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# Administrators' and Special-subject, Pre-tenured Teachers' Perceptions of Instructional Support

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# Administrators' and Special-subject, Pre-tenured Teachers' Perceptions of Instructional Support

## **Abstract**

This study informs the work of school leaders, administrators, pre-tenured teachers, and induction program directors by supporting research related to instructional leadership, school performance, and teacher socialization. The study investigates how administrators' and special-subject, pre-tenured teachers' perceive instructional leadership support. The study compared administrators' and special-subject, pre-tenured teachers' perceptions of support strategies in schools meeting and not meeting New York State English Language Arts adequate yearly performance (AYP) targets. The results of the study support research related to effective school leadership and contribute to the current literature on support for new teachers. The results suggest that administrators in schools meeting AYP targets set school-wide goals based on school and student achievement data and administrators' current support practices may not adequately meet the needs of special-subject, pre-tenured teachers. The results suggest a number of recommendations for improving administrators' current practices related to goal setting and support for special-subject, pre-tenured teachers and opportunities for further research related to administrators' instructional leadership support.

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By

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## Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to those individuals who supported me through the joys and challenges of the doctoral process. To Dr. Jason Berman and Dr. Russell Coward, there are no words to express my gratitude for your patience, guidance, and encouragement throughout this dissertation journey. I would also like to acknowledge the following people who supported my work.

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To my children, Gabriel, James, and Beth and to my grandchildren, Corrina, Riley, Benett, and Marshall, thank you for helping me to find balance in my work, school life, and family.

Finally, and most importantly, to my husband, James, you have always supported my dreams and aspirations. You are, and will always be, my soulmate.

## Biographical Sketch

Sheila M. Marconi is currently the Assistant Principal at Henry Hudson School #28, Rochester, NY. Ms. Marconi attended Monroe Community College from 1990-1993 graduating with an Associate in Science Degree in Liberal Arts and Sciences-General Studies. She attended the State University College at Brockport graduating in 1997 with a Bachelor of Science Summa Cum Laude. She returned to the State University College at Brockport graduating in 2002 with a Master of Science in Education degree. She attended St. John Fisher College graduating with a Master of Science Degree in Education in 2003. In 2008, she returned to St. John Fisher College to begin doctoral studies in the Ed.D Program in Executive Leadership. Ms. Marconi pursued her research in Educational Leadership under the direction of Dr. Jason Berman and Dr. Russell Coward receiving the Ed.D degree in 2011.

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## Abstract

This study informs the work of school leaders, administrators, pre-tenured teachers, and induction program directors by supporting research related to instructional leadership, school performance, and teacher socialization.

The study investigates how administrators' and special-subject, pre-tenured teachers' perceive instructional leadership support. The study compared administrators' and special-subject, pre-tenured teachers' perceptions of support strategies in schools meeting and not meeting New York State English Language Arts adequate yearly performance (AYP) targets.

The results of the study support research related to effective school leadership and contribute to the current literature on support for new teachers. The results suggest that administrators in schools meeting AYP targets set school-wide goals based on school and student achievement data and administrators' current support practices may not adequately meet the needs of special-subject, pre-tenured teachers. The results suggest a number of recommendations for improving administrators' current practices related to goal setting and support for special-subject, pre-tenured teachers and opportunities for further research related to administrators' instructional leadership support.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

School accountability under PL 107-110, Title II of the 2001 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act is a driving force motivating school districts, administrators, and researchers to understand how leadership impacts teaching and student learning in school communities (Portin, 2005; U S Department of Education, Ed.gov, <http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg20.html>). The NCLB legislation promotes effective school leadership as a critical element in meeting rigorous academic achievement standards for a growing and diverse population of over 50 million public school students (National Center for Educational Statistics, <http://nces.ed.gov/>). The NCLB regulations mandate that schools meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) targets for all groups of students. Failure to meet targets can lead to sanctions, reorganization of schools, and the removal of administrators or school staff (Orr, Berg, Shore, & Meier, 2008). The current emphasis on school accountability has prompted researchers to measure the type of leadership that supports effective teaching and positive student outcomes (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). Administrators' instructional leadership style is positively related to developing teachers' pedagogical skills, ultimately impacting students' success.

Research indicates that administrators' instructional leadership indirectly impacts teaching and student learning in high performing schools (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008; Supovitz, Sirinides, & May, 2009). Three instructional leadership dimensions show positive effects of leadership on teaching and

student outcomes: (a) “establishing goals and expectations; (b) planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum; and (c) promoting and participating in teacher learning” (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008, p. 635). The evidence linking leadership, teaching, and student performance draws from study samples that include a wide range of teacher experiences. Less is understood about how these instructional leadership dimensions affect specific groups of teachers such as those new to the profession. According to Youngs (2007) and Woods (2005), there is limited research focusing on effective administrative leadership support for new teachers.

### *Statement of the Problem*

This study extends the current research on administrators’ instructional leadership support for special-subject, pre-tenured teachers. The setting for the study was a large urban school district in Western New York. The district is referred to as District X (DX) in this study. The city where DX is located has a population of approximately 208,000 according to the 2006 census (U. S. Census Bureau, 2011). Although manufacturing jobs once supported the city’s economy, today medical institutions, schools, colleges and universities, and private companies are primary sources of employment in the area. The DX has approximately 5,300 employees, including 3,600 teachers and 250 administrators. There are 34,000 students enrolled in the DX’s pre-school, elementary, and high schools. An additional 10,000 adult students are served by DX programs. District X’s student make-up is predominately composed of poor, minority students.

Sixty-five percent of students in DX are Black/African American, 21% Hispanic, 12% White, and 2% Asian/Native American/East Indian/Other. Eighty-eight percent of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches. One half of DX’s schools have

poverty rates of 90% or above. High poverty rates and large numbers of minority students generally have a negative impact on teacher turnover in urban schools (Jacob, 2007; Portin, 2005). However, DX has been successful in retaining teachers over the last two decades according to DX's induction and mentoring program director. High teacher retention rates are attributed to the DX's career-in-teaching program (Koppich, Ashner, & Kerchner, 2002). Since the inception of the DX's career-in-teaching program in 1986, the average annual retention rate for teachers is 88%.

Teachers in the program progress from first-year interns who are assigned mentors to second- and third-year residents who gain professional status as tenured teachers after completing year three (Koppich, Ashner, & Kerchner, 2002). First, second, and third-year teachers are referred to as pre-tenured teachers in this study.

Administrators' instructional leadership support plays a key role in retaining and developing pre-tenured teachers throughout the intern and residency periods (Angelle, 2006; Youngs, 2007). Differences in how administrators support pre-tenured teachers in their buildings may impact teachers' development, student outcomes, and overall school performance. This study contributes to the current body of evidence on educational leadership and teacher socialization by exploring administrators' and special-subject, pre-tenured teachers' perceptions of instructional leadership support in six of the DX's elementary schools. Instructional leadership is grounded in educational leadership theory.

### *Theoretical Rationale*

Educational leadership is concerned with how leaders influence participants in school organizations. Leadership occurs in schools among central office supervisors, administrators, teachers, school staff, parents, community partners, and students

(Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, & Walhstrom, 2004). A number of well-developed educational leadership theories exist in the literature such as transactional, transformational, servant leadership, total quality management (TQM), distributed, and instructional leadership (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). Researchers are currently investigating how specific leadership theories are linked to teachers' instructional practices and student performance outcomes. For example, Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008) found "the average effect of instructional leadership on student outcomes was three to four times that of transformational leadership" (p. 635) in high-performing schools. Instructional leadership is a style approach to leadership focusing on administrators' behaviors such as "monitoring student progress on specific learning goals, supervising teachers, promoting high expectations for student achievement and teacher performance, focusing on basic skills, and monitoring the curriculum" (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005, p. 23).

Leadership styles describe leaders' behaviors in the form of task and relationship behaviors (Northouse, 2007). The purpose of task behaviors is goal attainment. Relationship behaviors motivate group members to reach identified goals. Research on the style approach to leadership identifies task behaviors as initiating or production-oriented behaviors. Relationship behaviors are characterized as consideration or employee-oriented behaviors. Effective school leaders integrate task and relationship behaviors in solving school problems like improving new teachers' effectiveness to increase student achievement outcomes (Robinson, Lloyd, Rowe, 2008). Instructional leadership is grounded in elements of the Full Range of Leadership Model (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Northouse, 2007).



The Full Range of Leadership Model (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Northouse, 2007) is a continuum of leadership behaviors encompassing transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership factors as shown in Figure 1.1. Leaders function across the continuum depending on the needs of the leader, the organization, and followers. Transactional leadership is made up of two leadership factors, contingent reward and management-by-exception.

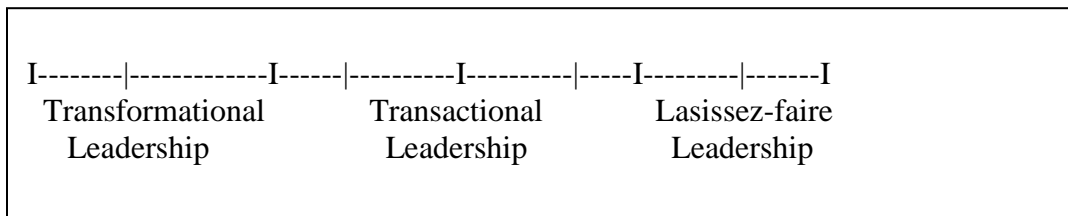


Figure 1.1. Full Range Leadership Continuum (Northouse, 2007, p. 180)

Contingent reward is an “exchange process between leaders and followers” (Northouse, 2007, p. 185). Leaders identify organizational goals and negotiate rewards with followers for achieving targeted goals. Contingent reward is an effective leadership style when constructive transactions occur between leaders and followers. Constructive transactions include setting goals, clarifying outcomes, rewarding and recognizing accomplishments, and providing feedback to employees (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). Management-by-exception is characterized as active or passive. In active management-by-exception, leaders monitor followers’ adherence to rules, policies, and procedures giving negative feedback or criticism for errors. In passive management-by-exception, followers receive little constructive feedback on their performance until problems cannot be corrected. Management-by-exception uses negative reinforcement and generally does not lead to widespread innovation or change in individuals or

organizations. In contrast, transformational leadership is concerned with positively impacting followers and organizations.

Transformational leaders motivate and inspire followers to become full participants in improving themselves and organizational outcomes. Transformational leaders practice four behaviors: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Northouse, 2007). Leaders move followers beyond expected outcomes through positive exchanges and feedback. Transformational leaders are highly involved with followers and interested in developing individuals to achieve their best.

Laissez-faire leadership, where leaders have little or no involvement with followers, is essentially no leadership. Leaders' behaviors, negative or positive, are nonexistent or absent. There is little or no contact with followers and no attempt to change, modify, or improve individuals or the organization. School administrators require a clear understanding of behaviors related to effective leadership practices to improve school performance outcomes.

For instance, in schools with a high number of new teachers, administrators may use a more transactional approach for supporting teachers' instructional pedagogy. In exchange for support in the first years of practice, teachers must show growth and are rewarded with tenure status after a specified probationary period. This contingent reward system allows administrators "to advance their own and their subordinates' agendas" (Northouse, 2007, p. 185). Administrators increase their schools' student achievement scores and teachers are provided with an improved level of job security. Understanding how instructional leadership impacts administrators' and pre-tenured teachers' work

requires an awareness of how instructional support is perceived by these school stakeholders.

### *Significance of the Study*

This study supports research on educational leadership and teacher socialization by investigating administrators' and special-subject, pre-tenured teachers' perceptions of instructional leadership support.

### *Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of this study was to explore administrators' and special-subject, pre-tenured teachers' perceptions of instructional leadership support. This study links theory and practice by investigating how the construct of instructional leadership functions in school settings. Four research questions frame the study.

### *Research Questions*

The research questions framing the study of administrators' and special-subject, pre-tenured teachers' perceptions of instructional support were:

Question 1: How do administrators describe instructional leadership support for pre-tenured teachers?

Question 2: How do pre-tenured teachers perceive administrators' instructional leadership support?

Question 3: What is the relationship between how administrators describe and pre-tenured teachers perceive instructional leadership support?

Question 4: How do administrators' descriptions and pre-tenured teachers' perceptions of support compare for schools meeting or not meeting AYP targets?

### *Limitations of the Study*

The study has several limitations. Although the methodology addressed issues related to the researcher as an administrator in DX, results may have been impacted in regard to the researcher's position, power, or bias. This possibility is discussed in Chapter 5. Secondly, the timing of the study and the final sample may have impacted the results because the study was conducted in May and June of the school year. The timing may have influenced teacher participation and response rates. This limitation is discussed in Chapter 5.

### *Key Definitions*

Research on administrators' and special-subject, pre-tenured teachers' perceptions of instructional support require the definition of common terms.

*Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)*: "The NCLB law requires every state to set high academic standards and yearly goals for achievement. By 2014, by law all children should be performing at the proficiency level in reading, language arts, math, and science. Adequate yearly progress (AYP) is the minimum level of performance school districts and schools must achieve every year to meet this goal"

(<http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/nclb/parents/fssinieng.html>).

*No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, (NCLB)*: Federal legislation, Pl 101-110. The legislation outlines accountability provisions that require states to set clear timelines for improving student achievement, with particular emphasis on closing achievement gaps between low-income and minority students and their peers (The Education Trust Foundation, <http://www2.edtrust.org/edtrust/default>).

*Pre-tenured teachers:* Intern and resident level teachers. Intern teachers are first-year teachers. Resident teachers are second- and third-year teachers.

*Response to intervention, (RTI):* A support strategy for students in need of academic intervention.

