that principals implement to build a community. In their conversation, participants talked about the importance of highlighting the successes in the school and how that gets done. Participant 5c talked about the significance of showcasing what is good in the school and said “Bring a sense of community...and I think celebrating every staff meeting.” Participants talked about principals that encourage the heart by making gestures to staff that give recognition for all that they do every day for kids. Participant 5a stated “I give them little gifts, little things, bearcat paws (mascot) and pins and things like that.” Study participants also talked about the significance of connecting with staff. They outlined the many ways that great principals can encourage the heart by building a community through these personal connections and the results. Participant 5b stated “If you have a place where people, they’re excited about Mondays and they’re excited about going to work, they’re just going to be producers.” Participants also talked about the need for communication in a community that encourages the heart. Communication is the method by which great principals recognize the efforts of staff, highlight their accomplishments, and make personal connections with them.

*Communicate.* According to study participants, principals that encourage the heart communicate frequently and successfully with staff. This communication provides

the vehicle for the other sub-themes to encourage the heart. Communication can come in a variety of ways. Participant 5a stated “It is just important to connect, see them personally and a lot of times send a note or say something to them.” I would send a note home just thanking them for whatever.” Sometimes highlighting positive accomplishments can be done in a more public way. Participant 5a said “On my weekly staff bulletin, my principal’s note...I highlight something that went well or just say a positive note on the reflection of the week.” Some participants talked about the power of being in classrooms and the opportunities for communication that it provides. Participant 5b said “I would just do walk through supervision, I have these little cards that say I caught you doing something. I would leave this little card and man it flew through the building.” There was conversation about the importance of showing the staff that you are willing to go the extra mile and that you appreciate them. Participant 5a said in reference to a conversation with a teacher who was disappointed with test scores, “I think you’re disappointing yourself. I said, you need to know you’re a good teacher.”

*Provide recognition.* Participants discussed the importance of recognizing the work and accomplishments of students and staff as you build a community and encourage the heart. Some recognition is best done in a more public way and some in a more private way. Participant 5b stated “Some of its private and they almost get embarrassed so I do that privately.” Participants talked about a variety of ways that principals give recognition. Sometimes it is more about taking the time to show your appreciation. Participant 5b stated “The most positive thing is just taking time out to say that was, you know, thank you for sharing.” Recognition can be given to individuals or classes.

Participant 5a said “I’ll make a good news phone call for Johnny and it says you deserve a good news phone call.”

*Highlight accomplishments.* Participants talked about how important it is for principals that are encouraging the heart to highlight the accomplishments of students and staff. This recognition comes in the form of actions and words. Participant 5c stated “Taking the time to highlight what teachers are doing spreads the excitement and of course again focuses in on what is our purpose.” According to participants, highlighting the work of students is important. Participant 5b stated “Their kids last and overall class did very well in the assessments compared to other classes. I made it a point to connect with them and show them and congratulate them.” Accomplishments can be highlighted in many ways according to participants. Participant 5a stated “But a lot of it is just trying to connect, see them personally, a note or say something to them.” Participant 5c said “We do this thing called good news phone call.” Sometimes participants highlight accomplishments in writing with notes or in a more public way. Participant 5b stated “My weekly bulletin, my principal’s note, just a section of it is always highlighting something that went well.”

*Make a personal connection.* All participants agreed that the most important practice of great principals that encourage the heart is making personal and meaningful connections with staff. Connecting personally is an important practice. Participant 5a stated “Just little things to keep the fun in it...try to connect and see them personally.” Participants talked about the significance of principals taking the time to appreciate staff. Participant 5c said “The most positive thing is just taking time out to say that was, you know, thank you for sharing.” Sometimes these connections are made with visits to

classrooms or with good news phone calls. Participant 5c talked of the importance and power of knowing his staff by name. He stated “It’s important to get to know them right away; you really need to know their names. Participants talked about how important it is to be genuine and show the staff that you really care. Participant 5b said “It’s just so important that they know that you care about them and I think it’s got to be genuine.” Participant 5a followed “It’s just like anything; you’ll do so much more for somebody that you know cares about you than you would for somebody else.” The participants talked about the importance of principals building relationships by their words and actions. Participant 5c stated “It is about building relationships. We talked about it with the staff for over a year about core beliefs and building relationships.” Participants believe that this is important advice for principals too. Participant 5c stated “They’re going to go the extra mile for you if they feel some connection to you.” Additionally, participant 5c said “I have a teacher who I know does not like what I want them to do with ELA...but he’ll say to me, I’ll do it because you asked me to.” Participants agreed when participant 5b stated “The kids won’t care what you think unless they think that you care; and the same thing with the teachers.”

### Linking Quantitative and Qualitative Results

Kouzes and Posner developed five leadership practices and ten leadership commitments that have been applied widely in business and nursing. The frequency of usage of these practices is measured by the K&P Leadership Practices Inventories. The K&P Leadership Practices Inventory-Self for this study was administered to elementary principals to identify the frequency of usage of each practice. The results of these surveys lead to the selection of focus group participants to generate data linking LPI

results to real elementary leadership practices in schools. The following section will highlight each Kouzes and Posner Leadership Practice, the leadership practice statements from the Kouzes and Posner LPI and the leadership practice statements from study participants.

**K&P Leadership Practice Statements**

Sets a personal example of what is expected  
 Makes certain that people adhere to agreed-on standards  
 Follows through on promises and commitments  
 Asks for feedback on how his/her actions affect people's performance  
 Builds consensus around organization's values  
 Is clear about his/her philosophy of leadership

Talks about future trends influencing our work  
 Describes a compelling image of the future  
 Appeals to others to share dream of the future  
 Shows others how their interests can be realized  
 Paints a "big picture" of group aspirations  
 Speaks with conviction about meaning of work

Seeks challenging opportunities to test skills  
 Challenges people to try new approaches  
 Searches outside organization for innovative ways to improve  
 Asks "what can we learn?"  
 Makes certain that goals, plans, and milestones are set  
 Experiments and takes risks

Develops cooperative relationships  
 Actively listens to diverse points of view  
 Treats others with dignity and respect  
 Supports decisions other people make  
 Gives people choice about how to do their work  
 Ensures that people grow in their jobs

Praises people for a job well done  
 Expresses confidence in people's abilities  
 Creatively rewards people for their contributions  
 Recognizes people for commitment to shared values  
 Finds ways to celebrate accomplishments  
 Gives team members appreciation and support

**K&P Leadership Practices****Model the Way****Inspire a Shared Vision****Challenge the Process****Enable Others to Act****Encourage the Heart****Study Leadership Practice Statements**

Say and do what you believe  
 Provide professional development  
 Recognize experts in the school  
 Know that you can do it  
 Focus on instruction  
 Have high expectations  
 Build trust  
 Understand the school culture  
 Communicate  
 Share valuable information

Build trust and rapport  
 Understand the culture  
 Celebrate success  
 Communicate  
 Generate dialogue  
 Provide professional development  
 Give teachers a voice  
 Support change  
 Focus on instruction  
 Focus on students

Support new initiatives  
 Talk about new initiatives  
 Don't be afraid to make change  
 Always expect more  
 Establish trust

Eliminate obstacles  
 Foster communication  
 Encourage Professional Development  
 Focus on children and instruction  
 Build trust  
 Respect teachers

Build a community  
 Communicate  
 Provide recognition  
 Highlight accomplishments  
 Make personal connections

*Figure 4.2.* Kouzes and Posner leadership practice statements and study leadership practice statements.

