HOW SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL LEADERS TRANSFORM SCHOOL CULTURE AND

DISCIPLINE

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This dissertation has been approved and accepted by the faculty of the Education Department, Carson-Newman University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Doctor of Education.

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Saunya Valisa Goss, May 2021

Abstract

School turnaround has received significant attention recently in educational literature and policy action to dramatically improve urban education in priority- and low-performing schools within a short period of time. Schools with ongoing low academic performance are labeled as schools in need of turnaround due to the need for rapid improvement. Students in low-performing schools also face numerous in-school difficulties. For instance, principal turnover within turnaround schools presents challenges for raising student achievement and creating a positive school culture.

Principals in urban and turnaround schools are perceived as having a more difficult and complex job. However, it is essential to identify which leadership styles, practices, and behaviors are most effective in yielding results in a low-performing school. After a review of current literature of school turnaround, a qualitative case study based on leadership theories and frameworks was conducted to examine the leadership styles, practices, and traits of principals within three successful turnaround schools. This qualitative case study examines the leadership changes made to reduce disciplinary infractions. Data were drawn and coded from principal interviews and a teacher focus group interview. A detailed review of school artifacts was also part of the data collection.

Based on the data collected, teachers and principals perceive that culture and discipline are major factors for school turnaround. In addition, shared decision making, servant and transformational leadership styles were necessary to turn their once underperforming schools around. These findings suggest what principals of turnaround schools should prioritize to reduce disciplinary infractions.

Keywords: leadership, turnaround school principals, culture, discipline

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"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope." Jeremiah 29:11
"For it is God who works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." Philippians 2:13
I am truly grateful to my Lord and Savior for His grace, goodness, and mercy. I am thankful for His many blessings. I desire to fulfill God's purpose and calling upon my life. Although I did not imagine completing a doctoral program, He directed my paths. I hope to glorify the Lord with what he has given my hands to do as a service to others. I hope to apply the knowledge I have gained and talents I have refined to be a blessing.

"Who has wisdom among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom." James 3:13
"Wisdom is the principle thing: therefore get wisdom..." Proverbs 4:7
Thank you, Dr. Brian Sohn, for your advice, wisdom, and support. I am also grateful to Dr. P. Mark Taylor and Dr. Tanisha Hunter for serving on my dissertation committee. You all pushed me to reach higher and provided much-needed feedback. Special thanks to all of the Carson-Newman professors for increasing my knowledge and sharpening my skills.

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"And now abide faith, hope, love, these three: but the greatest of these is love."
1 Corinthians 13:13
Last but not least, this study is dedicated to the late Andrew and Iris Goss. My parents set a strong foundation and I am eternally thankful for their love, support, and belief in me to accomplish greatness. This study is also dedicated to my son Rudy and brother Andrew. You are a blessing to my life. I love you both dearly. Thank you for loving and supporting me unconditionally.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction and Background of the Study

Since 1964, studies of national policies and school reform initiatives have raised questions relative to enhancing the achievement for students attending high poverty urban schools. Despite five decades of reform efforts including the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Effective Schools Movement of the 1970s and 80s, the Nation At Risk Report in 1983, the Standards and Accountability Movement of the 1990s, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2001, and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015, low academic achievement remains and educational leaders continue to search for systems, processes, and structures that can be used to enhance academic achievement of urban students. Recent changes resulting from the passage of ESSA grant more autonomy and place greater responsibility upon states to aid priority schools (VanGronigen & Meyers, 2019). Therefore, it is imperative for school turnaround district and state leaders to assess their current capacity for aiding low-performing schools and to determine what they need in order to meet requirements in the near- and longer-term futures.

Likewise, school turnaround has received significant attention recently in educational literature and policy action to dramatically improve urban education in priority- and low-performing schools within a short period of time. Schools classified as priority or low performing fail to meet established goals in the area of academic achievement. Most often, the priority schools serve minority populations. Schools with ongoing low academic performance are labeled as schools in need of turnaround. In current common educational usage, school turnaround refers to the rapid and significant improvement in the academic achievement of consistently low-achieving schools (Robinson & Buntrock, 2011). Federal legislation has identified varying degrees of school improvement and assigned responsibilities to states;

however, policy makers have divergent views regarding methodology to achieve turnaround. Recent federal government policy and investment has established turnaround models that emphasize the role of the school principal, which suggests that turnaround principals need to be different than other principals in some meaningful ways (Meyers & Hitt, 2018). However, it is essential to identify which leadership skills are most effective in yielding results in a low-performing school.

The principal's job is comprehensive, increasingly complex, and often inconsistent; in a word it is challenging (Stronge et al., 2008). Principals in urban, priority, and turnaround schools are perceived as having a more difficult and complex profession (Rhim & Redding, 2014). In recent years, the standards of performance for the principal have evolved to reflect the complexity of the job with several sets of guiding principles and performance standards coming from national, state, and local governing organizations. The challenges range from chronic absenteeism, parent involvement, student discipline, and teacher retention with the expectation to raise student achievement. There are many theories and approaches concerning the particular skills and strategies of effective leadership that take into account the expanding job responsibilities of principals—many of which prove cumbersome, exhausting, and distracting (Mellor, 2015).

According to Waters and Cameron (2007), principals are asked to fulfill many varied responsibilities essential to managing a school. Not all of them, however, are essential to improving student achievement. For example, maintaining facilities, compliance with board and state regulations, and managing budgets are all important aspects of managing a school, but not essential to raising student achievement (Waters & Cameron, 2007, p. 18). The Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) Balanced Leadership model is based on their

research findings that support principals with fulfilling important and essential responsibilities. McREL's Balanced Leadership model consists of 21 responsibilities categorized under the four domains of leadership: focus, managing change, and purposeful community. Clearly, effective leadership requires principals to possess an extraordinarily broad skill set.

Many recent policies aimed at conquering low-performing schools have failed to acknowledge the full impact of the social and economic challenges facing many school principals (Leithwood et al., 2010). The reasons for low performance are almost as complex as the reasons leaders are unable to turnaround schools in vast numbers. Reasons for low performance are rarely one dimensional or singular. The reasons are multi-faceted, interrelated, compounding, and exacerbated by the problem of school failure. In some cases, schools may be at the heart of the problem. In such instances, there is an absence of factors such as child abuse or neglect, poor home environment, lack of parental involvement, or low socio-economic household level. These low-performing schools are suffering because poor teaching is condoned, weak leadership is tolerated, or low expectations for student performance are common (Leithwood et al., 2010). On the other hand, it is undeniable that the relationship between poverty and underachievement is powerful. The gap in achievement between children from low-income families and their more affluent peers persists, and in the majority of cases, it actually increases throughout schooling (Garcia & Weiss, 2017). Although social disadvantage is not an excuse for poor achievement in academic terms, it certainly is a dominant factor (Leithwood et al., 2010).

Poverty in the United States is growing progressively worse (Jensen, 2019). Children attending high poverty schools are not likely to achieve as high academically as their peers in more affluent schools (Garcia & Weiss, 2017). According to Jensen (2019), children living in

poverty are more likely to show poor memory, distractibility, learned helplessness, aggression, poor reading skills, deficient vocabulary and impaired socioemotional skills. Turnaround principals have a greater urgency and accountability to improve student performance despite the mentioned variables from Jensen (2019). Educational outcomes in economically-deprived areas are worse than those in nondeprived areas, whether they are measured in terms of qualification, attendance, exclusions, or retention rates. Inner-city areas are particularly associated with lower educational outcomes (Logan & Burdick-Will, 2017).

There are stories of successful turnaround in high poverty and turnaround schools. Although every example is unique in some respects, all stories highlight the centrality of a small number of factors or conditions that affect improvement (Leithwood et al., 2010). The literature regarding effective turnaround shows that talented leadership is one of the strongest explanations for the success of school performance beyond expectations in high poverty settings (Leithwood et al., 2010). High poverty schools can achieve high academic performance, but this is not likely without effective leadership.

According to Leithwood et al. (2010), effective turnaround principals create the organizational conditions that allow improvement to be sustainable. These administrators develop their leadership approaches to the needs of the organization, and they adjust their leadership practices as the organization grows. In contrast, evidence about ineffective schools finds weak leadership at the most likely reason for underperformance in instruction and student achievement. Lack of vision, poor communication, inattention to teacher quality, and failure to make decisions are some of the characteristics of poor leadership in low-performing schools.

According to Hallinger (2003), effective leaders know how to achieve goals and motivate people along the way along with many other positive traits and competencies. An effective

principal's leadership behaviors vary depending on the numerous conditions and factors at the school. Effective leaders respond to the changing needs of their setting (Hallinger, 2003). A principal must understand the factors affecting students such as culture, gender, and interests at their school because these circumstances influence what leadership style is most effective for a positive school culture and reduction of disciplinary infractions. When students feel safe, valued, and at-ease in an environment where they can interact with caring individuals whom they trust, a positive school climate likely exists (Borkar, 2016). The safety and positivity of a school's climate can affect how students perform academically, as well as how they develop individually. Research suggests schools that successfully create environments conducive to learning tend to implement more supportive and positive school climate strategies (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

While the terms and definitions of leadership may vary, it is important for principals to understand the skills and abilities necessary to lead. From the effective leadership styles, it is possible to achieve organizational goals and positive outcomes (Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2014). Along with obtaining results, the leader is expected to build morale and provide support to increase productivity of employees. Based on leadership research, there are several styles for review and data based on effectives. This study analyzed effective turnaround school leaders and how they successfully transformed school culture and discipline which resulted in increased student achievement.

Statement of the Problem

This section discusses the challenges related to school turnaround, such as school culture, leadership, and discipline. Due to the urgency and needs of turnaround schools, there must be a focus on how school leaders can raise the bar for teaching and learning. Research studies suggest

that school success depends on the qualities and capabilities of school principals (Marzano et al., 2005). The leadership styles that are considered effective for turnaround leaders may vary based on the needs of the school. Along with the leadership styles of turnaround principals, their ability to lead and transform schools to maintain a positive school culture is emphasized in research studies (Hansen & Choi, 2012; Meyers & Hitt, 2018; Peck & Reitzug, 2014).

School improvement, or reversing the trajectory of a low-performing school, happens only through developing a positive school culture (e.g. Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015; Muhammad, 2017; Leithwood et al., 2010). Owens and Valesky (2015) state "culture refers to the values, belief systems, norms, and ways of thinking that are characteristic of the people in the organization" (p. 187). In addition, culture consists of the conclusions a group of people draws from its experience. While school culture can be used to mean many things, from the traditions and customs that the students bring with them to school, to the historical processes and structures that maintain the status quo of students in poverty, the key to this change in school culture rests in the way the teachers and leaders adapt their feelings, beliefs, and practices to meet student needs.

Along with developing and maintaining a positive school culture, turnaround leaders have the challenges of managing student discipline. School suspension adversely impacts students with behavioral difficulties; suspension does not produce long-lasting effects for changes in behavior (McGinnis, 2003). Suspension from school does not teach students specific replacement behaviors. Instead, suspension primarily communicates that their actions violated a rule. Through alternative approaches that teach appropriate behavior, teachers and other school officials engender long-term, prosocial, and positive behavioral outcomes (Welsh & Little, 2018).

Along with concerns with school culture and discipline, leaders must also address student achievement. Effective leaders develop goals based on the needs of the student population, teaching staff, and school community. Leadership for transition to a noticeably better place requires goals that help those with whom the leader works achieve better outcomes than those they currently achieve (Tomlinson, 2019). The challenge within urban schools is to find success with a multitude of factors such as student discipline, teacher morale, and academic achievement.

Purpose and Significance of Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to determine which leadership styles created a positive school culture and increased student achievement by reducing disciplinary infractions such as suspensions and zero-tolerance offenses. This study sought to explore and illustrate what has worked best for effective leadership and yielded large effects for academic progress, school culture, and student discipline.

A case study can employ various techniques and provide an in-depth description on this area of interest. The selected elementary school principals and teachers serve in high priority, urban, and turnaround schools. This study examined the leadership styles of three principals to determine how they have reduced disciplinary infractions and improved their school culture to increase student achievement. This case study consisted of interviews with principals, focus groups with certified teachers, and artifacts. The interviews provided insight into the preferred leadership styles and best practices of school principals through notes, transcripts, and recordings. Artifacts provided information related to the change. This explained how and when the changes occurred. Data were collected through the change process such as outline of professional development, Title I minutes, presentation graphics, and culture survey results.

Teacher focus groups provided insight into their perspectives and opinions about leadership styles.

This study is significant because it explored what happened as a result of a successful turnaround initiative and what happened to the school following the initial intervention. The research question guided the design of this qualitative study in order to contribute to the existing literature of leadership impact on school culture and discipline.

Research Question

The research question asks which methodology turnaround principals used, especially leadership practices and styles, to increase positive school culture that reduced disciplinary infractions and ultimately increased student achievement. In urban schools that reduced disciplinary infractions, what leadership changes were made? This case study investigated the leadership styles and practices of the previous and current principals to understand what competencies, actions, and decisions yielded positive outcomes for students. The interviews of school principals and teacher focus groups investigated if their leadership style evolved as beginning turnaround principals with no prior employment as a principal.

Conceptual Framework

Leadership is an important factor in organizational change and perceived as a critical resource and support (Owens & Valesky, 2015). However, leadership is a function of an organization's social interaction, rooted in the symbols and politics of the organization's culture. Leadership is dynamic, communicated and exchanged through social interaction and is rooted in the school culture as well as the socio-cultural identities of students and staff. Effective leaders must be capable of promoting and sustaining a positive learning environment to attract, maintain, and support the further development of effective teachers. Additionally, the right leader holds an

understanding of the need to recruit and sustain culturally responsive teachers who are better prepared to work with children of color (Khalifa et al., 2016).

Rationale for the Study

Culture can be defined as the shared philosophies, ideologies, values, assumptions, beliefs, expectations, attitudes, and norms that join a community together (Owens & Valesky, 2015, p. 190). Another leadership strategy is modeling and communicating expectations for individual and shared ownership of student, educator, and school success. Staff morale is critical to a positive learning community so leaders should recognize and celebrate improved educator and student performance related to school vision and goals. The developed goals are often required for turnaround leaders to mark improvement and address challenges within the school. In addition to academic goals and school culture such as teacher retention, leaders must manage discipline and reduce suspensions.

Not only is school discipline meant to establish order, it is also expected to keep students safe and remediate any misbehaviors (Peguero & Bracy, 2015). Toward this end, schools have a wide range of disciplinary practices that vary from parent/student conferences to expulsion. However, school discipline may be implemented in a zero-tolerance manner, which involves rigid or strict enforcement of the rules to punish all misconduct regardless of the specific scenario and mitigating circumstances such as a child's age, disability status, and/or specified offense. Moreover, the consequences can be unnecessarily severe at times given the level of student offense (Peguero & Bracy, 2015).

Research has shown that exclusionary discipline practices may have a negative impact on student attendance, academic performance, and dropout rates (Gage et al., 2013). Likewise, zero tolerance procedures such as suspension are connected to involvement in the juvenile justice

system and possibly even prison (Mallett, 2016). While inappropriate behaviors should not go unnoticed or unrectified, educators should be aware of how their responses to misconduct can affect student success in school.

For this study three principals who improved achievement according to Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) scores based on recent data sources were selected. In addition to improving student achievement, they reduced disciplinary infractions and received positive scores on school climate and culture surveys. Based on results from the Tennessee Educator Survey (2019), there was a significant increase in positive ratings when compared to previous leadership in the identified schools for the case study. This research study sought answers to how changes made by new principals and their leadership style contributed to school turnaround for culture, discipline, and achievement.

Researcher Positionality Statement

I am aware that I remain a strong advocate for urban schools due to my personal experiences as a teacher, mother, and administrator. This advocacy was the driver of my research. I also remain a reflective leader who knows the value of listening and use that skill set to ensure the rigor of this study. I have become an optimist with a glass half-full approach who believes there is hope. When groups of seemingly ordinary people unite, they can achieve the extraordinary. I also believe in not accepting limitations. Our goals, no matter what, can be accomplished.

Fullan (2006) argues that turnaround entails transformation, and that real transformation is only possible when schools are seen as part of a larger societal whole. Hence, turnaround leaders cannot have good schools without thinking about what it means to have good, healthy communities. The "real reform agenda," Fullan (2006) announced boldly, "is societal

development" (p. 1). After several years of focused attention and millions of dollars, school turnaround to address failing schools remains one of most persistent challenges in education including my district. Over the past twenty years, numerous leadership changes and restructuring have occurred due to little patience for failure in meeting student achievement goals. We can look at multiple forms of data and find various trends for success and opportunities for growth. On the other hand, TNReady achievement results and TVAAS are the final measures for student achievement. I support any policy that positively impacts student achievement and yields proven results. For example, we use a benchmark that is believed to be predictive of TNReady results. Based on one year of data, this has held true. Educational policies that provide consistent results from a variety of sources is ideal. All educators are eager for a policy that raises scores and closes the achievement gap.

Despite the millions of educational dollars invested by state and federal funds, there never seems to be enough resources to meet the needs of high priority learners, and the schools with success are fortunate to continue the path when funds are withdrawn. Over the years, there has been a fluctuation in funding, staffing, and initiatives in education. Despite the challenges, there are the pockets of hope that emerge. There is hope that public schools become more flexible and innovative through effective leaders such as those mentioned in this case study. Hopefully, new principals possess appropriate leadership skills to facilitate turnaround. However, through guidance and education on the topic of building a positive culture primed for change in turnaround schools, hope can turn into more certain outcomes for turnaround leaders.

Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions

This study is limited to administrators and certified teachers from three schools in middle Tennessee concerning leadership styles that transform school culture to reduce disciplinary

infractions and increase achievement in elementary schools. A limitation of this study is the focus on elementary school principals serving in urban turnaround schools. It is possible that the findings from turnaround principals may be no different than if the study focused on principals, in general. The study is dependent on the ability of participants to be familiar with leadership styles of the current and previous school administration regarding school culture and discipline practices.

A limitation of this study is that the confidence and expertise of the principals is limited due to years of experience. In addition, teachers and administrators might assume responses I may want to hear due to my previous role as an elementary director. These factors may influence responses and therefore impact the results of this study. Another limitation of this study is limited funding. In addition, the district has been under financial strain due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This also presents limitations due to modified schedules for teachers and principals. There are also safety guidelines such as social distancing to implement. Lastly, this is a study that allows for an in-depth qualitative research of the topic.

Sampling is a delimitation and only studying a portion of elementary turnaround principals provided insight into the stated problem. Sampling also limited the generalizations to schools with similar demographics. The three selected principals in this study served in their turnaround school fewer than three years. Successful turnaround experiences may be found at the elementary, middle, or high school levels. This study was restricted to successful elementary urban turnaround principals.

Another delimitation is the focus on teachers in grades kindergarten through fifth grade who have worked at the school during the transition of leadership. The decision to select specific grade levels and teachers was to gather more data on the changes within the school. The

responses provided insights on changes made that led to success with culture, discipline, and student achievement.

The study was based upon answers given to open-ended interview questions through oral responses and it was assumed that the participants were thoughtful, forthright, and honest in providing accurate data. An assumption was that the teachers and principals held ideas of what I may want or expect from their responses due to my previous role as director. Lastly, teachers may have felt ashamed or embarrassed if they had discipline problems or prevented a positive school culture due to their lack of being culturally responsive.

Definition of Terms

Specific terms are used throughout this research and are related to this study:

*Culturally responsive leadership***:** Culturally responsive school leaders are responsible for promoting a school climate inclusive of marginalized students (Khalifa et al., 2016).

Leadership qualities: Leader practices are the bundles of activities exercised by a person or group of persons that influence student achievement (Hitt & Tucker, 2016).

School culture: According to Owens and Valesky (2015), culture can be defined as the shared philosophies, ideologies, values, assumptions, beliefs, expectations, attitudes, and norms that join a community together. A school, for example—and all of these interrelated qualities reveal agreement, implicit or explicit, among teachers, administrators, and other participants on how to approach decisions and problems: "the way things are done around here."

School leadership: Responsible for the daily instructional leadership and managerial operations in the elementary school or secondary school building. Leadership is a process of influence leading to the achievement of desired purposes (National Association for Elementary School Principals, 2018).

School turnaround: School turnaround is the rapid and significant improvement in the academic achievement of consistently low-achieving schools (Robinson & Buntrock, 2011). The concept of turnaround has "significant roots in the corporate world and is associated with a high degree of intolerance for prolonged failure, along with an overwhelming bias for action and better results" (Leithwood et al., 2010, p. 3).

School turnaround leadership: Principals who are "charged with lifting an organization out of collective depression" (Hitt et al., 2018) so that the school may become what its students need are consider school turnaround leaders. Hitt et al. (2018) identified a few differences in "what turnaround principals do, including (1) centralizing decision-making initially before making informed decisions to distribute leadership; (2) expertly wielding support and accountability simultaneously to catalyze change; and (3) capitalizing on quick wins to initiate change in school culture" (p. 58).

Zero tolerance: Zero tolerance assigns explicit, predetermined punishments to specific violations of school rules, regardless of the situation or context of the behavior (Ispa-Landa, 2018).

Organization of the Study

Chapter one consists of background and introduction to turnaround schools and the characteristics and leadership styles along with other factors that impact student achievement such as school culture and disciplinary practices. The problem and research question are discussed to develop a deeper understanding of the leadership styles and competencies to prevent common failures within urban and turnaround schools. Ultimately, this study examined how elementary school principals successfully transformed their schools to increase student achievement and meet established goals.

Chapter two provides a comprehensive review of literature on factors impacting school turnaround such as leadership, culture, and discipline. The chapter contains information on the background and historical aspect of educational turnaround followed by leadership styles and competencies. The chapter further examines the theoretical and conceptual framework introduced in chapter one. School culture and discipline are key factors in success turnaround. The chapter includes research and finding on school discipline practices such as suspensions and zero-tolerance discipline. The chapter examines alternatives to discipline that impact student achievement.

Chapter three describes the methodology used in this study. Data were collected through the interviews (three urban elementary principals), artifacts, and focus group responses (kindergarten through fifth grade teachers). By applying a qualitative multi-case study design, elementary principals in a Tennessee school district who were appointed to lead a turnaround school were interviewed.

Chapter four presents the finding of this study. Characteristics of the participants are shared and data are analyzed to evaluate themes and trends from the research. Information in this chapter is related to the research question.

Chapter five draws conclusions from the study and connects finding to the broader field of research and practice regarding leadership in turnaround schools.

Summary

School culture and student discipline are factors in all schools; however, urban schools tend to face additional challenges in the areas of school culture related to discipline that may impact student achievement. For low-performing schools, there is a need for strong instructional and transformational leadership. The purpose of this study was to compare leadership practices

and how they transformed to a culturally responsive and positive school culture. In addition, this study considered the impact of leadership practices on disciplinary infractions and student achievement. The information gained from this study contributes to the knowledge base of essential leadership actions for turnaround leadership. This study is significant for this very reason. It sought to leverage the experiences of three successful turnaround leaders to provide insights to turnaround leaders of the present and the future. This study presents varied characteristics to sustain hope and high performance in turnaround schools. In doing so, the study recognizes improvement, and thus turnaround, is a process and success is possible.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Leadership in Turnaround Schools

Chapter one consisted of background and introduction to turnaround schools and the characteristics and leadership styles along with other factors that impact student achievement such as school culture and disciplinary practices. The problem and research question were discussed to develop a deeper understanding of the leadership styles and competencies to prevent common failures within urban and turnaround schools. Review of the literature that investigates school turnaround informed this research study.

This chapter contains the methodology of the literature review, overview of school turnaround, theory and conceptual framework of leadership, and various styles of leadership. In addition, this study sought to connect the impact of school leadership with culture, and student discipline along with student achievement. Empirical research from turnaround schools was reviewed to further understand the leadership and actions necessary for success. The purpose of the review is to justify research about how leaders successfully transform school culture to raise student achievement and reduce disciplinary infractions in high poverty and minority students.