### *Summary of Remaining Chapters*

Chapter 2, Review of the Literature, provides a topic analysis to support the problem statement identified in the introduction.

Chapter 3, Research Design Methodology, outlines this study's research questions, research context, participants, data collection, and analysis procedures.

Chapter 4, Results, presents the research questions, analysis of the data, and results of this study.

Chapter 5, Discussion, describes the implications of the findings, limitations, and recommendations for further study and practice.

## Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

### *Introduction and Purpose*

The literature review provides background for this exploratory study on instructional leadership, administrators, and pre-tenured teachers. Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) point out that instructional leadership is a “popular theme in educational leadership” but that the theory is “not well defined” (p. 18). This study provides insights into how practitioners in the field, specifically administrators and special-subject, pre-tenured teachers, experience instructional leadership.

### *Topic Analysis*

This review is divided into three sections. The first section describes four models of instructional leadership. The section illustrates commonalities across models related to instructional leadership in three areas: (a) “establishing goals and expectations, (b) planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum, and (c) promoting and participating in teacher learning” (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008, p. 635). The second section details studies on the direct and indirect effects of administrators’ leadership on teaching and student outcomes. In the third section, induction programs and the role of administrators in comprehensive induction programs are presented. The review begins with a discussion of instructional leadership theories.

*Instructional leadership models.* The concept of instructional leadership can be framed in several ways. Four models provide a foundation for defining the concept: (a) the instructional leadership model, (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986; 1987), (b) the Reflective-

Growth (RG) model (Blasé & Blasé, 1999), (c) the shared or integrated instructional leadership model, (Marks & Printy, 2003), and (d) the Learning Centered Leadership Framework, (Murphy, Elliott, Goldring, & Porter, 2007). Each model has philosophical differences in defining the roles of administrators and teachers as instructional leaders. Traditional models of instructional leadership place the administrator in the central role of the leader while more contemporary models promote a collaborative approach to school leadership. Hallinger and Murphy's model is based on the functions and processes of instructional leadership in urban schools.

Hallinger and Murphy's (1986; 1987) instructional leadership model was developed during the urban school reform movement in the 1980s (Heck & Hallinger, 2005). The model is characterized by three dimensions and ten leadership functions. The dimensions are (a) defining the school's mission, (b) managing the instructional program, and (c) promoting a positive school-learning climate. The ten functions of the model focus on the actions and responsibilities of administrators in schools. Per Hallinger and Murphy (1987), administrators:

1. Frame clear school goals
2. Communicate clear school goals
3. Supervise and evaluate instruction
4. Coordinate the curriculum
5. Monitor student progress
6. Protect instructional time
7. Promote professional development
8. Maintain high visibility

9. Provide incentives for teachers

10. Provide incentives for learning

The model has been portrayed as a hierarchical, managerial structure with administrators functioning as the central leader in schools. An extensive body of research on the model uses the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) to assess principals' instructional performance (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). The instrument helps to identify the frequency of 50 instructional leadership behaviors as perceived by respondents. While the PIMRS has been well researched, the instrument does not capture respondents' descriptions of instructional leadership support.

Blasé and Blasé's Reflective-Growth (RG) model uses qualitative evidence to define instructional leadership from teachers' perspectives (1999). This model was developed using open-ended questionnaires with elementary and secondary teachers. The RG model is characterized as a shared and reflective process between administrators and teachers. The model helps teachers to focus on strengthening instructional skills through reflective dialogue with administrators.

The RG model outlines five strategies that administrators use to assist teachers' reflective practices: (a) making suggestions, (b) giving feedback, (c) modeling, (d) using inquiry and soliciting advice and opinions, and (d) giving praise (Blasé & Blasé, 1999). Along with reflective dialogue, effective instructional leaders promote professional growth by:

1. Focusing on teaching and learning
2. Supporting collaboration among staff
3. Developing coaching relationships



4. Supporting program changes
5. Promoting adult learning principles in professional development opportunities
6. Initiating teachers' action research practices

The model aligns with concepts defining instructional leadership as a shared process between administrators and teachers in schools (Marks & Printy, 2003; Murphy et al., 2007).

Shared instructional or integrated leadership is characterized by teachers having responsibility with administrators for improving their own practice and school performance (Marks & Printy, 2003). The model integrates aspects of transformational and instructional leadership concepts. Collaboration between administrators and teachers is the foundation for shared instructional leadership, which relies on shifting leadership roles and responsibilities between participants depending on the needs of individuals and the school. For example, in formal induction programs, administrators and mentors share responsibility for supporting and evaluating first-year teachers. Shared instructional leadership focuses on leadership in professional learning communities (Marks & Printy). Murphy et al. (2007) characterize effective leadership in successful professional learning communities as “leadership for learning, instructionally focused leadership, or leadership for school improvement” (p. 179).

The Learning Centered Leadership Framework explains how administrators' leadership is influenced by (a) experience, (b) knowledge, (c) personal characteristics, and (d) values and beliefs (Murphy, et al, 2007). These elements translate into eight dimensions that instructional leaders attend to:

1. Vision for learning

2. Instructional program
3. Curricular program
4. Assessment program
5. Communities of learning
6. Resource acquisition and use
7. Organizational culture
8. Social advocacy (Murphy et al., p. 182).

The eight dimensions identified in the Learning Centered Leadership Framework (Murphy et al., 2007) are features also seen in Hallinger and Murphy's (1986; 1987) instructional leadership model, the RG model (Blasé & Blasé, 1999), and the shared or integrated model (Marks & Penty, 2003). For example, all the models refer to leadership practices that address setting the school's vision or goals, attending to the curriculum, assessment, and providing teachers with learning opportunities. Murphy et al. state that "the impact of leadership on valued outcomes is indirect" (p. 181). Studies focusing on the direct and indirect effects of leadership on teaching and student learning are identified in the literature.

*Direct and indirect effects of leadership dimensions.* Direct effect models of the relationship between leadership and student achievement propose a casual or direct link between administrators' practices and student outcomes. Indirect effect models propose that leaders' practices are mediated by school variables such as teachers or school climate. Leaders work on others who, in turn, work to achieve desired outcomes. Witziers, Bosker, & Kruger (2003) investigated direct links between leadership and student outcomes in an international review of 37 studies. They used correlational

coefficient measures to indicate the direct effects of leadership on student achievement outcomes. The study found the direct effect size of leadership on student achievement in primary schools was statistically insignificant, .02. For secondary schools, no direct effects were found. One in a series of three analyses in the study used Hallinger and Murphy's (1987) PIMRS to categorize leadership practices. The study indicated four subdimensions of leadership that showed a positive relationship between leadership and student outcomes. Dimensions involving supervision and evaluation, monitoring, visibility, and defining and communicating mission had a small but significant impact on student learning (Witziers, Bosker, and Kruger). Studies on the indirect effects of leadership and student outcomes showed much different results (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008; Supovitz, Sirinides, & May, 2009; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003).

Supovitz, Sirinides, and May (2009) investigated how principals' leadership and teacher peers influence changes in teachers' instructional practice leading to improved student learning. The study examined teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership practices using a self-reporting survey instrument. Principal leadership had an overall standardized effect size of .08 on teachers' change in instructional pedagogy. Principals' indirect influence was stronger than peer influence in changing practice in the content area of English language arts (ELA). The study points to three dimensions principals attend to that support changes in teaching and learning: (a) focusing on mission and goals, (b) encouraging trust and collaboration, and (c) actively maintaining an instructional emphasis. Supovitz et al.'s (2009) research supports the indirect relationship between administrators' leadership practices and teachers' instructional pedagogy

reported by Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) and Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008).

Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) found strong effect sizes between indirect leadership practices, teachers, and student achievement outcomes. The .25 effect size found in the analysis was significantly higher than the results reported by Witziers, Bosker, and Kruger (2003). Several reasons for the difference in results have been identified (Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe, 2008). First, Witziers et al.'s meta-analysis included studies from both the United States and other countries. Administrators' leadership may be perceived differently outside the United States, affecting overall averages in the data between leadership practices, teachers, and student achievement. Secondly, data from the samples included studies having very low correlations between administrators' leadership practices and students' achievement (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). These outlier studies may statistically impact the results of the analysis. Resolving issues of outliers in the data set concerning leadership, teachers, and student achievement are addressed in the work of Waters, Marzano, and McNulty, (2003).

Using computed averages in and between studies, excluding outliers in the data set, Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) found significant positive correlations between administrators' indirect leadership practices, teachers, and students' achievement outcomes. According to Marzano, Waters, & McNulty (2005), the study identified 21 instructional leadership practices referred to as "responsibilities" (p. 41) that administrators use to indirectly impact student achievement. Administrators:

1. Affirm and celebrate school accomplishments

2. Act as change agents
3. Provide contingent rewards
4. Communicate effectively
5. Act as culture builders
6. Provide adequate discipline allowing teachers to focus on teaching
7. Exhibit flexibility
8. Maintain focus on school goals
9. Possess strong beliefs and values
10. Ensure shared decision making processes
11. Provide intellectual stimulation for staff
12. Help to design and participate in curriculum, instruction, and assessment
13. Strive to remain current and up-to-date on curriculum, instruction, and assessment
14. Monitor school performance
15. Lead new initiatives
16. Establish routines and procedures
17. Advocate for the school
18. Attend to relationships between teachers and staff
19. Provide adequate resources for teachers
20. Remain aware of situational factors impacting the school
21. Are highly visible (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, p. 42)

Each responsibility has specific features. Situational awareness, for example, involves the administrators' ability to anticipate or predict potential problems in the

school and being aware of relationships among staff. Knowledge of the curriculum and teaching can involve the administrator visiting classrooms to observe, describe, and provide feedback on good teaching. Several issues related to Marzano, Waters, and McNulty's (2005) responsibilities are cited in the literature (Leithwood et al., 2004; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). First, many of the studies included in the analysis are unpublished dissertations and not subject to a peer review process. Second, the inability of administrators to balance all 21 leadership responsibilities simultaneously is problematic. An additional concern for this study is that many of the responsibilities are characterized as transformational, not instructional leadership elements.

A number of Marzano, Waters, and McNulty's (2005) 21 responsibilities reflect constructs associated with administrators' transformational leadership style, such as affirming and celebrating school accomplishments, providing intellectual stimulation, and acting as change agents. Determining differences on the effects of administrators' transformational and instructional leadership styles, teachers' effectiveness, and students' outcomes is seen in the work of Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008).

The majority of studies in Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe's (2008) investigation on the effects of instructional and transformational leadership styles on teaching and students' outcomes are based on teacher surveys. The administrator was identified as the primary school leader in 16 of 27 studies. The majority of studies included in the analysis focused on teachers' perceptions of administrators' leadership. The study used two levels of analysis.

The first analysis calculated the effect size of instructional and transformational leadership on student achievement outcomes. Instructional leadership has a mean effect

size three to four times greater than transformational leadership on students' outcomes. Teachers in high-performing schools described leaders in their schools to be "(1) more focused on teaching and learning, (2) a resource for teachers and, (3) more active as participants in and leaders of teacher learning and development" (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008, p. 657).

The second analysis calculated the effect size of instructional leadership dimensions on student outcomes. Five leadership dimensions identified by Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe, (2008) indirectly impacting student outcomes are "(1) establishing goals and expectations, (2) strategically resourcing, (3) planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum, (4) promoting and participating in teacher learning and development, and (5) ensuring an orderly and supportive environment (p. 635). Three dimensions showing positive effects on student outcomes were used in this study to explore administrators' and pre-tenured teachers' perceptions of instructional support: (a) establishing goals and expectations; (b) planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum; and (c) promoting and participating in professional development.

According to Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008), establishing goals and expectations has a small but "educationally significant" (p. 659) effect on student achievement. Goal setting has an average effect size of .42 standard deviations. Goal setting and goal content indirectly impact teachers' effectiveness and student outcomes by focusing teachers' work on instructional issues. Goal theory is based in the research of social psychology. Social psychology is concerned with how humans behave in

situational contexts. Latham and Locke's (2006) work focused on goal-directed behavior in organizations.

*Goal setting.* Latham and Locke's (2006) research proposed that goal-directed behavior is important for both individuals and organizations. A goal is defined as a level of performance proficiency one wishes to attain within a specific period of time. High goals that are specific and difficult lead to high self-efficacy for individuals and improved job performance. Goals help to direct, energize, and support an individual's new learning to accomplish difficult tasks (Latham & Locke, 2006; Locke & Latham, 2002). In organizations, employees' participation in setting high goals and expectations with leaders supports commitment in meeting higher performance outcomes (O'Hara & Maglieri, 2006).

Higher performance goals often require employees to learn new strategies to effectively change work skills and practices. Leadership is an important element in developing specific performance goals and for providing learning opportunities to change employee skills. In the school setting, consensus on identifying and working to meet specific, measurable goals leads to improved student achievement outcomes (Leithwood, et al., 2004; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008).

Setting goals in school settings is accomplished by communicating the importance of school goals, ensuring the goals are clear, and developing staff commitment to the goals. These practices are clearly defined in Hallinger and Murphy's (1986, 1987) instructional leadership model. Goal setting helps to direct the work of administrators in planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum.



Planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum shows moderate, indirect effects on student achievement, 0.42. Leaders in higher performing schools engage teachers in discussions around instruction, plan for long-term instructional objectives, work with teachers to share instructional responsibilities, conduct observations, provide feedback for teachers, and regularly monitor student achievement data (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008).