Each of the Kouzes and Posner Leadership Practices includes several leadership practice statements. For Model the Way, one practice statement was, *sets a personal example of what is expected*. Participating principals stated that principals that Model the Way, “Have high expectations” and “Say and do what they believe.” K&P included the practice statement, *asks for feedback on how his/her actions affect people’s performance*. Similarly, participants stated that principals that Model the Way “Communicate” and “Make staff feel supported.” K&P included, *is clear about his/her philosophy of leadership* as a practice statement for Model the Way. Study principals stated that as they Model the Way, they “Say and do what you believe” and “Share valuable information.”

For Inspire a Shared Vision, one Kouzes and Posner practice statement was, *speaks with conviction about meaning of work*. Focus group participants agreed that principals that Inspire a Shared vision, “Communicate”, “Generate dialogue”, and “Focus on children and instruction.” Another K&P practice was, *talks about future trends influencing their work*. Principals say that principals that Inspire a Shared Vision, “Support change.”

According to Kouzes and Posner, leaders who Challenge the Process, *ask what they can learn*. Focus group participants agreed and stated that principals that Challenge the Process, “Always expect more”, and “Talk about new initiatives.” Another Kouzes and Posner leadership statement for Challenge the Process was *challenges people to try new approaches*. Focus group participants agreed and stated that principals that Challenge the Process, “Support new initiatives”, “Always expect more”, and “Aren’t afraid to make change.”

For Enable Others to Act, one Kouzes and Posner leadership practice statement was, *give people choice about how to do their work*. Focus group participants agreed and stated that principals that Enable Others to Act, “Eliminate obstacles” and “Focus on children and instruction.” Another leadership practice statement measured in the LPI was, *treats others with dignity and respect*. Participating principals agreed and stated that school leaders who Enable Others to Act “Build trust” and “Respect teachers.”

For Encourage the Heart, three leadership practice statements were supported with the same practice statements from study participants. They were, *praise people for a job well done*, *express confidence in people’s abilities*, and *creatively reward people for commitment to shared values*. Study participants in this focus group used these statements to describe exemplary principals that Encourage the Heart, “Recognition” and “Highlight accomplishments.”

Figures 4.3 - 4.7 illustrate the focus group leadership practice statements that align to the Kouzes and Posner leadership practice statements for Model the Way.

**Focus Group Principal Leadership Practice Statements**

<b>K&amp;P Leadership Practice Statements</b>	Say and do what you believe	Have high expectations	Build trust	Make staff feel supported	Communicate	Understand the school's culture	Share valuable information
Sets personal example of what is expected		X					
Follows through on promises and commitments			X	X			
Asks for feedback on how his/her actions affect people's performance				X	X		
Builds Consensus around organization's values						X	
Is clear about his/her philosophy of leadership	X						X

*Figure 4.3.* Crosswalk of LPI Leadership Statements and Focus Group Leadership Statements for Model the Way.

**Focus Group Principal Leadership Practice**

**Statements**

<b>K&amp;P Leadership Practice Statements</b>	<b>Generate dialogue</b>	<b>Support change</b>	<b>Communicate</b>	<b>Give teachers a voice</b>	<b>Provide professional development</b>	<b>Focus on instruction</b>	<b>Focus on students</b>
Talks about future trends influencing work	X	X					
Appeals to others to share dream of the future			X	X			
Shows others how their interests can be realized					X		
Speaks with conviction of meaning of work	X		X			X	X

*Figure 4.4.* Crosswalk of LPI Leadership Statements and Focus Group Leadership Statements for Inspire a Shared Vision.

**Focus Group Principal Leadership Practice**

**Statements**

<b>K&amp;P Leadership Practice Statements</b>	Support new initiatives	Talk about new initiatives	Don't be afraid to make change	Always expect more
Seeks challenging opportunities to test skills	X	X	X	
Challenges people to try new approaches	X	X	X	X
Asks "what can we learn?"	X	X		X
Experiments and takes risks	X		X	X

*Figure 4.5.* Crosswalk of LPI Leadership Statements and Focus Group Leadership Statements for Challenge the Process.

**Focus Group Principal Leadership Practice**

**Statements**

<b>K&amp;P Leadership Practice Statements</b>	Build trust	Respect teachers	Eliminate obstacles	Focus on children and instruction	Professional development
Treats others with dignity	X	X			
Supports decisions other people make			X		
Give people choice about how to do their work			X	X	
Ensures that people grow in their jobs			X		X

*Figure 4.6.* Crosswalk of LPI Leadership Statements and Focus Group Leadership Statements for Enable Others to Act.

### Focus Group Principal Leadership Practice

#### Statements

K&P Leadership Practice Statements	Recognition	Highlight accomplishments	Make personal connections	Build a community
Praises people for a job well done	X	X	X	X
Expresses confidence in people's abilities	X	X	X	X
Finds ways to celebrate accomplishments	X	X	X	X
Gives team members appreciation and support	X	X		

*Figure 4.7.*

Crosswalk of LPI Leadership Statements and Focus Group Leadership Statements for Encourage the Heart.

#### Summary of Results

This chapter presented findings related to how elementary principals in central New York rated themselves on the frequency of use of the five leadership practices of Kouzes and Posner using the Kouzes and Posner Leadership Practices Inventory-Self. Research question one asked how do elementary principals in central New York rate themselves using the Kouzes and Posner Leadership Practices Inventory Self (LPI Self), in the areas of Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart? With a response rate of 78%, 39 surveys were returned. Of the 39 study participants, 8 were from rural districts and 31 were from suburban school districts. Survey results of study participants indicated to what degree

respondents engaged with each of the five leadership practices. Nineteen respondents had an LPI percentile ranking between 70 and 100 for the practice *Model the Way*. This represents the highest percent (49) of qualifying participants of the five practices. Fifteen respondents had an LPI percentile ranking between 70 and 100 for the practice *Inspire a Shared Vision*. Twelve respondents had an LPI percentile ranking between 70 and 100 for the practice *Challenge the Process*. This represents the lowest percent (31) of qualifying participants of the five practices. Seventeen respondents had an LPI percentile ranking between 70 and 100 for the practice *Enable Others to Act*. Fourteen respondents had an LPI percentile ranking between 70 and 100 for the practice *Encourage the Heart*.

Based on frequency of use according to the LPI, elementary principals in central New York shared information in five focus groups. Research question two asked for principals with a high frequency use of the five practices according to the LPI-Self, how do they describe their leadership behaviors relative to these practices and their implementation in elementary schools? The principals described of how Kouzes and Posner Leadership Practices were applied in elementary schools. Throughout the five leadership practices, eleven themes were identified. Within these eleven themes, 26 sub-themes were identified. Specific themes and subthemes were identified for each of the five leadership practices. These themes include *say and do what you believe, build trust, communicate, visibility and rapport, support change, support new initiatives, always expect more, eliminate obstacles, and build a community*.