Methodology of Literature Review

The methodology of this chapter consists of information gathered from multiple sources such as books, research studies, and articles. The following terms used for research are as follows: leadership in turnaround schools, leadership in urban schools, leadership styles, leadership and school culture, positive school culture, student discipline in urban schools, discipline and minorities, raising student achievement in urban schools and school improvement. Chapter two presents a review of related literature regarding under-performing schools and the practices that are being used to transform those schools into high performing schools. The review

builds the case that school leaders can effectively transform under-performing schools into high performing schools when they engage in leadership best practices. This literature review discusses the topic of school leadership and how the principal's leadership style impacts student achievement, school culture, and discipline. It includes the authoritarian, democratic, laisse-faire, situational, and servant leadership styles. Transformational leadership has substantial research and is the preferred leadership style discussed in this dissertation. In addition, this dissertation will discuss current trends such as culturally responsive leadership.

Along with studies on leadership styles and qualities, this study draws also on research that recognizes the complexity of culture, leadership, and the ever-changing nature of their relationship and how it impacts student discipline. The competencies of educational leaders throughout the school-community culture merit review. My understanding of culture is informed by a thorough review of educational leadership literature and by an interdisciplinary perspective that draws primarily from sociology and cultural anthropology (Monaghan, 2000). At the conclusion of this section, the study discusses areas that merit additional research and situates these findings within its unique contribution to the literature on turnaround schools.

Overview of School Turnaround

This review focuses on schools in the United States as a model for school improvement. Some literature (Hitt et al., 2018) uses the word "turnaround" to describe any school that has changed its academic trajectory for the positive, whether or not it has used the School Improvement Grant (SIG) turnaround model developed by the United States Department of Education. The concept of organizational turnaround is not new, but it is an application of an approach from the business to the education sector (Peck & Reitzug, 2014).

For the purpose of this study, turnaround means schools that choose to undertake the turnaround model as a choice for improvement under the School Improvement Grant program of the U. S. Department of Education. In 2009, the U.S. Department of Education defined the lowest five percent of the schools in the United States as needing turnaround, earmarking School Improvement Grants (SIG) for these schools as assistance (Hansen & Choi, 2012). While the term may imply a certain level of success in turning around the trajectory of a failing school, the name turnaround school applies to any school undertaking the model and is not defined by a specific level of achievement or success in using the model (Ujifusa, 2010).

The turnaround model—which requires the replacement of fifty percent of the staff, job-embedded professional development, increased learning time for both staff and students, and the selection of a curriculum model based on student need, is based on a model pioneered by the Chicago 29 Public Schools from 2001-2008 (Robinson & Buntrock, 2011). The current turnaround school model under the SIG program is relatively new. Therefore, data regarding success and failure of the SIG program is evolving. This literature review will examine past and present research regarding turnaround schools.

The use of narrow definitions of turnaround could be misguided in education, due to excluding large segments of schools needing improvement. For instance, Hansen and Choi (2012) used student achievement data to identify nearly 15 percent of schools in both Florida and Kentucky, and 30 percent of schools in Texas, as needing turning around. These numbers are much greater than the five percent eligible for SIG turnaround funding from the United States Department of Education. Leithwood and Strauss (2010) claimed turnaround occurs in a much broader sense, with different stages marked by declining performance, crisis stabilization, and sustaining and improving. Narrow definitions of turnaround would tend to ignore schools barely

averting stages of declining performance, or ones that might be headed back down the pathway of needing turnaround due to failure to sustain improvements.

Recent Conceptions of School Turnaround

In 2001, as a result of actions from President Bill Clinton, the U.S. Department of Education published the School Improvement Report: Executive Orders on Actions for Turning Around Low-Performing Schools. The report concentrated on the need to support failing schools to develop challenging academic standards, create high-quality assessments and monitor progress, hire well-trained educators, and employ strong leadership (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). The School Improvement Report held that improving low-performing schools is hindered by a lack of ability at the building, district, and state levels to provide interventions that build capacity to improve student achievement. As interest in school turnaround policy emerged, the Center on Innovation and Improvement (funded by the U.S. DOE) published *School Turnarounds: A Review of the Cross-Sector Evidence on Dramatic Organizational Improvement* (Rhim, Kowal, Hassel, & Hassel, 2007). The authors posit two findings including, (a) environmental context, and (b) leadership as the keys to improve low-performing schools. This dissertation focuses on the finding that leadership as a key to improving low-performing schools.

Along with national expectations, there are state and district policies that impact turnaround schools. For example, Henry et al. (2018) developed a set of guiding principles for state efforts to improve low-performing schools. These guiding principles constitute a coherent and interconnected approach to reform, all of which are necessary to improve low-performing schools. The five principles are not specific practices, nor are they a how-to guide for districts. Rather, the principles are mutually supportive components of a comprehensive strategy for

effective school reform. Henry et al. (2018) indicates the guiding principles are (p. 1): (a) establish a dedicated organizational infrastructure; (b) identify and address barriers to improvement; (c) increase instructional capacity; (d) increase leadership capacity; and (e) implement processes and practices to maintain stability.

These guiding principles have been developed in response to federal requirements to support low-achieving schools, because the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires states to designate the lowest-performing five percent of Title I schools as comprehensive support and improvement (CSI) schools. As a previous district leader, I have reviewed and implemented the recommended principles. From experience, I know the five principles, along with strong leadership and positive culture are essential.

School Turnaround: Poverty and Race

The effects of poverty present significant challenges to schools and communities charged with meeting the multiple needs of racially and ethnically diverse youth from high-poverty backgrounds (Hughes et. al., 2007). Sixty years after the Brown decision determined segregation in public education to be unconstitutional, school segregation is on the rise (Orfield & Frankenberg, 2014). According to Kotok et al. (2017), "decades of research since *Brown v. Board of Education* finds that segregated minority schools are academically harmful to the students who attend them, and that most racially segregated schools are also economically concentrated" (p. 416). In contrast, another body of research concludes that diverse schools benefit all students—white students and students of color—in ways that help to better prepare them to live in a diverse society as an adult (Kotok et al., 2017).

Many of the schools in need of turnaround are located in either urban areas or rural areas where students share a low socio-economic status. A majority of the students in these schools are

African American or Hispanic (Lachlan-Hache, Naik, & Casserly, 2012). The obstacles of working with urban students in poverty are well documented and prevalent in an overwhelming majority of these low-performing schools (Jensen, 2009). U.S. Department of Education (2009) reported that Secretary of Education Arne Duncan stated, "If we are to put an end to stubborn cycles of poverty and social failure, and put our country back on track for long term economic prosperity, we must address the needs of children who have long been ignored and marginalized in chronically low-achieving schools."

According to Meyers (2017), policy makers tend to focus on remediating factors internal to schools (i.e., curricular standards, pedagogy, and accountability measures), rather than strategies to address external factors (i.e. support services and poverty). Turnaround schools in high-poverty neighborhoods serve many children from low-socioeconomic households (Meyers, 2017). Students in poverty fall behind at an early age compared to their more privileged counterparts with over 50 percent of low-income students being deficient in reading, leading to a vicious cycle of trying to catch up (Jensen, 2009).

Funding for School Turnaround

Due to the challenges and needs previously mentioned, additional funding is necessary for turnaround efforts. The funding may support additional resources such as retention bonuses, staffing, and materials. In early 2009, the Obama administration announced its intention to use $5 billion to turn around the nation's 5,000 poorest-performing schools over the next five years. This was a challenge to an education sector that has had some success at turning around individual schools, but has not yet delivered dramatic change at a larger scale. Despite an unprecedented amount of money invested for scripted reform programs, achievement gaps, struggling schools, and failed reforms persist in school turnaround efforts (Fullan, 2005).

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed by former President Obama in 2015 which builds upon the previous version of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002. A major component of the ESSA is to sustain and expand investments for disadvantaged and high-need students. This component of the ESSA authorizes at least $47 million for each of fiscal years 2017 through 2020 to be appropriated to fund the activities described for the prevention and intervention programs for children and youth who are neglected, delinquent, or at-risk (Every Student Succeeds Act Comprehensive Guide, 2020). According to the U.S. Department of Education (2020), over $300 million was invested on priority and turnaround schools.

School Turnaround: Obstacles and Challenges

Out-of-school obstacles that include not having access to important services such as medical facilities, libraries and books, access to pre-kindergarten, and/or academically rich experiences complicate matters further (Jensen, 2009). Shortage of funding for essential needs is often a causal factor as to why students in poverty fall behind quickly and lack access to these services (Tavernise, 2012). However, students in low-performing schools also face numerous in-school difficulties. For instance, principal turnover within turnaround schools presents challenges for raising student achievement and creating a positive school culture.

Principal turnover is defined as one principal exiting a school and being replaced by a new principal, which often negatively impacts student achievement. One reason is due to teacher turnover as a result of a new principal. Another reason is that principal turnover negatively impacts school culture through a decreased sense of respect and morale. Lastly, principal succession extends beyond the teachers and student. Parents may be negatively impacted through fear, detachment, or other negative factors. According to Heck and Hallinger (2014), recent

research into the influence of principals has shown that principals' effects within schools increase over time especially in the area of student achievement. Principals require seven years or more before they can successfully implement change within a school, especially in high poverty and minority schools which are more likely to have inexperienced principals (Boyce & Bower, 2016). Not only is there the challenge of principal turnover, but teacher retention is also an obstacle in turnaround schools.

Teacher quality and experience are usually lagging for teachers serving students in poverty compared to their more privileged peers (Mette, 2013). This often results in brand new teachers working with high-needs students who are several years behind in reading and/or math.

Not only are principals faced with teacher quality issues, but they must also focus on teacher recruitment and retention. Turnaround schools' capacity is often weakened by recruitment and retention challenges (Meyers, 2017). Moore (2012) indicated that teacher absenteeism and turnover tend to be higher and teachers' perceptions of student problems (i.e., tardiness, absences, and discipline) heighten their dissatisfaction, which influences turnover. In order to improve this, leaders need to ensure a positive culture for students and teachers. While a positive culture is a common theme, policymakers seem to yield to the strategies involved in turnaround being more important, than the naming of "culture" itself as an essential component (Lachlan-Hache et al., 2012).

Contemporary Theories of Leadership

This section provides information about leadership theories, turnaround leadership theories and the conceptual framework. Leadership is complex and for this reason there are various theories of leadership. Based on a review of articles and books, the following terms are used interchangeably in this dissertation: characteristics, competencies, and traits. According to

Wolinksi (2010), all contemporary theories of leadership can fall under one of the following three perspectives: leadership as a process or relationship, leadership as a combination of traits or personality characteristics, or leadership as certain behaviors. This dissertation is grounded in the theory of traits and characteristics that influence practices and behaviors rather than relationships.

A small handful of personal traits explains a high proportion of the variation in leadership effectiveness (Leithwood et al., 2019). The deep background to the variation of effectiveness is the off-again, on-again interest in leadership traits by the broader leadership research community (Leithwood et al., 2019). However, the eventual emergence of a personality theory that addressed this problem, the five-factor model by Digman (1990), breathed new interest into research about leadership traits. Among the personality traits in the five-factor model, substantial effects on both leadership emergence and effectiveness have been reported for four of the five traits – extraversion, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness – but not neuroticism (Leithwood et al., 2019). Partly reflecting conclusions from research on the five-factor theory, however, Leithwood et al., (2019) concluded that at least under challenging conditions, there was evidence to suggest that the most successful school leaders are open-minded and ready to learn from others. They are also flexible in their thinking, persistent, resilient, and optimistic.

In addition to the competencies previously stated, Leithwood et al. (2019) introduced the concept of "personal leadership resources" (PLRs) and this concept includes the non-behavioral, nonpractice-related components of leadership (including traits) which significantly influence the nature of leaders' behaviors or practices. According to Leithwood and Strauss (2010), personal resources are primarily composed of traits, which can be defined as "relatively stable and coherent integrations of personal characteristics that foster a consistent pattern of leadership

performance across a variety of group and organizational situations" (p. 27). Similarly, competencies are constructs manifested by behavior that relate to effective or outstanding performance in a specific job or role.

The cognitive category of PLRs includes domain-specific knowledge (e.g. knowledge about how to diagnose and improve leadership, expert problem solving and systems thinking), none of which fit common definitions of traits. Similarly, the social category of PLRs, including perceiving and managing emotions, as well as acting in emotionally appropriate ways, captures much of what has been learned about "social appraisal skills" or "emotional intelligence" not typically viewed as traits (Leithwood et al., 2019). The psychological category of PLRs includes qualities normally considered to be traits – optimism, self-efficacy, resilience, and proactivity.

Leithwood et al. (2019) argue that the results of research about leadership traits has quite limited value and that the results of research about the full range of non-behavioral, non-practice qualities underlying effective leadership practices (PLRs) are likely to be much more useful than isolated categories or competencies. While further research is required, a well-defined set of cognitive, social and psychological "personal leadership resources" show promise of explaining a high proportion of variation in the practices enacted by school leaders.

Along with evaluating leadership traits and competencies, this study sought to analyze leadership theory related to turnaround schools. The leadership styles theory is among the most prevalent ones in the field of educational administration (Berkovich, 2018).

Leadership Theory Applied to Turnaround Schools

Turning around chronically low-performing schools is challenging work that requires significant restructuring. In most low-performing schools, high rates of teacher and principal turnover along with student transiency create an unstable foundation upon which to build

meaningful improvement efforts. Consistent, effective school leadership is required to create the conditions within the school that allow for effective instruction and positive relationships among the school's staff. According to Henry et al. (2018), survey results from Tennessee show that teachers prefer safe schools led by supportive administrators who enforce discipline consistently. These school characteristics are all areas that can be impacted by the school leadership. Transformational success requires engagement and commitment by school district leaders with the capacity and will to support dramatic change. The most successful turnaround efforts have high-impact leaders and the district capacity for transformational change (Robinson & Buntrock, 2011).

According to Hitt et al. (2018), researchers have made little systematic effort to understand the competencies of turnaround principals and no empirically derived models for school leaders exist. Large school districts and service providers continue to create and implement competency models that are not empirically based or tested (Public Impact, 2008), indicating both the need for and interest in research-based turnaround principal competencies. Too many turnaround plans fail to recognize that strong, competent leaders are needed to inspire cultural change, establish strategic focus, and drive decisions (Robinson & Buntrock, 2011). In addition, evidence indicates competent leadership is key to recruiting, retaining, and developing effective teachers. Despite the recognized importance of school leadership, most districts still use outdated methods to select school leaders, relying on past job performance reviews, quick interviews, degree attainment, seniority, and, all too often, political connections (Hitt et al., 2018). Rigorous and competency-based processes for the recruitment, selection, development, and evaluation of leaders are necessary.

Most studies that seek to identify successful turnaround schools base their judgment solely on student achievement data, ignoring elements that are key to the model that speak to school climate, policies, and professional interaction (Peck & Reitzug, 2014). For example, one key mandate of the turnaround model is habituation of data use for guiding instruction and policy at the school, but this is not generally used as a criterion for defining the "success" of a turnaround school (Hitt et al., 2018). Instead, a school's success or lack of success is defined by whether student achievement levels meet the goals for improving reading and math proficiency set by the awarding agency. A school that fails to meet their target or sees a decline in achievement is "not improving." No common quantitative definition of "improving" and "turned around" currently exists (Trujillo, 2015).

Research remains unclear about which turnaround strategies and practices are effective (Hitt & Meyers, 2019). The lack of data sources meeting rigorous criteria to demonstrate turnaround may contribute to the field's inability to provide insightful practical and policy guidance (Hitt & Meyers, 2019). Perhaps not surprisingly, literature on school turnaround continues to consist primarily of case studies more than a decade after the publication of a federally-backed practice guide on school turnaround (Hitt & Meyers, 2019). In his analysis of existing quantitative studies investigating turnaround, Stuit (2012) finds that many schools fail in their turnaround initiative, which in turn limits the sample of schools from which to learn. Over the years, case studies continue to be the primary research method for studying turnaround due to variability in regulations and government and inconsistent success among schools in need of turnaround.

Research on school principal effectiveness is increasingly clear that leadership in schools matters for students, second only to teacher quality (Leithwood & Strauss, 2010). Other

researchers explain the principal's influence as traveling various paths (Sun & Leithwood, 2012) that indirectly impacts student achievement on account of the interactions between and structures for adults in the school. The influence exerted by principals on stakeholders depends in some ways on the levels of the leaders' personal resources (Leithwood et al., 2019). Leadership not only influences personal resources, but also practices.

Conceptual Framework

Kouzes and Posner's (2017) leadership theory asserted that the leadership practices of modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, enabling others to act, and encouraging the heart are universal. Thus, these leadership practices should be corroborated by turnaround principals' own accounts of their understandings of best practices. By assessing the reality of Kouzes and Posner's five common leadership practices with elementary school turnaround principals' personal best experiences, this will allow me to study the context of principal leadership in a turnaround school. This will include describing the principal's direct impact on teachers' instructional practices and the organization's collective capacity, as well as the principal's indirect influence on student achievement (see Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1

Principal Leadership Style and Practices
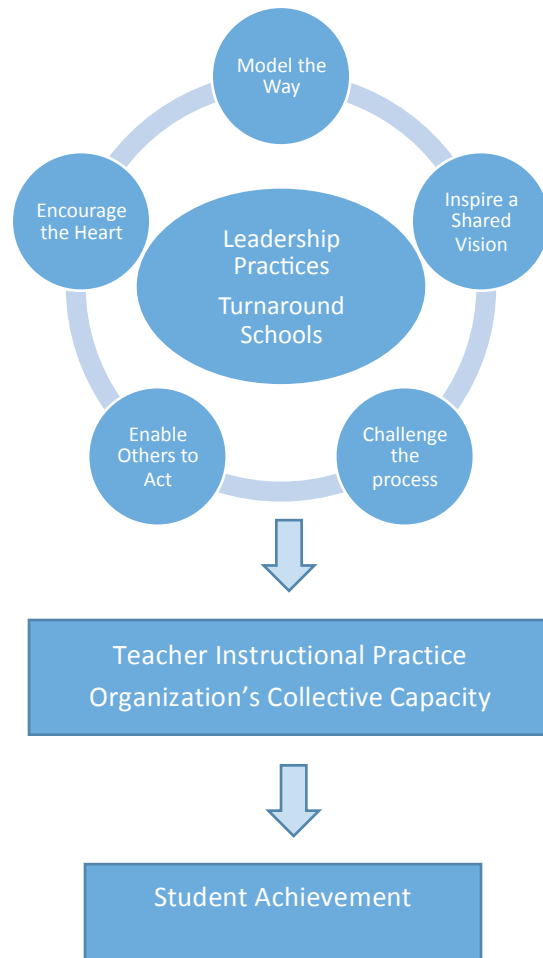
Note. This figure represents the Conceptual Leadership Framework adapted from Kouzes and

Posner (2017).

Kouzes and Posner (2017) indicate five key practices: 1. Modeling the way by creating

standards of excellence and setting examples to follow. 2. Inspiring a vision or a passionate

belief for making a difference by envisioning the future and creating a unique image of what an

organization can become. 3. Challenge the process by searching for opportunities to challenge

status quo, or looking for innovative ways of organizational improvement and risk taking. 4.

Enabling others to act and fostering collaboration and team spirit by creating an atmosphere of

trust. 5. Encouraging the heart by recognizing individual contributions and celebrating accomplishments.

The study focuses primarily on how leaders inspire the educators they lead to build a positive culture and reduce discipline infractions to increase student achievement in turnaround schools. I combined the conceptual framework presented in the study with the experiences of three turnaround schools and their leadership stories to be able to gain a better understanding of various processes used to build a positive adult culture while engaging stakeholders in the change process of school turnaround. More specifically, I sought to understand the extent that school leaders consciously or subconsciously use the conceptual framework to build and sustain a positive adult culture in the turnaround process leading to positive outcomes for the students.

Leadership Styles

Effective school leadership is vital to the success of any school, but especially in turnaround schools. This research intends to investigate the leadership styles and characters associated with positive outcomes related to school culture, discipline and achievement. Kouzes and Posner (2017) report there are key practices such as modeling the way and inspiring a vision to achievement positive outcomes. In order to answer the research question and analysis data from interviews, an overview of leadership styles and characteristics is essential.

Authoritarian Leadership

Authoritarian leadership is defined as a style whereby the leader maintains maximum control over the environment. An authoritative leader, or a leader with an autocratic style, maintains control through strict rules, established guidelines, and negative consequences (Smith, 2017). An authoritarian leader does not consult others in the decision-making process and is focused on control. To maintain control, an authoritarian leader is quick to confirm the status quo

by emphasizing hierarchical differences between the supervisor and subordinate; this is often accomplished through definitional reminders and the forced use of titles (Kelly & MacDonald, 2019).

An authoritarian leader's desire to clearly establish and maintain control is a likely precursor to him or her utilizing abusive supervisory strategies. According to Kelly and MacDonald (2019), these abusive tendencies include threats and punishments to those lower in power, which lead to poor communication and decreased teamwork. Authoritarian leaders' self-centered motives are often displayed through disregarding or discounting their subordinate's ideas or contributions. From this perspective, communication between hierarchal levels comes from the top and feedback from the lower levels is neither desired nor appreciated. Subordinates perceive this type of leader to be overbearing, disrespectful, and self-centered (Kelly & MacDonald, 2019). These perceptions are also likely to induce retaliatory intentions and/or actions from subordinates, which can be targeted at either the leader or the organization that the leader represents.

There are mixed findings regarding the relationship between authoritarian leadership and employee outcomes which suggest two possible explanations (Wang & Guan, 2018). First, the psychological processes of authoritarian leadership's influence on employee outcomes are complex. Second, as most studies on authoritarian leadership have supported its negative impact on employee behaviors, it is plausible that the actual effects of authoritarian leadership on employees depend on certain conditions, such as individual values. Authoritarian leadership is proposed to have under certain conditions a positive effect on employees.

Wang and Guan (2018) propose that authoritarian leadership could enhance employee performance based on the idea that authoritarian leaders can be effective by setting specific and

unambiguous goals to their subordinates. In addition, authoritarian leaders typically enhance followers' sense of identity as group members, which further motivates employees to perform at high levels. Authoritative leaders are more likely to provide a clear, explicit, and direct example with their subordinates. Some scholars believe that authoritarian leaders usually set high performance standard expectations for their subordinates. Authoritarian leaders demand their subordinates to achieve the best performance by exercising strict control, setting clear rules, establishing job responsibilities, issuing punishment and rewards (Wang & Guan, 2018). As a result, employees can be motivated to perform at high levels to deliver excellent quality.

Democratic Leadership

The democratic leadership style is often contrasted with the authoritarian style because of their incompatibility (Kelly & MacDonald, 2019). Where authoritarian leaders use their power and position to maintain control of their subordinates, democratic leaders utilize their power and position to encourage the shared decision-making process with their subordinates. A democratic style of leadership includes the participation of all individuals in decision-making processes. Although the leader typically has the final decision in this style of leadership, the followers are part of the process. (Kelly & MacDonald, 2019). A democratic leadership style was found to be the most effective style because student performance is improved by the "encouragement of class participation in decision making." A democratic leadership style strengthens relationships between students and teachers (Smith, 2017). Teachers who perceived that they were empowered and encouraged in their work environments have higher levels of trust in their principals (Moye et al., 2005).

Democratic leaders are also called *participatory leaders* because of their encouragement and are characterized as having communication that is oriented on shared responsibilities with

subordinates (Kelly & MacDonald, 2019). Democratic leadership is concerned with both productivity and with people; as such, it has been shown to induce employee productivity, satisfaction, and commitment. Kelly and MacDonald (2019) suggest that increased encouragement from subordinates provides a feedback loop that increases organizational ability to facilitate change across all its levels. Subordinates who share two-way communication with their supervisors are also less likely to experience role ambiguity than subordinates whose leaders do not promote two-way communication (Kelly & MacDonald, 2019).

Laissez-Faire Leadership

As pointed out by Anders et al., (2014), research on laissez-faire leadership is scarce compared to the abundant studies on transformational and transactional forms of leadership. However, studies have shown that the prevalence of laissez-faire leadership in contemporary working life is strikingly high, with there being documented negative associations of such leadership with subordinate satisfaction with the leader, evaluations of leader effectiveness and subordinates experiencing stress (Anders et al., 2014).

Anders et al. (2014) explained the laissez-faire style as one that "abdicates responsibilities and avoids making decisions" (p. 325). Laissez-faire is uninvolved in the work of the unit. Anders et al. (2014) state that it is difficult to defend this leadership style unless the subordinates of the leader are experts and well-motivated specialists. In this style, leaders normally do not want to interfere in decision-making processes. Subordinates are free to do work in their own way and they are also responsible for their decisions. Normally, these leaders avoid making decisions and do not require employees to work collaboratively. Sometimes the leaders provide answers and questions, but avoid providing feedback (Anders et al., 2014).