*Supervision and evaluation.* Conducting observations and providing feedback for teachers are processes involved in supervision and evaluation. Supervision is a process of talking with teachers to improve teaching and learning. Evaluation is a quality control process using formal observations to assess teachers' level of performance. Berube and Dexter (2006) summarized five models of supervision and evaluation in the research: (a) Supervisory Leadership, (Sergiovanni & Starrat, 2002); (b) Differentiated Supervision, (Glathorn, 1997); (c) Developmental Supervision, (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2004); (d) Framework for Teacher Evaluation, (Danielson, 2007); and (e) Classroom Walk-Through, (Downey, Steffy, English, Frase, & Poston Jr., 2004). The models have common approaches that administrators use to support teachers' growth and effectiveness.

The Supervisory Leadership (Sergiovanni & Starrat, 2002) model is based on five options that administrators use to supervise and evaluate teachers' growth. Clinical, collegial, self-directed, informal, and inquiry-based options allow administrators to individualize support for teachers based on professional experience and effectiveness. Differentiated Supervision (Glathorn, 1997) and Developmental Supervision (Glickman et al., 2004) models work in a similar manner. These models propose that administrators

use a directive approach for supervising new teachers and teachers who show difficulties with classroom instruction. Non-directive approaches are used for more experienced teachers. Administrators provide time for teachers to collaborate in learning activities, conference with teachers to plan for lessons, conduct classroom observations, and engage teachers in discussions focusing on instruction and student learning (Berube & Dexter, 2006; Ovando & Ramirez, 2007). Additionally, administrators help teachers set goals to improve professional practices.

The Framework for Teacher Evaluation (Danielson, 2007) is based on teachers' professional responsibilities and experience. Professional growth is a central feature in the framework for the teacher evaluation model. Teachers' responsibilities in this model include preparing and planning for instruction, attending to the classroom environment, conducting classroom instruction, and meeting professional responsibilities. The career-in-teaching program in place in District X (DX) uses a structure similar to this model. The model uses a three-track system of teacher supervision based on teaching experience. Track 1 supports new teachers, track 2 is for more experienced teachers, and track 3 is for struggling teachers. The administrators' supervisory role for new teachers is to evaluate teachers' professional pedagogy using formative and summative assessments. Formative evaluation of teachers can occur in classrooms through the Walk-Through model (Downey et al., 2004).

Administrators' brief classroom visits provide a foundation for the classroom Walk-Through model. Using short, focused classroom observations, administrators gather information on specific topics and then provide feedback to teachers. The model allows administrators and teachers to discuss and reflect on classroom practices and

students' learning. The classroom Walk-Through model supports teachers' work but does not replace summative supervision using observations and evaluations. Supervision in this model is a collaborative approach allowing administrators and teachers to become interdependent players in the supervision process. Several studies examined the formal supervision process (Ovando & Rameriz, 2007; Zimmerman & Decker-Pelton, 2003).

Ovando and Ramirez (2007) used a qualitative, multiple case study approach to examine instructional leadership and supervision in high-performing schools. Using open-ended interview questions, journaling, and observations, the study investigated administrators' perceptions of instructional leadership dimensions in supervising teachers' classroom performance. The study sample included principals and assistant principals in elementary, middle, and high schools. Participants in the study had a range of administrative experiences from 6-37 years. Administrators in the study used a formal teacher evaluation system for assessment, the Professional Development Appraisal System.

The Professional Development Appraisal System (PDAS) assesses teachers' involvement in professional development related to district and school goals (Ovando & Ramirez, 2007). The administrator is the designated evaluator for assessing teachers' performance in eight domains:

Domain 1: Actively engaging students in the learning process

Domain 2: Providing student-centered instruction

Domain 3: Monitoring and evaluating student progress

Domain 4: Managing student discipline, classroom time, and materials

Domain 5: Communicating professionally

Domain 6: Participating in professional development

Domain 7: Adhering to school policies and procedures

Domain 8: Improving academic performance

Findings from the study indicate three actions that effective administrators use to support and evaluate teachers' performance. Administrators set clear goals, use walk-through observations, and connect professional development activities with teachers' goals. For example, administrators use information from walk-through observations to provide instructional and motivational strategies for teachers. Ovando and Rameriz (2007) suggest that instructional leadership is an important feature in the supervision process in high-performing schools. Teachers' perceptions of the role of administrator in the supervision process are reported by Zimmerman and Decker-Pelton, (2003).

Teachers' perceptions of administrators' supervision practices used the Professional Appraisal Systems Survey to gather data from 86 K-12 teachers (Zimmerman & Decker-Pelton, 2003). The study reported teachers' responses through quantitative and narrative descriptions. A constant comparative analysis of the survey data showed four domains related to teachers' perceptions on the role of the administrator in the evaluation process. Administrators influenced teachers through (a) interaction, (b) consistency in evaluations, (c) commitment of the administrator, and (d) pedagogical knowledge. In the interaction domain, 89% of teachers reported that discussion and feedback from administrators was an important element in evaluation. Teacher trust in the evaluation process is enhanced when administrators effectively communicate and provide strategies for improving classroom instruction. Summative and formative supervision for new teachers can involve both administrators and mentors. The role of

administrators and mentors in the supervision and evaluation process for new teachers was reported by Milanowski (2005).

Milanowski's (2005) field study examined the split roles of supervisors and evaluators where administrators and mentors share supervision and evaluation roles. The program design described in the study provided new teachers with a single mentor or an administrator and a mentor to assess teachers' progress. Mentors evaluated and provided feedback for teacher interns in the first year of induction along with administrators.

Milanowski's (2005) study investigated whether a single formative evaluator provided more useful support than an administrator and mentor. Results of the study show no significant differences in teachers' evaluation based on roles. However, the study suggests the quality and consistency of the assistance teachers receive is important. The supervision, evaluation, and feedback cycle can help determine teachers' professional development needs.

*Professional development.* Research indicates that leadership related to teachers' professional development has strong effects on student outcomes (Darling-Hammond, Chung Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Robinson, Lloyd & Rowe, 2008; Timperly & Alton-Lee, 2008; Yoon, Duncan, Wen-Yu Lee, Scarloss & Shapley, 2007). Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe found this dimension has an average effect size of .84 standard deviations. In high-performing schools, administrators promote professional development by focusing on teaching and learning, providing advice for solving problems, and holding teachers accountable for student achievement. Timperly and Alton-Lee describe a framework for linking professional development and student outcomes.

The Framework for the Analysis of the Effectiveness of Professional Learning Experiences provides a means for outlining how teachers' professional development learning cycles impact students' outcomes (Timberly & Alton-Lee, 2008). The environment, content, and activities of professional development promote four cycles in teachers' learning processes: "(1) cueing and retrieving prior knowledge, (2) becoming aware of new information and skills and integrating them into current values and beliefs systems, (3) creating dissonance with current position, (4) enhanced co and self regulation" (Timperley & Alton-Lee, 2008, p. 342). In an analysis of 72 studies, Timperley and Alton-Lee found variable, but positive, academic effects for professional development on student outcomes. The largest gains were found in professional development that promotes teachers' content and assessment knowledge. Professional development should be differentiated according to teachers' levels of skill. For example, new teachers may require an emphasis on classroom management or fundamental principles of instruction while more experienced teachers need professional development related to improving content knowledge. New teachers' experiences with professional development are reported in the research (Anderson & Olsen, 2006).

In a small-scale study, 15 second through sixth-year teachers' perceptions of professional development was linked to four themes: (a) developmental needs, (b) the school, (c) opportunities to collaborate, and (d) interest in new job roles and responsibilities (Anderson & Olsen, 2006). Teachers in their second year of practice described a need for more support through mentoring, collegial observations, and teaching strategies. Collaboration opportunities such as grade-level planning and creating lessons were important sources of support for teachers in the study.

Although professional development has a strong impact on student achievement outcomes, Yoon et al. (2007) found that only 9 studies out of the 1,300 reviewed for inclusion in a review of the literature on the topic met evidence standards. There is a lack of empirical research on features of effective professional development, but generally accepted elements include intensive, sustained, active learning activities that are job embedded and content specific (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Desimore, 2009; Wayne, Yoon, Zhu, Cronen, & Garet, 2008;). Yoon et al.'s review indicated that teachers receiving more than 14 hours of professional development in mathematics, science, reading, and language arts positively impact student achievement. Although there is limited research on the topic, experimental studies show an average of 49 hours of professional development over one year can improve student achievement outcomes by 21% (Darling-Hammond, et al.). When teachers participate in sustained professional development, they are more likely to impact student learning. The No Child Left Behind (2001) legislation specifies that professional development activities must include both administrators and teachers, help teachers achieve highly qualified status, and improve student outcomes. Districts must continuously plan for, fund, analyze, and evaluate professional development at the school and district levels (Benton & Benton, 2008).

According to Benton & Benton (2008), administrators acting as “instructional leaders” (p. 26) must plan and promote professional development for meeting schools’ and individual teachers’ needs. Planning for professional development should take place at the building level and involve administrators, teacher specialists, grade-level, department leaders, and individual teachers. This team approach to professional development is centered on research-based practices, alignment with the schools’ long-

term goals, identifying resources for implementing professional development activities, and designing appropriate times for training. Much of the professional development support for new teachers is embedded in formal induction programs.

*Induction and mentoring.* Quality, formal induction programs provide opportunities for skilled, well trained, compensated mentors to actively support new teachers in the initial years of practice (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Individual programs promote induction as an ongoing learning process, a developmental process, or “as a means of orienting new teachers to the district, helping them teach to district standards and holding them accountable for competent practice” (Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2009, p. 307). Some programs allow for mentor training, release time to observe other teachers, supportive teacher networks, and reduced workloads. According to Snipes and Horwitz (2007), there is wide variation in induction programs. Like the programs themselves, the involvement of building administrators in the process varies depending on the structure of the program, state certification and licensing regulations, and administrators’ leadership practices (Fulton, Yoon, & Lee, 2005).

*Urban teacher induction programs.* The career-in-teaching program described in this study provides one year of mentoring to all first-year teachers as required by New York State regulations (New York State Education Department (NYSED) <http://www.nysed.gov/>). The centrally administered program allows for limited input from administrators. For example, DX administrators are annually appointed to the governing board that oversees the program, and building administrators provide recommendations on mentor applications or on year-end summaries of mentors assigned to their buildings. However, administrators receive little or no training in conjunction



with mentors, and the governing panel selects and places mentors in buildings. Although administrators are responsible for developing new teachers and making recommendations for tenure, their role in the induction program is limited. Descriptions of similar induction programs can be found in the literature.

Details on Cincinnati's Peer Assistance and Evaluation Program (PAEP) are described in a review of three, well established induction programs by Carver and Feiman-Nemser (2009). Cincinnati's induction program began in 1985 as a cooperative effort between the school district and the union. The program is structured to allow for one year of new teacher induction. The program uses ongoing assessments by paid mentors who incorporate release time and lead teacher status for mentors. New teachers in Cincinnati's Career-in-Teaching Program must be rated satisfactory within two years of employment. Discrepancies in mentor assessments and administrator evaluations are reviewed by the governing board in making recommendations for continued employment status in year two (Carver & Feiman-Nemser). The administrator has limited influence on the induction process in this program. Some large urban systems like New York City Schools place more responsibility on administrators in the mentoring and induction process. (New York City Department of Education <http://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/DHR/TeacherPrincipalSchoolProfessionals/ProfessionalDevelopment/NTIPrincipals>).

In the 2007/08 school year, the New York City Department of Education began placing administrators in a central role designing and implementing mentoring programs for new teachers. The site-based management design empowers administrators to develop a mentoring plan and allocate appropriate resources to create a model for new teachers to

fit the unique needs of individual schools. Administrators have support from a Lead Instructional Mentor, professional development, and district assistance to plan and assess designs. The administrator forms mentoring committees, selects mentors, and schedules time for teachers and mentors to meet. Like individual school district programs, administrators have varying degrees of participation and influence in state programs that extend the induction process beyond year one for new teachers.

*State induction programs.* In some states, such as Connecticut and California, regulations require mentoring and assessment beyond one year for new teachers. Although of longer duration, these programs do not allow for more involvement from building administrators (Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2009; Youngs, 2007). For example, in California's Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) program, administrators have a limited role.

California has a long history in the induction literature based on research and partnerships between the Santa Cruz New Teacher Project (SCNTP), University of California, Santa Cruz, the county office of education, and school districts (Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2009). Induction for new teachers in California is a two-year, performance-based program that includes standards driven assessment. The program requires completion of an approved preparation program, a baccalaureate degree, mentoring, and formal assessments from administrators. Like regulations in New York State, new teachers must complete 150 hours of professional development to attain a professional credential (<http://www.nysed.gov/>; Carver & Feiman-Nemser). The BTSA program in California is a well-funded, systematic certification and induction plan for all first and second-year teachers. Local districts receive \$3,200 in state funds for each new

teacher. The state also provides technical and training assistance to districts. Carver and Feiman-Nemser point out that in the BTSA program the administrators' role is primarily an evaluative one for contract renewal purposes. The same is true for Connecticut's comprehensive induction program.

In 1989-1990, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) established the Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) program to use as part of the requirement for provisional teaching licensure (Youngs, 2007). The program provides a mentor for all first-year teachers. In addition to first-year mentoring, teachers complete a portfolio that is used as an assessment tool in licensing decisions. Administrators are trained to review and support the work of mentors and the development of teacher portfolios. Youngs found that although administrators had specific training on assessments, wide differences occur in the beliefs and competencies of individual administrators in regard to induction and mentoring. These discrepancies can influence teacher growth, satisfaction, and intent to remain in the profession in the first years of practice. Understanding how administrative leadership practices can support new teachers is critical in providing urban students with highly qualified instructors. Portin (2005) states that in the induction and mentoring process "the most important role falls to the building principal" (p. 82). However, researchers point out that there is limited research on how administrators influence new teachers' development in the induction process (Youngs; Woods, 2005).