The last section of the chapter linked the core leadership practice statements from Kouzes and Posner to the leadership practice statements described by elementary principals in each of the theme areas. Additionally, figures illustrate how these core

leadership practice statements from Kouzes and Posner are most closely aligned to the specific leadership practice statements from participating elementary principals. For example, for Model the Way, one practice statement was, *sets a personal example of what is expected*. Participating principals said that principals that Model the Way, “Have high expectations” and “Say and do what they believe.” For Inspire a Shared Vision, one Kouzes and Posner practice statement was, *speaks with conviction about meaning of work*. Focus group participants stated that principals that Inspire a Shared vision, “Communicate”, “Generate dialogue”, and “Focus on children and instruction.” According to Kouzes and Posner, leaders who Challenge the Process, *ask what they can learn*. Focus group participants stated that principals that Challenge the Process, “Always expect more”, and “Talk about new initiatives.” For Enable Others to Act, one Kouzes and Posner leadership practice statement was, *give people choice about how to do their work*. Focus group participants agreed that principals that Enable Others to Act, “Eliminate obstacles” and “Focus on children and instruction.” And for Encourage the Heart, three leadership practice statements were supported with the same practice statements from study participants. They were, *praise people for a job well done*, *express confidence in people’s abilities*, and *creatively reward people for commitment to shared values*.

The next chapter interprets the findings and discusses how principal descriptors can be synthesized to include a framework for how the Kouzes and Posner Leadership Practices look in elementary school practice. Chapter 5 also makes recommendations for educators and policy makers.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

### Introduction

Chapter 5 discusses the specific results of the study. Particular attention is given to how the results, implications, and contributions of the study contribute to scholarship and professional practice. Part one of chapter 4 discussed the administration of the Kouzes and Posner Leadership Practices Inventory-Self to study participants. The LPI was used to identify participants for the focus groups in part two of the study. Part two of chapter 4 illustrated the findings from the focus groups based on each of the K&P leadership practices. Chapter 5 revisits the problem statement as well as the purpose and research questions. Chapter 5 also interprets the findings and discusses how principal descriptors can be synthesized as a framework for describing Kouzes and Posner Leadership Practices in elementary school practice. Finally, Chapter 5 makes recommendations for educators and policy makers and provides a conclusion that summarizes the study. This chapter also discusses limitations of the study.

### Problem Statement

Effective leadership practices for elementary principals are more important than ever and principal salaries, jobs, and the future of their schools depend on it. School reform initiatives like Race to the Top bring requirements for increasing accountability with punitive measures specifically targeted to principals. Given this context, Wahlstrom and Louis (2008), point out that the leadership of the principal is a key factor in supporting student achievement and is essential to building successful schools. This

increased responsibility and accountability dictates an urgent need for a validated, research based leadership framework for elementary principals. The work of Kouzes and Posner is widely respected and applied in business and nursing. There is potential for Kouzes and Posner's research to provide a framework of leadership practices for elementary school principals.

Based on the problem statement, the purpose of the study was to look critically at the Kouzes and Posner leadership practices of elementary principals. First, leadership practices of elementary principals were measured using Kouzes' and Posner's Leadership Practices Inventory Self (LPI Self), which looks at practices in five areas: Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act and Encouraging the Heart. Next, focus groups were formed with participating elementary principals to identify how the leadership practices of Kouzes and Posner are manifested by these principals in their schools.

Guided by the research questions, action research was conducted in a mixed method study. The study examined leadership practices of elementary principals based on the leadership practice framework of Kouzes and Posner. The following research questions were addressed in order to develop a leadership framework for elementary principals in central New York:

Q1: How do elementary principals in central New York rate themselves using the Kouzes and Posner Leadership Practices Inventory Self (LPI Self), in the areas of Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart?

Q2: For principals with a high frequency use of the five practices according to the LPI-Self, how do they describe their leadership behaviors relative to these practices and their implementation in elementary schools?

### Implications and Findings

The results of this study come at a unique time in education. This study and the results are timely in that limited research exists to align principal practices with a validated research-based business framework. There was a gap in the literature in leadership practices specific to the application of Kouzes' and Posner's work to the practices of elementary principals. The study fills the gap between the leadership practices of Kouzes and Posner and their usefulness to the field of education, specifically with the elementary principal. The study results provide an evidence based elementary leadership framework that is explicitly described by principals and grounded in the leadership practices of Kouzes and Posner.

The Federal and State emphasis on test results and performance evaluations has the potential to designate failing principals based on specific criteria in the grant language (NYSED.gov 2010). According to Winerip (2010), the language in RTTT ignores other student criteria such as student disabilities and language barriers. As a result, principals in some states are losing their jobs due to RTTT requirements. For example, a principal in Burlington, Vermont was recently removed because of the principal evaluation component of Race to the Top. The principal was not removed due to any identified incompetence or misconduct. Winerip stated that the principal was removed because under the RTTT initiative, schools with low test scores must remove their principal or forfeit their money under the rules of the grant. Because Burlington stood to lose \$3

million, the principal was removed. Parents, teachers, and children were outraged when the principal that they respected was removed despite the fact that 37 of 39 fifth graders were either refugees or receiving special education services.

The inclusion of test scores in performance evaluations is one critical and controversial component of the new legislation. According to the law, student achievement data is a mandatory component of certain teacher and all principal evaluations (NYSED.gov 2010). Evaluations will fall into one of four specified performance categories and a rating in the two lowest categories; ineffective and developing, would require an improvement plan. Two consecutive “ineffective” annual ratings qualify as a pattern of incompetence and could be used as the basis for termination of teachers and principals. An interesting component of the new performance evaluation language for administrators is that it focuses only on principal evaluations.

Pepper (2010) makes a case for the need for a critical look at leadership styles. She cites the requirement to rate school performance based on student test scores and the teacher and principal evaluation requirements. She suggests that, rather than improving student performance, the threat of corrective actions for poor test scores in addition to an increase in public scrutiny furthers a high stakes, high stress educational environment. Pepper suggests that never in the history of education has the school principal’s job been more important and more difficult. Principals are responsible for increased test scores while managing the traditional principal role of responding to students, staff, and parents. Pepper further discusses different styles of principals. This work supports the results of the study.

Griffith (2004) looks at the direct effect of principal transformational leadership to school performance and states that staff descriptions of principal behaviors fall into three components of transformational leadership. These components are inspiration, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation. Further, Griffith describes an indirect effect of principal leadership on certain student achievement. Additionally, he looks at the factors that are present in the principal-teacher interactions and how those relationships impact classroom instructional practices. Although there is no direct link between principal behaviors and student behavior, there appears to be a connection between principal-teacher interactions that has a positive impact on learning outcomes.

#### *What Elementary Principals Say and Do*

Study results illustrate specifically what principals in central New York say and do regarding the five leadership practices of Kouzes and Posner. The design of the study was purposive and included practitioners who were chosen based on their specific responses on a research based instrument (LPI) indicating high frequency of use for certain K&P practices. Focus group data provide information from participants relative to each leadership practice. K&P identify specific leadership practice statements that align to each of the five leadership practices. Study results provided specific leadership practice statements generated by participants that align to the K&P statements. Figure 5.1 specifically illustrates the leadership practices statements from Kouzes and Posner and from the principals in central New York in the study.