Laissez-faire leadership does not emphasize structure in any way, almost to the point of disregard. According to Kelly & MacDonald (2019), laissez-faire leaders are physically present but absent in leadership**.** In more modern definitions, laissez-faire leadership has been defined as "marked by a general failure to take responsibility for managing" and as "leaders who avoid making decisions, hesitate in taking action, and are absent when needed" (Kelly & MacDonald, 2019). Absence of a leader's guidance in this regard may go beyond a leader being neutral about his or her responsibilities or failure to perform the basic criteria of his/her position, such as absence during decision-making moments. Leaders of this type are characterized as keeping a low profile and seeking to not "rock the boat."

Laissez-faire leadership tendencies have been shown to decrease subordinate satisfaction and perceived leader effectiveness as well as increase safety concerns among group members (Kelly & MacDonald, 2019). This type of leader is likely to avoid commanding or instructing her or his subordinates unless it is required or absolutely necessary. This lack of communication can lead to role conflict and role ambiguity of workgroup members, which can result in internal conflicts between members (Kelly & MacDonald, 2019).

Situational Leadership

Situational leadership approaches embrace an ethos of flexibility recognizing that situations change and new needs emerge. It therefore utilizes a range of approaches and styles that are relevant to different situations as they arise. This leadership style incorporates the dimensions of directedness and supportiveness and promotes a method of leading and teaching in which the student can respond, influence and develop confidence (Walls, 2019). The situational leadership model is a useful tool that could help leaders in all types of organizations to achieve their targets. It addresses the task behavior, relationship behavior of the leader and the readiness

level of employees. Ultimately, the model indicates that there is no single way to lead. Raza and Sikandar (2018) indicate this leader must "select the way that best suits in a particular situation depending upon the readiness levels of followers" (p. 79).

Situational leadership was developed by Hersey and Blanchard in 1969 as a life-cycle behavioral model (Kelly & MacDonald, 2019). The theory originated in the idea of parenting styles and how they changed based on the developmental level of children. According to them, successful leadership lies in selecting the most suitable leadership style based on the followers' readiness level (Raza & Sikandar, 2018). They applied this idea to leadership styles and how they changed based on the developmental levels of employees. A leader's style is dependent upon the developmental level, competence, and commitment of an individual. Based on the developmental level of the individual and the difficulty of the task, a leader would use one of the following leadership approaches: 1) coaching, 2) directing, 3) delegating, and 4) supporting (Kelly & MacDonald, 2019). In this model, it is important for leaders to adapt their style to developmental level. According to Smith et al. (2017), there are three skills necessary to become a situational leader: (a) develop goals that are specific, motivating, attainable, relevant and trackable (SMART); (b) diagnose the developmental levels of employees; and (c) match leadership style to the needs of the individual.

Servant Leadership

Attitudes and beliefs are important because what leaders think and feel drives behaviors. Servant leaders do not think they are better than the people they lead. Servant leaders do not think that unless employees are watched like hawks, they will not work hard. They believe that if leaders support the right values and culture, normal people will do extraordinary things. The term "servant leadership" was coined nearly fifty years ago in an essay by American management

writer Robert K. Greenleaf (Kiker et al., 2019). Put simply, the principle behind a servant leader is that someone leads because they want to serve others rather than because they see leadership as a way to attain material possessions. A servant leader is primarily focused on the needs of others and on helping their people to develop or grow, seeing this as the route to organizational success.

How servant leaders behave is a key to their successful leadership. Behaviors are means of communicating: being a good listener, allowing autonomy, empowering others, providing open lines of communication, maximizing opportunities for employees to contribute to the organization, and being honest with others (Polatcan, 2020). Servant leaders do not mistreat, humiliate, or devalue people. They understand that behaviors either build trust or destroy it, and without trust, one cannot generally achieve consistent high employee engagement and high performance.

Servant leadership takes a humble and forgiving approach that is focused on the well-being of their employees (Lu et al., 2019). The approach ensures that the worker has the opportunity for growth, productivity and workplace satisfaction, with the understanding that this will have a positive impact on their relationships with customers and on the performance of the organization. Servant leaders tend to be humble, giving, and dedicated. They do the work for others rather than for themselves, praise, or recognition. Leadership is about taking care of those in your charge and as leaders who are best able to motivate followers are those who focus least on satisfying their own personal needs and most on prioritizing the fulfillment of followers' needs (Mackeage, 2020).

Transactional Leadership

Transactional leaders focus on organization, supervision, and group performance, whereas transformational leaders focus on change within the organization. The term "transactional" refers to the fact that this type of leader essentially motivates by exchanging rewards for performance. Followers receive certain valued outcomes (e.g. wages, prestige) when they act according to their leader's wishes. Transactional leadership styles are more concerned with maintaining the normal flow of operations; therefore, this style is best described as keeping the ship afloat (Ingram, 2019). Transactional leaders use disciplinary power and an array of incentives to motivate employees to perform at their best.

A transactional leader generally does not look ahead in strategically guiding an organization to a position of market leadership; instead, these managers are often concerned with making sure everything flows smoothly today. Transactional leadership theories are all founded on the idea that leader-follower relations are based on a series of exchanges or implicit bargains between leaders and followers (Kaur & Naqshbandi, 2015). The general notion is that, when the job and the environment of the follower fail to provide the necessary motivation, direction and satisfaction, the leader, through his or her behavior, will be effective by compensating for the deficiencies (Mulder, 2016). The leader clarifies the performance criteria--in other words, what is expected from subordinates and what they receive in return.

Transformational Leadership

A better understanding of transformational leadership can follow from contrasting it with transactional leadership. Transformational leadership was first developed as a theory in the general leadership literature during the 1970s and 1980s, and it found a receptive audience in the educational community during the 1990s as part of a general reaction against the top-down

policy-driven changes that predominated in the 1980s (Hallinger, 2003). In 1985, the term transformational leadership was coined by Bernard M. Bass, referring to a theory that is considered one of the most popular theories among the various inspirational theories of leadership (Kelly & MacDonald, 2019).

Transformational leadership is "capacity building" which fosters a united purpose, where values, beliefs, and attitudes of all individuals are joined in concert (Ubben, Hughes, & Norris, 2017). Transformational leadership is based on trusting relationships that acknowledge and validate the talents and contributions of followers. Baptiste (2019) defines transformational leadership as a style of leadership centered on leaders establishing new norms, changing employee attitudes, creating a new vision of reality, and making fundamental changes to the culture of the organization.

Ubben, Hughes, and Norris (2017) identified four factors for transformational leadership: (a) idealized influence and charisma, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) individual consideration. Factor one includes two related components, idealized influence and charisma. Factor two involves inspirational motivation. Factor three is intellectual stimulation that is characterized by leaders who promote an atmosphere of openness and accessibility which stimulate creativity. Factor four is individual consideration in which each person is recognized for the unique and valuable contributions that he or she brings to the organization.

Transformational leadership style is based on influence and is accomplished when leaders delegate and surrender power over people and events in order to achieve power over accomplishments and goal achievement. The concept of transformational leadership is one of the most significant leadership models put forward in relation to the advancement of the educational

field. In education, studies suggest that transformational leadership influences teachers'

commitment and on their attitudes toward their jobs (Baptiste, 2019).

Leithwood and his colleagues have achieved the most substantial adaptation of Bass'

(1985) transformational leadership construct in the educational environment (Hallinger, 2003).

Leithwood's conceptual model has been subjected to extended programmatic investigations over

the past decade and includes eight components to the model. A transformational leadership style

can produce changes in people (Hallinger, 2003). Hallinger adapted Leithwood's

transformational model (Figure 1.2) to include an eighth component: individualized support,

shared goals, vision, intellectual stimulation, culture building, rewards, high expectations, and

modeling.

Figure 1.2

Transformational Leadership Model

Note: This figure is an adaptation of Leithwood's transformational leadership model.

Hallinger (2003) noted two distinctions of Leithwood's transformational leadership

concept. First, unlike the instructional or transactional models that suggest that leadership comes

from the principal (i.e., a top-down approach), the transformational model suggests that

leadership may come from teachers as well as the principal (i.e., a bottom-up approach). Second,

the model is grounded in the needs of individuals (second-order change), rather than the transactional idea of the principal directing staff towards a desired outcome (first-order change). A principal demonstrating a transformational leadership style creates the conditions for the school to function as an organizational entity rather than individual units.

Culturally Responsive Leadership

Successful leaders tend to embrace the transformational leadership style in urban schools. But transformational leadership is not the only approach with a documented history of success in turnaround urban schools. There is current research around culturally responsive leadership which gives value to the approach. Culturally responsive school leaders are responsible for promoting a school climate inclusive of minoritized students, particularly those marginalized within most school contexts (Khalifa et al., 2016). These leaders maintain relationships with the community members they serve. They lead professional developments to ensure their teachers and staff, along with the curriculum, are continuously responsive to minoritized students. In other words, as population demographics continuously shift, so too must the leadership practices and school contexts that respond to the needs that accompany these shifts. It is the job of instructional leaders to develop and improve teachers' craft in ways that result in improved student outcomes, but this must be done with cultural responsiveness.

Culturally responsive leaders develop and support the school staff and promote a climate that makes the whole school welcoming, inclusive, and accepting of minoritized students. Khalifa et al. (2016) recognized that culturally responsive leadership is needed in all settings, including those not dominated by minoritized students, and that not all students of color are minoritized. (p. 1275). All minority students are not in oppressed communities and living in poverty or considered low socioeconomic status. Although these factors are not present for all

students of color, culturally responsive leadership is essential due to the oppression that may occur within institutions such as schools.

According to Young, Madsen, and Young (2010), principals in their study were not only unprepared to lead in diverse schools and implement policy that would respond to diversity issues, but also could not articulate a meaningful theory about or approach to diversity in their schools. This is concerning given the significance of principals who promote inclusive school cultures and instructional practices, and work to position schools within community, organizational, and service-related networks (Khalifa et al., 2016). Most who are focused on leadership reform do so exclusively on models such as transformational and transactional leadership to address the cultural needs of students. It has become increasingly clear, however, that an intensification of these same leadership strategies will do little to address the needs of minoritized students (Khalifa et al., 2016).

Summary of Leadership Styles

By nature, turnaround work requires leaders to engage in change, and part of the transformation is to build a culture of change within an organization. There are multiple characteristics or styles a leader may demonstrate. For this study, school leaders will discuss their strengths, challenges and actions that led to increases student achievement and positive school culture ratings. In addition, reducing disciplinary infractions which is a common challenge in turnaround schools. Since there are several potential styles of a school leader, it is important to evaluate the key ideas and actions demonstrated.

Table 1.1

Leadership Style Key Ideas and Practices

Leadership Style	Key Ideas	Key Practices
Authoritarian	Strict rules and guidelines, hierarchal differences, high performance standards	Maintain control, set unambiguous goals, clear and direct
Democratic	Focus on employee productivity and satisfaction, feedback	Shared decision making, two-way communication
Laissez-Faire	Subordinates are free to make their own decisions, limited communication	Neutral, low profile, avoid conflict and decision making
Situational	Actions based on skill level of employee, adaptive to the needs	Modifies style and adapts, direct and/or supportive
Servant	Focus on needs of other, people-centric rather than process-centric approach	Relationship centered, humble, others before self
Transactional	Incentives driven, short term goal, prefers exchanges, practical, order	Exchanges rewards for performance, focus on operations, resistant to change
Transformational	Challenges status quo, employee empowerment, shared leadership, visionary	Builds capacity and trust, influencers, collaborative, change agent
Culturally Responsive	Focus on school culture, equity, social justice and inclusiveness	Relationship building with all stakeholders, focus on professional development

School Culture

Culture can be defined as the shared philosophies, ideologies, values, assumptions, beliefs, expectations, attitudes, and norms that bind a community together (Owens & Valesky, 2015). A school, for example, has a culture among teachers, administrators, and other participants regarding how to approach decisions and problems. Culture is often referred to as "the way we do things around here" in schools and other organizations (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015, p. 17). School culture is determined by the values, shared beliefs, and behavior of the various stakeholders within the school's community and reflects the school's social norms.

Culture provides a school with an identity and image that often creates a brand for the community.

A culture defines normalcy and morality for its members. Factors that affect school culture include policies, procedures, and expectations for teaching, learning, and student achievement. Although many schools have remarkably similar sets of policy in place, how those policies are implemented or enforced is ultimately what sets school cultures apart. When it comes to school culture, hidden rules always supersede written rules. Regardless of how the policies may be written in a school handbook, it is the culture interpretation of those policies that most helps teachers know how they are expected to act (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015).

While schools are often places of cultural cohesion where educators and students create understanding and sustain unity, they can also be places of cultural conflict where different values, beliefs, and norms create discord and confusion. Researchers describe school and organizational culture as a mixture of these two forces in concordant opposition and argue that it is a leader's job to move a school from a negative culture toward a more positive culture (Fraise & Brooks, 2015).

Culture and Leadership

There is a component of research on cultural and educational leadership focused on understanding issues related to traditionally marginalized and oppressed peoples. Much of this work has focused on how educational leaders from traditionally marginalized populations become leaders and practice leadership (Fraise & Brooks, 2015). This research has produced several insightful findings and innovative approaches regarding educational leadership. Another component of educational leadership and cultural research is focused on taking classic, difference-blind theories and ideas from the literature and updating them so as to be sensitive to

contemporary issues in schooling, such as immigration, race, class, and gender (Fraise & Brooks, 2015). Each of these components offers useful insights because they take into account perspectives and cultures that affect modern schools.

Fraise and Brooks (2015) posit that since "culture is generally understood as customs and beliefs and composed of traditions, practices, and behaviors, [then] school culture is made up of formal and informal dynamics related to administrator-teacher-staff-student interaction, language, communication, and policy development and implementation" (p. 11). It is both what happens during formal sessions in the classroom, as well as what happens in the lunchroom. It is also, however, about what happens at home, in the neighborhoods, and around policy makers. To some degree, culture stretches across school and community to create patterns and fields of meaning for individuals and groups. What occurs in some classrooms is a process of cultural collision in which the curriculum, school policies, and school culture directly collide with the culture of students.

School culture communicates to students the school's attitudes toward a range of issues and problems, including how the school views them as human beings (Fraise & Brooks, 2015). This consequently results in a devaluing of some against others, which can be understood as cultural racism. Administrators and teachers, who develop their own espoused and actual cultures and sub-cultures, influence these practices and cultural dynamics via their special formal authority in the system, a system they also participate in informally as discrete individuals (Fraise & Brooks, 2015).

Building a positive adult culture could very well be deserving of more attention as a factor taking central stage in a leader's engagement with turnaround work. Furthermore, policymakers' focus on systems without a focus on culture could be misguided. Culture, for

instance, trumps systems in overall importance for turnaround, yet both are needed for improvement in an organization (Merchant, 2011). More research involving telling the journey and/or process leaders take in moving educators they lead through the re-culturing process in turnaround work is needed in order to continue to fill the gap between research and policy driven practices in turnaround schools.

However, there are other forms of leadership that value culture and build schooling around it rather than seek to change it. This is at the heart of an approach to education called culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Schools should foster a culture that takes all cultures into consideration with their formal and informal curricula and policies (Fraise & Brooks, 2015). This kind of learning environment provides a setting in which students feel safe enough to be themselves and in which their anxiety is lowered to the point that they can concentrate on learning in an environment that is culturally safe. Culturally relevant pedagogy allows them to learn in the manner that best fits them, and it emphasizes several propositions that ask educators to think about and practice their work a bit differently than is typically the case (Fraise & Brooks, 2015).

Culturally relevant pedagogy, then, is simultaneously about learning visible curricula and unlearning hidden curricula. Students and teachers bring intentional and unintentional attitudes, dispositions, and biases to their educational practices. Therefore, it is important for school leaders to individually and collectively engage in a process that is at once unlearning their biases and learning new information.

School Discipline

The unlearning process of leadership is especially relevant to the field of school discipline. In the 1980s, in response to reports of increasing violence such as school shootings in

urban schools, officials across the nation initiated new efforts to reduce school crime and misbehavior. Federal and state lawmakers incentivized school administrators to respond to disciplinary infractions with exclusionary punishments such as suspension and expulsion as well as hiring police officers as school resource officers (Ispa-Landa, 2018). School disciplinary procedures can be either inclusionary or exclusionary. Typically, schools utilize exclusionary methods such as out-of-school suspensions to discipline students who engage in disruptive, aggressive, or violent behaviors. Although it is important to discipline students who violate rules, it is widely recognized that disciplinary practices such as suspensions are overused in public school settings (Ispa-Landa, 2018).

By the end of the 1990s, many schools had adopted more severe and rigid disciplinary codes, such as zero-tolerance policies, which seek to deter misbehavior through severe consequences for even minor misconduct. However, as many researchers have noted, punitive school discipline codes clash with students' developmental needs and are often administered in a way that highlights racial inequality (Ispa-Landa, 2018). The 1994 Gun Free Schools Act ushered in a tide of zero-tolerance policies that rely on exclusionary discipline practices to remove students from the classroom or school as a form of punishment, usually for minor offenses like disruption, defiance, and disrespect (Anyon et al., 2018). Research shows these practices do not work (Ispa-Landa, 2018).

As of May 2015, 22 states and the District of Columbia had revised their laws to require or encourage schools to (a) limit the use of exclusionary discipline practices; (b) to implement supportive (i.e., nonpunitive) discipline strategies that rely on behavioral interventions such as restorative justice and schoolwide positive behavioral interventions and supports (SWPBIS); and (c) to provide support services such as counseling, dropout prevention, and guidance services for

students experiencing academic or behavioral problems (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

By the 2015–2016 school year, 23 of the 100 largest school districts nationwide had

implemented policy reforms requiring non-punitive discipline strategies and/or limits to the use

of suspensions (Steinberg & Lacoe, 2017).

School Discipline Policies and Practices

In the past decade, school discipline policies and practices have garnered increasing

attention because of the well-documented racial, gender, and income disparities in disciplinary

outcomes (Welsh & Little, 2018). There is significant research related to race, school culture,

and discipline. This literature review recognizes the research around the impact of white teachers

in high minority urban schools. Disparities in school discipline for other racial/ethnic groups

have been less studied, with mixed results (Skiba, 2015). There is substantial research on African

American males and how they are impacted by disciplinary actions within schools compared to

other races and genders. This body of research is beyond the scope of this study. In this study, it

is important to know and understand the impact of punitive disciplinary actions for minority

students. In response to discipline disparities, there are emerging policy initiatives at the federal,

state, and district levels as the search for alternatives to zero-tolerance policies intensifies (Welsh

& Little, 2018).

Discipline policies resulting in school exclusion through out-of-school suspensions

(suspensions are the most prevalent disciplinary outcomes) and expulsion are prevalent and

systematic (Welsh & Little, 2018). Between 1973 and 2006, there was an increase from 3.7% to

6.9% in the rate of students in the United States being suspended or expelled (Losen & Skiba,

2010). Fabelo et al. (2011) reported that nearly a third of all students experience an out-of-school

suspension or expulsion over the course of their K–12 schooling. Exclusionary discipline

policies and practices disproportionately affect African American students and leave these students most vulnerable for entry into the school-to-prison pipeline (Skiba, 2015).

Disparities in School Discipline

During the 2011–2012 academic year, approximately 3.5 million students in the United States received suspensions, and suspension rates vary considerably across subgroups (Hwang, 2018). One-third of the mentioned students have been suspended more than once and the suspension rate is more than three times higher for Black students than for White students (Hwang, 2018). The disparities in disciplinary outcomes are fairly consistent across all settings and grades, indicating a systemic problem that starts as early as pre-school (Skiba, 2015). School discipline policies may be linked to the inequality of educational opportunities, experiences, and outcomes.

Exclusionary discipline practices may affect an array of school and student outcomes, including school climate, student mobility, school engagement, and students' cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes, as well as long-term labor market outcomes (Welsh & Little, 2018). Maintaining school safety and a productive learning environment by removing disruptive students remains a primary goal for school leaders; however, disproportionalities in school discipline raise serious questions about educational equity in districts and schools nationwide. Obtaining a balance between school safety and school discipline is a policy challenge with significant educational and social equity implications.

High rates of and disproportionalities in a range of disciplinary outcomes for Black students have been widely documented in the literature, including, but not limited to, more frequent office disciplinary referrals (ODRs), corporal punishment, suspensions, and inconsistency in the application of sanctions (Welsh & Little, 2018). Less attention has been paid

to disparities in disciplinary outcomes for other racial and ethnic groups. For Latinx students, the results are inconsistent. Some studies highlight racial discipline disparities for Latinxs (Anyon et al., 2014), whereas other studies have found no significant differences between Latinx and White students' suspension rates (Skiba, 2015). Some scholars have suggested that Latinx students may be under-represented in exclusionary discipline in elementary schools but over-represented in secondary school (Anyon et al., 2014).

The existing literature suggests that the rates of and disparities in exclusionary discipline outcomes are multiply determined, local, multifaceted, and complex (Welsh & Little, 2018). No single factor explains the discipline disparities as empirical evidence, which indicates that student behavior and school-level variables all contribute to disciplinary outcomes. The starting point for explaining the rates of and disparities in exclusionary discipline results is student behaviors and/or attitudes: Students who are disciplined are those who are misbehaving. Although several studies have found that problem behaviors and/or attitudes are strong predictors of receiving some form of disciplinary action, misbehavior (the type and frequency of infraction leading to each incident of suspension or expulsion) does not completely explain the rates of or disparities in exclusionary discipline results (Skiba et al., 2014).

Students' racial background and socioeconomic status (SES) contribute to the likelihood of receiving exclusionary discipline and adds to the disparities. In addition to race, the existing evidence suggests that low-SES students receive exclusionary discipline at a higher rate than their peers and that poverty at the student level has been linked to increased risk for out-of-school suspension (Welsh & Little, 2018). Family dynamics, such as living in a two-parent household and the quality of home resources (e.g., a quiet space, books, and time allotted for homework), also predict the likelihood of suspension (Skiba et al., 2014).

The literature suggests that race trumps other student characteristics in explaining discipline disparities. Race is one of the most significant predictors of out-of-school suspension--regardless of behavior (Huang & Cornell, 2017) --and race is a significant predictor of receiving exclusionary discipline after accounting for SES. It is reasonable to assume that discipline disparities are the result of the management of less severe behaviors and the use of discretion by teachers and school (Welsh & Little, 2018). The majority of the extant evidence largely suggests that the disciplinary challenges frequently faced by schools come from less severe behaviors such as tardiness and absenteeism rather than more severe behaviors such as drugs, weapons, or physical aggression (Welsh & Little, 2018).

Discipline in Turnaround Schools

Student achievement and growth are essential components of the school turnaround efforts. The connection to student discipline and achievement especially in turnaround schools is often scrutinized and evaluated. Results from Hwang's (2018) study on suspensions and achievement demonstrate the correlations between suspensions and lower educational outcomes, which increases concerns about the negative consequences of suspensions. Safe and orderly school environments are prerequisites for student success, but school removal likely not only fails to deter student misbehavior but likely also damages student learning. The results show that multiple suspensions are associated with lower levels of achievement. In addition, Hwang (2018) finds that these associations are stronger for students from vulnerable populations who have a higher risk of suspensions. The goal of disciplinary responses should be to deter future student misbehavior while still engaging that student in the learning process. Isolating students from school is unlikely to correct misbehavior and is likely to hamper student-teacher relationships

and school bonding. Ultimately, this loss of instruction time may push students further away from schools, leading to irreversibly negative consequences.

Student Achievement

There is empirical evidence that suggests that receiving exclusionary discipline predicts low student achievement. For example, Gregory et al. (2014) employed a hierarchical linear model to examine teacher perceptions of student behavior across classrooms for 35 Black students with a history of low achievement and found that Black students with higher GPAs (grade point averages) were viewed as cooperative and were less likely to receive an office referral whereas African American students with lower GPAs were perceived as defiant and were more likely to receive an office referral. Skiba et al. (2014) found that higher-achieving students were less likely to be suspended from school or expelled rather than the alternative punishments, such as in-school suspension.