*Role of the administrator in induction programs.* Youngs' (2007) investigation on principals' leadership support in relation to induction reveals that there are distinct differences in how administrators view their roles. The study involved elementary

principals and first and second-year teachers in Connecticut schools. Results of the study indicate that instructionally focused administrators can influence new teachers' professional pedagogy through direct interaction and by supporting the work of mentors. Youngs' study provides descriptions of how administrators' professional backgrounds and beliefs concerning leadership, induction, and supervision impact their support for new teachers. For example, one administrator in the study conducted formal observations and post-conferences, scheduled grade-level and mentor meetings, and worked on teacher portfolios with new teachers. The administrator had a strong background in curriculum and professional development. Instructionally focused administrators can impact new teachers' growth and decisions to remain in a school (Youngs).

Woods (2005) explored the topic of the administrator's role in the induction process using five case studies. Administrators play five roles in the induction process with new teachers. Administrators act as (a) school culture builders, (b) instructional leaders, (c) coordinator of mentors, (d) teacher recruiters, and (e) teacher retainers (Woods). Woods found 25% of new teachers reported their administrators modeled lessons in their classrooms. Additionally, administrators used formal assessments and short classroom visits to support teachers' classroom practices. Teacher reports indicate that 64.3% of elementary administrators in the study conducted weekly classroom visits. Both Youngs' (2007) and Woods' research focuses on first or second-year teachers. This study contributes to the research on administrators' instructional support for new teachers by examining first, second, and third-year, special-subject teachers' perceptions of instructional leadership support.

*Teachers' life cycle.* Teacher growth and development occurs in six phases according to Steffy and Wolf's Life Cycle of the Career Teacher model (as cited in Downey et al., 2004). The (a) novice, (b) apprentice, (c) professional, (d) expert, (e) distinguished, and (f) emeritus phases describe teacher growth over the course of the professional career. The model is based on the adult theory of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1997). Transformative learning explains how people interpret what happens to them as a means of increasing self-knowledge leading to changes in beliefs and expectations. Teachers experience transformational learning through practice and critical reflection.

Experience, support, and reflection sustain teachers' continuous development, expertise, effectiveness, and engagement in the profession. Failure to engage in activities that promote growth and self-renewal can result in teachers' withdrawal and disengagement. Teachers stop taking responsibility for student learning and their own professional growth. Administrators play a critical role in supporting teachers throughout the teacher life cycle. This study contributes to the research by exploring how administrators and special-subject, pre-tenured teachers experience leadership support in the apprentice phase of teachers' life cycles.

### *Summary and Conclusions*

Research provides evidence that administrators' instructional leadership style supports teachers' growth and students' academic outcomes. Instructional leadership is characterized by a range of administrator behaviors including framing the school's mission and vision, aligning curriculum, assessment, instruction, and professional development, and promoting a positive, supportive school environment. Pre-tenured

teachers require leadership support to improve instructional effectiveness in the first years of professional practice.

Much of the research on administrators' support for new teachers focuses on first-year teachers in induction and mentoring programs. Administrators support pre-tenured teachers by identifying student, classroom, and professional goals, designing professional development to meet identified goals, collaborating with formal mentors, visiting classrooms for formative and summative observations, and providing pre-tenured teachers with frequent, meaningful feedback. Research provides evidence of the administrator's role in supporting pre-tenured teachers in induction programs. However, research on how administrators and special-subject, pre-tenured teachers perceive leadership support is limited.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### *Overall Research Design*

This research was designed to study how administrators' and pre-tenured teachers' experience instructional leadership in six urban elementary schools. Descriptive research was conducted in natural settings where the researcher is positioned as a part of the instrumentation. The study used semi-structured interviews and field notes to investigate administrators' and pre-tenured teachers' perceptions of instructional support and went on to compare administrators' descriptions of what was provided with teachers' descriptions of what was received.

The study was grounded in theoretical concepts related to administrators' instructional leadership styles (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008; Witziers, Bosker, & Kruger, 2003). Research using meta-analytic methods suggests positive links in the relationship between administrators' leadership style, teaching, and students' academic and social outcomes. Three leadership dimensions showing positive impacts on teaching and student outcomes are (a) "establishing goals and expectations; (b) planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum; and (3) promoting and participating in teacher learning" (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, p. 635). Four research questions framed the study:

Question 1: How do administrators describe instructional leadership support for pre-tenured teachers?

Question 2: How do pre-tenured teachers perceive administrators' instructional leadership support?

Question 3: What is the relationship between how administrators describe and pre-tenured teachers perceive instructional leadership support?

Question 4: How do administrators' descriptions and pre-tenured teachers' perceptions of support compare for schools meeting or not meeting AYP targets?

Issues involving the researcher as an insider in this study are addressed by adhering to procedures that ensured informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality for participants in the collection, analysis, and reporting of data.

#### *Setting for the Study*

The context for the study was a large urban school district. The study sites were purposefully selected from 6 of the district's 39 elementary buildings. The sites represented specific criteria including school enrollment and demographics and students' academic achievement results as evidenced on 2007/2008 New York State English Language Arts Assessment. Sampling at the site level was informed by Creswell (2007; 2009) and Patten (2007). The schools in the study were labeled A, B, C, D, E, and F to ensure anonymity for participants. Three of the schools were meeting adequate yearly performance (AYP) targets on the New York State 3-8 English Language Arts Assessment. Three schools were not currently meeting AYP targets. All schools in the study had two administrators, a principal and assistant principal. A brief sketch of each school provides background information on the study sites.

School A is a mid-size school with a student population of approximately 400 students. The students are 87% Black/African American, 7% Hispanic or Latino, 5%



White, and 1% Asian/Other. After-school enrichment activities for students include school clubs, tutoring, music, and drama. A Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and strong community partnerships are features of the school's support system for families. School A is meeting AYP targets.

School B is smaller in size to school A with a population of approximately 300 students. School B's enrollment is 79% Black/African American, 17% Hispanic/Latino, and 4% White. Student learning in the school is supported through instructional technology. The school has an active School Based Planning Team, PTA, and a wide range of community partnerships that provide wrap-around medical care for students and families. School B is not meeting AYP targets.

School C's student population is approximately 450 students. The student population is 92% Black/African American, 4% Hispanic/Latino, and 3% White. The school has a positive behavior program and after school support for students, as well as, an active PTA. The school partners with area colleges to provide tutoring and enrichment activities for students.

School D is the largest school included in the study with just over 500 students. The student population is 57% Black/African American, 30% Hispanic/Latino, 12% White, and 1% Asian/Other. The school's Hispanic and Latino population has grown over the last three years with the development of a bilingual program. The school partners with a number of health agencies to provide care for students. School D is not meeting AYP targets.

School E has approximately 300 students. School E has been identified as a rapidly improving urban school. School E's PreK-sixth grade students are 94%

Black/African American, 4% Hispanic/Latino and 2% White. School E has consistently shown strong results on New York State standardized measures of student performance and is currently meeting AYP targets.

School F has just over 450 students. The student enrollment is 53% Black/African American, 23% Hispanic/Latino, 20% White, 3% Asian/Other, and 1% Multiracial. The school uses a workshop model and small group intervention to meet students' individual learning needs. The school has active partnerships with a number of community agencies to support families and students. School F is meeting AYP targets.

Participants in the study included administrators and pre-tenured teachers from schools A, B, C, D, E, and F.

#### *Research Participants*

Participants in the study included administrators, principals, assistant principals, and special-subject, pre-tenured teachers at the selected school sites. A personal interview and a letter of introduction outlining the purpose of the study was scheduled and completed by the researcher with administrators (see Appendix A). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 principals and assistant principals at the study sites using an interview protocol (see Appendix B). With administrators' approval, a letter of introduction along with a self-addressed, open-ended questionnaire was given to 62 pre-tenured teachers at the school sites (see Appendixes C and D). The questionnaire was used to recruit teachers for the study. Interviews were conducted with 14 teachers using a 9-question protocol (see Appendix E). The data set included participant interviews, transcripts, and observational field notes.

### *Study Timeline*

This study was submitted for approval by the colleges' Internal Review Board and the School District in March 2010. The researcher conducted the initial interviews with administrators when approval was obtained. The teachers' questionnaires were distributed in April and May 2010 and teacher volunteers were scheduled for interviews as the questionnaires were returned.

The data collection phase of the study occurred over a two-month period in May and June in the spring semester of the 2009-10 school years. Administrators and teachers were scheduled for a 20-minute interview with one of three interviewers. The interviewers for the study were the researcher and two administrative graduate students employed by DX. Interviewers used a question protocol as an outline for conducting the interviews (see Appendix D). The interview questions were used to gather information regarding participants' descriptions and perceptions of instructional leadership support. Observational field notes were written during each interview. Weekly checks were made to ensure that interviews were completed by June 2010.

### *Procedures for Data Collection*

The researcher scheduled interviews with participants and provided materials for interviewers for the collection of data. The interviews were tape recorded, returned to the researcher, and transcribed. A transcription service was used to prepare the documents. School data, interview tapes, interview transcripts, and observational field notes provided data for analysis.

Analysis of the data was an ongoing process. Responses from the open-ended interviews were coded by the researcher to identify and categorize common support

strategies. Administrators' and pre-tenured teachers' responses were compared within and across schools. Triangulation of data sources included school data, interview tapes, interview transcripts, and observational field notes. Finally, data were discussed in relation to the research questions.

First, how administrators' describe leadership support is reported. Secondly, how special-subject, pre-tenured teachers' perceive administrators' support is reported. Third, an account of the relationship between how administrators describe and special-subject, pre-tenured teachers perceive leadership support is reported. Finally, similarities and differences in responses for schools meeting or not meeting AYP targets are discussed. The research results include participants' responses. Interpretation of the findings describes responses in relation to the research literature, current practices, limitations, and recommendations.

#### *Summary of the Methodology*

This study investigates administrators' and special-subject, pre-tenured teachers' perceptions of instructional leadership support. The study used school data, semi-structured interviews, interview transcripts, and observational field notes as data sources. The data were coded to develop common categories of instructional support strategies. Responses were compared across and within schools. Results are reported in narrative passages and discussed in relation to four research questions.

## Chapter 4: Results

This study explored administrators' and special-subject, pre-tenured teachers' perceptions of instructional leadership support. This chapter is structured to report participants' responses addressing four research questions:

Question 1: How do administrators describe instructional leadership support for pre-tenured teachers?

Question 2: How do pre-tenured teachers perceive administrators' instructional leadership support?

Question 3: What is the relationship between how administrators describe and pre-tenured teachers perceive instructional leadership support?

Question 4: How do administrators' descriptions and pre-tenured teachers' perceptions of support compare for schools meeting or not meeting AYP targets?

First, participants' responses to research questions one and two addressing administrators' and pre-tenured teachers' descriptions and perceptions of leadership strategies are reported. Secondly, the relationship between administrators' and pre-tenured teachers' responses are presented. Third, leadership support in schools meeting or not meeting adequate yearly performance (AYP) targets are compared. Finally, study results are discussed in relation to theoretical research on instructional leadership support and school performance.

### *Data Analysis and Findings*

Data collected from administrators were largely informational. Administrators described strategies they used to support pre-tenured teachers. Data collected from special-subject, pre-tenured teachers were informational and evaluative providing information on the efficacy of administrators' support strategies.

### *Research Question 1*

How do administrators describe instructional leadership support for pre-tenured teachers? Administrators' descriptions of instructional leadership support for pre-tenured teachers were categorized into five, broad support strategies as shown in Table 4.1. All administrators described professional development, mentoring, and developing relationships as support strategies for pre-tenured teachers. Managing organizational systems was described by 9 of the 10 administrators as a support strategy. Goal setting was identified by 6 of 10 administrators as a support strategy.

Table 4.1

### *Administrators' Descriptions of Support Strategies*

| Strategies   | Administrators (10) |
|--|---------------------|
| Planning and participating in professional development | 10                  |
| Mentoring  | 10                  |
| Developing relationships                               | 10                  |
| Managing organizational systems                        | 9                   |
| Goal setting   | 6                   |

Each leadership strategy includes a number of elements or activities planned and implemented by administrators to support the needs of pre-tenured teachers (see Appendix F).

*Planning and promoting professional development.* Designing professional development activities for pre-tenured teachers was a strong and recurring strategy of support for administrators in this study. District X (DX) has mandatory professional development hours for all teachers built into the monthly work schedule. Twenty-seven hours of mandatory professional development time are allocated for building hours. These hours include time set aside for professional learning, staff development, and district-wide training. For example, two hours of diversity training is required in each school. Special-subject teachers are required to attend departmental training related to their field for 5 of the 27 hours. The hours may be designed as one- or two-hour professional development workshops. Administrators described a number of informal professional development activities to supplement formal, monthly presentations and workshops for pre-tenured teachers.

Administrators provide additional professional development support for pre-tenured teachers through collegial learning groups, classroom-to-classroom visits, coaching, grade-level team meetings, and individual study. Some activities such as weekly grade-level meetings offer opportunities for pre-tenured teachers to receive collegial support for long-range planning, looking at student work, designing academic intervention, or for asking questions concerning school policies and procedures. Informal professional development from colleagues provides pre-tenured teachers with one type of mentoring support.

*Mentoring.* All administrators identified mentoring as a support strategy for pre-tenured teachers. Administrators provide informal mentoring by asking colleagues to be resources or by designating a buddy teacher within their schools to support first-year teachers. Seasoned, grade-level colleagues can address first-year teachers' daily issues and concerns helping to supplement the formal mentor program in place in DX.