K&P Leadership Practice Statements	K&P Leadership Practices	Study Leadership Practice Statements
<p>Sets a personal example of what is expected            Makes certain that people adhere to agreed-on standards            Follows through on promises and commitments            Asks for feedback on how his/her actions affect people's performance            Builds consensus around organization's values            Is clear about his/her philosophy of leadership</p>	<p><b>Model the Way</b></p>	<p>Say and do what you believe            Provide professional development            Recognize experts in the school            Know that you can do it            Focus on instruction            Have high expectations            Build trust            Understand the school culture            Communicate            Share valuable information</p>
<p>Talks about future trends influencing our work            Describes a compelling image of the future            Appeals to others to share dream of the future            Shows others how their interests can be realized            Paints a "big picture" of group aspirations            Speaks with conviction about meaning of work</p>		<p><b>Inspire a Shared Vision</b></p>
<p>Seeks challenging opportunities to test skills            Challenges people to try new approaches            Searches outside organization for innovative ways to improve            Asks "what can we learn?"            Makes certain that goals, plans, and milestones are set            Experiments and takes risks</p>	<p><b>Challenge the Process</b></p>	<p>Support new initiatives            Talk about new initiatives            Don't be afraid to make change            Always expect more            Establish trust</p>
<p>Develops cooperative relationships            Actively listens to diverse points of view            Treats others with dignity and respect            Supports decisions other people make            Gives people choice about how to do their work            Ensures that people grow in their jobs</p>		<p><b>Enable Others to Act</b></p>
<p>Praises people for a job well done            Expresses confidence in people's abilities            Creatively rewards people for their contributions            Recognizes people for commitment to shared values            Finds ways to celebrate accomplishments            Gives team members appreciation and support</p>	<p><b>Encourage the Heart</b></p>	<p>Build a community            Communicate            Provide recognition            Highlight accomplishments            Make personal connections</p>

*Figure 5.1. Kouzes and Posner Leadership Practice Statements and Study Leadership Practice Statements.*

## Discussion of the Connections between Kouzes and Posner and Study Leadership Practices

Study results demonstrate that the leadership practices of elementary principals in central New York are not unlike the behaviors of leaders illustrated in the work of Kouzes and Posner in business. Many connections can be made between the leadership practice statements of K&P and those listed by study participants. This suggests that leadership practices may be universal in education, business, and nursing.

Kouzes and Posner believe that exemplary leaders that model the way must model the standards and behaviors that they expect in others. K&P say that “You have to open up your heart and let people know what you really think and believe.” Study participants also believe that elementary school leaders need to say and do what they believe as they model the way. K&P talk about leaders leading from what they believe. Study participants agreed and talked about focusing on instruction through open communication with teachers.

Communication is essential for an elementary principal. This communication comes in the form of actions and words. As an elementary principal, one might value literacy and believe that literacy is at the center of all good instruction and learning. In addition to articulating their philosophy regarding literacy, principals could model those beliefs in the way that they support initiatives, allocate monies, provide professional development, and lead conversations with staff, students and parents. If literacy is what that principal believes, literacy would be at the core of what that principal says and does in the school. Open communication breaks down barriers and eliminates speculation that can lead to frustration and distrust.

Kouzes and Posner have stated that exemplary leaders have a vision for what an organization can be. They say that these leaders understand that they must share their dreams and vision with staff. In order to share that vision, K&P believe that leaders must know their people and be able to speak in a way that they will understand. Like K&P, study participants agreed and said that elementary principals who inspire a shared vision understand the need to build trust and rapport with their staff. This trust is built by generating dialogue that gives teachers a voice. Kouzes and Posner also believe that leaders who inspire a shared vision understand the needs of their staff by listening to them. Elementary principals in the study believe that elementary principals who inspire a shared vision understand the culture of their school by generating dialogue, communicating, and by celebrating the success of the teachers, students and school.

Elementary principals need to have and share a vision as schools move into the new paradigm of education, which includes higher standards for instruction, student achievement, and teacher and principal performance. This new paradigm comes with a high level of anxiety for teachers and principals. Principals who inspire a shared vision have to have open lines of communication and be ready and willing to listen to their staff. Trust is built by principals who listen attentively, maintain high levels of confidentiality, and follow through on promises. As principals work with teachers on initiatives that have a dramatic effect on all of them, having that level of comfort and trust will allow for growth in a school community. The inspiration comes from principals who show an understanding for the challenges associated with elementary teaching. K&P and study participants agree that listening, working collaboratively, and generating dialogue around

instruction and students are important to building and sharing a vision for the future of the school.

Kouzes and Posner talk about leaders who challenge the process being pioneers. They say that no leaders challenge the process by keeping things the same. Study participants talked about similar leadership characteristics. They said that elementary principals that challenge the process talk about new initiatives and support them. K&P believe that exemplary leaders who challenge the process are committed to change and accomplish change by having high expectations. They also believe that you cannot get people to make change if they don't feel safe. Participating principals agreed and stated that principals that challenge the process are not afraid to make change and support these changes by establishing trust and always expecting more.

Change can be exciting and also cause tremendous anxiety. Elementary principals have the power and authority to use their leadership practices to challenge the process and make change in a way that promotes excitement and relieves anxiety. With the changes and challenges associated the new New York State Core Curriculum and Annual Professional Performance Reviews, elementary leaders have an opportunity to share vital information in a way that shows staff that they will tackle these new challenges together. These principals should share this information in a thoughtful and informative way that illustrates the principals' beliefs that higher levels of student achievement are in their grasp and that change can be good.

Kouzes and Posner believe that exemplary leaders enable others to act by fostering collaboration and building trust. Participants in the study identified a variety of leadership practices that elementary principals exhibit as they enable others to act. These

principals foster communication and build trust as well. K&P believe that exemplary leaders recognize that the capacity of others is strengthened when they facilitate others to do their best. Study participants shared that elementary leaders eliminate obstacles so that they can foster professional growth and keep the focus on children and instruction. These principals respect teachers and empower them to focus on what is most important.

These practices are important in schools because they place an emphasis on what is most important. Principals need to do whatever they can to eliminate the minutia that gets in the way of teachers planning and implementing great instruction. Elementary principals can do this by protecting instructional time and by eliminating interruptions in the schedule. They can make sure that curriculum and instruction is the priority. Principals who enable others to act provide opportunities for professional growth through in-service opportunities and collaborative planning time with special service providers. Providing time for teachers to plan collaboratively builds the congruence between the classroom teacher and other support service providers like reading, speech, and resource teachers.

Kouzes and Posner believe that exemplary leaders encourage the heart by making gestures that support and encourage their people. They believe that a leader's job is to show appreciation for the contributions of staff, and to create an environment which celebrates its people. Study participants identified ways that elementary principals encourage the heart. These principals believe that principals recognize the importance of building a community by providing recognition for a job well done. These principals highlight the accomplishments of their staff and students and work to make the necessary personal connections.

Elementary principals should encourage the heart by recognizing and celebrating the accomplishments of their staff and students. Walkthrough supervision is one way to provide positive feedback in an immediate way to teachers. Visiting classrooms and leaving a quick note of thanks to the teacher that mentions something positive that the principal observed is one example. Highlighting classroom and teacher performance in a newsletter or announcement is another idea. Some principals celebrate student achievement with breakfasts, luncheons or other events that highlight student achievement. Making other meaningful connections with individual staff members is a way to make staff feel that you care about them as individuals.

#### *Leadership Behaviors Identified Across Practices*

Study results identified three core leadership dispositions that thread through all five leadership practices. Study participants mentioned these three themes in conversations about what elementary principals do to model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encourage the heart. The core themes resonated with participating principals in focus group discussions. These common leadership practices are at the center of what elementary principals do as they implement the K&P leadership practices in central New York.

#### *Communicate, Build Trust, and Focus on Instruction and Children.*

The first of these three recurring core leadership dispositions was *communicate*. Communication was central to the leadership practices of elementary principals in this study. Study participants identified the importance of communication in all five focus group conversations. In the model the way focus group, study participants talked about the importance of communicating with staff to share valuable information and to build

meaningful relationships. In the inspire a shared vision focus group, participants discussed how communication means generating dialogue, providing professional development, and the importance of giving teachers a voice. For challenge the process, participants talked about communicating about new initiatives. Participants in the enable others to act focus group talked about the importance of fostering conversations and communication. Encourage the heart focus group participants talked about building a community through communication.