Black, Latinx, and Indigenous students perform poorer on most educational measures administered in American schools. And the discipline gap—which is often characterized by racialized disparities in disciplinary referrals, suspensions, expulsions, and court citations—is a direct indication that school cultures are hostile toward minoritized students (Khalifa et al., 2016). Blacks and Latinxs are more likely than Whites to be referred to the office for minor offenses, such as defiance or noncompliance (Khalifa et al., 2016). These responses create a hostile school environment and lead to student disengagement in school, as frequent suspensions appear to significantly contribute to the risk of academic under-performance.

According to the National Association of Secondary School Principals and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (2013) studies have shown that student performance improves when school leaders can motivate their staff to contribute to the school's

academic priorities, instill their staff with a shared sense of responsibility for improvement, and create a culture focused on learning. Low academic school performance for students of color is directly related to the educators in the buildings who serve these students (Khalifa et al., 2016). School cultures that disproportionately discipline minority students often do so due to low expectations about their intelligence levels and academic potential. Khalifa et al. (2016) reported low expectations occur because teachers do not feel students are smart enough based on their behaviors or appearances. Then the marginalization of students' social and cultural capital occurs and perpetuates a cycle, indicating that educators either do not value or recognize the worth of these minoritized perspectives or cultures. Successful urban leaders are self-aware of their belief and values to lead educators beyond biases to raise academic achievement for all students, especially students of color.

Eliminating Disparities by Examining the Effectiveness of Alternatives

School discipline reform is a current topic of debate among policy makers and researchers across the political spectrum. Although both proponents and critics hold strong prior assumptions about the utility of school discipline reform, few studies have considered the consequences of these reforms (Steinberg & Lacoe, 2018). As remedies to overly harsh and racially inequitable school discipline, schools have introduced interventions such as restorative justice, social-emotional learning, and SWPBIS. However, striking racial gaps persist even in schools with these and other reforms. Promising new shifts have occurred as school districts begin moving away from exclusionary discipline practices toward those focused on building relationships and treating discipline as an opportunity to support students' healthy social-emotional development (Anyon et al., 2018). This movement is aligned with research indicating that supportive and genuine relationships are essential in creating a positive school climate,

reducing problem behaviors, and lessening racial discipline gaps (Gregory et al., 2014). Students' perceptions of positive relationships at school are predictors of a variety of behavior outcomes, such as fighting, substance use, skipping school, and academic success as measured by student grades (Anyon et al., 2018). Conversely, the absence of strong positive relationships is a predictor of negative psychological outcomes like depression, suicide attempts, and low self-esteem, along with adverse academic outcomes such as grade retention (Anyon et al., 2018). Building positive and meaningful relationships is important for all students; however, it is imperative that school staff intentionally cultivate relationships with students of color as these students often report feeling less safe among and less connected to adults in schools (Gregory et al., 2014).

In response to the disparities in disciplinary results, numerous alternative approaches to exclusionary discipline policies and practices have developed in recent decades at the federal, state, and district levels. Discipline reforms attempt to establish strategies that keep students in schools and counteract disparities using program- and policy-based interventions (Steinberg & Lacoe, 2017). Program-based approaches focus on initiatives that (a) try to improve school culture for the entire school, and (b) provide school personnel with skills in behavior management and school discipline (Welsh & Little, 2018), whereas policy-based approaches focus on changing the policies that guide school and district responses to behaviors.

Program-based approaches include, but are not limited to (a) response to intervention (RTI), (b) the integrated comprehensive services model, (c) positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS), (d) restorative practices (RPs), (e) the My Teacher Project (MTP), and (f) social-emotional learning (SEL). These approaches are not mutually exclusive and can be used collectively (Steinberg & Lacoe, 2017). RTI, RPs, and PBIS are popular school-level program-

based initiatives (Steinberg & Lacoe, 2017). Student misbehavior is targeted by popular

program-based approaches such as RTI, SEL, and PBIS, even though behavior is not the main

driver of discipline disparities. Student characteristics, such as poverty, sexual orientation, race,

and gender, are not explicitly targeted. Few interventions mention, view, or conceptualize race as

a targeted mechanism, even though race is a significant contributor to discipline disparities.

Skiba (2015) argued that most of the interventions tend to be color-blind or race neutral and

concluded that these types of interventions will not assist in reducing racial disparities in

disciplinary outcomes.

Theoretically, my research raises questions on whether and how some of the various

alternatives are working to counter the causes of the disparities in disciplinary outcomes.

Overall, there seems to be a mismatch between the theory of action of the alternative approaches

and the causes of discipline disparities. The existing evidence identifies several causes of

discipline disparities but suggests that school- and classroom-level factors as well as students'

race are the most significant contributors to the disparities. The vast majority of the alternative

approaches are most concerned with assisting students with assimilating to the school culture

rather than crafting the school culture to fit the social, emotional, and cultural needs of students.

As such, schools focus more on achieving behavior management through conventional methods

and less on addressing the biases and cultural clashes that may be driving discipline disparities.

However, the evidence suggests that remedies to discipline disparities should focus on the

disposition and biases of teachers and school leaders' behavior management rather than student

misbehavior. RTI attempts to restore student behavior, SWPBIS attempts to restructure

disciplinary practices, SEL targets misbehavior via teaching students social and life skills, and

RPs attempt to restore and repair relationships affected by misbehavior (Skiba, 2015). It is

important to note that a handful of alternatives endorse culturally responsive teaching models and the cultural needs of students. Regardless of the method, successful school leaders transform school culture by implementation of strategic training and support based on the needs of their school community. In so doing, they can eliminate disparities among students and work toward more equitable outcomes for all students.

Empirical Research: Turnaround Principals

Case studies by Padilla (2013) and Faison (2014) are similar in goals and purpose to this dissertation. Padilla (2013) conducted a phenomenological case study to examine the lived experiences of two middle and two high school turnaround principals in the New York City school district. Of the possible 33 turnaround schools in New York, 15 were contacted to participate. Padilla's (2013) study used interviews, informants, incident reports, site visits, and document analysis for data collection along with triangulation of various data points. The principals ranged in age, race, and gender. All principals in this study had five years or fewer of experience. Student enrollment ranged from 780 to 1,200. The population of students ranged from 79-96% as eligible for free and reduced lunch. According to Padilla (2013), none of the schools in the study met adequate yearly progress as defined by NCLB.

After a review of the findings, four conclusions were identified to acknowledge the vital work of turnaround leaders in New York City. The conclusions Padilla (2013) determined were as follows: (a) leading a culture of change in turnaround schools; (b) establishing credibility at the systems level; (c) making turnaround training a premium for leaders; and (d) celebrating the small moves to influence. These conclusions are expounded upon below.

Leading a culture of change requires strategic practices and approaches. According to Padilla (2013), turnaround principals revamp improvement strategies, eliminate inefficiencies,

and execute a coherent strategy when a school is in crisis. The second conclusion is that the leaders need to be credible. The third conclusion requires training for the principal to reach their potential and achieve success in turnaround schools. Lastly, the turnaround principals celebrate the small wins.

Faison's (2014) qualitative study examined the leadership practice of those who led a successful reform under the School Improvement Grant (SIG). Over the course of two to three years, billions of dollars were provided through the SIG to the lowest performing schools (lowest five percent of schools) with the expectation to raise student achievement. Three elementary turnaround schools in North Carolina were selected for the case study. The participants in Faison's (2014) study consisted of principals, assistant principals, teachers, counselors and curriculum coaches. The methods included interviews, observations, and review of artifacts such as school documents. Data were analyzed and triangulated to determine essential school improvement components (Faison, 2014).

The three schools in Faison's (2014) study were located in urban settings in midsize to large cities in Title I schools with African American female principals. The demographics for the schools ranged from over 250 to 470 elementary students. One school was 22% Latinx and 73% African American. The second school was 92% African American with 91% receiving free and reduced lunch. The third school was considered 95% free and reduced lunch, with 47% Latinx, 23% African American and 17% White.

Faison's (2014) approach used open-ended, semi-structured interviews. The findings were shared in two ways. Initially, the findings were shared through the story of a fictitious principal, who led a successful turnaround. The practices and strategies portrayed in the narrative came directly from the interviews, documents, and observations collected during the study.

Secondly, findings were shared in a more traditional method, by identifying themes that emerged and connecting them with the conceptual framework. Faison indicated factors that contributed to the success of these schools, which included leadership, data/accountability, instructional practices, professional development, and parent and community involvement.

According to American Institutes for Research (2016), key findings emerged from the analysis of activities in these 25 schools during the first year of SIG. Approaches to leadership varied across the set of core sample schools with most principals exhibiting a mix of leadership qualities. The most frequently reported leadership approach among the core sample schools was transformational leadership, referring to principals who can develop leaders and motivate and engage their staff behind a strong organizational vision. Although respondents in the majority of schools reported some improvement during 2010–2011, schools in which respondents described the improvements in the greatest number of areas also had higher levels of principal strategic leadership (referring to principals who are able to formulate a strategy for school improvement and translate that strategy into concrete priorities and specific actions) and were more likely to have experienced a disruption from past practices (Faison, 2014).

Additionally, 7 of the 25 core sample schools had experienced a visible disruption from past practice and the remaining schools appeared to be following a more incremental approach to improvement (Faison, 2014). Lastly, core sample schools with the lowest levels of organizational capacity during 2010–2011 were those in which (a) teachers reported having fewer resources, (b) the SIG award represented a larger percentage of the prior year's per-pupil expenditure, and (c) respondents perceived the SIG award as a catalyst for change (Faison, 2014).

When comparing the two studies there are similarities in the methodology and results. There was variability with participants and demographics such as race. All schools were considered low performing, high poverty, and in need of substantial improvement. Both studies indicate the significance of effective leadership and improvement strategies as the essentials for success. The ability to manage change is another common factor for success. Faison (2014) included professional development and parental involvement as factors for success in the studied turnaround schools.

Summary

The school principal's role has changed from managing and running an efficient school to accountability for student achievement in urban schools through initiatives such as School Improvement Grants from U.S. Department of Education for school turnaround. The ESSA's mandate to identify and effect positive change in the lowest-performing schools acknowledges the importance of the principal's leadership to transform school cultures. Principals must oversee this change process despite numerous challenges involving poverty, retention, and managing student disciple while addressing the needs of the school culture and raising student achievement. Principals demonstrate a variety of leadership styles depending on the context of the school. The leadership styles may range from laisse-faire to transformational depending on the setting, needs, and employees. Researchers (Kouzes and Posner, 2017; Waters and Cameron, 2007) agree that school leaders have an indirect impact on student achievement, school culture, and discipline policies.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Methodology

While the supply of effective leaders continues to be a challenge for local education agencies, the search for leaders who possess the potential to lead persistently low-performing schools presents a sense of urgency for improving the educational experiences for students in urban turnaround schools. The purpose of this research is to explore the practices and qualities of effective turnaround leaders in a large, urban public school district who can successfully transform schools. This research applies a qualitative case study to investigate and compare leadership styles of successful urban principals.

This study is based on interpretations of urban principals who have raised student achievement by creating positive school cultures and reducing disciplinary infractions. This chapter presents the research questions, research design and approach, description of the study participants and setting, data collection methods, ethical considerations and summary. The information gained in this study will contribute to the knowledge base of prioritizing essential actions for turnaround leadership.

Research Question

The research question for this study is as follows: In urban schools that reduced disciplinary infractions, what leadership changes were made? In order to answer the research question, data will be obtained from three schools in Tennessee within the same school district. This study is intended to provide a deeper understanding of effective leadership styles and qualities in elementary turnaround schools as determined by both school leaders, teacher who work for the leaders and quantitative data.

Description of the Research Design and Approach

This section describes the research approach used to study the leadership practices of successful elementary turnaround principals. Qualitative research relies on the participants to offer in-depth responses to questions about how they have understood their experience. Hendricks (2013) describes qualitative research as being able to understand and interpret phenomena as they occur in their natural settings. According to Jackson et al. (2007), this humanistic, interpretive approach is also called ''thick descriptive'' because of the richness and detail to the discussion. Through qualitative research, the study garnered much more information about a phenomenon, realizing that the results will be generalizable to a population. Flyvbjerg (2011) indicates one can generalize based on an individual case, therefore, the case study can contribute to scientific development.

This research is founded on a philosophical stance that is interpretive in nature. The interpretive stance is one in which the research is meant to make meaning of experiences of others in order to provide guidance (Merriam, 2009). Deeper understanding and meanings of situations occur through personal experience. In addition, the use of multiple pathways may meet a challenge, which in the case of this research is to guide leaders in turnaround schools. In using this philosophical stance, hopefully, leaders find greater empowerment to understand that change can happen in all schools including the most challenging schools, if an intentional effort at building the culture needed for change is the primary focus.

My interest in the research question of this dissertation stems from my own leadership experiences in the area of school reform. The following narrative offers insight into my philosophical stance that guided my interpretation of my research. For my first assignment as principal, I was selected to lead a low-performing urban school. Due to substantial leadership

training through various cohorts and programs, I developed the leadership capacity needed to build a positive support system to the campus community engaged in turnaround, despite a magnitude of unexpected problems. To achieve this, my faculty, starting with my leadership team, and I regularly dissected experiences within the organization to make meaning of them as a collaborative leadership group.

Since I was charged to lead a school that was labeled a low performing school, there were many experiences that were not leading to positive outcomes. After determining meaning from these experiences, we had to quickly identify what we could improve daily for our students regarding teaching and learning. This careful and reflective approach enabled us to provide our students living in poverty with the tools they needed to be successful in school and beyond. The first step was creating a school culture where all stakeholders wanted to invest and belong to increase attendance and reduce discipline infractions. In addition, we sought to ensure the needs of the whole child through support services and we sought to equip teachers with culturally responsive techniques. It was this same interpretive stance based on my experiences that guided my basic qualitative research.

Qualitative Research and Case Study

According to Merriam (2009), qualitative research strives to understand how people make sense of their world and its experiences. This study attempted to examine how successful turnaround leaders make sense of their responsibilities and how they work to build a positive school culture and raise achievement. Leadership styles of three principals were analyzed to determine how they have reduced disciplinary infractions and improved their school culture to raise student achievement. For this study, turnaround leaders were purposefully selected. Data from state and local education agencies were used to identify schools in Tennessee improvement

that are receiving federal funding to undergo school turnaround. In this case study, the phenomenon was identified by collecting multiple artifacts and data. Along with collecting artifacts such as surveys, discipline data and school improvement plans, the data also includes interviews and focus groups.

A case study is a form of qualitative research. Yin (2008) describes a case study as working to investigate a phenomenon in real life. In this dissertation, the phenomenon is the act of turnaround principals who transform school culture and reduce suspensions to raise student achievement. Case studies do not claim any particular methods for data collection or data analysis (Merriam, 2009). Any and all methods of gathering data from testing to interviewing may be used in a case study as qualitative research. Qualitative reports are generally heavily narrative in form and contain rich descriptions of setting and context. Thick descriptions of the context will be used so that potential users can make the necessary comparisons and judgments about similarity (Ary et al., 2018). The thick description will "place readers vividly in the research setting so that they can follow the logical process" will go through while collecting data (Ary et al., 2018, p. 474).

Case studies have a conceptual nature like all kinds of other research. According to Stake (2000), they are organized around a small number of research questions. The questions are centered on thematic lines or issues (Stake, 2000). The answers to the questions in the case study provide meaningful information regarding school turnaround. The closeness of a case study to real-life situations and its multiple wealth of details are important (Flyvbjerg, 2011).

In conducting qualitative research, interviewing is a set of techniques for generating data from individuals and/or groups utilizing structured, semi-structured, or unstructured questioning formats. Generally, semi- or unstructured, open-ended, informal interviewing is preferred to

allow for more flexibility and responsiveness to emerging themes for both the interviewer and respondent (Jackson et al., 2007). Interviews were recorded and transcribed.

For this research, interviewing was used in conjunction with focus groups as a method of gathering data. As one way of collecting data in qualitative research, focus groups are group interviews (typically involving 5–12 people) that rely on the interaction within the group and the questions asked of the moderator to provide insight into specific topics (Jackson et al., 2007). The focus group interviews serve as one component to data collection. The primary advantage for conducting this focus groups is the ability to observe interactions and responses among multiple participants on school culture, student discipline, and organizational leadership. The focus group will consist of teachers across multiple grade levels who have been supervised by more than one principal. This will provide insight on the changes and styles of the principals.

Due to Coronavirus (COVID-19), state standardized testing data was unavailable for the 2019-2020 school year. The three schools were selected based upon their previous improvement in key areas of focus which included student discipline, chronic absenteeism, academic achievement (TCAP and TNReady) and growth measures (TVAAS). Additional data includes culture and climate surveys completed by teachers related to administration and school operations.

Description of the Study

This section discusses the participants and setting. According to Patton (2002), there is no actual specific guide to advise a researcher on how to focus a study. The extent to which a research or evaluation study is broad or narrow depends on purpose, the resources available, and the interests of those involved" (Patton, 2002). Purposeful sampling was needed to select the participants for the study due to the limited number of successful leaders of school turnaround in

the region. Additionally, specific criteria were developed which included selecting individuals who were specifically knowledgeable about and had participated in the turnaround process.

Participants

Participants were selected from elementary schools considered to be low performing in the middle Tennessee area with poverty rates ranging from 60% to 100% and minority student populations ranging from 85% to 100%. Principals who were appointed to lead these turnaround schools within the past three years were the selected participants. The achievement data of these schools indicated students were lower-performing compared to peers across Tennessee. They have increased student achievement data in English Language Arts and Mathematics based upon data from two or more years before their arrival to the school. The district superintendent appointed each of the principals in this study to lead an elementary school following failure of the school to meet state testing accountability.

Due to the leadership of these principals in their urban schools, the turnaround process either has occurred or is in motion. Furthermore, each school showed evidence of the probability of academic improvement in both mathematics and literacy being sustained beyond the tenure of the principal leadership. Louis et al. (2010) articulated positive effects on a school's culture when leadership turnover is avoided; however, they also indicated that a principal's tenure is fewer than four years, on average. All names, including the principals and schools, listed are pseudonyms. Principal Smith at Blue Academy has eight years' administrative experience. She has served six years as an assistant principal and two years as a principal. The second leader for this research study is Principal Lewis at Berry Hills Elementary. This principal is in her third year and previously served as an assistant principal for two years. Principal Franks at Morris Elementary is the third principal for this study and has four years' experience as an assistant

principal and is in her third year of principalship. All leaders in this study have served in urban schools for most of their career as teachers or assistant principals and each has at least 18 years of experience in education.

Table 1.2

Principal Experience and Demographics

Principal	Race	Gender	Level of Education	Total Years of Educational Experience	Total Years as Assistant Principal	Total Years as Principal
Ms. Smith	Black	Female	Masters	23	6	2
Dr. Lewis	White	Female	Doctoral	24	2	3
Ms. Franks	Black	Female	Masters	23	4	3

Criteria for selected schools represent demographics typical of turnaround schools, which are most often located in urban environments, with a high-poverty demographic and high minority student populations. This study consists of interviews of three elementary school principals and nine (kindergarten through fifth grade) teachers in high priority, urban turnaround schools. Selected leaders were voluntary participants with varied personal, academic and professional backgrounds. The setting for the interviews was at the identified school in the principal's office or conference room. Selection of leaders was based on three qualifications in order to ensure objectivity was maintained:

(1) A leader who was in, or is currently in, a school with low math and or literacy student achievement scores based on state standardized tests;

(2) A leader who was in, or is currently in, a school receiving School Improvement (SIG) State Priority Grant funds and/or federal Title I funds;

(3) A leader who is recommended by a district level central office expert as having turnaround characteristics. More specifically, turnaround leaders elected for this study operated in a school that was struggling with school achievement as indicated by standardized test data such as low scores in literacy and mathematics as compared to schools in both their district and state.

Figure 1.1

Current Data from Three Turnaround Schools

	School-Wide TVAAS								
	16-17			17-18			18-19		
	Comp	Lit	Num	Comp	Lit	Num	Comp	Lit	Num
Blue Academy	1	2	1	1	3	1	3	3	3
Berry Hills Elementary	2	5	2	1	2	1	5	5	5
Morris Elementary	1	3	1	2	3	2	4	4	4

	TNReady / EOC Success Rate								
	16-17 Overall	16-17 ELA	16-17 Math	17-18 Overall	17-18 ELA	17-18 Math	18-19 Overall	18-19 ELA	18-19 Math
Blue Academy	13.8%	11.4%	16.1%	11.8%	9.7%	13.8%	18.9%	15.6%	22.2%
Berry Hills Elementary	10.0%	7.1%	12.9%	6.3%	5.9%	6.6%	14.9%	8.6%	21.2%
Morris Elementary	11.8%	8.7%	14.6%	9.2%	6.8%	11.6%	12.0%	12.4%	11.6%

Note. Tennessee Value Added Assessment System (TVAAS) measures student growth from year to year for students in fourth and fifth grades. The TNReady and End of Course (EOC) Success Rate measures academic achievement for students in third through fifth grades.

Setting

The study took place in a large school district located in Tennessee. The district serves a large population of diverse schools with the majority of the schools receiving federal funds due

to number of students living in poverty. There are 75 schools with over 44,000 students, and it is a district comprised of urban, suburban, and rural school communities. Over forty-five percent are considered Black, Hispanic or Native American. Thirty-five percent of students are economically disadvantaged. Within the school district, the state has identified 13 schools as high needs—9 of which are priority schools. All of the schools in this study are high-needs institutions, and two of the schools are defined as priority.

Over the past ten years, the turnaround schools have been identified by specific names labeled by state or district leadership. For the past three years, the district developed a partnership to redefine support and create goals for the identified priority schools. School Improvement Grants have been awarded to provide additional funding for resources such as curriculum and additional staff. The current partnership initiative provides retention and recruitment bonuses for educators in turnaround schools. The leaders and teachers are provided with additional support from the district in effort to raise student achievement and reach status above priority.

Data Collection

Data was collected through principal interviews, artifacts, and focus group responses (kindergarten through fifth grade teachers). By applying a qualitative case study design, I interviewed elementary school principals in a Tennessee school district who are appointed to lead a turnaround school. My research began with email invitations to selected principals to participate in an in-person or Zoom semi-structured interview (Appendix A). Additionally, I reviewed selected school documents such as achievement data, school improvement plan, and school manual for each year the principal successfully served in his/her turnaround school.

By conducting interviews with turnaround principals, conducting focus groups, and reviewing school documents, I hoped to gain an understanding of each principal's leadership practices in his/her current school setting. The focus group with classroom teachers provided insights on teacher perceptions and attitudes regarding leadership practices, school culture, and student discipline. From the focus groups, I expected to gain a deeper understanding of the changes that occurred with previous and current leadership that resulted in academic gains for students and increased teacher growth measures (Appendix B). Notes were taken during individual interviews conducted face-to-face and through Zoom meetings pending COVID-19 guidelines. In addition, responses from interviews and focus groups were recorded and transcribed.

Data Analysis

Data analysis involved reviewing the data collected to synthesize and analyze what was observed (Ary et al., 2018). The data analysis for this qualitative study combined data from interviews, focus groups and artifacts. Additionally, the data analysis included categorizing responses from interviews through coding. After coding the responses from focus groups and principal interviews, data was transcribed and determining patterns occurred. Selective coding was used to systematically review qualitative data to look at specific categories or themes (Ary et al., 2018). Axial coding was used to make connections between and across categories and open coding categorized data into manageable segments (Ary et. al., 2018).

Trustworthiness

Qualitative research must be trustworthy in the eyes of the person conducting the study and the audience in order to meet ethical considerations. Credibility and trustworthiness are two factors to consider when collecting and analyzing the data. According to Saldana (2011),

trustworthiness, or providing credibility to the writing is when we inform the reader of our research processes. According to Amankwaa (2016), and Lincoln and Guba (1985), "all research must have truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality in ordered to be considered worthwhile." Amankwaa (2016) states trustworthiness consists of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state trustworthiness involves the following:

- Credibility - confidence on the truth of finding

- Transferability - showing that the findings have applicability in other contexts

- Dependability - showing that the findings are consistent and could be repeated

- Confirmability - a degree of neutrality or the extent to which findings of a study are shaped by the respondents and not researcher bias.