All first-year teachers in DX receive formal mentoring support. Mentors are given release time for coaching, evaluating, and reporting the professional growth of first-year teachers. New teachers are evaluated in several areas, including instructional pedagogy, classroom management, parent communications, and professional development. Formal mentoring was described by administrators as an important strategy of support for new teachers adjusting to the policies of DX and the demands of their classrooms. One administrator explained how mentoring gives new teachers support beyond their student teaching experience in working with colleagues, "Your student teaching experience is not sufficient. A teacher isn't only an isolated teacher nowadays; she has to be a multi-team player" (Administrator School B). While mentoring was described by administrators as an integral component in new teachers' socialization, a majority felt there were gaps in DX's mentor program.

Administrators described a number of gaps in the formal mentoring program. First, administrators felt building-based mentors were more effective than those assigned from outside the building. Administrator School C stated, "From my experience, the mentors within the building seem to be the most beneficial because they can get to the person more. And so they can actually observe that person in different settings." Secondly, administrators felt methods for the selection of mentors did not take into



account the administrator's recommendations or concerns. As one administrator said, "I don't think I have any input" (Administrator School F). Third, administrators described a need to extend mentoring support for new teachers beyond the first year. Administrator School F said, "I think a lot of times people need more help in the second year."

Administrators acknowledged the current program in place in DX has gaps. However, formal mentoring was described by administrators as a significant feature in helping teachers adjust to the demands of the profession. As one administrator explained, "We're the only profession that we're expected to walk in and know what to do. This is the most challenging profession I know...it's not only teaching academics, it's about building relationships" (Administrator School B). Administrators described how they develop relationships as a support strategy for pre-tenured teachers.

*Developing relationships.* Administrators described a number of activities for developing relationships as a support strategy for tenured teachers. Administrators provide one-on-one support by meeting individually with new teachers at the start of the school year; informally visiting teachers' classrooms; or by modeling lessons, rituals, and routines for teachers. All administrators talked at length about establishing a climate of accessibility, security, and trust where pre-tenured teachers feel at ease asking for assistance. Administrator School C stated, "I try to create the relationship where they can come to me in comfort." In a number of cases, 8 of the 10 administrators described using a team approach to developing relationships with pre-tenured teachers.

Administrators in a majority of schools described working as administrative teams to develop relationships with pre-tenured teachers. While maintaining their roles as school leaders, administrative teams described themselves as teachers of teachers. As one

administrators said, “We try to have a personal relationship that doesn’t cross over the line of teacher/administrator...we are here to support you, we are here to help you, and we can show you how. We are both classroom teachers at heart” (Administrator School D). Administrators also described planning opportunities for pre-tenured teachers to informally socialize and develop relationships with colleagues.

All administrators described setting aside time and resources for school retreats, holiday celebrations, school-wide field trips, or team-building activities to help pre-tenured teachers acclimate to their school cultures. One administrator said, “I feel like we’re a family and we pride ourselves on that here and that in itself is the support” (Administrator School E). Administrators provided pre-tenured teachers with strategies such as professional development, informal or formal mentoring, or opportunities to develop supportive relationships by managing organizational systems within their buildings.

*Managing organizational systems.* Administrators described how they managed organizational systems, including time, personnel, and school budgets to plan and implement support strategies for pre-tenured teachers. Time, for example, was described by administrators as a significant factor in planning support for pre-tenured teachers.

As school leaders, administrators oversee and plan daily and weekly schedules that allow for professional development and mentoring support for pre-tenured teachers. Coordinating schedules for individual teachers or across grade levels provides time for collaborating, coaching, and modeling from more experienced colleagues. Administrator School E said, “We have grade-level meetings and we have common planning time almost five days a week.” In addition to time, administrators described allocating

resources for additional personnel to support new teachers. One administrator said, “I actually have a para....so we’re able to have them go into each of our classes for almost an hour” (Administrator School D). All administrators described a need for additional financial resources in their school budgets to extend support for new teachers.

Administrators described how limited funding impacted their ability to provide new teachers with materials, updated technology, coaching, and professional development opportunities such as conferences and workshops. One administrator stated, “Often they come in with nothing....I’m sure they buy their own things but it would be nice to say, look, here’s some extra money for you” (Administrator School E).

Administrators identified a need for DX to increase school budgets to specifically target the needs of new teachers. “You know if their classrooms not stocked there should be funds, resources, they shouldn’t go without tables and chairs or things because they’re the new kid on the block” (Administrator School B). Administrators also described the importance of providing new teachers with opportunities to attend conferences or observe in other school districts. Administrator School C said, “I think that every new teacher should be able to get away in their first year to see something that’s kind of a mind-blowing experience.” Another administrator reflecting on the fact that some pre-tenured teachers are placed in dysfunctional schools without appropriate modeling support stated, “There are some city schools that just don’t at all function the right way....it would be really nice to go to a building that functioned, that was esthetically pleasing to see what a classroom that has all the pieces actually looks like” (Administrator School E). In addition to professional development, mentoring, and developing relationships, administrators described goal setting as a support strategy for pre-tenured teachers.

*Goal setting.* Goal setting was described by six administrators as a support strategy for pre-tenured teachers. Administrators in four of the six study sites planned and implemented professional development, informal mentoring, or organizational systems based on individual teacher or school-wide needs.

Administrators develop instructional or behavior management goals with pre-tenured teachers by conducting formal and informal observations, reviewing student data, or providing feedback to teachers. “I would sit down with them every few weeks or so and say, ok, is this working for this group of kids” (Administrator School F)? By providing pre-tenured teachers with short- and long-range goals, administrators allow pre-tenured teachers to experience incremental successes. Administrator School C explained, “Once I do find out their needs or begin to see some areas that I feel need focusing on, I do it in levels. I don’t attack everything at once. I think that could become overwhelming”. Identifying specific goals enables administrators to plan professional development such as collegial coaching or informal mentoring support for pre-tenured teachers.

Administrators described professional development, mentoring, developing relationships, managing organizational systems, and goal setting as support strategies for pre-tenured teachers. Four of the five strategies emerged in responses for the second research question exploring how pre-tenured teacher describe administrators’ instructional leadership support.

*Research Question 2*

How do pre-tenured teachers perceive administrators' instructional leadership support? As with administrators' responses, pre-tenured teachers' responses were categorized as broad support strategies as shown in Table 4.2.

All pre-tenured teachers perceived professional development as a support strategy. A majority of pre-tenured teachers described formal mentoring, developing relationships, and organizational systems as support strategies. While professional development was described by all administrators and pre-tenured teachers as a support strategy, for 13 special-subject teachers in this study, building and departmental professional development support was inadequate in meeting their needs.

Table 4.2

*Pre-tenured Teachers' Descriptions of Support Strategies*

| Strategies   | Pre-tenured Teachers (14) |
|--|---------------------------|
| Planning and participating in professional development | 14                        |
| Mentoring  | 13                        |
| Developing relationships                               | 11                        |
| Managing organizational systems                        | 12                        |

*Planning and participating in professional development.* Special-subject, pre-tenured teachers in this study described formal building professional development as an ineffective use of their time. Teacher #1 School A stated, "Actually, the Wednesday PDs, and I've said it kind of from the beginning, a lot of times don't apply to us as speech pathologists....a lot of times I feel like I could be doing better things with my time". Other special-subject teachers described building professional development as an

opportunity to network with colleagues or show support for classroom teachers in their schools. “For the Wednesday afternoons-often the topics are not relevant to me specifically, but I love to go to those because I feel that that’s been the best opportunity for me to become part of the school family” (Teacher #1 School A). Informal professional development activities, for instance, grade level meetings or collegial coaching, were also described as problematic by special-subject teachers.

Itinerant art and music teachers, for example, did not have daily schedules that allowed for meeting or planning with colleagues. Three special-subject teachers received little or no informal, daily coaching support from colleagues in their disciplines since there was only one librarian, art, or music teacher assigned to their schools. Teacher #3 School B said, “I understand I’m a minority-I’m the only one in the building.” Instead, special-subject teachers relied on professional development and coaching support from others in their departments.

Although special-subject teachers identified departmental professional development as a support, several teachers perceived this strategy as problematic. Special-subject teachers cited a lack of communication and opportunities to network with other specialists as concerns with district-sponsored professional development. Teacher # 11 at School C said, “It’s hard being a new teacher. I have some music but there seems to be disorganization...there’s not a good communication where we can all sit down and share.” An art teacher also felt the professional development she received from her department was lacking. “The art department at large needs to strengthen its PD, needs to strengthen its interrelationships within its department” (Teacher #2 School A). In addition

to communication and networking concerns at the departmental level, scheduling of city-wide workshops was a concern for one special-subject teacher.

Teacher #4 School B works with two departments, the Pre-K and bilingual programs. Since all departmental professional development meetings are scheduled on the same day, this teacher described regularly missing out on professional development support in at least one program. “It’s like I can’t be in two places at the same time” (Teacher #4 School B). To supplement their professional development needs, pre-tenured teachers relied heavily on formal mentors for support.

*Mentoring.* Pre-tenured teachers, 13 of the 14, described mentoring as a significant support strategy in their first years of practice and beyond. Pre-tenured teachers described assistance with paperwork, policies, and procedures; with developing lesson plans; and with emotional support as some of the benefits they experienced from the mentoring program. Pre-tenured teachers reported their mentors were a resource for implementing instructional strategies, developing effective classroom management plans, or as liaisons to specialized departments. Teacher #12 School E described his mentor as “the most beneficial support” he had received in his three-year career. The majority of mentors assigned to pre-tenured teachers were not assigned to the same schools as their mentees.

Eleven of the fourteen pre-tenured teachers had mentors assigned outside of their buildings. All participants were elementary teachers assigned to pre-school to grade six classrooms. Some mentors had high school assignments or had little experience with their mentees’ assigned grade levels. Although pre-tenured teachers and mentors were not always closely matched in location, grade level, or classroom design (as was the case for

four special education teachers assigned to self-contained or integrated special classes), 13 of the 14 pre-tenured teachers described mentors as a critical and ongoing support strategy. “I think knowing I have a mentor, had a mentor, and that I can still call her with questions, I still do” (Teacher #14 School F). Special-subject teachers reported that mentoring from district colleagues in their subject areas was vitally important to their success.

Mentors helped special-subject teachers to negotiate the structure of the DX’s various departments, such as, art, music, or speech. “I had a mentor my first year in the district with a more senior teacher out of the building....somebody who could fill me in on the culture at the district at large in the department” (Teacher #2 School A). Speech pathologists described how mentors assisted them in completing required paperwork, setting up their classrooms, improving behavior management skills, or by locating other experts to assist them. As one speech teacher said, “I don’t think I could have made it through that year without her” (Teacher #13 School E). In addition to building relationships with mentors, pre-tenured teachers described developing relationships with administrators and other colleagues as an important support strategy.

*Developing relationships.* Pre-tenured teachers described developing trusting relationships with administrators and colleagues as a support strategy. For pre-tenured teachers, developing relationships with administrators involved frequent and positive interactions. In School B, for example, one pre-tenured teacher described administrators as accessible and empathetic to the emotional ups and downs of working with colleagues and teaching students with high needs, “My room is sort of across from my VP {vice principal} and principal so I’m usually...their doors are always open so I just wander in



there and talk to them” (Teacher #4 School B). A second teacher states, “I’ve always felt that I could go to my assistant principal. I think she remembers what it’s like in the classroom” (Teacher #5 School B). Along with developing trusting relationships with administrators, pre-tenured teachers described collaboration with colleagues as an important support strategy.

Open relationships with colleagues helped new teachers feel comfortable seeking and receiving support. Teacher #4 School B said, “I know a lot of the staff members....I really appreciate the support...they welcome me very warmly, like I was one of them and it’s been great.” Another special-subject teacher said, “I really feel like my colleagues were my support” (Teacher #6 School C). In addition to open relationships with colleagues, time in their positions helped new teachers feel comfortable seeking and receiving support.

In their second and third years of practice, many pre-tenured teachers felt comfortable collaborating with colleagues. For example, a special educator reflecting on her second year of practice stated, “I think this year that I have a wonderful support staff. Like all my paras {paraprofessionals} and I get along-we all work off each other very well” (Teacher #10 School D). In another case, a third-year speech teacher reported, “When I came back in September of that second year I came back with confidence...I wasn’t the new person on the block, I didn’t have to prove myself...I knew the kids, I knew the teachers” (Teacher #13 School E). In addition to developing trusting relationships with administrators and colleagues, pre-tenured teachers described organizational resources such as space and materials as support strategies.

*Managing organizational systems.* Organizational systems were described by 12 of the 14 pre-tenured teachers as a support strategy. However, pre-tenured teachers reported resources and adequate classroom space as problematic. Pre-tenured teachers noted a need for additional resources like books, technology, curriculum guides, classroom furniture, or reading and writing programs to support their work. As one teacher said, “As ridiculous as it sounds, it’s even the size of the chairs that I have, and the size of the desks...some are big, some are small.” Administrators’ ability to organize and allocate appropriate classroom space in buildings was also a concern for special-subject teachers.

For 8 of the 13 special-subject teachers in this study, having adequate classroom space was a concern. For example, in schools A and F, first- and second-year speech pathologists provided therapy in converted storage rooms, one adjacent to the school’s loading dock near the cafeteria. Teacher #1 School A said, “When I first came in here this room was a storage room, literally lined with shelves and boxes and for those first few months we were just fighting to turn this into workable space.” Other pre-tenured teachers described sharing classroom space with veteran teachers as a concern.