The theme of communication is supported in the research. Mitchell and Castle (2005) believed that the most important strategy of instructional leadership is the promotion of professional dialogue. DuFour (2007) agrees that professional dialogue in a professional learning community is essential. The establishment of a community of learners is enhanced by professional dialogue.

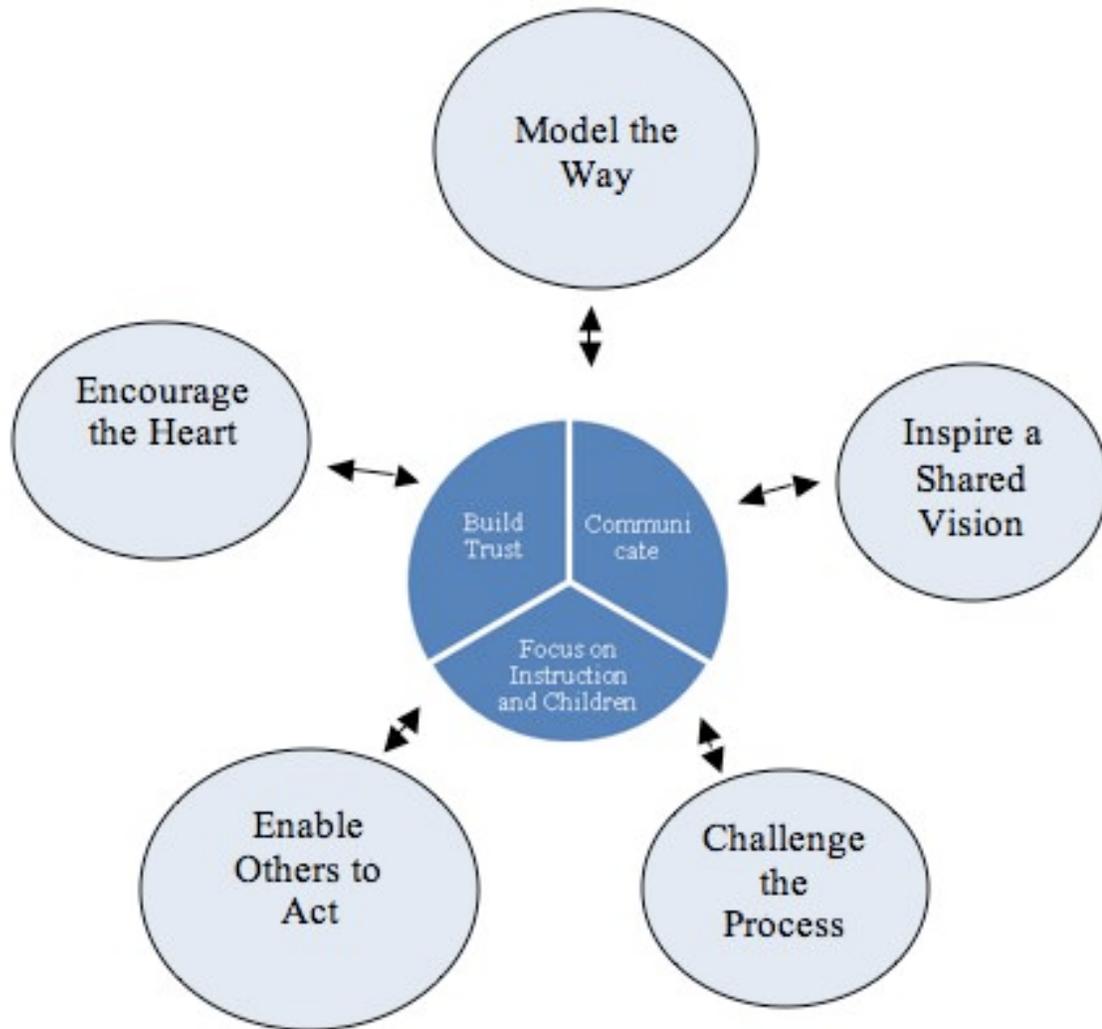
The next leadership disposition was *build trust*. The theme of trust was woven through the focus groups for model the way, challenge the process, and enable others to act. In the model the way focus group, study participants talked about trust and that elementary principals build trust by understanding the school culture and by making the staff feel supported. Elementary principals in the challenge the process focus group talked about the need to build trust if you always expect teachers to do more. In the enable other to act focus group, participants said that principals build trust by respecting teachers.

Trust was mentioned in most focus group conversations. Principals that create a culture of trust can work collaboratively with teachers. In schools where trust is at the core, teachers work to make positive change and are willing to follow the lead of the

principal even when there is the fear of failure. Teachers are more eager to challenge the process when there is a safety net. Trust is a leadership trait that is supported in the research. McClure (2004) believes that trust is the foundation for everything in leadership. The study reports the top 10 lessons on leadership. Among the top 10 lessons were *put the relationship first, communicate, and trust is the foundation of everything*.

The third core leadership disposition that crossed frames in the study was *focus on instruction and children*. This theme was mentioned in three focus groups; model the way, inspire a shared vision, and enable others to act. Study participants frequently emphasized the foundation of elementary leadership being a firm commitment to quality instruction and a focus on the children in their care. Study participants in the model the way focus group talked about focusing on instruction with high expectations for student achievement. In focus group inspire a shared vision, participants talked about elementary principals supporting change by focusing on instruction and children. Decman, Mackey, and Pitcher (2006) talk specifically about the link between the characteristics of principals and actual student achievement. They believe that principals should be instructional leaders and exhibit characteristics of strong leadership.

The dispositions of building trust, communication, and focusing on instruction and children are leadership behaviors that are threaded throughout the five Kouzes and Posner leadership practices and the leadership practice statements in the study. Figure 5.2 shows the three core leadership behaviors that were threaded throughout the five leadership practices of Kouzes and Posner. These core leadership behaviors are in the center diagram and the K&P leadership practices are around the diagram.



*Figure 5.2.* Core Leadership Dispositions that Thread Through the Kouzes and Posner Practices in the Study.

#### Findings supported by research

Many researchers agree that school leadership is critical. As outlined by Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004), school leadership is second only to teacher direct instruction relative to its contribution to learning. Leone, Warnimont, and Zimmerman (2009) describe many emerging trends in education and their implications for school leaders. Leone, Warnimont and Zimmerman identified prerequisite leadership

skills and behaviors for principals to successfully serve the needs of students in the future.

Findings from this study outline specific and core leadership practices for elementary principals at a time when elementary principal leadership is at a critical point in educational history. The findings provide a useful roadmap for elementary principals as they work to implement new educational initiatives. Additionally, the framework for elementary principal practices can be helpful to district leaders who are charged with evaluating principals.

### Limitations

The study has limitations in two areas. First, the purposeful sampling did not include any participants from the urban setting. Although there was an attempt to include a large urban school district, permission to conduct a study was not gained in time. The inclusion of urban principals may have generated another dimension to focus group conversations about elementary principal leadership practices.

Second, although focus group selection was based on a quantitative process of identification, because most focus groups were conducted in the summer, some elementary principals who qualified were unavailable for participation. A deeper pool of qualifying participants may have generated additional insights into elementary principal leadership practices in central New York.