Ethical Considerations

The purpose of this study was to focus on the successful turnaround school leader, and to understand the complex relationship between this successful leader and his or her ability to transform to a positive school culture that raises student achievement. The turnaround school leader is a central agent in culture-building work, which has a direct impact on educators, and thus an impact on students. Along with building the culture and having a direct impact on teachers and students, there is a need for sustainability of positive outcomes.

Since 2010, there have been four superintendents for the selected school district. With this said, I have worked under superintendents with varying perception about urban and low performing schools in need of turnaround. As a former turnaround teacher, school principal, and supervisor, I am mindful of my bias and the potential bias of those involved in the study. To lessen this bias, I used a structured approach guided by my conceptual framework, while

recognizing factors outside of the framework. As data was collected, my perceptions and interviewee responses could change the predicted outcomes of this research study.

Peer Reviewer

In addition, I reflected on field notes in collaboration with others, such as my dissertation advisor and peer reviewer to reduce bias. In peer review, a discussion among peers occurred to determine whether my interpretation of the data was reasonable (Ary et al., 2018).

A peer reviewer was utilized to review and provide feedback on this study. He helped with descriptions, kept the study focused on facts, and reviewed the documentation gathered. A peer debriefer was provided with qualitative data from the case study along with interpretation of the data. The peer reviewer gave feedback based on areas of expertise. In addition, s/he identified weaknesses and strengths found during the study.

Prior to beginning the study in schools, a defense of the research proposal and Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from Carson-Newman University took place. I met with the appropriate district-level administrators to share an overview of the study and obtain written permission for proposed interviews and access to any relevant documents. After obtaining permission from the district to move forward with the study, the researcher gained permission from the dissertation committee. All efforts were made to reduce bias throughout the data collection process by adhering to interview questions prepared in advance, establishing observation protocols, and by assigning numbers to participant responses and artifacts collected.

Participant responses were housed in an online folder and written documentation was stored in a locked cabinet. Participants were protected through the use of pseudonyms and also by the removal of names on documents connected to interviews, artifacts, or observations shared publicly or with the dissertation committee. Participants who were willing to be part of the study

were provided with informed consent forms outlining the objectives of the study, the process for data collection, the structure of the focus group and principal interview, confidentiality agreement, and protection of anonymity. Participants were advised of their right to decline answering a question or end their participation at any time. Finally, access to identifiable data and information were limited to the dissertation committee.

Member Checks

Member checks occurred to ensure consistency and fidelity. Member checks is a process in which participants in the study are asked whether they have accurately and realistically described their experience (Ary et al., 2018). The checks ensured validity, provided feedback on the research. Following the principal's approval to use the transcription, I captured the themes of the research study, to prepare individual case reports and to merge findings. The organization of gathered data allowed me to analyze my data and develop findings and assertions to learn the leadership practices of turnaround principals.

Triangulation

In addition, triangulation was utilized to ensure trustworthiness. Triangulation is the process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verify the repeatability of an observation or interpretation (Stake, 2000). The use of multiple sources of data, multiple observers, and/or multiple methods is considered triangulation (Ary et al., 2018). By triangulating the data, themes emerged from different components and subjects, which provided more trustworthiness to the study.

<div align="center">

Summary

</div>

As urban school leaders continue to search for answers, stories of successful urban school turnarounds become better known and documented, allowing other leaders to make meaning of

the stories. A qualitative research design granted the opportunity to gain deeper insight into the unique connections between leadership practices, school culture, and student discipline in order to raise student achievement in urban schools. Investigating the relationship between reduced exclusionary discipline practices and positive school cultures is the focus of this qualitative study. This chapter reviewed the methods I used to examine the research questions in the study, which involved the story of three turnaround leaders in three schools who led urban schools through the turnaround process.

CHAPTER 4

Presentation of the Findings

Chapter one introduces turnaround schools and the characteristics and the leadership styles of turnaround leaders. It also presents other factors that impact students at the schools, such as school culture and disciplinary practices. The problem and research question are discussed to develop a deeper understanding of the leadership styles and competencies to prevent common failures within urban and turnaround schools.

Chapter two provides a comprehensive review of literature on factors impacting school turnaround such as leadership, culture, and discipline. The chapter contains information on the background and historical aspect of educational turnaround followed by leadership styles and competencies based on the theoretical and conceptual framework introduced in chapter one. Case studies related to culture, discipline, and achievement within turnaround schools are included.

Chapter three describes the methodology used in this study. Data were collected through the interviews (three urban elementary principals), artifacts, and focus group responses (kindergarten through fifth grade teachers). By applying a qualitative multi-case study design, elementary principals in a Tennessee school district who were appointed to lead a turnaround school were interviewed.

This chapter contains the finding of my research study. Following an introduction, I provide information about the participants and demographic information of the selected turnaround schools. Information in this chapter is related to the research question. A review of artifacts such as the school improvement plan, demographics, present levels of performance, and discipline data are included. Teacher retention and school culture survey results are included in this chapter. Coding charts with data from the principal and focus group interviews are

presented. Characteristics of the participants are shared and data are analyzed to evaluate themes and trends from the research. The chapter concludes with a summary of the analyzed data.

Participants and School Demographics

Qualitative research relies on the participants to offer in-depth responses to questions about how they have understood their experience. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the leadership styles and changes within a turnaround school. The study is dependent on the ability of teachers to be familiar with leadership styles of the current and previous school administration regarding school culture and discipline practices. The study was based upon answers given to open-ended interview questions through oral responses and it was assumed that the participants were thoughtful, forthright, and honest in providing accurate data. I investigated administrators' actions related to leadership practices, culture, and behavior. In turn, teacher perceptions of leadership practices related to culture, behavior, and student achievement.

One principal and three teachers from three elementary schools in Tennessee were selected to participate in the study. Pseudonyms were used for the names of each principal and teacher who participated in the study. Additionally, pseudonyms were used for the names of the school selected for this study. Ms. Smith is the principal of Blue Academy and the teachers who participated in the study are Michelle, Leslie, and Terri. The participants from Berry Hills are Dr. Lewis, the principal, and three teachers named Gail, Patricia, and Sarah. Morris Elementary participants are Ms. Franks, the principal, along with three of her teachers, Cheryl, Melissa, and Samantha.

The research question considers the steady success of turnaround principals, especially leadership practices and styles that improved school culture: In urban schools that reduced disciplinary infractions, what leadership changes were made? This case study investigated the

leadership styles, practices, and characteristics of the previous and current principals to understand Wolinski's (2010) theories of leadership based on traits and behaviors. Leithwood et al. (2019) introduced the concept of "personal leadership resources" (PLRs) and this concept includes the non-behavioral, nonpractice-related components of leadership (including traits) which significantly influence the nature of leaders' behaviors or practices. Along with evaluating leadership traits and competencies, this study sought to analyze leadership theory related to turnaround schools.

The turnaround schools in this study substantially improved their academic trajectory, culture, and discipline after leadership changes were made. State and district testing, school improvement plans, and in-depth interviews with teachers and principals all speak to the dramatic progress in academic performance in the school, student discipline, and culture of the school. Because the interviews offered insight into and experience of the teachers and leaders who engaged in this school change, they inform an understanding of the culture before, during, and after the change.

Participants

Participants were selected from elementary schools considered to be low performing in the middle Tennessee area with poverty rates ranging from 75% to 100% and African American and Latinx student populations ranging from 85% to 100%. Principals who were appointed to lead these turnaround schools within the past three years were the selected participants. The achievement data of these schools indicated students were lower performing compared to peers across Tennessee. They have increased student achievement levels in English Language Arts and Mathematics based upon data from two or more years before their arrival to the school. The

district superintendent appointed each of the principals in this study to lead an elementary school following failure of the school to meet state testing accountability.

The principals have served as assistant principal for a minimum of two years before transitioning to the role of principal. The selected principals have prior teaching and leadership experiences in urban school before their current assignment. One principal has a doctorate as the highest level of education. The other two principals have a master's degree. In addition to higher levels of education, each principal has participated in leadership training programs.

The elementary teachers selected for the focus group range in 3 to over 20 years of teaching experience and represent kindergarten to fifth grade. All of their experience consists of teaching in an urban setting. Nine teachers were selected for the focus group and all selected participants agreed to participate in the study. Each participant in the focus group responded to most or all of the presented questions.

Document Review

A school improvement plan serves to signal the academic areas of focus for schools. All schools within the district used a common template. The five focus areas for the district are Accelerating Student Achievement, Engaged Community, Future Ready Students, Great Teachers and Leaders, and Whole Child. Each school selected at least three areas to target for the current school year. I analyzed the school improvement plan for each school which is centered on district- and school-based goals and actions. Plans were reviewed for the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years. Each school plan included a roster of leadership members, including the principal. Other individuals on the roster tended to be instructional coaches, grade-level team leaders, and support teachers such as behavior specialists. Schools wrote academic goals based

on student achievement measures. Job embedded professional development was included in each school improvement plan.

Demographic Data

Table 4.1 shows the demographic information in the school improvement plans and on the Tennessee State Report Card for the current school year. Berry Hills and Morris Elementary serve prekindergarten to fifth grade students. Blue Academy serves kindergarten through fifth grade students and also hosts some students who are out of zone as part of their magnet program. The school improvement plan further listed the strategies that staff would use to help students achieve the academic goals. Due to the needs and goals reported in the school improvement plan, the principals also indicated teacher retention as an area for refinement.

Table 4.1

School Demographics

School	Enrollment	Economically Disadvantaged	Racial and Ethnic Demographics
Blue Academy	358	62.3%	96.9% Black/Hispanic/Native American
Berry Hills	672	64.9%	96.4% Black/Hispanic/Native American
Morris Elementary	312	68.9%	97.1% Black/Hispanic/Native American

Teacher Retention

In review of the school demographic data, data was available for teacher retention in the Tennessee State Report Card and the 2020 Tennessee Educator Survey. The Tennessee report card was updated for 2020 and provided data for previous years. Based on the report card, Blue Academy retained 79.5% of their teachers and Berry Hills obtained a retention rate of 82.5%.

Morris Elementary retained 77.7% of their staff for the 2019-2020 school year. All three schools'
teacher retention rates are below the district average of 88.5% and 90.0% for the state.

School Climate and Culture Survey

According to the Department of Education (2021), the 2020 Tennessee Educator Survey
is a partnership of the Department of Education and the Tennessee Research Alliance to gather
data on school leadership, workload, instruction, and other factors that may impact school
climate and culture. The survey response rates for 2020 are as follows: District 51%; Blue
Academy 48%; Berry Hills 73%: and Morris Elementary 87%. A limitation of this finding is that
the schools do not have the same participation rates. According to the Tennessee Educator
Research Alliance (2020), schools must obtain a participation rate of 45% to receive data results
to provide critical, actionable data that influences strategies and goals at the state, district and
school level.

Berry Hills and Morris Elementary have the highest responses for satisfaction with 100%
of teachers who completed the survey indicating they are generally satisfied with being a teacher
at their school. Blue Academy obtained a lower percentage at 80%. For Blue Academy,
satisfaction rating of strongly agree increased by 31% from 2019. A limitation to the findings in
this survey is the possibility that principals incentivized teachers to complete the survey to reach
a 100% complete rate.

Respondents were asked if school leaders effectively handle school discipline and
behavior problems. The schools in this study increased their strongly agree and agree ratings.
Blue Academy increased to 28% from 0% since 2018. For Berry Hills, the percentage was higher
at 91% who agree or strongly agree that discipline is handled effectively. This score is slightly
down by 2% from 2019 survey results. For Morris Elementary, there is a similar trend of 91%

who agree or strongly agree which is up 24% from 2019.This is evidence of improvement with perceptions of school discipline and behavior for the schools in this study.

In regards to school leadership, when asked if they like the way things are run at the school, Blue Academy scored 73% with agree or strongly agree. This percentage is 28% higher in 2020 than in 2019. Berry Hills obtained a percentage score of 97% in response of agree and strongly agree regarding how the school is running. The teachers at Morris Elementary score indicates that 100% of teachers surveyed agree or strongly agree with how the building is run which is up 20% from 2019.

Present Levels of Performance

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, schools in this district closed in March 2020. Schools reopened in August 2020 with three learning options available to parents. Despite challenges with the COVID 19 pandemic, students were provided opportunities for in-person instruction as well as remote learning. According to the Tennessee Department of Education (2020), Response to Intervention and Instruction (RTI²) consists of three tiers. Tier I ensures that all students receive research based high quality instruction and administration of a universal screener to inform instruction. Based on the results of the universal screener, students who fall below the twenty-fifth percentile and have fallen behind academically or behaviorally should receive research-based intervention. These interventions are designed to target specific skill deficits uncovered by the universal screener. To monitor learning and intervention, universal screeners were completed quarterly and bi-weekly for progress monitoring in Tier II and III.

Upon examination of progress, iReady universal screener scores in reading and math increased for each school for Tier II and III students (See Figure 4.1). Tier I results indicate there was no change from fall 2020 to winter 2021, which indicates students are sustaining their skill

levels and not regressing. For Tier II, students moved forward by 24-29%. Results for Tier III indicate that Berry Hills moved students forward by 16% while Morris Elementary raised scores by 28% and Blue Academy increased slightly higher at 29%.

Figure 4.1

Fall to Winter Universal Screener Data
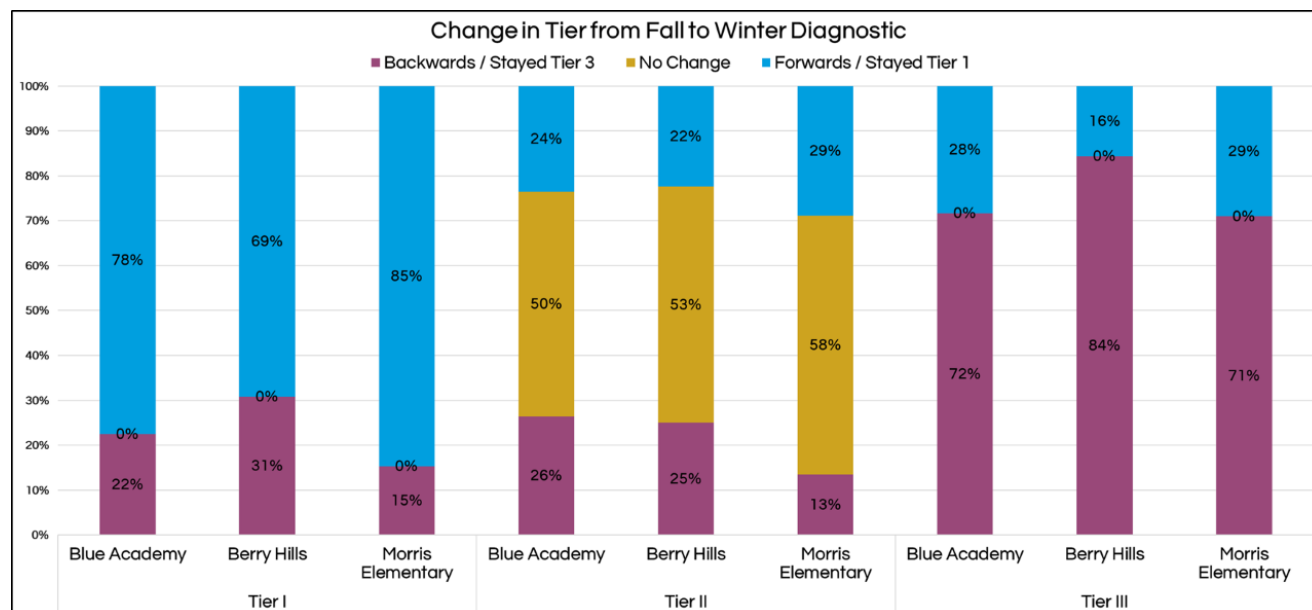
Note. This figure represents data retrieved from the universal screener for kindergarten- fifth grade (2021) to determine if students made progress.

Discipline Data

Over the past three years, the principals selected for this case study have significantly reduced suspensions based on review of discipline data (See Figure 4.2). Blue Academy and Morris Elementary have the most significant decrease in disciplinary infractions. Morris Elementary had an increase in suspension during the second year of principalship for the current administrator. While the discipline data appears lower at Berry Hills, their suspension rates were significantly higher for the 2016-2017 school year, before the change of leadership. Berry Hills continues to show a continuous decline in suspensions based on current data.

Figure 4.2

Out of School Suspension Data
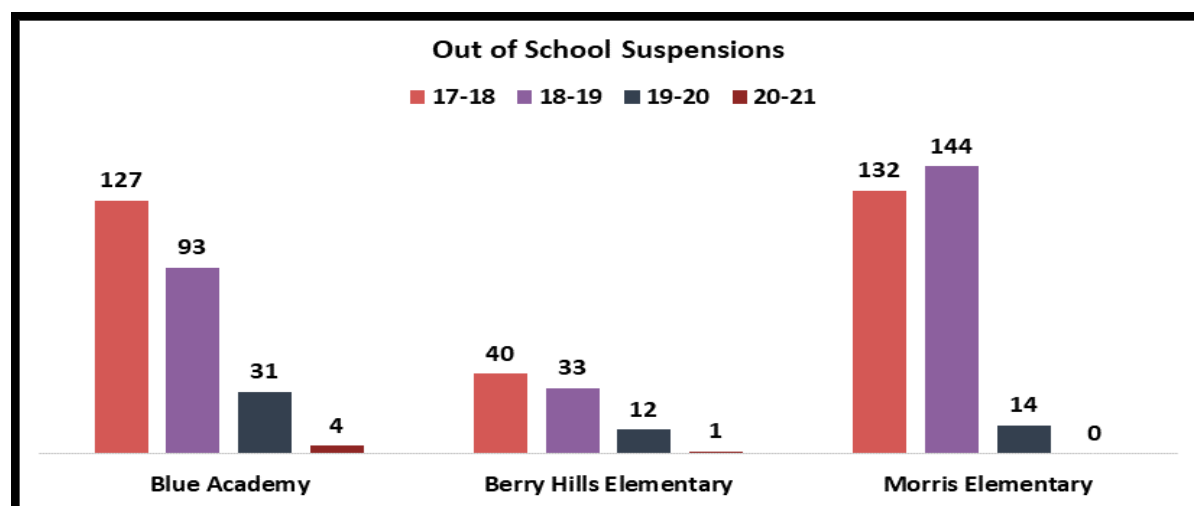
Note. This figure represents the data for out of school suspension from August 2017-January 2021).

The data regarding discipline supported the need for improvement in this area. Based on gathered information during the interviews, reform to implement school-wide discipline plans and positive behavior support systems such as Response to Instruction and Intervention for Behavior led to the decline in suspensions and problematic behavior.

Interview Data

Quotes from four participants are included at the beginning of this section. The quotes provide aspects of this case study related to significant responses related to challenges and leadership in turnaround schools.

> The first year, I think the school managed me, because there was just a lot to clean up. And now I feel like, like, I can manage the school. We have clear expectations, clear structures, people follow those, and it's just now, monitoring your implementation of that. And I felt like the very first year was sort of just

flying by the seat of your pants and trying to make quick decisions about things

that needed to happen. (Dr. Lewis, Principal)

But I also think there's a realness of the struggle that comes with students learning

and teachers teaching. I think there's an acceptance that this is really hard

sometimes. But that's where that positivity and encouragement comes in of

saying, but we can do this, our kids can do this. But I think there's also a realistic

view, especially this year that this is hard sometimes. So I think there's some

acknowledgement and acceptance of that. (Gail, Teacher).

She showed me what it means to be a servant leader. I mean, I'd heard that term

before. But I didn't realize the principal can do lunch duty, the principal can be the

crossing guard, the principal can take their rake out to the playground, and empty

out the drainage ditch so that the playground doesn't flood. And as well as

throwing out all the trash and painting the whole building. It was just remarkable,

just remarkable difference. (Sarah, Teacher)

Just to be realistic, if you came in throughout the week, you may see anything from, I

have a behavior problem, people making accommodations to cover one another when

someone is out…Principals walking in and out of classrooms, whether they're doing

observations or just saying hello, making sure you don't need anything. You're going to

see frustrated teachers, even hard times, and you will see teachers enjoying teaching.

You're going to see teachers helping each other- definitely teamwork…You're definitely

going to see planning throughout the week as well. So those are just some of the things

and happy children. A big word for here would be definitely creativity. (Terri, Teacher)

Overview of Principal Interviews

The three turnaround principal interviews were conducted individually through Zoom video. On December 16, 2020 the interviews were conducted within 30-45 minutes for each principal. The principals were presented with the following questions during the interview:

1. Tell me about your path to principalship in a turnaround school?

2. If I spent a week in your school, what would I see?

3. What were your first actions as principal in this school?

4. What do you do differently now compared to your first year in this school?

5. How would you describe your leadership style?

6. What do you think your teachers would say about your school culture?

7. How do you monitor your school culture?

8. Based on current data, student discipline has declined for the past two years. What do you attribute to this change to?

9. How has this impacted student achievement?

The selected principals consented to the interview upon first request and responded to each of the questions presented. Ms. Smith, principal of Blue Academy responses were collected as raw data and analyzed for coding (see Table 4.2). Responses were coded from the interview with Dr. Lewis, principal at Berry Hills (see Table 4.3). Lastly, Ms. Franks, principal of Morris Elementary was the last interview conducted and coded (see Table 4.4). The raw data from the three separate interviews were compiled into one coding chart (see Table 4.5) to determine the similarities and themes.

Table 4.2

Data Sorted in Levels of Coding for Research Question: In urban schools that reduced disciplinary infractions what leadership changes were made?

Raw Data	Open Coding	Axial Coding	Selective Coding

Leadership

"As assistant principal I entered a turnaround school that was at the very bottom of the list in the state."

"You're the one that's gonna save us."

"We as principals, we can't wait, we're not human."

"I found lots of deficiencies in the school- lots, meaning that I personally could not handle."

"So I started building professional development, observing best practices, giving teachers effective actionable feedback."

"I had some people to push me to say that it was time for me to apply for principalship."

"I think I'm definitely a servant leader."

"I try to model a lot of things for my faculty and model in a lot of ways, and it has served me well."

"Faculty members tell me you've really inspired me."

"I'm really methodical and I think, try to think things through and then I get input…insightful decisions."

"It's hard work--hard work not in the sense of once you get to work--it is hard work when I'm at home, because I'm always thinking okay what move do I need to make here."

Open Coding: Low Performing School; Teacher Focused; Professional development; Workload; Methodical; Inspirational; Servant Leadership

Axial Coding: Focus on instruction and professional growth; Servant leadership

Culture

"The first thing that comes to my mind…is joy. I think people are happy to be here…, including our kids." "I think you will see passion…"

"Collaboration, that's one thing I came in here really with a strong passion for and I didn't see a lot of when I came in."

"Keeping kids at the center."

"We're on our path to becoming a true PLC. I think it is like one of the greatest things I probably have done as far as initiatives."

"At this point I feel like I have two different staffs still, I inherited one, and the others were hired."

"I have vocal faculty members, they are going to tell me the pulse of the school."

Open Coding: Passion and joy; Collaborative; Student focused; PLC; Teacher recruitment; Open communication

Axial Coding: Collaborative with open communication, PLC, and recruitment of talent

Behavior

"Teachers say discipline is so much better." "Hands down our RTI-B team… it's consistent."

"Specifically talk about individual children and devise a plan."

Discipline and student achievement "go hand in hand."

"I think time on task and staying in class and being involved in academic lessons, that's made a difference."

Open Coding: Team Approach; Consistency with behavior plan; Teacher buy in; Problem solving for behavior; Time on task; Student achievement increased

Axial Coding: Raised student achievement by increasing time on task, consistently problem solving through a behavior team

Selective Coding: Focus on instruction, servant, leadership, collaboration, teacher recruitment of talent, professional development, and behavior team are perceived as the leadership changes made to reduce disciplinary infractions.

Note. The raw data obtained from Ms. Smith provided information for open, axial and selective coding. Open coding keywords for Ms. Smith for the leadership theme are as follows: low performing school, teacher focused, professional development, work load, methodical, inspirational and servant leadership. For axial coding, the key phrases are focused on instruction and professional growth, and servant leadership. Selective coding indicates that focus on instruction, servant leadership, collaboration, teacher recruitment/retention, professional development, and behavior team and plan are perceived as the leadership changes to reduce disciplinary infractions.