A number of special education teachers described problems sharing classroom space with partner teachers. In one case, Teacher #14 School F stated, “The room was full, it was all set up but none of it was mine....I lived out of crates the first two weeks.” In another case, Teacher # 7 School D described how his partner teacher told him to “sit at the back table with the student teacher and observe.” One pre-tenured teacher seemed resigned to the fact that his classroom space issues could never be resolved, “Space is a huge issue and that’s not anything we can solve....unless we spend millions of dollars

and that's just not going to happen" (Teacher #3 School B). The relationship between administrators' descriptions and pre-tenured teachers' perceptions of support are addressed in the third research question.

### *Research Question 3*

What is the relationship between how administrators describe and pre-tenured teachers perceive instructional leadership support? The relationship between administrators' and pre-tenured teachers' responses was connected to the teacher sample in this study. The majority of teachers in the study sample were special-subject providers. Administrators did not describe support for specific groups of pre-tenured teachers. Rather, administrators provided general descriptions of support for all pre-tenured teachers in their buildings. While there were not wide variations in the types of support described by all participants, there were differences in how special-subject teachers perceived the effectiveness of strategies such as professional development, mentoring, or managing organizational systems. For example, all administrators and pre-tenured teachers described professional development as a support strategy. However, special-subject teachers perceived building professional development support as less than adequate in meeting their unique needs.

*Planning and promoting professional development.* Although administrators recognized and described differentiating professional development for a range of teacher needs, the majority of special-subject teachers in this study perceived building-based professional development as inadequate and not connected to their practice. For instance, a speech teacher in School E stated, "For the Wednesday afternoons-often the topics are not relevant to me specifically" (Teacher # 13). In another case, a first-year teacher felt

unsupported by her administrators seeking outside professional development to support her practice. Teacher #1 School A explained, “I think that as far as administration, for my PDs I always kind of feel like I shouldn’t ask. We had PD just a couple of weeks ago and only two of us were allowed to go.” In contrast, administrators in Schools A and E described differentiating professional development for a range of teacher needs.

Like the majority of their colleagues in this study, administrators in Schools A and E described differentiating professional development for pre-tenured teachers in their buildings. An administrator in School A stated, “At the start here we kind of all start off together....but then also we differentiate our PD later.” School E’s Administrator also described differentiating professional development in her building saying, “It’s general for the whole staff, but we do differentiate.” Still, special-subject teachers perceived professional development at the building level to be less than adequate. In a number of cases, differences between administrators’ descriptions and pre-tenured teachers’ perceptions concerning formal mentoring support were also related to the teacher sample.

*Mentoring.* The majority of participants in this study described mentoring as a support strategy for first-year teachers. However, there were discrepancies between administrators’ descriptions and special-subject teachers’ perceptions concerning the effectiveness of formal mentoring. Special-subject teachers’ perceived formal mentoring from colleagues in their disciplines as a critical element of support in their first year of practice. A special education teacher stated, “My first year I had a wonderful mentor....she was always there for me and she still talks with me” (Teacher #10 School D). Administrators’ descriptions of formal mentoring focused more on gaps and problems

with the structure of the formal program rather than on the quality of relationships between teachers and mentors.

Administrators' descriptions of formal mentoring as a support strategy for pre-tenured teachers focused on a number of concerns. First, a number of administrators described building-based mentors as more effective than those assigned from outside the school. This was not a concern for the majority of special-subject teachers who had mentors assigned outside their buildings. Secondly, some administrators described a lack of communication between administrators and mentors as an issue. In contrast, special-subject teachers reported frequent and open communication with their mentors. Teacher #13 School E felt her mentor was readily accessible stating, "I mean, she was here every week and available to me on the phone and shared." Third, some administrators described procedures for selecting mentors as problematic. Administrator School F questioned the selection of mentors describing them as uncooperative and ineffective. "The mentors in this building have mentored everybody here....they are anti-collaboration, anti-administration" (Administrator School F). Although administrators had concerns with gaps in the formal mentor program, in only one case, for the general education classroom teacher in this study was the match between the teacher and the mentor perceived as a concern by both the administrator and the teacher.

For Teacher #5 School B, formal mentoring was perceived as a "touchy subject." The mentor failed to provide the teacher with appropriate support with the exception of written evaluations, leaving the teacher struggling in year one. Teacher #5 School B said, "I really felt in the dark last year. But then, I felt I couldn't say anything about that because this woman's writing my evaluations. I need a year of mentor teaching to get my

professional certification.” The Administrator in School B describing the relationship between the teacher and mentor stated, “It wasn’t a good situation.” Along with professional development and mentoring support, there were also differences in how administrators described and special-subject teachers perceived the effectiveness of how administrators manage organizational systems.

*Managing organizational systems.* Managing organizational systems such as materials, space, and time were described by administrators and pre-tenured teachers as support strategies. However, for some special-subject teachers, these systems were perceived as problematic. In a number of cases, special-subject teachers felt administrators were disinterested regarding their concerns with classroom space. For example, Teacher # 10 School A felt isolated by the location of her classroom space, “I felt very segregated...I was in the basement. It was rough.” Another special-subject teacher whose classroom was also located in a school basement stated, “No one ever came down here other than my observation. You know, I don’t even think the principal realized I had an office down here” (Teacher #1 School A). One special-subject teacher sharing space with a classroom teacher said, “I just want an office. I just want a space to organize my stuff, that’s all” (Teacher #6 School C). Although classroom space was a concern for a majority of special-subject teachers in this study, no administrators described classroom space as a support strategy or a concern in their buildings. In addition to concerns with classroom space, several special-subject teachers perceived their administrators as unconcerned or disorganized in managing time and resources.

Several special-subject teachers perceived administrators, who were responsible for designing schedules, managing, and allocating resources, as ineffective in regard to

managing organizational systems. In School F Teacher #11 said, “The scheduling was horrific. The testing schedule was just not thought out and it had a negative impact on what we could do with kids.” In another instance, a special education teacher felt a lack of classroom resources were linked to organizational issues in her building. Teacher #14 School F stated, “I’ve borrowed workbooks and copied...I keep being told we have it we just don’t know where it is...it seems to be a lot of disorganization.” Some special-subject teachers attributed their lack of resources, appropriate classroom space, or scheduling difficulties to poor administrative management. However, administrators described limited financial resources as a constraint in providing new teachers with materials or technology.

All administrators in this study described a need for additional resources in their school budgets to support pre-tenured teachers. Administrators described how they would extend mentor support, increase professional development opportunities, or offer coaching in model classrooms to new teachers with additional resources. Administrator School D explained how she would use additional funds, “We would design a classroom to have the bells and whistles. Our kids deserve it, our teachers deserve it.” Administrator School F talked about having funds specifically for new teachers, “an allocation that goes directly to them.” Although there were some differences in administrators’ descriptions and special-subject teachers’ perceptions of professional development, mentoring, and organizational systems, this was not the case in the area of developing relationships.

*Developing relationships.* Administrators recognized, and pre-tenured teachers confirmed, that developing supportive relationships was a critical support strategy in the first years of practice. Administrators described developing supportive relationships

through having an open-door policy, providing opportunities for social interaction within their schools, or by providing new teachers with collegial coaching or mentoring. For pre-tenured teachers, developing trusting relationships with administrators and colleagues increased with time in their positions. By the second and third years of practice, pre-tenured teachers described developing confidence in their abilities to interact with colleagues and students.

There were discrepancies in how administrators described and special-subject, pre-tenured teachers perceived support strategies in the areas of planning and promoting professional development, mentoring, and managing organizational systems. However, there was close agreement from all participants on the importance of developing relationships in the first years of professional practice. Comparisons between administrators' descriptions and pre-tenured teachers' perceptions of support in schools meeting or not meeting AYP targets are addressed in the fourth research question.

#### *Research Question 4*

How do administrators' descriptions and pre-tenured teachers' perceptions of support compare for schools meeting or not meeting AYP targets? There were few differences in schools meeting or not meeting AYP targets in relation to administrators' descriptions and pre-tenured teachers' perceptions of four of the five support strategies identified in this study. In both types of schools, there were common similarities and differences in administrators' general descriptions and special-subject teachers' perceptions of professional development, mentoring, developing relationships, and managing organizational systems. However, for the support strategy of goal setting



identified by administrators in this study, there were differences in schools meeting targets as compared to those not meeting targets.

*Goal setting.* Goal setting was described by six administrators as a support strategy. There were differences in school-wide goal setting in schools meeting or not meeting AYP targets. Administrators in three schools who were meeting AYP targets described aligning school data and support strategies to clearly defined student and school goals as compared to one administrator in a school who was not meeting targets.

References to systems of support in schools meeting targets included response to intervention (RTI) teams, designing schedules with specific times dedicated to English Language Arts and math instruction, and daily or weekly grade-level meetings devoted to planning and looking at student work. As an Administrator in School E stated, “Our focus is academics....We have set times for ELA for each grade level, set times for math for each grade level.” In contrast, an Administrator in School B, not meeting AYP targets, was general in her descriptions of school-wide goals. “We’re working on downsizing our areas-our goals....We’re moving toward academic achievement but we feel like the children need to be nurtured, moved around, and feel good about themselves before they can learn.” Systematically providing professional development support for teachers was also a priority for administrators in higher achieving schools as compared to those not meeting targets.

Aligning professional development to meet the needs of pre-tenured teachers was an ongoing process in schools meeting AYP targets. For example, in one school that was meeting state standards, an administrator stated, “We have regular, monthly, first-year teacher meetings” (Administrator School A). In another school, an administrator

described using school and student data to design professional development to improve teachers' instructional effectiveness. "We looked at our test scores and said, oh, we're doing poorly here so every month we chose a skill. Our intervention support teachers provide a PD, our skill of the month" (Administrator School F). Administrators successfully meeting AYP targets focused on identifying their school's academic goals and planning support strategies for teachers based on student and teacher needs. One administrator said, "The academic area was strictly our focus to get those test scores up and to meet kids' individual needs...to see what they needed to be successful, what the teachers needed" School-wide goal setting was clearly defined by all administrators in schools meeting AYP targets. Only one of six administrators in schools not meeting AYP targets described a central focus for her school.

Administrator School B defined her school's goal as a school theme, "We're taking that healthy generation as a school theme." According to this administrator, making school comfortable and fun for students was a priority, "We're going to go with that and make it a fun place for kids to come so they will want to learn" (Administrator School B). The opposite was true for administrators in School E meeting AYP targets. In this school, administrators first focused on student academics then on students' self-esteem and social needs. An Administrator in School E stated, "Now we have academics under control, so now we're doing all those additional pieces that are making kids grow," There were clear differences in administrators' descriptions of school-wide goal setting in schools meeting or not meeting AYP targets. Next, the results of this study are examined in relation to leadership support strategies identified in the research literature.

### *Summary of Results*

As stated in Chapter 1, research indicates that administrators' instructional leadership styles indirectly impact teaching and student learning in high-performing schools. Three leadership strategies identified in the research literature, (a) establishing goals and expectations; (b) planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum; and (c) promoting and participating in teacher learning positively impact student achievement outcomes (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). This study was designed to explore how administrators describe and pre-tenured teachers perceive leadership support strategies.

Two leadership strategies identified in the research literature, goal setting and planning and participating in professional development, were described by administrators and pre-tenured teachers in this study. In addition, administrators' and pre-tenured teachers' identified developing relationships and mentoring as support strategies.

Goal setting was described by all administrators in schools meeting AYP targets as a support strategy compared to two administrators in schools not meeting AYP targets. As described in the research literature, administrators in higher performing schools aligned professional development and school resources with individual or school-wide goals based on teacher needs and students' academic achievement data. For an administrator in a school not meeting AYP targets, school-wide goals promoted student health and well-being.

Professional development was also described by all administrators and pre-tenured teachers as a significant instructional support strategy. Although administrators described planning formal and informal professional development opportunities for pre-

tenured teachers, there were few references to participating in professional development along with teachers as described in the research literature. In many cases, administrators described coaches, model classrooms, or grade-level team meetings as professional development support activities. However, there were exceptions; two administrators described participating in school-wide book talks with teachers. Overall, special-subject teachers in this study perceived professional development as an important, but problematic, support strategy.

Special-subject teachers described professional development provided by administrators and DX as not connected to their practice and inadequate in meeting their needs. For the majority of teachers in this study, both in schools meeting and not meeting AYP targets, a lack of appropriate professional development was a concern. A third support strategy identified in the research literature, planning, supervising, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum, was defined in this study as managing organizational systems. Administrators manage organizational systems such as space or materials to provide pre-tenured teachers with opportunities for formal and informal supervision and collegial coaching. Two additional support strategies identified in the literature were described by administrators and pre-tenured teachers.

According to the research literature, administrators in high-performing schools ensure that teachers have an orderly and supportive environment in which to work (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). The study revealed in both schools, meeting and not meeting targets, administrators and pre-tenured teachers described developing relationships and mentoring as part of a supportive environment. Administrators develop supportive environments for pre-tenured teachers by promoting personal and empathetic

relationships with teachers or by creating opportunities to collaborate with colleagues.

Administrators manage and allocate time and resources for retreats, celebrations, or team building activities as part of this support strategy.

There were no meaningful differences in descriptions of leadership support in this study as compared to those found in the research literature. However, the results indicated a misalignment between administrators' and pre-tenured teachers' perceptions in regard to the effectiveness of support strategies. In addition, the results show evidence of goal setting in schools meeting AYP targets as compared to those not meeting AYP targets. Further discussion of this study's findings, limitations, and recommendations are presented in Chapter 5.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

### *Introduction*

The purpose of this study was to explore administrators' and special-subject, pre-tenured teachers' perceptions of instructional leadership support. It supports the current research on administrators' instructional leadership and support for new teachers. The results contribute to the research on educational leadership, school performance, and teacher socialization. In this chapter, the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations for further research, and a conclusion are presented. The findings are discussed in relation to the research literature, current practices, and methodology.