### Recommendations

The purpose of the study was to examine the Kouzes and Posner leadership practices of elementary principals. Kouzes and Posner developed a theory that exceptional leaders apply certain general practices in their work. The study examines the

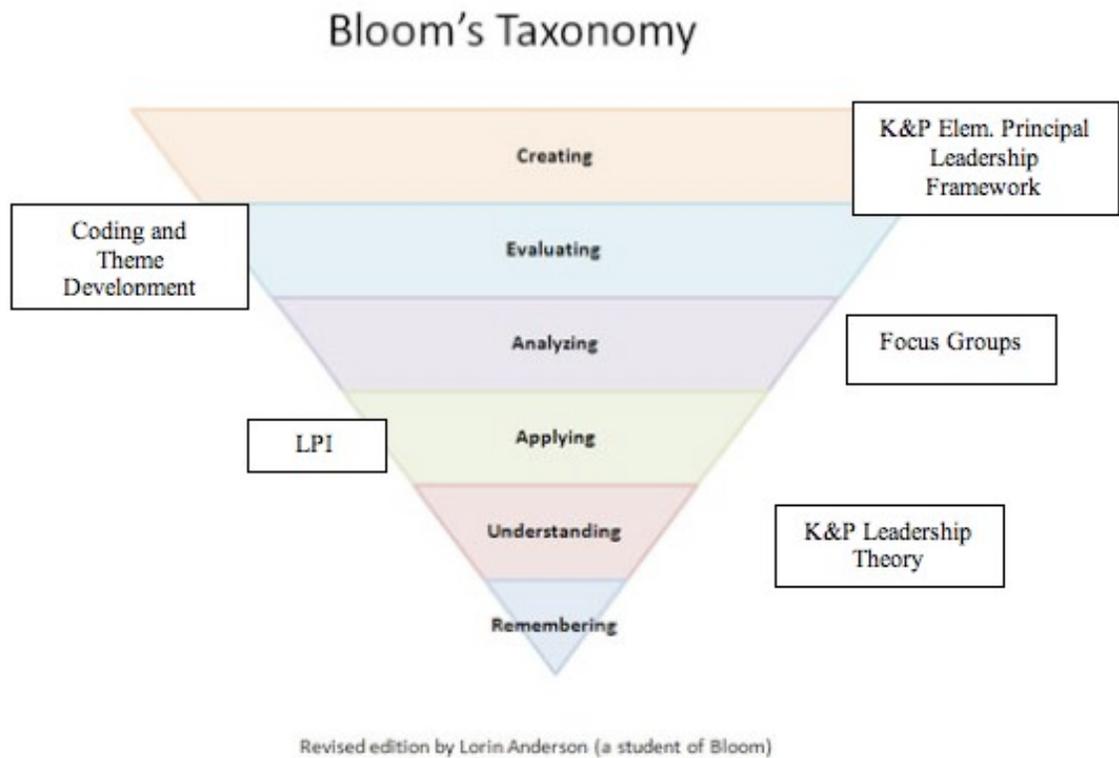
leadership practices of elementary principals, and, as a result, creates a framework for identifying the Kouzes and Posner leadership practices in an elementary school setting. The following recommendations provide opportunities for further research and offer meaningful suggestions for professional practice.

#### *Recommendations for Further Research*

One value of this study was the process. The process of identifying study participants was purposive based the Kouzes and Posner theory of leadership. The LPI-Self was administered for the purpose of identifying those principals who had a high frequency usage of each of the five leadership practices. This identification process allowed for focus groups made up of only those principals who had a high frequency use in their professional practice. The elementary leadership practice framework based on the work of Kouzes and Posner contributes to scholarship in the areas of principal leadership. Further research is recommended to provide additional understanding about the application of the Kouzes and Posner work in other school environments. This process could be replicated in the middle and high school setting. Additionally, this study could be replicated in higher education and applied to the leadership practices of academic department chairs, academic deans, and college presidents. As mentioned in the limitations section, urban principals were not included in this study. This study could be replicated in the urban setting to provide insight into the leadership practices of elementary principals specific to urban schools. Further research is also recommended outside of the field of education. This study could be adapted for replication in not for profit and government agencies.

### *Recommendations for Professional Practice*

Elementary principal leadership practices identified in the study can be applied to higher education leadership programs for several reasons. First, leadership programs have the responsibility for the preparation of new educational leaders and a framework for elementary principal leadership practice provides a research based structure that is grounded in leadership theory and developed with the help of practitioners. Second, the framework of elementary principal leadership has immediate practical application to in schools across central New York. The new principal evaluation requirements make this research based, practitioner generated framework especially valuable. Additionally, the introduction of Kouzes and Posner's leadership theory adds value to higher education curriculum. Principal and administrative leadership development could include study results and the process for developing this leadership framework in schools. The study results provide an authentic framework that can be applied to the practical requirements of most leadership development programs. The study results and process also have value for pre-service elementary principals and other administrators. The leadership framework can be taught and applied in practice. The study process and results make the K&P theory come to life in a genuine way. Linking the actual participant commentary to the Kouzes and Posner theory validates the study and its connection to the theory. This study process and results show the progression of Bloom's Taxonomy (1956) from theory to practice as illustrated in figure 5.3.



*Figure 5.3.* Bloom's Taxonomy as applied to the study.

This study enhances the potential of helping students apply theory to practice using the taxonomy and the study results. According to Bloom's Taxonomy (1956), the deeper a concept is understood and applied, the greater the chance of automaticity. Applying the taxonomy to the process used in the study brings a higher level of understanding about the practical application of Bloom's Taxonomy. The overlay of Bloom's Taxonomy to the study process and results accentuates the dimensions of the study.

The results of the study are significant because they are based on authentic feedback from practitioners in central New York. Elementary principals generated the data that resulted in the leadership practice framework. The results show how principals

apply the theory in their schools on a routine basis. Focus group discussions provided data from principals who qualified for participation with a valid, research based instrument. Figure 5.3 illustrates how to apply a theory to a study with practitioners, analyze and evaluate the results, and apply those results in a meaningful way.

The study results are unique in that they provide explicit guidance to educators such as principals, directors, superintendents and boards of education at a time of intense accountability. The information gleaned from this study can be used to help principals and school districts develop new evaluation systems required by Race to the Top funding. Race to the Top (RTTT) is a federal initiative that provides an opportunity for states to receive additional school funding through the United States Department of Education. Among other things, Race to the Top requires eligible states to take a critical look at evaluation systems for teachers, administrators, and principals (nysed.gov 2010). Gareis and Tschannen-Moran (2004), acknowledged that it is widely accepted that good principals are at the center of good schools. Professional development can be designed around the elementary principal leadership framework that resulted from this study. This framework specifically illustrates what elementary principals say and do in their schools every day, and should be used a model of elementary principal professional practice.

In addition to pre-service educational opportunities for future principals, the study results provide content for other, targeted professional development in-service opportunities. For current principals, personnel administrators, and other administrators who evaluate principals, in-service on a validated leadership practice framework for elementary principals has great value.

Study results have significance in the supervision of elementary principals. Principals in New York are at the front of a reframing of the evaluation process. A component of Race to the Top is a requirement for major changes in the annual professional performance review (APPR) for teachers and principals. The new performance evaluation language for administrators focuses only on principal evaluations. These changes are directly impacting elementary principal evaluations and will potentially affect the tenure and employment of elementary school leaders. Superintendents must renegotiate evaluation language and processes with administrator unions. This K&P leadership framework, based on the feedback from elementary principals could be referenced in school districts as they struggle to implement the new APPR requirements put forth by the New York State Education Department. An evaluation system based on the study results for elementary principals would put the emphasis on growth rather than punishment. A meaningful growth model evaluation system could be developed.