Table 4.3

Data Sorted in Levels of Coding for Research Question: In urban schools that reduced disciplinary infractions what leadership changes were made?

Raw Data	Open Coding	Axial Coding	Selective Coding
Leadership The school was "the lowest performing elementary school in the state." "I love teaching. "I always try to never forget what it's like to be a teacher. I always like to think through how will my decision affect teachers." "Familiarity with urban schools and turnaround schools I think that's why they placed me here." "I try to spend the majority of my day in the classroom, seeing what kids are experiencing, what teachers are teaching." "My first actions were setting up the the, the culture and climate of the school, the expectation systems" "First year, I think the school managed me, because there was just a lot to clean up. And now I feel like I can manage the school. We have clear expectations, clear structures." "The very first year was sort of just flying by the seat of your pants and trying to make quick decisions about things that needed to happen." "I weigh heavy in the shared leadership. I don't really like to make decisions by myself. We problem solve together."	Low performing school Teacher focused Instructional leadership Focus on culture and climate Workload Seeks input Shared leadership	Focus on instruction Shared decision making	Instructional focus, shared leadership, collaboration, retention and recruitment of talent, behavior team and plan are perceived as the leadership changes made to reduce disciplinary infractions.
Culture …"family atmosphere for majority of the teachers…they've been here with me for three to four years" The culture is "very collaborative." …"high percentages of teachers that enjoy working here and want to work here, which also results in low teacher turnover" …"open door policy if teachers have issues" "I tend to hire people that are like me." "We are very collaborative here, we work together. There's not an option- that's just the way that we do things."	Input Collaborative Openness Recruit and retain teachers	Collaborative with open communication and recruitment of talent	
Discipline "…area of strength, and so they (team) take pride and ownership" "…the consistency of our behavior plan. And the consistency of implementation" "As suspensions and office referrals have decreased student achievement and student growth has increased. And I think that's a direct result of kids being in class--other kids being able to learn--instructional time is not wasted on behavior." "When teachers are able to teach, then you know student achievement will increase."	Consistency with behavior plan and team approach with implementation Teacher buy in Problem solving for behavior Student achievement increased	Consistency with behavior plan and team to raise student achievement	

Note. The raw data obtained from Dr. Lewis was evaluated using open, axial and selective coding. Open coding keywords for Dr. Lewis when analyzing the leadership theme are as follows: low performing school, teacher focused, instructional leadership, work load, focus on culture and climate, input, and shared leadership. For axial coding, the key phrases are focused on instruction and shared decision making. Selective coding indicates that focus on instruction, shared leadership, collaboration, teacher recruitment/retention, professional development, behavior team, and consistent behavior plan are perceived as the leadership changes to reduce disciplinary infractions.

Table 4.4

Data Sorted in Levels of Coding for Research Question: In urban schools that reduced disciplinary infractions what leadership changes were made?

Raw Data	Open Coding	Axial Coding	Selective Coding

Leadership

You would see me "collaborating with coaches, interacting with students and teachers and going in and out" of classrooms.

My first actions-"work on the culture and climate, put practices in place to improve student behavior, and work on improving academic achievement."

"I believe in shared decision making- allowing the leadership team to help in the decisions that are impacting the school."

"Finally gotten to a place where I have a stable staff."

Culture

Input from "everyone in the building as far as their take on what was going well and what needs to be worked on."

Teachers "wanted consistency and wanted everybody to be held accountable."

"I do have to make adjustments based on morale sometimes and what's going on."

The culture "is positive and we are collaborative."

"I think they would say that I have an open door policy where I am accessible."

"Working on recruiting those quality teachers and finding ways to keep them here."

Behavior

Teachers "felt like the student behavior was out of control. And so we knew that was something that we had to work on."

"…the explicitness of having SWPBS, CHAMPS" has improved behavior.

"All the teachers have been trained… holding them accountable and giving them the specific steps of things that they have to do and try before administration gets involved."

"We're getting to a place now where I feel like the kids hold each other accountable."

"If I get the behavior and the climate and culture, right, then achievement is going to start going up-we're seeing it."

Open Coding: Instructional leadership; Focus on culture and climate; Workload; Seeks input; Shared decision making; Transformational leadership; Input; Positive; Collaborative; Openness; Recruit and retain teachers; Consistency with behavior plan and implementation; Team approach; Teacher buy in; Problem solving for behavior; Student achievement increased

Axial Coding: Focus on instruction; Shared decision making; Collaborative with open communication and recruitment of talent; Consistency with behavior plan and team to raise student achievement

Selective Coding: Instructional focus, collaboration, retention and recruitment of talent, behavior team and plan are perceived as the leadership changes made to reduce disciplinary infractions.

Note. For the interview with Ms. Franks, the raw data was evaluated using open, axial and selective coding. Open coding keywords for Ms. Franks are as follows: instructional leadership, focus on culture and climate, work load, input, shared decision making, and transformational leadership. For axial coding, the key phrases are focused on instruction, shared decision making, and transformational leadership. Selective coding indicates that focus on instruction, collaboration, teacher recruitment/retention, transformational leadership, and behavior team are perceived as the leadership changes to reduce disciplinary infractions.

Table 4.5

Data Sorted in Levels of Coding for Research Question: In urban schools that reduced disciplinary infractions what leadership changes were made?

Raw Data	Open Coding	Axial Coding	Selective Coding

Leadership

The school was "the lowest performing elementary school in the state."

"You're the one that's gonna save us."

"We as principals, we can't wait, we're not human."

"First year, I think the school managed me, because there was just a lot to clean up. And now I feel like I can manage the school. We have clear expectations, clear structures."

"I found lots of deficiencies in the school- lots, meaning that I personally could not handle."

"I try to spend the majority of my day in the classroom, seeing what kids are experiencing, what teachers are teaching."

"I think I'm definitely a servant leader."

"I weigh heavy in the shared leadership. I don't really like to make decisions by myself. We problem solve together."

"I feel like I have transformed the school."

Open Coding: Low performing school; Workload; Teacher focused; Instructional leadership; Shared leadership; Servant Leader; Transformational

Axial Coding: Focus on instruction; Shared decision making

Culture

The culture "is positive and we are collaborative." "We are very collaborative here, we work together. There's not an option- that's just the way that we do things."

"I think they would say that I have an open door policy where I am accessible."

"Working on recruiting those quality teachers and finding ways to keep them here."

... "high percentages of teachers that enjoy working here and want to work here, which also results in low teacher turnover"

"Keeping kids at the center."

Open Coding: Input; Collaborative; Openness; Recruit and retain teachers

Axial Coding: Collaborative with open communication and recruitment of talent

Discipline

"If I get the behavior and the climate and culture, right, then achievement is going to start going up-we're seeing it."

"Teachers say discipline is so much better." "Hands down our RTI-B team... it's consistent."

Discipline and student achievement "go hand in hand."

"As suspensions and office referrals have decreased student achievement and student growth has increased. And I think that's a direct result of kids being in class--other kids being able to learn-- instructional time is not wasted on behavior."

Open Coding: Consistency with behavior plan and team approach with implementation; Teacher buy in; Problem solving for behavior; Student achievement increased

Axial Coding: Consistency with behavior plan and team to raise student achievement

Selective Coding: Instructional focus, shared leadership, collaboration, retention and recruitment of talent, behavior team and plan are perceived as the leadership changes made to reduce disciplinary infractions.

Note. Table 4.5 contains results from the raw data analyzed from the three principal interviews to determine trends for open coding. For axial coding, concepts were obtained through analysis of the responses generated from open coding. Selective coding was used to determine perceptions from the three principals for the research question.

Overview of Focus Group Interview

The teacher focus group interview was conducted with 9 certified teachers through Zoom video. The three participants were selected from each school. All selected teachers consented to the study. The interview lasted for one hour and 15 minutes. The teachers were presented with the following questions during the interview:

1. Tell me about the conditions of the school when you arrived?

2. If I spent a week in your school, what would I see?

3. If I visited your classroom, what would I see about the culture in your classroom?

4. What were the first actions of your principal in the turnaround process?

5. What changes have been sustained? Why do you think they have been sustained?

6. Do you view this school as rapidly improving, stagnant, or regressed for the past two years? Why?

7. What are your beliefs about student discipline?

8. How has discipline evolved over the past two years?

9. What are the successes and challenges for student discipline?

10. What supports have been put in place and what do you need to be successful?

11. What changes exist between your current and previous principal?

The teachers were representative of grades kindergarten through fifth. The years of teaching experience ranged from three to 28 years. Table 4.6 displays the results of open, axial, and selective coding from the interview data to determine the similarities and themes.

Table 4.6

Data Sorted in Levels of Coding for Research Question: In urban schools that reduced disciplinary infractions what leadership changes were made?

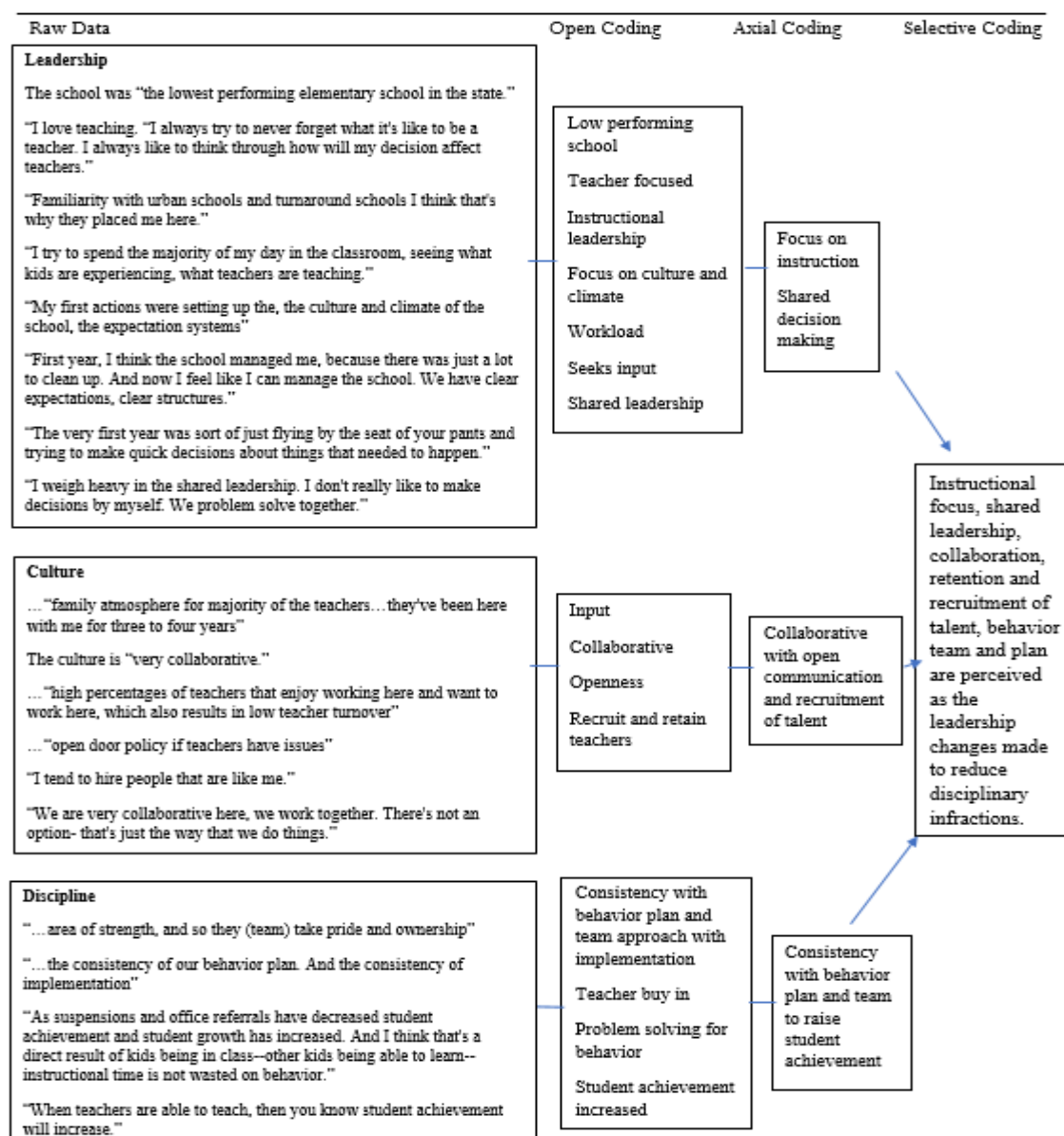| Raw Data	Open Coding	Axial Coding	Selective Coding
Culture "…there's a realistic view, especially this year, this is hard sometimes." "…there was a real lack of authentic communication between administration and teachers." "It was more of a keep your head down, duck and cover. Hopefully, nobody will notice you then you won't get in trouble kind of feeling." "I've been through three administrators…every year there was a mass exodus." "We were bleeding new teachers…like we were always just like a revolving door."	Workload Lack of communication High turnover with teachers and administrators	Workload, communication, and faculty turnover impacted the school culture	Communication, relationships, capacity building, order, consistency with explicit behavior exceptions are perceived as the leadership changes made to reduce disciplinary infractions.
Discipline "There was definitely a lack of respect from the students towards the teacher, from the teachers towards the students, which added to the problem." "A lot of teachers were scared of the children." "I am a disciplinarian. I believe in rules and following expectations." "…very explicit with expectations and directives." "…students knowing they are loved regardless." "We have to go the extra mile to get a relationship with every student." "We have a PBIS team…we created a behavior matrix.	Lack of respect Explicit rules and expectations Love Relationship building Behavior plan and team	Establishing a positive culture with clear communication and feedback, focus on discipline, student data and professional growth	
Leadership Changes "One word- joy." "Positive, just happy smiling faces." "..we have protocols in place. I know I'm safe in my school." "You're going to see teachers helping each other-definitely team work." "We're all a family." The principal created "cadres." …individual conferences…getting to know me…help us try to do better in areas we are struggling in." The principal is "trying to build capacity with our teachers…and I feel like that has been sustained." "We're a data driven family." "We're always looking at how we can improve." "We can't get married to anyone idea…let's look at the data." "…the consistency piece within the building has changed over the past two years." "COVID has affected a lot this year."	Positive culture Safety and order Discipline Family oriented Communication and feedback Data driven Consistency Adjustments made due to pandemic	Relationship building, explicit expectations, plan and behavior team addressed lack of respect and problematic behavior	

Note. Through open coding the raw data was analyzed to create the keywords. Axial was used to determine key concepts from the open coding, Selective coding was used based on the emerged themes from axial coding. Through open and axial coding, the data became more specific around workload, communication, turnover, relationship building, behavior teams, and professional growth. Using selective coding I determined that communication, relationships, capacity building, order, consistency with explicit behavior expectations are perceived as the leadership changes made to reduce disciplinary infractions.

Triangulation

For this research study, triangulation was utilized to ensure trustworthiness. The use of multiple sources of data, multiple observers, and/or multiple methods is considered triangulation (Ary et al., 2018). This study uses triangulation through multiple sources of data, multiple observers, and/or multiple methods. By triangulating the data, themes emerged from different components and subjects, which provided more trustworthiness to the study. For this study, I relied upon artifacts, principal interviews, and a teacher focus group were conducted to increase credibility and reduce bias.

To answer my research question, I gathered perceptions from principals and teachers. Each interview provided raw data to include in a coding chart. Raw data from the three principals were combined into one coding chart. In total five coding charts were developed for comparison and evaluation. Each chart represented one of the interviews (new principals, veteran principals, and district supervisors) to enable comparison.

Leadership Perspective

The raw data from the interview transcripts were analyzed and clustered into themes. I constructed themes throughout my data as it was coded and analyzed for reoccurring thoughts and perceptions. Triangulating the data from artifact review, interviews with principals, and the focus group led to the emergence of three dominant themes addressing the research question being investigated. The dominant themes constructed from the data are leadership, culture and discipline. Participant responses were sorted into categorizes based on the themes related to findings from the literature review. From the responses, I determined the concepts and ideas highlighted from the raw transcribed data. I used written notes to assist with inferencing and making connections. I printed out the responses, organized by color coding then sorted into categories based on similar characteristics. I used axial coding to generate labels to describe the

relationships in each category. The labels from axial coding formed the basis for the themes in the findings. Lastly, selective coding was used to determine the leading themes surfacing from the subthemes in the axial codes.

From the principal interviews, open coding provided the following concepts for the leadership theme: low performing school, workload, focus on teachers, instructional leadership, shared leadership, servant leader and transformational. The analysis of the culture raw data yielded input, collaborative, openness, and recruitment and retention of teachers as concepts that emerged. Open coding for discipline provided information that was categorized as consistency with behavior plan, team approach with implementation of the plan, teacher buy in, problem solving for behavior and increase in student achievement. The concepts developed from the open coding led to the ideas for axial coding.

Axial coding from the principal responses provided ideas centered around focus on instruction, shared decision making, servant and transformational leadership from the emerged theme of leadership. Being collaborative along with open communication and recruitment of talent emerged in axial coding when analyzing the concepts from open coding under the culture theme. For axial coding under the theme of discipline, consistency with behavior plan and team to raise student achievement was determined from the raw data and open coding.

Concepts from the axial coding for the emerged themes were the basis for determining the selective coding. Based on the selective coding, instructional focus, collaboration, teacher retention and recruitment, behavior plan and team, along with shared, servant and transformational leadership are perceived as the leadership changes made to reduce disciplinary infractions.

From the coding, three themes emerged. Each principal emphasized the importance of leadership, culture, and student discipline as factors in the turnaround of their schools. While their perspectives are not monolithic, they share striking similarities.

Theme 1 Leadership

The first noted theme from the coding was around the concept of leadership. Each of the interviewed principals indicated the actions they performed during their first and second years as principal. The concept of leadership emerged in all of their responses. The principals were placed in turnaround schools in need of immediate improvement. There were similarities with principal responses in regards to leadership as indicated by Table 4.5. The principals varied in responses when asked about their individual leadership style. Other concepts were similar but may have varied in terminology as explained in this section.

Ms. Smith, principal of Blue Academy made comments under the category of leadership that are related to workload and multiple problems. Ms. Smith mentioned previous experience in a low performing turnaround school. In addition to expectations of a turnaround principal, she addressed the many deficiencies in the school. Ms. Smith mentioned that it's hard work to manage a turnaround school not just because of the daily responsibilities but because of always thinking through the magnitude of needs in the school. Ms. Smith indicated that principals are perceived as being the ones who can ultimately save the school from failure and sometimes the expectations are beyond what is capable of the leader. Ms. Smith reported, "We as principals can't wait, we're not human" in response to the challenges and high expectations for school leaders. She discussed the importance of being methodical and seeking input to make insightful decisions. In addition, the importance of modeling and the ability to inspire others. Ultimately,

Ms. Smith defined herself as a servant leader with a focus on teachers and students. Ms. Smith stated, "I'm a servant leader and I think with a servant mindset."

Dr. Lewis, principal of Berry Hills discussed leading an elementary school defined as the lowest performing elementary school in the State based on student achievement. Dr. Lewis described her love of teaching as the foundation for school leadership in a turnaround school. During the interview, she was teacher-focused. Dr. Lewis mentioned spending the majority of her time in classrooms to observe teaching and learning. She discussed the challenges of her first year due to the numerous needs and areas of concern. Dr. Lewis decided to focus on culture, climate, and establishing clear expectations for teachers and students. Dr. Lewis discussed the importance of shared leadership and solving problems together.

During the interview, Ms. Franks, principal of Morris Elementary, mentioned that her first actions as the new principal of her turnaround school was to work on the culture and climate, put practices in place to improve student behavior, and work on improving academic achievement. Ms. Franks indicated that classroom visits and collaboration with coaches have helped with success as a leader. She reported that her beliefs in shared decision making and transformational leadership. Ms. Franks indicated that her ability to create a stable staff has been a factor in raising student achievement. The primary areas of transformation include school culture and behavior.

Theme 2 Culture

In addition to the theme of leadership, coding indicated that culture was another theme. When asked about first actions they took as principal, they mentioned improving the school culture. Shared decision making and input were some of the concepts that I gathered from their responses. Goals related to school culture were evident and an area of focus for the principals in

order to turnaround student outcomes. Ms. Smith viewed professional learning communities and collaboration as important components of her school culture. While the other two principals focused on collaboration and professional growth without using the terminology of professional learning communities as factors to improve culture within a turnaround school. The principals view culture as evolving and in need of frequent monitoring to improve teacher retention rates.

When questioned about the school culture, Ms. Smith described her school as a place that is full of joy with teachers and students who are happy to be part of the learning environment. This principal also mentioned passion as a way to describe the culture and Ms. Smith discussed the importance of their daily efforts in relation to their vision. According to Ms. Smith, professional development and the goal of becoming a true professional learning community are important factors for creating a strong school culture.

Over the past two years, Ms. Smith has experienced slight turnover with teachers and as a result the principal believes that the school has two staffs. Ms. Smith discussed one being a group of teachers who have a long history at the school and the other as the newer teachers who have been hired into the school under her leadership. Ms. Smith mentioned that collaboration is a passion and an area of focus. She discussed the culture of having several teachers who give input and monitor the pulse of the school. Regardless of what is happening in the school, the principal discussed keeping students at the forefront as the most important factor as a leader and for teachers.

Dr. Lewis described her school culture as very collaborative with a family atmosphere. She reported that there is a high percentage of teachers who enjoy working at the school which results in improved rates of teacher turnover. In regards to culture, the principled mentioned working together and establishing the way that they do things in their building. She stated, "I

spend a large majority of my day in classrooms doing walkthroughs… to see what kids are experiencing and what teachers are teaching." Dr. Lewis discussed the importance of hiring the best fit for the school culture and the importance of having an open-door policy for teachers. Dr. Lewis' responses lend to communication and input as factors for maintaining a positive school culture.

In the area of school culture, Ms. Franks values input from teachers in the building regarding strengths and areas of improvement. She discussed the needs of her teachers regarding clear expectations, consistency and accountability. In addition, the importance of focusing on teacher morale to maintain a positive culture. She believes this along with collaboration have improved their learning environment. Ms. Franks discussed having an open-door policy, lines of communication, and being accessible to teachers as contributing factors to the improvement of culture. She mentioned that maintaining a positive culture is a focus to recruit and retain quality teachers.

Theme 3 Discipline

Discipline was the final theme that emerged from the coding. Based on the responses from principals, student discipline and behavior were significant obstacles for their school improvement efforts. Each principal discussed development of a school-wide behavior plan and a team approach to manage discipline within their building. Based on the data in Figure 4.2, student discipline infractions such as suspensions have significantly declined.

When discussing discipline, Ms. Smith indicated that the teachers feel that discipline has improved significantly under her leadership. Ms. Smith primarily credits implementation of the Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTI²) Behavior team. She indicated that the consistency of this team and the behavior plan are the most important factors to reducing office

referrals and disciplinary infractions. Ms. Smith also reported that their problem solving approach for individual students by creating a specific plan has significantly reduced disciplinary infractions. Ms. Smith indicated that discipline and student achievement go hand-in-hand. The time on task and staying in class to ensure involvement in all academic lessons has made a difference in student achievement.

During the interview, Dr. Lewis mentioned that discipline is an area of strength because of the behavior team and their pride in ownership of creating a positive school culture. Dr. Lewis attributes consistency of their behavior plan as an indicator of success. She reported that when teachers are able to teach, then their student achievement will increase. In turn, this results in a decrease of office referrals and suspension. According to Dr. Lewis, student achievement and growth have increased. Dr. Lewis believes this is a direct result of students spending more time in class and other students being able to learn and instructional time that is not wasted on behavior.

Upon arrival to Morris Elementary, Ms. Franks reported that teachers felt the behavior was out of control and that it wasn't being addressed. As a leader one of the first actions was to improve discipline and culture. Ms. Franks reported, "I believe in shared decision making and allowing teachers to give input has helped improve discipline." She discussed the importance of establishing expectations for teachers and students. Not only was it important to have expectations, but there was a need to be explicit with the expectations. Ms. Franks reported that implementation of the school wide positive support behavior plan and CHAMPS program improved behavior. She discussed the importance of training and accountability for teachers. In addition, providing teachers with specific steps to complete before involving administration. Ms. Franks feels that after three years, the students now hold each other accountable. She discussed

that a mentor advised her that if she gets the culture and climate right, then achievement will go up. She affirmed that she is now seeing this in her building after implementing the feedback and recommendation.