### *Implications of the Findings*

*Findings in relation to the research.* The significance of this study's findings supports research on leadership and goal setting in high-performing schools. There was evidence in this study that administrators in schools meeting adequate yearly progress (AYP) targets set school-wide goals based on school and student achievement data. Goal setting in schools supports teachers' commitment to improving instructional pedagogy and can lead to improved student outcomes (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986; 1987; Leithwood, et al., 2004; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). Results of this study support the findings of a recent investigation involving 12 principals in high-performing elementary schools. Crum, Sherman, and Myran (2009) report that "references to the use of data permeated the conversations with principals" (p. 55) who consistently maintain high levels of student achievement in their schools. The findings contribute to the current

discussion on effective instructional leadership and school accountability in a “post-NCLB nation” (p. 48) from practitioners in the field (Crum, Sherman, & Myran).

In addition, the study contributes to the research on the role of administrators in supporting new teachers in comprehensive induction programs. A lack of commitment on the part of administrators regarding formal induction programs has been found to negatively influence new teachers’ perceptions of the programs (Cherubini, 2009). The results of this study did not support this research. The findings indicated that differences in administrators’ and pre-tenured teachers’ perceptions of the formal mentoring program in District X (DX) did not diminish teachers’ commitment to the program. This finding might be related to this study’s final sample. The majority of pre-tenured teachers in the sample were special-subject providers. Many of these pre-tenured teachers were the only special-subject provider in their buildings. In a number of cases, there was only one librarian or one music teacher in buildings. Perhaps this group is more dependent on the support of mentors in their field leading to positive perceptions of the induction program. Along with information on induction programs, goal setting and formal mentoring were two of the five support strategies related to the research literature that emerged from the findings.

Administrators and pre-tenured teachers described professional development, mentoring, developing relationships, managing organizational systems, and goal setting as important instructional support strategies. The support strategies reported by participants were not significantly different than those found in the research literature (Blasé & Blasé, 1999; Hallinger & Murphy, 1986, 1987; Marks & Printy, 2003; Murphy, Elliott, Goldring, & Porter, 2007; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008; Supovitz, Sirinides,

& May, 2009; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). However, the results did show differences between administrators' descriptions of leadership support in schools meeting and not meeting AYP performance targets in the area of goal setting. This is an important finding of this study and suggests that effective administrators use data to align school-wide goals with systems of support to consistently improve student outcomes (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). Aside from differences related to goal setting in schools meeting or not meeting AYP targets, administrators' descriptions of support across schools in this study seemed similar. This might be attributed to commonalities in administrators' leadership experiences, educational background, or the current leadership training in place in DX. Future researchers might compare administrators' professional practices related to these factors to enhance DX's long-term leadership development and training programs. This study did not show wide variations in administrators' descriptions of support strategies.

Administrators seemed genuinely committed to providing adequate support for pre-tenured teachers in their buildings. However, their efforts often fell short. For example, all administrators described professional development as a support strategy for new teachers. Providing professional development for teachers is frequently cited in the research literature as an important support strategy for improving instruction and student outcomes (Darling-Hammond et al, 2009; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Robinson, Lloyd & Rowe, 2008; Timperly & Alton Lee, 2008; Yoon et al, 2007). Effective professional development should focus on teachers' content and assessment knowledge and be differentiated for a range of skill levels (Timperley & Alton-Lee, 2008). Although administrators described how they provided differentiated professional



development for pre-tenured teachers, the majority of teachers felt the professional development they received was inadequate in meeting their needs. Administrators should collaborate more frequently with DX's department heads, mentor program coordinators, other building administrators, and mentors to design relevant professional development activities for pre-tenured teachers. Administrators reported little communication or collaboration with these stakeholders concerning new teachers during or after formal mentoring in year one. In fact, a lack of communication between administrators and mentor program coordinators may have contributed to differences in participants' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the formal mentoring program in this study.

Although administrators were generally supportive of DX's formal mentoring program, mentor concerns impacted administrators' overall perceptions and support of the program. Wide variations in levels of support from administrators concerning formal, comprehensive mentoring programs are reported in the research literature (Cherubini, 2009; Isenberg et al., 2009). Researchers have found that variations in administrators' commitment to induction programs coupled with a lack of communication between program coordinators and administrators diminishes teachers' perceptions on the merits of formal mentoring and induction support (Cherubini). This was not the case for pre-tenured teachers in this study.

Pre-tenured teachers described formal mentoring as a significant support strategy even in schools where administrators were not entirely satisfied with the program. Mentors provided pre-tenured teachers with instructional, as well as, emotional support throughout their first years of practice. Relationships established between pre-tenured teachers and mentors continued into the second and third years of practice providing

teachers with informal professional support. Administrators expressed a need for extending formal mentoring support for pre-tenured teachers into the second year. The efficacy of extending comprehensive support for new teachers beyond year one is currently being investigated by researchers (Isenberg et al, 2009).

Administrators expressed a need for extending formal mentoring for pre-tenured teachers beyond year one to support teachers' classroom management and instructional pedagogy to improve student achievement outcomes. However, results from the second year of a three-year randomized controlled study on the impact of comprehensive induction programs on new teacher retention rates and student outcomes indicates no impacts of extended formal mentoring on student achievement (Isenberg et al, 2009). Administrators might better support pre-tenured teachers by changing or expanding their current practices related to the use of data, informal mentoring support, or by designing differentiated professional development activities in their buildings.

The findings suggest opportunities for further research on effective leadership support for new teachers by focusing on strategies found in the literature but not emphasized by respondents in this study. For example, formative and summative evaluations are reported in the literature as support strategies for improving teachers' instructional effectiveness (Danielson, 2007; Downey, et al, 2004; Mathers, Oliva, & Laine, 2008). There were limited references to formative evaluations. However, there were few references to summative evaluations as a support strategy. Systematically investigating pre-tenured teachers' formal evaluation documents over time might lead to insights on how professional development or formal and informal mentoring support is demonstrated in classrooms in high-achieving schools. Longitudinal research on teachers'

summative evaluations might also provide information to DX on effective or ineffective feedback from administrators related to this support strategy. School administrators can use the findings to improve their current practices in several ways.

*Current practices.* The results of this study call into question the all too common practice of administrators relying on “gut feelings” (p. 55) to improve their schools’ performance outcomes (Crum, Sherman, & Myran, 2009). Rather, administrators acting as instructional leaders direct the work of their schools based on data and clear, measurable goals. Administrators can develop strategies for increasing their own and teachers’ understanding of data-driven decision-making through training and professional development activities.

Next, administrators described a number of ways they provide professional development and informal mentoring support for new teachers in their buildings. These strategies include; Buddy teachers, coaching, classroom-to-classroom visits, or grade-level meetings. Administrators continued attention to expanding and developing supportive learning communities within their buildings provides opportunities for improving new teachers’ instructional pedagogy and overall school performance through collegial modeling, collaboration, and reflection (Danielson, 2007). Administrators and teachers in effective learning communities “work together to question, search, analyze, develop, test and evaluate new skills strategies, awareness, attitudes and beliefs that promote student learning” (National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2008, p. 18).

Finally, the high percentage of special-subject teachers participating in this study serves to reinforce the notion that administrators must continuously monitor how to best

meet the needs of *all* school staff. Overall, administrators' general descriptions of support focused on the needs of classroom teachers, not special-subject providers. Urban schools such as DX show an increase in student populations requiring support from special subject providers especially for second language learners. Special-subject teachers in this study expressed concerns with professional development at the building and departmental levels, issues related to adequate classroom space, scheduling, and materials. Attention to the needs of special-subject teachers may contribute to improvements in teachers' abilities to meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of a growing and diverse population of students. The findings of this study emerged from the exploratory design of the study.

#### *Limitations*

This study used an inductive approach to better understand the concept of instructional leadership from the perspectives of administrators and pre-tenured teachers. The methodology followed established practices currently used by researchers examining educationally related practices, problems, and issues (Cherbuni, 2009; Crum, Sherman, & Myran, 2009). Data were collected using open-ended questions, semi-structured interviews, observational field notes, and school performance data. An inductive approach was used during transcript analysis resulting in detailed descriptions of support strategies that were inferred from the data. Responses were compared within and across schools. The exploratory approach of this study allowed for a deeper understanding of participants' common experiences of leadership support. However, there were a number of limitations to this study connected to the methodology.

The researcher acknowledges several limitations impacting the results of this study. The researcher, as the principal investigator, may have affected the study results in regard to issues related to researcher bias, power, and position. In addition, the timing of the study and final sample may have impacted results.

While there is no direct or discernible evidence in this investigation, the researcher's position as an administrator in DX could have led to unintended bias in the collection and interpretation of data (Creswell, 2007, 2009; Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). Creswell notes that in qualitative inquiry "researchers' interpretations cannot be separated from their own background, history, context, and prior understandings" (p. 39). Reliability and trustworthiness regarding interpretations of the data requires qualitative researchers to acknowledge and reflect on assumptions that might affect the results. As a practicing administrator in DX, the researcher spent considerable time over the course of this study reflecting on personal experiences concerning leadership support for new teachers. The researcher continuously reread transcripts to ensure accuracy in reporting participants' verbatim answers, coded, and recoded information to accurately categorize responses, and used multiple sources of data to interpret the results. However, the researcher's understanding, experiences, and training in the area of instructional leadership may have impacted the findings in ways which remain unaware. In addition to researcher bias, the researcher's supervisory role in evaluating teachers may have influenced pre-tenured teachers' responses.

The methodology of this study was structured to allow non-supervisory personnel to conduct the teacher interviews since the researcher is an administrator in DX. Unfortunately, due to personal circumstances, the administrative graduate students

recruited to conduct the teacher interviews could carry out only two interviews. The researcher conducted both the administrator and teacher interviews.

Precautions were taken to assure anonymity and confidentiality for teacher participants in this study. Pre-tenured teachers volunteered to participate in the study through an anonymous questionnaire. The researcher discussed and provided all subjects with informed consent documents. No subjects were directly supervised by the researcher and transcripts were coded to eliminate identifying features for individual participants. Still, the possibility remains that teachers' responses could have been influenced by the researcher's position as an administrator in DX. Pre-tenured teachers interviewed for this investigation seemed comfortable, open, and eager to participate in this study. However, issues related to the researcher's position and teachers' non-tenured status may have led some participants to be less than candid in their responses.

The timing of the study during May and June of the school year may have impacted response rates in two ways. Classroom teachers' professional responsibilities related to the close of the school year include administering state and local assessments, preparing student portfolios, and submitting final grades. A possible consequence of the timing was that classroom teachers may not have had time or interest in participating in a study during this time period. Administrators' recommendations concerning tenure status for third-year teachers occurs in DX by May 15<sup>th</sup>. Some third-year teachers may not have considered themselves as having pre-tenured status after mid-May since final school board approval determines the tenure date. Final tenure approval often occurs in DX after May 15<sup>th</sup> depending on when tenure resolutions are scheduled to appear on the school board's agenda. The final study sample may also have influenced the results of this study.

Teacher questionnaires were distributed to 62 pre-tenured teachers at the 6 schools. The final study sample consisted of 14 pre-tenured teachers. There were thirteen special-subject teachers and one general education teacher included in the study. General education, pre-tenured classroom teachers were not strongly represented in this study. Additionally, study sites were purposefully selected from 6 of the DX's 39 elementary schools. Given the study sample, conclusions and findings of this research may not be generalized to DX's other schools with different administrators and pre-tenured teachers.

Finally, the analysis of the data and interpretation of the findings point out a weakness related to the methodology of this study. Accepted qualitative practices for validating and interpreting study data were employed in this study, specifically, triangulation of data sources and continuous reflection (Creswell, 2007; 2009). However, a more rigorous approach applied to the analysis would address questions related to the interpretation of the results. For example, a second coder would have assured that the support strategies reported in the results had been subjected to intercoder agreement (Creswell, 2007). The results point to recommendations for researchers and practitioners in the field of education.

### *Recommendations*

The results show a need for continued research on instructional leadership, school performance, and student outcomes. Although the findings indicated administrators in schools meeting AYP targets use school and student data to set school-wide goals to improve student outcomes, no definitive conclusions can be drawn from the data. The findings support the current research and show a need for further study focusing on how effective administrators align school goals with systems of support in high-performing

schools. Given the current climate of increased accountability and changes in student performance standards enacted by the New York State Education Department in 2010, there is an urgent need in DX to understand how successful administrators understand and use goal-directed behaviors to consistently improve student outcomes. Well-designed studies may provide additional insights on effective leadership in consistently high-performing schools. There is also a need in DX for training administrators and teachers on using a variety of data sources to improve school and student outcomes.

The DX's pre-tenured classroom teachers were not well represented in this study. Research on this population may provide additional insights into pre-tenured classroom teachers' perceptions of effective leadership support. Future investigations might compare classroom and special-subject, pre-tenured teachers' perceptions of support strategies. In addition, research comparing elementary and high school pre-tenured teachers' perceptions of support may result in new information on the topic.

Although the current research on comprehensive induction programs has not shown value-added effects of extended mentoring on student achievement outcomes, the results of this study show a need for providing frequent opportunities for pre-tenured teachers to meet and network with other professionals in their specialty areas. The DX might accomplish this by increasing the number of yearly departmental meetings for special-subject teachers or by providing monthly meetings for second- and third-year teachers facilitated by departmental colleagues. At the building level, administrators can differentiate professional development to meet the needs of special-subject teachers.