The results of the study and the framework for elementary principal leadership practices based on the work of Kouzes and Posner could also be used for succession planning and personnel recruitment of principal candidates. The framework has the potential to be a tool for human resource managers looking to recruit and employ the best elementary principals possible. The framework could help craft a template from which to interview and hire elementary school leaders.

More than evaluating or making principals better, the study results can be applied to the supervision of other practitioners. The leadership practice themes identified in the study have been applied in business, nursing and now in education. The study results

could be applied to teachers. Teachers are leaders in their classroom and the themes and practices identified in the study are about behaviors that positively influence others. Many of these themes and practices could be applied in classrooms by teachers with children as the beneficiaries of improved classroom climate.

The value of applying this study and findings to teachers can have a lasting impact on teaching and learning. An elementary principal's leadership framework based on leadership behaviors that have a positive influence on people and programs most likely would have a positive effect on teachers. Research supports the connection between principal leadership and other factors in schools such as the positive effect of principal leadership on schools, teachers, student achievement, and teacher job satisfaction. Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) found that school leadership is second only to teacher direct instruction in its contribution to what students learn in school.

Bogler (2001) conducted research regarding the impact of principals on the levels of teacher job satisfaction. Bogler sought to determine how teachers perceive their principals. Bogler wanted to determine if the teachers in the study regarded their principals as transformational leaders. The study suggested that the greater the teachers' perception that their work was genuine and professional, the more they perceived their principals to be transformational leaders and ultimately the more satisfied they were.

Therefore an elementary principal's leadership framework based on leadership behaviors that have a positive influence on teachers and promote higher levels of teacher satisfaction and programs will most likely have a positive effect on teachers. This

satisfaction may increase the quality of instruction and may also result in increased levels of student achievement.

### Conclusion

The stresses associated with educational administration are at an all time high. No position in educational leadership is under greater scrutiny than the principal. Gareis and Tschannen-Moran (2004), acknowledged that it is widely accepted that good principals are at the center of good schools and that without good leadership that guides the improvement of student success, schools cannot succeed.

Many studies discuss a connection between the impact of school principals and a school's success overall. As outlined by Louis and Wahlstrom (2008), many researchers have studied leadership, leadership practices, and the impact of effective leadership on school climate, teacher satisfaction, and student achievement. Bowles and Bowles (2000) identified the work of two leading researchers, Kouzes and Posner, for establishing a set of leadership practices that are widely respected and applied in business and nursing. To address the gap that exists in the research in the area of principal leadership practices, this study applied Kouzes and Posner's work to the practices of elementary principals. The study also identified a Kouzes and Posner leadership framework for elementary principals which described those characteristics.

The purpose of the study was determined after a thorough review of the literature on principal leadership, principal accountability and challenges, principal's impact on student achievement, and the impact of principal leadership on teacher satisfaction. The study looked critically at the Kouzes and Posner leadership practices of elementary principals. Leadership practices of elementary principals were measured using Kouzes'

and Posner's Leadership Practices Inventory Self (LPI Self) which looks at practices in five areas: Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act and Encouraging the Heart. Focus groups were conducted with participating elementary principals to identify how the leadership practices of Kouzes and Posner manifest in practice by these principals in their schools. And ultimately, the study results helped to form a Kouzes and Posner leadership practice framework for elementary principals.

The study took place in central New York with 17 public school districts in the focus county. The 50 elementary schools in this study included 39 suburban schools and 11 rural schools. One urban school district with 15 elementary schools was not included in the study. Because the study looked at the application and utilization of specific leadership practices, a sequential mixed methods design was most suitable. The design involved an initial phase of quantitative data collection and analysis, followed by a phase of qualitative data collection and analysis. In this study, The Kouzes and Posner Leadership Practices Inventory-Self was used in the initial phase followed by qualitative focus groups. The study included the application of one survey instrument. Additionally, focus groups were conducted with selected study participants based on the results of the survey instrument. The mixed methods design was appropriate because the study sought to measure the frequency of specific leadership behaviors of principals and then develop a framework to describe those behaviors and how they are applied in the elementary school.

After the survey reports were completed, an analysis was done to generate a list of principals that scored in the high range, 70%-100%, for frequency of engagement in each

of the leadership practices measured by the instrument. Principals who scored in the high range for frequency of engagement for each leadership practice were invited to participate in a focus group. One focus group was conducted for each leadership practice examined. After focus group recordings were transcribed, coding was completed. Focus group transcripts were analyzed using inductive coding for the identification of themes.

The qualitative analysis generated specific themes and sub-themes for each of the five Kouzes and Posner leadership practices as they apply to the elementary school principal. These themes were used to generate a very specific list of elementary principal leadership practice statements that were aligned to the leadership practice statements from the Kouzes and Posner Leadership Practices Inventory-Self. This link between the quantitative and qualitative results established an evidence based framework of very specific elementary principal leadership practices based on the well established research based leadership practices of Kouzes and Posner.

Research results outline elementary leadership behaviors for each of the five Kouzes and Posner leadership practices. Additionally, a cross walk of results generated parallels between the leadership practice statements of K&P and the specific leadership practices statements of elementary principals in the focus groups. Three overarching themes that act as core leadership practices were identified. These themes are build trust, communicate, and focus on instruction and children.

There are several implications of the study. The study addresses a gap between the leadership practices of Kouzes and Posner and their usefulness to the field of education, specifically with the elementary principal. The study results provide an evidence-based elementary leadership framework that is validated by principals and

grounded in the research based leadership practices of Kouzes and Posner. The study illustrated exactly what elementary principals say and do as they model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encourage the heart.

The study made connections between the leadership practices of Kouzes and Posner and the specific leadership practice statements generated by validated practitioners in the focus groups. It also identified leadership practices that exist across the practices. Three core themes: build trust, communicate, and focus on instruction and children were identified and were consistently present in the findings for each leadership practice

The recommendation and contribution section of the study identifies how the study results further research and professional practice. There are recommendations for pre-service leadership training including leadership preparatory programs for principals. These recommendations include implications for curriculum enhancement in the areas of theory to practice in leadership. The recommendations related to leadership are grounded in the knowledge that these results are validated by practitioners.

A recommendation is made regarding the application of the study process to other theories that would inform practice. The recommendation identifies the LPI and other theory based instruments.

A recommendation is made regarding the application of research based leadership practices in light of RTTT. It is cited that there is great value in applying the practitioners view point to the development of new evaluations.

Recommendations are made for purposeful in-service and professional development. The leadership framework developed as a result of the study provides a peer to peer support mechanism validated by a research based instrument.

Recommendations were included that discuss the new evaluation systems associated with the new annual professional performance reviews for principals. This framework for elementary leadership would focus on principal growth not punishment.

Finally, a recommendation was made about the application of this study's process and theory to teachers, understanding that teachers are leaders too. There is value in applying a valid and research based framework of leadership practices to teachers. Additionally, it is suggested that as principals apply validated elementary leadership practices that are people based, the levels of teacher satisfaction could increase resulting in higher levels of teacher satisfaction, increased quality of instruction, and an increase in student achievement.

The study makes contributions to the field of education at a time when leadership is so important. Effective leadership practices for elementary principals are more important than ever. Principal salaries, jobs, and the future of their schools depend on it.

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- <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/executive-summary.pdf>

## APPENDIX A: SURVEY INVITATION LETTER AND CONSENT

Dean F. Goewey  
Doctoral Candidate  
St. John Fisher College  
315-532-2359 cell  
315-341-2666 office  
dgoewey@oswego.org

Dear Colleague:

I am a doctoral candidate in the Ed.D program in Executive Leadership at the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. School of Education at St. John Fisher College. I am in the process of writing my dissertation and I am planning my research study for the winter of 2011.