Teacher Perspective

A focus group interview was conducted with nine elementary teachers. The raw data was gathered and analyzed for open, axial, and selective coding. From this data, three themes emerged which includes culture, discipline, and leadership changes. I analyzed data through open coding determined that workload, lack of communication and high turnover for teachers and administrators are important factors within their school for culture. When responses were categorized for discipline, open coding revealed ideas lack of respect, explicit rules and expectations, love, relationship building and the behavior team and plan as key concepts related to discipline. Open coding from the emerged theme of leadership changes included positive culture, safety, order, discipline, family-oriented, communication and feedback, data driven, consistency, and adjustments due to the pandemic. Based on the responses from teachers, there is a connection between school culture and leadership.

Axial coding from the focus group indicated that workload, communication, and faculty turnover are factors when analyzing responses categorized under the culture theme. Relationship building, explicit expectations, behavior plan and behavior team implementation addressed the lack of respect and problematic behavior based on axial coding for discipline. For the leadership changes theme, the teachers indicated that establishing a positive culture with clear communication and feedback, focus on discipline and student data and professional growth are the ideas that were consistent from the teachers within the focus group. Based on open and axial coding, selective coding as used for the established themes. Selective coding determined that

communication, relationships, capacity building, order, consistency with explicit behavior expectations are perceived as the leadership changes made to reduce disciplinary infractions.

During the focus group interview the teachers expressed a number of challenges they face working in a turnaround school. The challenges include the perception and reality that the work in a turnaround school is hard. High teacher and administrative turnover, lack of communication and the additional responsibilities of working in a turnaround school were frequent comments. For example, Cheryl stated, "I've been through three administrators…every year there has been a mass exodus…so the conditions of the school was very poor as far as the way students viewed the school, the way teachers viewed the school, just fractured all the way around." The teachers discussed the changes with school discipline and culture. Despite the challenges, most of the teachers agreed that teacher turnover has improved under the current leadership. The teachers from Blue Academy mentioned that the previous principal had little to no teacher turnover and worked to build strong relationships with teachers. On the other hand, they discussed that the previous administrator struggled with student discipline and low student achievement data.

There was consensus among the teachers around culture, discipline, and the impact of leadership changes. The teachers indicated that the changes have led to school improvement. One change has to do with creating a positive, happy, and joyful school culture. When asked about what I would see in a week, Cheryl responded "one word-joy." Patricia responded, "Positive, just happy, smiling faces." The culture was improved by relationship building, clear and open communication. The teachers felt that the principals also created a culture of professional growth in a family atmosphere where teachers work together as a team. The teachers also indicated that all of the principals were working to retain and recruit quality teachers. A teacher mentioned the specific focus on becoming data driven as a team within the

school as a significant factor for the change in school culture. The teachers reported consistency with expectations, job responsibilities, and discipline have impacted the school culture as well.

In regards to discipline, there was an agreement that there was a lack of respect from students towards the teachers and in some cases teachers towards the students. The teachers agreed that being explicit with expectations has improved the behavior. There was mention of showing love and respect for students and building relationships. Based on responses from the teachers, the behavior team appears to be a significant factor in each of the schools selected for this research study as a way to reduce disciplinary infractions. According to Gail, "We have a PBIS team, and they come up with plans to help us implement and improve our behavior plan." Samantha reported, "We have a behavior team and that has made a huge change in our building." The behavior team operates with input in problem-solving methods. There was a discussion around continuous improvement for students in the school community.

Similarities and Differences between Principals and Teachers

There were similarities and differences in the responses from principals and teachers. Despite the different questions presented during the interviews, common ideas, thoughts and themes emerged. All participants discussed the workload and challenges as educators in turnaround schools. Each principal mentioned teacher retention and recruitment as important factors with their school improvement plans and goals. The teachers mentioned high turnover with teachers and administration as a challenge within their schools. Each participant viewed school culture as an important factor in urban schools and consider it an area that has improved within the schools. However, the principals recognized that focus on the culture is an area of focus for continuous improvement.

While principals viewed the workload in a turnaround school as part of their professional responsibility, the teachers viewed workload as part of the culture within turnaround schools. When analyzing the culture, I determined that communication was an important factor based on responses from the principal and teacher focus group interviews. The teachers indicated improvement with communication and feedback related to their performance as teachers. The principals mentioned the importance of communication through gathering teacher input and maintaining an open-door policy.

Communication was not only mentioned in relation to culture, but with discipline as well. In contrast from the principal interview responses, the teachers discussed lack of respect within the school culture and discipline referrals for disrespect. There was a culture of disrespect between teachers and students that has changed under the new leadership. The lack of respect from students was not a topic of discussion for the principals interviewed.

Each principal and many teachers from the focus group mentioned the importance of communicating expectations with discipline and the importance of collaboration regarding academics and behavior. In contrast, the teachers focused on the importance of showing love for their students and relationship building with students to maintain culture and discipline. On the other hand, principals focused on the importance of relationship building with their teachers. The participants agreed that collaboration within the behavior team to solve problems, analyze data, and develop solutions is an essential factor regarding changes with discipline infractions.

During the teacher focus group interview, the teachers indicated communication and collaboration were important for their school. Along with communication, the teachers provided more details with changes that occurred under the current leadership. All of the teachers have worked with at least two different administrations in their assigned school. The teachers were

aware of the behaviors and characteristics of the previous principal and able to identify the number and magnitude of changes.

During the interviews, the principals did not identify the number of changes compared to the responses from teachers. It could be determined that the principals were unaware of the magnitude of changes and its impact within their building based on teacher perceptions. Another determination is that the principals are unaware of their immediate impact or notice that their changes had upon school operations and workload.

In relation to the leadership changes, the teachers provided characteristics and practices of their school principals. Only one teacher defined their principal as a servant leader. Based on the review of literature, most of the teacher responses about leadership practices and styles fall under servant, democratic and transformational. While the principals may not have been familiar with the terminology associated with leadership styles theory, each principal defined herself as either a distributive, servant, instructional or transformational leader.

Summary

There is a relationship between principals' and teachers' perception of leadership changes related to culture and discipline. For this study, I conducted three principal interviews and one teacher focus group. The research question I sought to answer was "In urban schools that reduced disciplinary infractions, what leadership changes were made?" The first step in understanding the results of the data was to generate responses from participant through specific questions related to leadership changes that may have impacted school discipline and student achievement. From participant responses, tables were created to interpret the raw data to determine perceived themes and subthemes for leadership changes.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

Chapter one introduces turnaround schools and the characteristics and the leadership styles of turnaround leaders. It also presents other factors that impact students at the schools, such as school culture and disciplinary practices. The problem and research question are discussed to develop a deeper understanding of the leadership styles and competencies to prevent common failures within urban and turnaround schools. Ultimately, this study examined how elementary school principals successfully transformed their schools to increase student achievement and meet established goals.

Chapter two provides a comprehensive review of literature on factors impacting school turnaround such as leadership, culture, and discipline. The chapter contains information on the background and historical aspect of educational turnaround followed by leadership styles and competencies. The chapter further examines the theoretical and conceptual framework introduced in chapter one. School culture and discipline are key factors in success turnaround. The chapter includes research and finding on school discipline practices such as suspensions and zero-tolerance discipline. The chapter examines alternatives to discipline that impact student achievement.

Chapter three describes the methodology used in this study. Data were collected through the interviews (three urban elementary principals), artifacts and focus group responses (kindergarten through fifth grade teachers). By applying a qualitative multi-case study design, elementary principals in a Tennessee school district who were appointed to lead a turnaround school were interviewed.

Chapter four contains the findings of my research study. Following an introduction, I provide information about the participants and demographic information of the selected turnaround schools. Information in this chapter is related to the research question. A review of artifacts such as the school improvement plan, demographics, present levels of performance and discipline data are included. Teacher retention and school culture survey results are included in this chapter. Based on this study, there is a relationship between principals' and teachers' perception of leadership changes related to culture and discipline. Leadership, culture and discipline are the three themes that emerged as factors in school turnaround.

While in chapter four I examined the data collected from turnaround principals and their teachers, in this chapter, I draw conclusions, discuss implications and provide recommendations. This chapter will begin by reviewing the purpose of the study, significant findings from the literature review and conceptual framework. The research question involves the turnaround leader's changes with building a positive culture and reducing disciplinary infractions. Additionally, connections are made with the conceptual framework and leadership theories with the findings from this study for the conclusions. Implications for how the research could be used by administrators and district leadership is also discussed. The chapter will close with considerations regarding delimitations and limitations followed by a summary of the study.

Discussion

Principals matter. The purpose of this qualitative study was to determine which leadership styles created a positive school culture and increased student achievement by reducing disciplinary infractions such as suspensions and zero-tolerance offenses. This study sought to explore and illustrate what has worked best for effective leadership and yielded large effects for academic progress, school culture, and student discipline in urban and turnaround schools.

Turning around chronically low-performing schools is challenging work that requires significant restructuring. In most low-performing schools, high rates of teacher and principal turnover along with student transiency create an unstable foundation upon which to build meaningful improvement efforts. Consistent, effective school leadership is required to create the conditions within the school that allow for effective instruction and positive relationships among the school's staff. Figure 5.1 contains the key finding of leadership behaviors and practices that are necessary for turnaround principals based on the themes. The behaviors are further explained throughout this section and chapter.

Figure 5.1

Key Leadership Behaviors and Practices
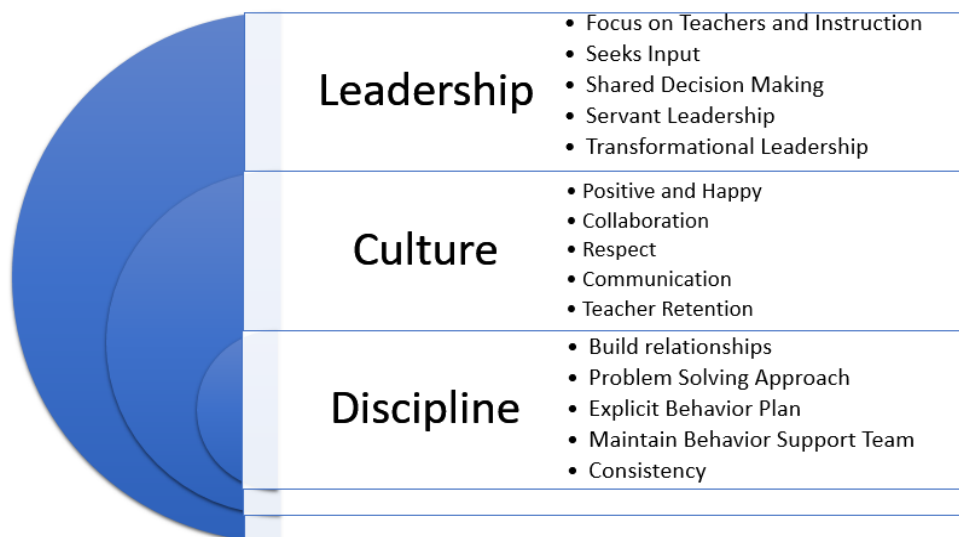
Note. This figure represents an overview of the key behaviors and practices identified in this study from the open, axial and selective coding.

Effective leadership may be evaluated through theories of leadership which fall under one of the following three perspectives: leadership as a process or relationship, leadership as a combination of traits or personality characteristics, or leadership as certain behaviors. This

dissertation is grounded in the theory of traits and characteristics that influence practices and behaviors rather than relationships. A small handful of personal traits explains a high proportion of the variation in leadership effectiveness (Leithwood et al., 2019).

Leithwood et al. (2019) introduced the concept of "personal leadership resources" (PLRs) and this concept was intended to include the non-behavioral, nonpractice-related components of leadership, (including traits) which significantly influence the nature of leaders' behaviors or practices. According to Leithwood and Strauss (2010), personal resources are primarily composed of traits, which can be defined as "relatively stable and coherent integrations of personal characteristics that foster a consistent pattern of leadership performance across a variety of group and organizational situations" (p. 27). Similarly, competencies are constructs manifested by behavior that relate to effective or outstanding performance in a specific job or role.

The cognitive category of PLRs includes domain-specific knowledge (e.g. knowledge about how to diagnose and improve leadership, expert problem solving and systems thinking), none of which fit common definitions of traits. Similarly, the social category of PLRs, including perceiving and managing emotions, as well as acting in emotionally appropriate ways, captures much of what has been learned about "social appraisal skills" or "emotional intelligence" not typically viewed as traits (Leithwood et al., 2019). The psychological category of PLRs includes qualities normally considered to be traits – optimism, self-efficacy, resilience, and proactivity.

According to Leithwood et al. (2010), effective turnaround principals create the organizational conditions that allow improvement to be sustainable. In contrast, the characteristics of poor leadership in low-performing schools includes lack of vision, poor communication, inattention to teacher quality, and failure to make decisions. Based on responses

from principals and teachers, characteristics of poor leadership in low performing schools were addressed for the schools in this study. For example, teachers indicated that their school went from poor to good communication. Of the traits identified by Leithwood et al (2019), the principals' responses in this study indicate optimism, resilience and proactivity. The principals based their leadership approaches on the needs of the organization, and they adjusted their leadership practices as needed. For example, the principals created a collaborative environment and implemented strategies for teacher retention. These personal leaders' resources enabled them to make improvements to their school's culture and discipline.

Leadership, culture, and discipline are the themes that emerged from this study (see Figure 5). For each of the themes, I noted key leadership behaviors and practices. The leadership theme consisted of a focus on teachers and instruction and the importance of seeking input. Principal reported that they implemented shared decision-making, servant leadership, and transformational leadership.

The culture theme indicated that collaboration respect, communication, teacher retention, and a positive learning environment are essential for school turnaround. Building relationships using a problem-solving approach, implementing an explicit behavior plan and team, and maintaining consistency stood out as the practices of effective principals to address school discipline.

The cognitive category of the PLRs includes specific knowledge about how to diagnose and improve leadership, expert problem-solving, and systems thinking. The principals and teachers in this study indicated the importance of problem-solving. When it comes to issues related to the culture, the participants mentioned teacher retention and implementation of a behavior team to address student discipline concerns. Each principal mentioned workload and

multiple problems that needed to be addressed. They adjusted their leadership styles to meet the needs of the school.

The social category relates to the principals' ability to perceive and manage emotions. The principals consistently gather input from stakeholders in their building such as students, parents, and teachers. The increase of positive responses on the Tennessee Educator Survey indicates the principals possess emotional intelligence that has contributed to improvements with culture and climate. Lastly, the psychological category includes the following traits: optimism, self-efficacy, resilience, and proactivity.

The rest of this session is organized according to the three themes that emerged in this sentence.

In 2018, the principals received trainings through district and state leadership programs as well as McREL Balanced Leadership mentioned in the literature review. Some of the 21 leadership responsibilities such as order, culture, discipline, input, and communication were mentioned as high leverage responsibilities by the principals. There was also evidence of principals engaging in the responsibilities of optimizer and intellectual stimulation. According to Waters and Cameron (2007), an optimizer inspires and leads new challenges and intellectual stimulation is the extent to which a principal ensures the teachers are aware of current practices as part of the school culture. The principals in this study have served as instructional coaches which provides a foundation for the responsibility of knowledge with curriculum and instruction. Day and Sammons (2013) reported that the key dimensions of successful leadership are identified as: defining the vision, values and direction, improving conditions for teaching and learning, redesigning the organization: aligning roles and responsibilities, enhancing teaching and learning, redesigning and enriching the curriculum, enhancing teacher quality, building

relationships inside the school community, building relationships outside the school community and placing an emphasis on common values. In spite of the comprehensive nature of this list, the data collected from participant responses touches on each of the key dimensions in some capacity with the exception of vision. This term was not directly reported by any of the participants but it stands to reason that a clear vision underpinned all of the changes they made to improve student outcomes.

According to Hallinger (2003), effective leaders know how to achieve goals and motivate people along the way along with many other positive traits and competencies. An effective principal's leadership behaviors vary depending on the numerous conditions and factors at the school. Effective leaders respond to the changing needs of their setting (Hallinger, 2003) as indicated in this study based on principal responses regarding changes over two years. A principal must understand the factors affecting students such as culture, gender, and interests at their school because these circumstances influence what leadership style is most effective for a positive school culture and reduction of disciplinary infractions. The safety and positivity of a school's climate can affect how students perform academically, as well as how they develop individually. The teachers indicated the importance of safety and order within their schools, which improved under the current leadership. Indeed, the principals all stated that while they were initially overwhelmed with the magnitude of problems, they were able to prioritize issues and set attainable goals for improving the school. As indicated by Hallinger (2003), setting goals and motivating others are traits of effective leaders.

A recent major research synthesis conducted by Grissom et al. (2021) finds that the impact of an effective principal is greater and broader than previously stated, with positive impacts on learning and attendance, and teacher satisfaction and retention. Based on this study,

teachers were satisfied with the changes and this is supported by recent school culture survey results as indicated in chapter four. I believe the teachers were satisfied due to the creation of a collaborative culture, professional development, and structures to reduce disciplinary infractions. For example, teachers discussed how the principals changed their school to a culture of respect between students and teachers.

Grissom et al. (2021) determined that effective principals carry out four key behaviors, according to a major synthesis of research on school leadership: engaging in "high-leverage" instructional activities, such as teacher evaluation and feedback; building a productive climate; allowing for collaboration and professional learning communities; and managing personnel and resources strategically. It is essential, too, that these practices be conducted through an equity lens. Grissom et al. (2021) explore not only what the recent body of evidence says about principal impact, but also the demographic characteristics of principals in the second decade of the 21st century, the practices that define effective school leadership—and, importantly, how principals can carry out those practices to promote equitable education in their schools.

It is essential for principals to embed equity into their practices, as public schools serve growing numbers of students of color, students from low-income households, English learners, and students with disabilities. Berry Hills has a high English learner population with Blue Academy showing a slight increase. According to Grissom et al. (2021), there is emerging research on how equity can be applied in each of the four areas previously mentioned through culturally responsive teaching, creating a climate that celebrates diversity, and engaging with parents. During the teacher focus group interview, responses related to being culturally responsive, celebrating diversity and parent engagement were briefly mentioned or implied in

relation to the school discipline theme. For example, Terri at Blue Academy highlighted the ways in which the school integrates students' home culture with its arts program and events.

Along with discipline, school principals have a key role to play in setting direction and creating a positive school culture and supporting and enhancing staff motivation and commitment needed to foster improvement and promote success for schools in challenging circumstances. The challenges facing school leaders reported by Day and Sammons (2013) include ensuring consistently good teaching and learning; integrating a sound grasp of basic knowledge and skills within a broad and balanced curriculum; managing behavior and attendance; strategically managing resources and the environment; building the school as a professional learning community; and developing partnerships beyond the school to encourage parental support for learning and new learning opportunities. These finding are consistent with this study, particularly with ensuring good teaching through observation and feedback, managing behavior, and building a professional learning community. Each principal mentioned the importance of frequently visiting classrooms to observe instruction and provide feedback. Along with managing behavior, they also mentioned the importance of professional learning communities.

The practices mentioned by the principals and teachers lean toward the mentioned styles. Instead of using the term distributive leadership, the principals mentioned shared leadership. The principal mentioned the importance of feedback and walkthroughs which is aligned with an instructional focus. Principal practices such as observation and feedback were mentioned by teachers as well. Although only one principal used the term transformation as their style, the practices and leadership changes indicated by all participants aligned with this style of leadership.

Day and Sammons (2013) seek to increase knowledge and understanding of school leadership and its relationship with school improvement and student outcomes. They examine definitions, concepts and models of leadership and examine the outcomes of recent research on successful leadership of effective and improving schools. Much of the research on school leadership has focused on the role of the principal, but it is increasingly recognized that the distribution of school leadership more widely within schools is important and can promote improvement (Day & Sammons, 2013). Their review is closely aligned to the finding in this study. There is a relationship between transformational leadership, instructional leadership and distributed leadership.

Based on this research study, each of the key findings were mentioned by teachers and principals. Both groups mentioned that one of the most important leadership changes was an instructional focus, along with feedback. Building a positive culture and collaboration were discussed by participants in each interview. The teachers in this study discussed the importance of data to inform instruction. This connects to principal what principals said about instituting professional learning communities as a leadership change. Efforts regarding the change for teacher recruitment and retention are connected to strategic personnel and resource management processes. Lastly, Grissom et al. (2021), indicate a key finding in their research that is aligned with the findings from this research study. For example, effective principals orient their practice toward instructionally focused interactions with teachers, building a productive school climate, facilitating collaboration and professional learning communities, and strategic personnel and resource management processes.

Along with teacher retention and an instructional focus, there are many factors for turnaround principals to consider. There is growing research around the practices and behaviors

of effective leaders. Along with leadership practices and behaviors, the traits are discussed in the next section on implications for practice.

Implications for Practice

This study was specifically limited to the connection between school leadership practices and traits that impact student behavior to reduce disciplinary infractions in urban settings. As mentioned in the literature review, the psychological category of personal leadership resources (PLR) includes qualities normally considered to be traits – optimism, self-efficacy, resilience, and proactivity. Based on the principal responses, self-efficacy and resilience are evident traits for the leaders. Now that the principals have some experience, they have developed the proactivity trait and can anticipate and address problems. The workload and magnitude of problems are indicators of their ability to be resilient. Leithwood et al. (2019) argue that the results of research about leadership traits has limited value and that the results of research about the full range of non-behavioral, non-practice qualities underlying effective leadership practices are likely to be much more useful than isolated categories or competencies. I emphasized the behaviors and practices of principals more than the listed traits identified in the literature review because this study is focused on specific steps principals can take rather than profiles of effective leadership.

Principals and teachers are directly connected as influencers with student achievement and outcomes. Each of the schools in this study focused on culture and discipline which has improved classroom instruction and student achievement (see Figure 3.1 and 4.1). According to Leithwood et al. (2004), leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school. Principals' effects, however, are larger in scope because they are averaged over all students in a school, rather than a single

classroom. This comparison of principal impacts to teacher impacts is not an "apples-to-apples" one because principals' effects on students come largely through their effects on teachers, including how principals hire, retain, develop, and encourage teachers and create appropriate conditions for teaching and learning (Grissom, et al., 2021).

Findings from this research study provided new insights, while substantiating existing research related to the challenges of school leadership in urban and turnaround schools. The findings indicate that the challenges, perceptions, and needs within an urban school are often defined by principals and teachers. The dominant themes and connections between leadership, culture and student behavior should not be overlooked when evaluating indicators of success related to school turnaround. Based on responses gathered from participants in this study and from the literature review, there are many factors that impact student achievement and school success. Effective leadership, strong culture, and behavioral systems provide the foundation for school transformation. This supports the notion that district leadership and principals should further train and support the practices deemed most effective for school turnaround. Figure 5. 1 contains the key practices and behaviors identified by teachers and principals organized under the themes of leadership, culture and discipline.

Due to the magnitude of responsibilities, there must be a focus on the foundation, which includes culture and structures needed to manage student discipline. Principals and teachers discussed the importance of having a behavior program and plan that are explicit. This was indicated as a major change made by current leadership. The literature suggests that school discipline is a factor that impacts most urban schools. The implications for practice are identified as follows: provide leadership training with structures such as McREL Balanced Leadership and

leadership pipelines and offer training and resources to promote positive school climate culture and discipline practices.

As indicated throughout this study, there is no one indicator of how leaders become successful with school turnaround. Based on gathered data, improvement requires clear focus on established goals to raise student achievement. School culture and discipline are important factors with urban school settings for varied reasons mentioned in the literature review. For example, culturally responsive leadership is necessary along with the ability to transform a school into a positive learning environment. The role of leadership is complex, especially in urban schools. This research study was to examine how school leaders successfully transform their schools to raise student achievement. These findings show the possibility of future research.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study analyzed effective turnaround school leaders and how they successfully transformed school culture and discipline which resulted in increased student achievement. Further research on school principals implementing a turnaround can be used to increase our knowledge about the leadership practices required to improve culture and reduce discipline infractions. Several are suggested below for future consideration in a research study.

1. The principals in this study were all proven leaders and led a successful turnaround school based on achievement and discipline data. Research to examine those principals who failed to obtain increased student achievement should also be conducted to identify how their practices differed from those of the principals in this study.