Mentoring program coordinators in DX should increase their communication and interaction with building administrators to address concerns related to the program.



Designing opportunities for administrators and mentors to train together might improve teacher outcomes and strengthen administrators' commitment to the induction program.

### *Conclusion*

In the current atmosphere of high-stakes accountability, researchers, school districts, administrators, and teachers seek to identify factors that distinguish high-performing schools from underperforming schools. Administrators' and special-subject, pre-tenured teachers' perceptions of leadership support in this study contribute to the discussion on the topic. This study supports research on goal setting in high-performing schools and contributes to the research on the administrator's role in comprehensive induction programs for new teachers. The results of this study in relation to administrators' and special-subject, pre-tenured teachers' descriptions of their lived experiences of leadership support emerged from the research questions. This study is grounded in instructional leadership theory. The core of instructional leadership theory is found in elements related to transformational and transactional leadership (Northouse, 2007). Researchers report transactional leadership positively impacts student achievement outcomes in high-performing schools (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). Research related to instructional leadership involves a cross-section of administrators and teachers. This study contributes to the existing research on instructional leadership by focusing on administrators and special-subject, pre-tenured teachers in schools meeting or not meeting AYP targets linking theory and practice.

As a first step in the study, semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions explored how administrators and special-subject, pre-tenured teachers perceive instructional support. Five leadership support strategies emerged from the research

questions: (a) professional development, (b) mentoring, (c) developing relationships, (d) managing organizational systems, and (e) goal setting. The strategies align with those found in the research literature (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). A second step in the study compared administrators' and pre-tenured teachers' responses in relation to support strategies. The qualitative design of this study allowed for detailed descriptions of how administrators describe and pre-tenured teachers perceive support strategies. Comparisons between responses revealed similarities and differences in how administrators and special-subject, pre-tenured teachers perceive support in the areas of professional development, mentoring, and managing organizational systems.

For special-subject, pre-tenured teachers, administrators' support in the area of professional development falls short in meeting their unique needs. Special-subject, pre-tenured teachers expressed that professional development at the building level focuses on classroom teachers and does not relate to their practice. This is a serious concern since research indicates sustained, differentiated professional development supports positive student achievement outcomes. The results of the study also show differences between administrators' and special-subject, pre-tenured teachers' perceptions of mentoring support.

Administrators in this study described several concerns in relation to the selection and assignment of mentors in DX's formal mentoring program. Administrators felt they have little or no input regarding mentors. They reported building mentors as more effective than those assigned from outside their buildings and believe extending the formal mentoring process into the second year of practice will improve teachers'

classroom management, instructional pedagogy, and ultimately, student outcomes. This is not borne out in the current research (Isenberg et al. 2009). Unlike administrators in this study, special-subject, pre-tenured teachers have few concerns in relation to DX's mentor program.

For special-subject, pre-tenured teachers in this study, mentoring is a significant source of support in their early years of professional practice. Mentoring provides a foundation for building a network of collegial support extending well beyond the first year. Although special-subject, pre-tenured teachers do not have concerns with DX's mentor program, they do have concerns regarding adequate classroom space, scheduling, and materials. These concerns may be related to how administrators prioritize school resources in their buildings

A surprising finding in this study revealed that a majority of special-subject, pre-tenured teachers have concerns regarding adequate classroom space in which to conduct mandated academic intervention services for students. Special-subject, pre-tenured teachers reported that carving out a workable classroom space in their buildings during their first year of practice as problematic. In some cases, administrators provided little or no assistance to special-subject teachers in locating or setting up appropriate work spaces within their buildings. Clearly, administrators try to prioritize and assign classroom space according to the number of students assigned to teachers. However, special-subject providers such as speech pathologists and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) teachers provide services for students most likely to have difficulty meeting performance standards. Despite this fact, special-subject teachers are often left on their own to find adequate space to meet with students. The findings imply that special-subject

teachers may hold an undervalued position in the hierarchical structure of school communities. This is an area for future investigation based on administrators' general statements concerning support for new teachers and special-subject, pre-tenured teachers' perceptions of inadequate professional development and school resource support. Research allowing special-subject teachers to voice their unique needs and experiences in schools could add to literature on this growing population of educators. In addition to participants' descriptions and perceptions regarding support strategies, the methodology of this study allowed for comparisons between responses in schools meeting or not meeting AYP targets.

The analysis of responses across schools suggests administrators' current practices in relation to goal setting may have positive effects in schools meeting AYP targets. This is a small, but important finding of this study. Administrators in schools meeting AYP performance targets described setting school-wide goals based on school and student achievement data. Administrators in these schools clearly articulate and align their schools' academic achievement goals with support such as professional development in the form of collegial coaching or classroom-to-classroom visits. In addition, effectively managing organizational resources is a priority for administrators in schools meeting AYP targets. In schools not meeting AYP targets, administrators use general descriptions to identify their schools' goals and the allocation of resources. The findings support research related to goal setting and positive student outcomes in high-performing schools (Crum, Sherman, & Myran, 2009; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). Administrators' current practices in making data-driven decisions based on student achievement data may positively impact school performance regardless of their schools'

population (Crum, Sherman, & Myran). Although the findings of this study support research on effective school leadership in high-performing schools and contributes to the current literature on mentoring support for new teachers, a number of limitations impacted the results of this investigation.

Although exploratory research can lead to a deeper understanding of an individual's or groups' lived experiences with a phenomenon, the methodology can call into question the researcher's position as a central instrument in the collection, analysis, and interpretation of study data. In this study, limitations in relation to researcher bias, power, and position may have impacted the results. In spite of using measures to ensure anonymity for participants, the fact that the researcher is an acting administrator in DX responsible for supervising and evaluating new teachers, presents challenges in regard to the integrity of the findings. While "unacknowledged bias may entirely invalidate the results of an interview inquiry" (p. 170) recognition of a subjective viewpoint by the interviewer can add to multiple perspectives on a topic (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Furthermore, the timing of the study during May and June of the school year may have impacted teacher response rates and the teacher sample. There were 14 pre-tenured teachers participants in the study. The number of teacher participants may have been impacted by professional responsibilities related to the close of the school year. In addition, general education pre-tenured teachers were not well represented in the study. The findings may not generalize or be characteristic of pre-tenured classroom teachers' perceptions of instructional support.

Recommendations emerging from the study include suggestions for changes in DX's training procedures for administrators and teachers on data-driven decision making,

pragmatic ideas for administrators focused on aligning support strategies with specific measurable goals to improve student outcomes, and adjustments in the mentoring program for DX's induction program coordinators. The findings also include suggestions for exploring the topic of instructional leadership support for new teachers related to summative evaluation or for specific teacher populations.

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## Appendix A

### *Administrator Letter of Introduction to the Study*

Dear (Administrator's Name),

I am requesting your permission to conduct a study of administrators' support of pre-tenured teachers in your building. I would like to interview you and any other administrators involved in this support. All pre-tenured teachers in your building will be given a questionnaire indicating their interest in volunteering for the study.

The study has been approved by Dr. Jeanette Silvers, Chief Accountability Officer, Rochester City School District. The study will be supervised by Dr. Jason Berman and Dr. Russell Coward of St. John Fisher College. I would be happy to share any and all materials related to the study with you after completing the work. All interviews and questionnaires will be confidential and anonymous. Thank you for your consideration. If you have questions concerning this study please contact me at any time.

Sincerely,

Sheila M. Marconi  
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## Appendix B

### *Protocol for Administrator Interviews*

1. How long have you been an administrator in this school?
2. What have been your greatest successes and your greatest challenges in this school?
3. What is your school's improvement goal for this year?
4. How do you think your experience and background helped you find a focus for this school?
5. What kinds of support do you give your pre-tenured teachers?
6. What support do you think has been the most effective for pre-tenured teachers?
7. (If response is instructionally focused support then probe for social support.  
If response is socially focused support then probe for instructional support)
8. If you could design a program to support new teachers in your school what would it look like?
9. What additional resources would you like to have to support your new teachers?

## Appendix C

### *Teacher Letter of Introduction to the Study*

Dear (Teacher),

As a student in the Ed.D. program at St. John Fisher College, I am conducting a study exploring leadership support for pre-tenured teachers. I am requesting your voluntary participation in the study. Please complete the attached questionnaire and if you choose to participate in a short follow-up interview, you will receive a Starbucks gift card as an expression of appreciation. The interview will be conducted at your convenience. All responses to the questionnaire and interviews are of course, confidential and anonymous.

Thank you for your consideration and for returning the questionnaire.

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Appendix D

*Teacher Questionnaire*

1. Are you a 1<sup>st</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ 2<sup>nd</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ or 3<sup>rd</sup> year \_\_\_\_\_ teacher?

2. How long have you been teaching at your present school? \_\_\_\_\_

3. What grade level are you teaching this year? \_\_\_\_\_

4. What do you think has supported your growth as a beginning teacher?

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5. Briefly describe your mentoring experience during your first year of teaching.

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Thank you for completing this questionnaire. If you are willing to participate in a follow-up interview based on these questions, please provide your e-mail address so we can schedule an interview at your convenience.

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## Appendix E

### *Protocol for Teacher Interviews*

1. Question #1 for first year teachers:
  1. Has this year been your first full time teaching experience? Where did you do your student teaching?Question #1 for second year teachers:
  1. How many years have you been teaching in this building? Did you teach at the same grade level last year?Question #1 for third year teachers:
  1. How many years have been teaching in this building? Did you teach at the same grade level the last two years?
  
2. Question #2 for first year teachers:
  2. When did you decide to be a teacher?Question #2 for second year teachers:
  2. When did you decide to be a teacher?Question #2 for third year teachers:
  2. When did you decide to be a teacher?
  
3. Question #3 for first year teachers:
  3. What is your greatest success and your greatest challenge this year?Question #3 for second year teachers:
  3. What is your greatest success and your greatest challenge this year? How does this year compare to your first year teaching?Question #3 for third year teachers:
  3. What is your greatest success and your greatest challenge this year? How has your experience this year been different than your first couple of years?
  
4. Question #4 for first year teachers:
  4. Could you describe your mentoring experience this year?Question #4 for second year teachers:
  4. Did you participate in the mentoring program last year? Could you describe your experience in the mentor program?Question #4 for third year teachers:
  4. Did you participate in the mentor program your first year? Could you describe your experience in the mentor program?



5. Question #5 for first year teachers  
5. In addition to the mentor program, does your principal have some things in place to support you?  
Question #5 for second year teachers:  
5. In addition to the mentor program, did your principal have some things in place to support you?  
Question #5 for third year teachers:  
5. In addition to the mentor program, did your principal have some things in place to support you?
6. Question #6 for first year teachers:  
(If response is instructionally focused support then probe for social support.  
If response is socially focused support then probe for instructional support)  
Question #6 for second year teachers:  
(If response is instructionally focused support then probe for social support.  
If response is socially focused support then probe for instructional support)  
Question #6 for third year teachers:  
(If response is instructionally focused support then probe for social support.  
If response is socially focused support then probe for instructional support)
7. Question #7 for first year teachers:  
7. What supports have been most effective for you?  
Question #7 for second year teachers:  
7. What supports have been most effective for you?  
Question #7 for third year teachers:  
7. What supports have been most effective for you?
8. Question #8 for first year teachers:  
8. What do you feel would help you in your work with students?  
Question #8 for second year teachers:  
8. What do you feel would help you in your work with students?  
Question #8 for third year teachers:  
8. What do you feel would help you in your work with students?
9. Question #9 for first year teachers:  
9. If you could ask for anything you wanted to support your teaching for next year what would you ask for?  
Question #9 for second year teachers:  
9. If you could ask for anything you wanted to support your teaching for next year what would you ask for?  
Question #9 for third year teachers:  
9. If you could ask for anything you wanted to support your teaching for next year what would you ask for?

## Appendix F

### *Categories of Administrators' Support Strategies*

| Planning and participating in professional development   | Mentoring  | Developing relationships  | Managing organizational systems   | Goal setting   |
|--|--|---|---|--|
| <p>The Administrator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plans for and provides formal work-shops and in-services for pre-tenured teachers</li> <li>• Promotes and supports collegial learning groups within the school</li> <li>• Arranges classroom to classroom visits for pre-tenured teachers</li> <li>• Assigns coaches to work in pre-tenured teachers' classrooms</li> <li>• Schedules and provides time for grade level team meetings</li> <li>• Encourages individual teacher study and participation in professional development opportunities</li> </ul> | <p>The Administrator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arranges for collegial support or coaching for pre-tenured teachers from specialists and lead teachers</li> <li>• Assigns a Buddy teacher to pre-tenured teachers</li> <li>• Meets with and supports the formal mentor in identifying pre-tenured teachers' strengths and weaknesses</li> </ul> | <p>The Administrator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meets individually with new teachers at the start of the school year</li> <li>• Informally visits pre-tenured teachers' classrooms</li> <li>• Models lessons, rituals, and routines for pre-tenured teachers</li> <li>• Plans and promotes social events and gatherings to introduce pre-tenured teachers to the school culture</li> </ul> | <p>The Administrator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plans daily and weekly schedules that allow for professional development and mentoring support for pre-tenured teachers</li> <li>• Provides pre-tenured teachers with adequate classroom space and materials</li> <li>• Allocates resources for school retreats, holiday celebrations, school-wide field trips, or team building activities to support pre-tenured teachers</li> </ul> | <p>The Administrator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develops instructional or behavior management goals with pre-tenured teachers by conducting formal and informal observations, reviewing student data, or through feedback from pre-tenured teachers</li> <li>• Aligns school data and support strategies to clearly defined student and school goals</li> </ul> |