I am reaching out to you as a fellow elementary principal because my study is in the area of elementary principal leadership and the authentic application of specifically identified leadership practices by elementary principals.

My dissertation, entitled Examining the Kouzes and Posner Leadership Practices of Elementary Principals in Central New York, is dependent on the participation of practicing elementary principals. I look to you to assist me as I endeavor to make a contribution to scholarship and practice in our very important profession and the field of education.

I am asking you to complete a short survey called the Kouzes and Posner Leadership Practices Inventory. This survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Please complete the attached form and return it to me in the enclosed self addressed envelope. Please call or email me with any questions you might have and thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Dean F. Goewey

**St. John Fisher College**  
**INFORMED CONSENT FORM**  
**Teacher Candidate**

Title of study: Examining the Kouzes and Posner Leadership Practices of Elementary Principals in Central New York

Name of researcher: Dean F. Goewey

Dean Goewey is the principal of Minetto Elementary School in the Oswego City School District and a doctoral candidate at St. John Fisher College.

Phone for further information: 315-532-2359 or 315-341-2666 or [dgoewey@oswego.org](mailto:dgoewey@oswego.org)

Purpose of study:

- The purpose of the study is to look critically at the Kouzes and Posner leadership practices of elementary principals.

As schools become involved in reform efforts and as the field of education advances toward the necessity of higher levels of student achievement and principal accountability, the need for a greater understanding of effective leadership practices of elementary principals becomes more important.

Approval of study: This study has been reviewed and approved by the St. John Fisher College Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Instructor of Record: This study is being conducted with the permission of the course instructor(s): Marie Cianca, Ed.D., & C. Michael Robinson, Ed.D.

Place of study: Participant prerogative

Risks and benefits: The expected risks and benefits of participation in this study are explained below: There are minimal to no risks in this study. However, study participants may interact with other study participants if invited to participate in the second part of this study. The benefits of the study are the professional dialogue that focus group participants will engage in. Additionally, the results of the study will contribute to scholarship and professional practice in elementary leadership.

Method for protecting confidentiality/privacy:

All inventories and results will be kept in a locked cabinet and will be destroyed after five years. No names will be identified with comments or from participant work in any publications.

**Your rights:** As a research participant, you have the right to:

1. Have the purpose of the study, and the expected risks and benefits fully explained to you before you choose to participate
2. Withdraw from participation at any time
3. Refuse to answer a particular question

4. Be informed of the results of the study.

I have read the above, received a copy of this form, and I agree to participate in the above-named study.

---

Print name (Participant)  
Date

Signature

---

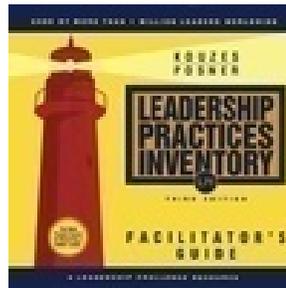
Print name (Investigator)  
Date

Signature

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact the researcher listed above.

## APPENDIX B: KOUZES AND POSNER LPI

Kouzes, J., & Posner, B. (2002b). *The leadership practices inventory: Theory and evidence behind the five practices of exemplary leaders*. Retrieved June 5, 2010, from [http://media.wiley.com/assets/463/74/lc\\_jb\\_appendix.pdf](http://media.wiley.com/assets/463/74/lc_jb_appendix.pdf).



## APPENDIX C: FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

### Focus Group One

- What does *model the way* mean to you as an elementary principal and instructional leader?
- Describe some behaviors that you exhibit that *model the way* in your school.
  - Prompt: Can you use personal examples of what you have said or done to *model the way*?
  - Prompt: What do those statements or behaviors do to and for staff in your school?

### Focus Group Two

- What does *inspire a shared vision* mean to you as an elementary principal and instructional leader?
- Describe some behaviors that you exhibit that *inspire a shared vision* in your school.
  - Prompt: Does *inspire a shared vision* require actions or words?
  - Prompt: How does your personality play into your ability to *inspire a shared vision*?

### Focus Group Three

- What does *challenge the process* mean to you as an elementary principal and instructional leader?

- Describe some behaviors that you exhibit that *challenge the process* in your school.
  - Prompt: Can you describe a time when you *challenged the process in your school*?
  - Prompt: How do you *challenge the process* within the confines of district initiatives and existing frameworks?

#### Focus Group Four

- What does *enable others to act* mean to you as an elementary principal and instructional leader?
- Describe some behaviors that you exhibit in your school that *enable others to act* in your school.
  - Prompt: How do you foster collaboration in your school?
  - Prompt: What strategies do you use to share power and provide choice to teachers?

#### Focus Group Five

- What does *encourage the heart* mean to you as an elementary principal and instructional leader?
- Describe some behaviors that you exhibit that *encourage the heart* in your school.
  - Prompt: How do you show appreciation to staff?
  - Prompt: How do you celebrate success of individuals and the organization?

APPENDIX D: FOCUS GROUP INVITATION LETTER AND CONSENT

Dean F. Goewey  
Doctoral Candidate  
St. John Fisher College  
315-532-2359 cell  
315-341-2666 office  
dgoewey@oswego.org

Dear Colleague:

Thank you for your generous participation in my doctoral study on elementary principal leadership for the Ed.D program in Executive Leadership at the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. School of Education at St. John Fisher College. Your participation has been invaluable to my study.

I am reaching out to you again as a fellow elementary principal because part two of my study calls for focus groups based on the results of the Leadership Practices Inventory that you completed for me.

My dissertation, entitled Examining the Kouzes and Posner Leadership Practices of Elementary Principals in Central New York, is dependent on the participation of practicing elementary principals. I look to you to assist me again as I endeavor to make a contribution to scholarship and practice in our very important profession and the field of education.

I am asking you to participate in a small focus group on \_\_\_\_\_ to discuss the leadership practices that reported on in your previous inventory. The focus group will be held at \_\_\_\_\_, at \_\_\_\_\_. Again, I assure you that your participation and contributions will be completely confidential. However, you may interact with other study participants during the focus group(s). Please complete the attached form and return it to me in the enclosed self addressed envelope. Please call or email me with any questions you might have and thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Dean F. Goewey

**St. John Fisher College**  
**INFORMED CONSENT FORM**  
**Teacher Candidate**

Title of study: Examining the Kouzes and Posner Leadership Practices of Elementary Principals in Central New York

Name of researcher: Dean F. Goewey

Dean Goewey is the principal of Minetto Elementary School in the Oswego City School District and a doctoral candidate at St. John Fisher College.

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Purpose of study:

- The purpose of the study is to look critically at the Kouzes and Posner leadership practices of elementary principals.

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Approval of study: This study has been reviewed and approved by the St. John Fisher College Institutional Review Board (IRB).

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Method for protecting confidentiality/privacy:

All inventories and results will be kept in a locked cabinet and will be destroyed after five years. No names will be identified with comments or from participant work in any publications.

**Your rights:** As a research participant, you have the right to:

1. Have the purpose of the study, and the expected risks and benefits fully explained to you before you choose to participate
2. Withdraw from participation at any time
3. Refuse to answer a particular question
4. Be informed of the results of the study.

I have read the above, received a copy of this form, and I agree to participate in the above-named study.

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_____	
Print name (Participant)	Signature
Date	

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_____	
Print name (Investigator)	Signature
Date	

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact the researcher listed above.