2. This study examined three principals in depth but it would be beneficial to observe a larger number of principals leading schools considered low-performing, in need of

turnaround, or labeled priority. Expanding the scale of the study would ensure greater generalizability across schools and school leaders.

3. While all three principals in this study fall into leadership styles categorized by Ms. Smith, Dr. Lewis and Ms. Franks, I did not attempt to compare whether one leadership style proved more effective than another based upon the context of the school or later academic, behavioral, or affective outcomes. More research might provide school leaders with better insight into the leadership style most suited for a particular setting or situation involving school turnaround.

4. This study postulates that leadership qualities play an important role in improving school culture and reducing disciplinary infractions to improve academic outcomes. More research is needed to quantify the role played by each factor in order to better prioritize action steps for turning around schools.

5. While this study focused on the perceptions of principals and teachers triangulated with academic, behavioral, and affective data, the perspectives of students and their families are not considered. These stakeholders may offer additional insight into the turnaround process and more research should consider their points of view.

6. Based on research and finding from this study, culturally responsive leadership is emerging within the leadership profession and deserves further investigation.

7. The principals in this study participated in a leadership pipeline program and McREL Balanced Leadership Training. However, they did not mention the names of the trainings in their responses to presented questions. The impact and relevance of leadership pipeline and training programs on success as principal should be examined.

The above studies would lead to increased knowledge of how to improve the culture and student discipline in turnaround schools. These studies could enhance the depth of knowledge of how to improve these schools. It is evident from this study and the literature review that leadership is a key component to the success of these schools.

Considerations

The study was based upon answers given to open-ended interview questions through oral responses and it was assumed that the participants were thoughtful, forthright, and honest in providing accurate data. It is possible that the teachers and principals held ideas of what I may want or expect from their responses due to my previous role as director. Lastly, teachers may have felt ashamed or embarrassed if they had discipline problems or prevented a positive school culture due to their lack of being culturally responsive.

Limitations

This study is limited to administrators and certified teachers from three schools in middle Tennessee concerning leadership styles that transform school culture to reduce disciplinary infractions and increase achievement in elementary schools. A limitation of this study is the focus on elementary school principals serving in urban turnaround schools. The study is dependent on the ability of participants to be familiar with leadership styles of the current and previous school administration regarding school culture and discipline practices.

A limitation of this study is that the confidence and expertise of the principals is limited due to years of experience. In addition, teachers and administrators might assume responses I may want to hear due to my previous role as an elementary director. These factors may have influenced responses and therefore impacted the results of this study. Another limitation of this study is limited funding. The participants in this study were not compensated for their time. In

addition, the district has been under financial strain due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This also presents limitations due to modified schedules for teachers and principals. The interviews were conducted through Zoom on scheduled remote learning days for students. There are also safety guidelines such as social distancing to implement when collecting the necessary documents such as the informed consent.

Delimitations

Sampling is a delimitation and only studying a portion of elementary turnaround principals provided insight into the stated problem. Sampling also limited the generalizations to schools with similar demographics. The three selected principals in this study served in their turnaround school fewer than three years. Successful turnaround experiences may be found at the elementary, middle, or high school levels. This study was restricted to successful elementary urban turnaround principals.

Another delimitation is the focus on teachers in grades kindergarten through fifth grade who have worked at the school during the transition of leadership. The decision to select specific grade levels and teachers was to gather more data on the changes within the school. The responses provided insights on changes made that led to success with culture, discipline and student achievement.

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Summary

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Principals in urban, priority, and turnaround schools are perceived as having a more difficult and complex job than principals in other schools (Rhim & Redding, 2014). In recent years, the standards of performance for the principal have evolved to reflect the complexity of the job with several sets of guiding principles and performance standards coming from national, state, and local governing organizations. I started the journey of understanding what makes for a successful turnaround principal and what leadership practices and styles they relied upon to turn

their once underperforming schools around. I was hopeful that the story of three successful schools is more telling than the research around the failures of turnaround schools.

This qualitative study focused on the leadership changes made to reduce disciplinary infractions in urban and turnaround school. Teachers and principals consistently referenced similar practices and behaviors such as shared decision making, clear communication, collaboration and consistency that led to school improvement.

While all of the principals discussed leading in their turnaround school as challenging work, they were able to find celebrations and rewards within these schools. I feel fortunate to have experienced the realities and perceptions of three turnaround principals as they transform their schools. Ultimately, the principals all frequently referenced transformational, distributive, and instructional leadership.

The summation of this study has presented itself as hope for the ability to improve student outcomes in urban and turnaround schools. The journey to understand why some schools work and others do not has been a challenge. This study allowed me to deepen my understanding of the essential styles, practices and competencies of school leaders. As the knowledge from this study is gained, I plan to share and implement findings to improve the education of students within urban settings.

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APPENDIX A

Turnaround Principal Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your path to principalship in a turnaround school?

2. If I spent a week in your school, what would I see?

3. What were your first actions as principal in this school?

4. What do you do differently now compared to your first year in this school?

5. How would you describe your leadership style?

6. What do you think your teachers would say about your school culture?

7. How do you monitor your school culture?

8. Based on current data, student discipline has declined for the past two years. What do you attribute to this change to?

9. How has this impacted student achievement?

APPENDIX B

Focus Group Interview Questions

1. Tell me about the conditions of the school when you arrived?

2. If I spent a week in your school, what would I see?

3. If I visited your classroom, what would I see about the culture in your classroom?

4. What were the first actions of your principal in the turnaround process?

5. What changes have been sustained? Why do you think they have been sustained?

6. Do you view this school as rapidly improving, stagnant, or regressed for the past two years? Why?

7. What are your beliefs about student discipline?

8. How has discipline evolved over the past two years?

9. What are the successes and challenges for student discipline?

10. What supports have been put in place and what do you need to be successful?

11. What changes exist between your current and previous principal?

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT "Identifying leadership styles and practices of effective urban school principals to transform school culture and discipline."

INTRODUCTION You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to identify the practices and styles of effective leaders within turnaround schools.

PARTICIPANTS INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY Your participation in this study will be documented through a transcript of a principal interview or focus teacher focus group. The interviews will be conducted face to face via Zoom. Some of you will participate in an interview. Some of you will participate in a focus group. Once the interviews are complete, you will be asked to affirm whether or not the summaries provided by the researcher described or did not describe your experience.

RISKS There are no known physical risks to participating in this research study. Through self-reflection during the interview you may begin discussing memories and previous experiences.

BENEFITS The benefit of participating in this research study is to help contribute to the body of knowledge regarding effective leadership necessary for successful transformation within turnaround schools.

CONFIDENTALITY The information in this research study records will be kept confidential. Data will be stored securely and will be made available only to the researcher conducting the study and the advisor. No reference will be made in oral or written reports, which could connect you to the study. You will be asked to select a pseudonym of your choice, which will be used to refer to you throughout the study.

CONTACT INFORMATION If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, (or you experience adverse effect as a result of participating in this study,) you may contact the researcher, Saunya V. Goss, 409 Phoenix Avenue, Chattanooga, TN 37411, (423) 304-2341.

PARTICIPATION Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

CONSENT I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's Signature_____Date_____

Investigator's Signature_____Date_____

CONSENT FOR AUDIO RECORDING

I agree to allow my face to face Zoom interview to be audio recorded.

Participant's Signature_____Date_____

Figure 1.1

Principal Leadership Style and Practices

Note. This figure represents the Conceptual Leadership Framework adapted from Kouzes and Posner (2017).

Figure 1.2

Transformational Leadership Model

Note: This figure is an adaptation of Leithwood's transformational leadership model.

Figure 3.1

Current Data from Three Turnaround Schools

	School-Wide TVAAS								
	16-17			17-18			18-19		
	Comp	Lit	Num	Comp	Lit	Num	Comp	Lit	Num
Blue Academy	1	2	1	1	3	1	3	3	3
Berry Hills Elementary	2	5	2	1	2	1	5	5	5
Morris Elementary	1	3	1	2	3	2	4	4	4

	TNReady / EOC Success Rate								
	16-17 Overall	16-17 ELA	16-17 Math	17-18 Overall	17-18 ELA	17-18 Math	18-19 Overall	18-19 ELA	18-19 Math
Blue Academy	13.8%	11.4%	16.1%	11.8%	9.7%	13.8%	18.9%	15.6%	22.2%
Berry Hills Elementary	10.0%	7.1%	12.9%	6.3%	5.9%	6.6%	14.9%	8.6%	21.2%
Morris Elementary	11.8%	8.7%	14.6%	9.2%	6.8%	11.6%	12.0%	12.4%	11.6%

Note. Tennessee Value Added Assessment System (TVAAS) measures student growth from year to year for students in fourth and fifth grades. The TNReady and End of Course (EOC) Success Rate measures academic achievement for students in third through fifth grades.

Figure 4.1

Fall to Winter Universal Screener Data
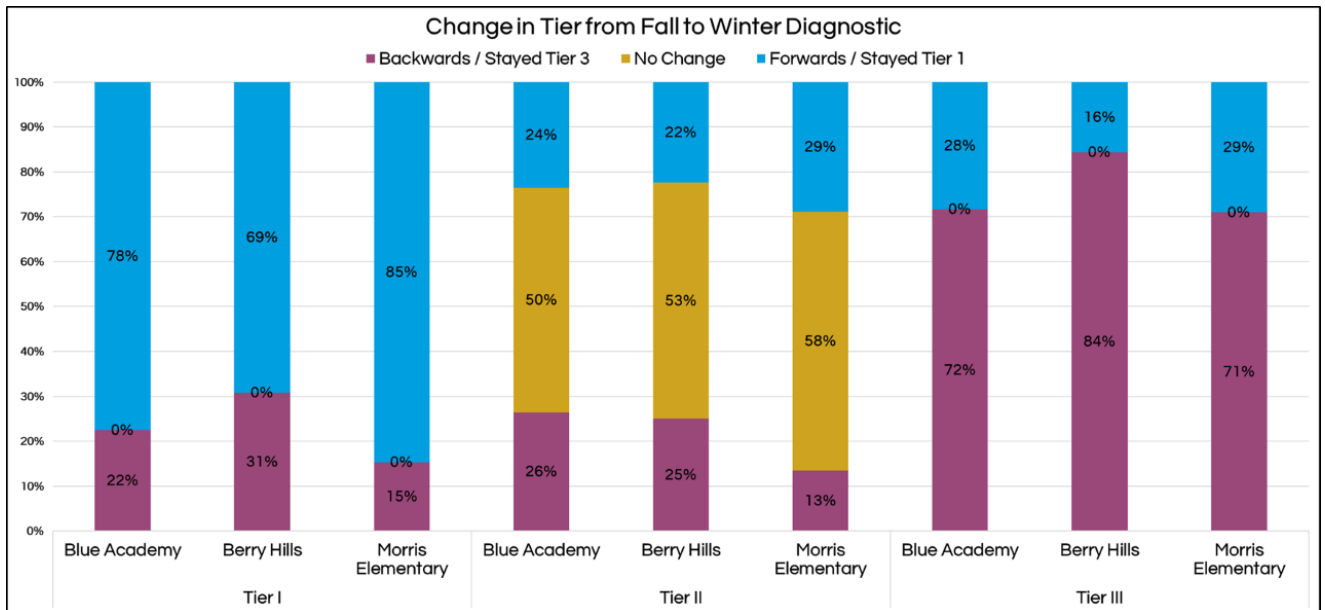
Change in Tier from Fall to Winter Diagnostic

Note. This figure represents data retrieved from the universal screener for kindergarten- fifth

grade (2021) to determine if students made progress.

Figure 4.2

Out of School Suspension Data
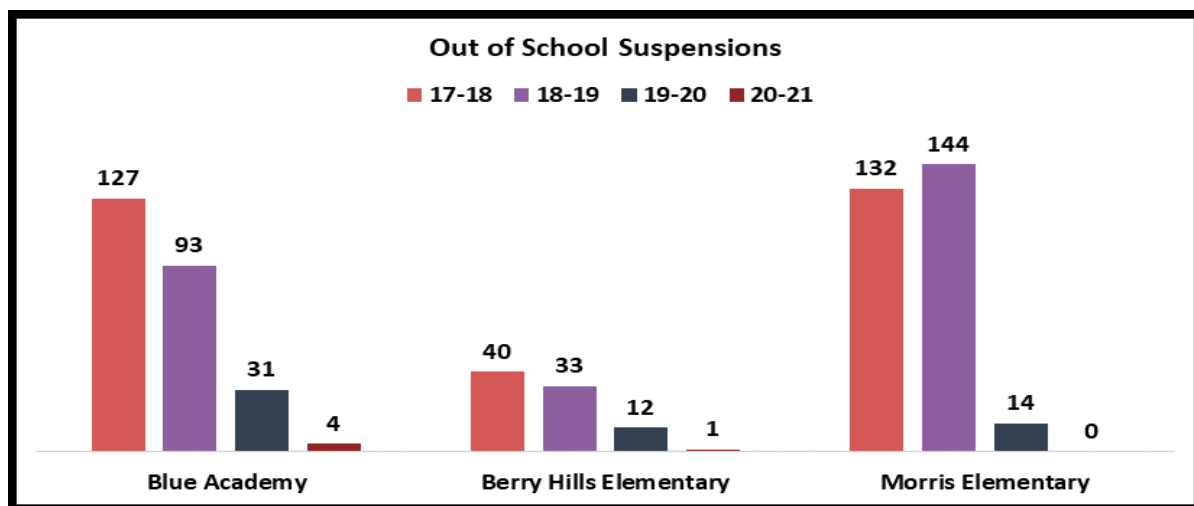
Out of School Suspensions

■ 17-18 ■ 18-19 ■ 19-20 ■ 20-21

	Blue Academy	Berry Hills Elementary	Morris Elementary
17-18	127	40	132
18-19	93	33	144
19-20	31	12	14
20-21	4	1	0

Note. This figure represents the data for out of school suspension from August 2017-January 2021).

Figure 5.1

Key Leadership Behaviors and Practices
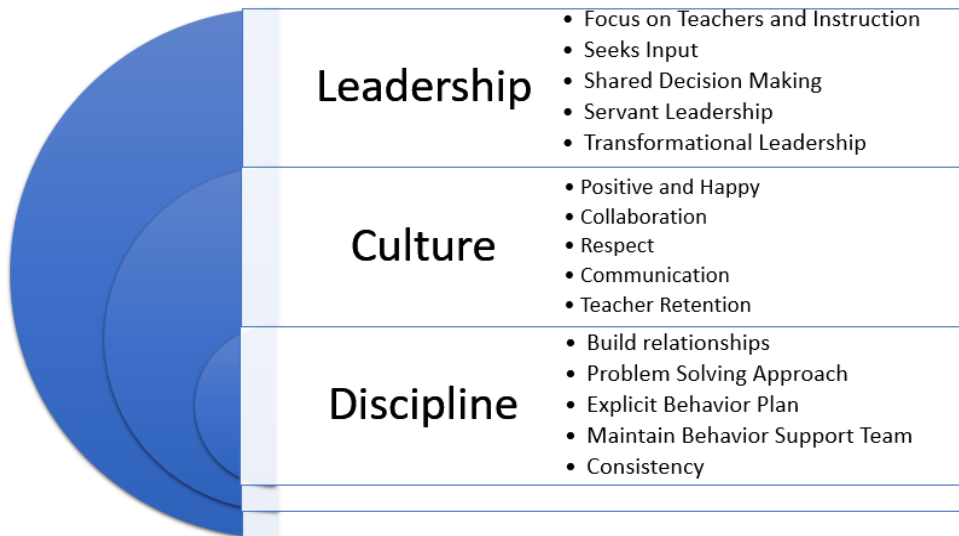
Leadership
- Focus on Teachers and Instruction
- Seeks Input
- Shared Decision Making
- Servant Leadership
- Transformational Leadership

Culture
- Positive and Happy
- Collaboration
- Respect
- Communication
- Teacher Retention

Discipline
- Build relationships
- Problem Solving Approach
- Explicit Behavior Plan
- Maintain Behavior Support Team
- Consistency

Note. This figure represents an overview of the key behaviors and practices identified in this study from the open, axial and selective coding.

Table 1.1

Leadership Style Key Ideas and Practices

Leadership Style	Key Ideas	Key Practices
Authoritarian	Strict rules and guidelines, hierarchal differences, high performance standards	Maintain control, set unambiguous goals, clear and direct
Democratic	Focus on employee productivity and satisfaction, feedback	Shared decision making, two-way communication
Laissez-Faire	Subordinates are free to make their own decisions, limited communication	Neutral, low profile, avoid conflict and decision making
Situational	Actions based on skill level of employee, adaptive to the needs	Modifies style and adapts, direct and/or supportive
Servant	Focus on needs of other, people-centric rather than process-centric approach	Relationship centered, humble, others before self
Transactional	Incentives driven, short term goal, prefers exchanges, practical, order	Exchanges rewards for performance, focus on operations, resistant to change
Transformational	Challenges status quo, employee empowerment, shared leadership, visionary	Builds capacity and trust, influencers, collaborative, change agent
Culturally Responsive	Focus on school culture, equity, social justice and inclusiveness	Relationship building with all stakeholders, focus on professional development

Table 1.2

Principal Experience and Demographics

Principal	Race	Gender	Level of Education	Total Years of Educational Experience	Total Years as Assistant Principal	Total Years as Principal
Ms. Smith	Black	Female	Masters	23	6	2
Dr. Lewis	White	Female	Doctoral	24	2	3
Ms. Franks	Black	Female	Masters	23	4	3

Table 4.1

School Demographics

School	Enrollment	Economically Disadvantaged	Racial and Ethnic Demographics
Blue Academy	358	62.3%	96.9% Black/Hispanic/Native American
Berry Hills	672	64.9%	96.4% Black/Hispanic/Native American
Morris Elementary	312	68.9%	97.1% Black/Hispanic/Native American

Table 4.2

Data Sorted in Levels of Coding for Research Question: In urban schools that reduced disciplinary infractions what leadership changes were made?

Raw Data	Open Coding	Axial Coding	Selective Coding
Leadership "As assistant principal I entered a turnaround school that was at the very bottom of the list in the state." "You're the one that's gonna save us." "We as principals, we can't wait, we're not human." "I found lots of deficiencies in the school- lots, meaning that I personally could not handle." "So I started building professional development, observing best practices, giving teachers effective actionable feedback." "I had some people to push me to say that it was time for me to apply for principalship." "I think I'm definitely a servant leader." "I try to model a lot of things for my faculty and model in a lot of ways, and it has served me well." "Faculty members tell me you've really inspired me." "I'm really methodical and I think, try to think things through and then I get input...insightful decisions." "It's hard work--hard work not in the sense of once you get to work--it is hard work when I'm at home, because I'm always thinking okay what move do I need to make here."	Low Performing School Teacher Focused Professional development Workload Methodical Inspirational Servant Leadership	Focus on instruction and professional growth Servant leadership	Focus on instruction, servant, leadership, collaboration, teacher recruitment of talent, professional development, and behavior team are perceived as the leadership changes made to reduce disciplinary infractions.
Culture "The first thing that comes to my mind...is joy. I think people are happy to be here..., including our kids." "I think you will see passion..." "Collaboration, that's one thing I came in here really with a strong passion for and I didn't see a lot of when I came in." "Keeping kids at the center." "We're on our path to becoming a true PLC. I think it is like one of the greatest things I probably have done as far as initiatives." "At this point I feel like I have two different staffs still, I inherited one, and the others were hired." "I have vocal faculty members, they are going to tell me the pulse of the school."	Passion and joy Collaborative Student focused PLC Teacher recruitment Open communication	Collaborative with open communication, PLC, and recruitment of talent	
Behavior "Teachers say discipline is so much better." "Hands down our RTI-B team... it's consistent." "Specifically talk about individual children and devise a plan." Discipline and student achievement "go hand in hand." "I think time on task and staying in class and being involved in academic lessons, that's made a difference."	Team Approach Consistency with behavior plan Teacher buy in Problem solving for behavior Time on task Student achievement increased	Raised student achievement by increasing time on task, consistently problem solving through a behavior team	

Table 4.3

Data Sorted in Levels of Coding for Research Question: In urban schools that reduced disciplinary infractions what leadership changes were made?

Raw Data	Open Coding	Axial Coding	Selective Coding
Leadership The school was "the lowest performing elementary school in the state." "I love teaching. "I always try to never forget what it's like to be a teacher. I always like to think through how will my decision affect teachers." "Familiarity with urban schools and turnaround schools I think that's why they placed me here." "I try to spend the majority of my day in the classroom, seeing what kids are experiencing, what teachers are teaching." "My first actions were setting up the, the culture and climate of the school, the expectation systems" "First year, I think the school managed me, because there was just a lot to clean up. And now I feel like I can manage the school. We have clear expectations, clear structures." "The very first year was sort of just flying by the seat of your pants and trying to make quick decisions about things that needed to happen." "I weigh heavy in the shared leadership. I don't really like to make decisions by myself. We problem solve together."	Low performing school Teacher focused Instructional leadership Focus on culture and climate Workload Seeks input Shared leadership	Focus on instruction Shared decision making	Instructional focus, shared leadership, collaboration, retention and recruitment of talent, behavior team and plan are perceived as the leadership changes made to reduce disciplinary infractions.
Culture … "family atmosphere for majority of the teachers…they've been here with me for three to four years" The culture is "very collaborative." … "high percentages of teachers that enjoy working here and want to work here, which also results in low teacher turnover" … "open door policy if teachers have issues" "I tend to hire people that are like me." "We are very collaborative here, we work together. There's not an option- that's just the way that we do things."	Input Collaborative Openness Recruit and retain teachers	Collaborative with open communication and recruitment of talent	
Discipline "…area of strength, and so they (team) take pride and ownership" "…the consistency of our behavior plan. And the consistency of implementation" "As suspensions and office referrals have decreased student achievement and student growth has increased. And I think that's a direct result of kids being in class--other kids being able to learn--instructional time is not wasted on behavior." "When teachers are able to teach, then you know student achievement will increase."	Consistency with behavior plan and team approach with implementation Teacher buy in Problem solving for behavior Student achievement increased	Consistency with behavior plan and team to raise student achievement	

Table 4.4

Data Sorted in Levels of Coding for Research Question: In urban schools that reduced disciplinary infractions what leadership changes were made?

Raw Data	Open Coding	Axial Coding	Selective Coding
Leadership You would see me "collaborating with coaches, interacting with students and teachers and going in and out" of classrooms. My first actions-"work on the culture and climate, put practices in place to improve student behavior, and work on improving academic achievement." "I believe in shared decision making- allowing the leadership team to help in the decisions that are impacting the school." "Finally gotten to a place where I have a stable staff."	Instructional leadership Focus on culture and climate Workload Seeks input Shared decision making Transformational leadership	Focus on instruction Shared decision making	Instructional focus, collaboration, retention and recruitment of talent, behavior team and plan are perceived as the leadership changes made to reduce disciplinary infractions.
Culture Input from "everyone in the building as far as their take on what was going well and what needs to be worked on." Teachers "wanted consistency and wanted everybody to be held accountable." "I do have to make adjustments based on morale sometimes and what's going on." The culture "is positive and we are collaborative." "I think they would say that I have an open door policy where I am accessible." "Working on recruiting those quality teachers and finding ways to keep them here."	Input Positive Collaborative Openness Recruit and retain teachers	Collaborative with open communication and recruitment of talent	
Behavior Teachers "felt like the student behavior was out of control. And so we knew that was something that we had to work on." "…the explicitness of having SWPBS, CHAMPS" has improved behavior. "All the teachers have been trained… holding them accountable and giving them the specific steps of things that they have to do and try before administration gets involved." "We're getting to a place now where I feel like the kids hold each other accountable." "If I get the behavior and the climate and culture, right, then achievement is going to start going up-we're seeing it."	Consistency with behavior plan and implementation Team approach Teacher buy in Problem solving for behavior Student achievement increased	Consistency with behavior plan and team to raise student achievement	

Table 4.5

Data Sorted in Levels of Coding for Research Question: In urban schools that reduced disciplinary infractions what leadership changes were made?

Raw Data	Open Coding	Axial Coding	Selective Coding

Leadership

The school was "the lowest performing elementary school in the state."

"You're the one that's gonna save us."

"We as principals, we can't wait, we're not human."

"First year, I think the school managed me, because there was just a lot to clean up. And now I feel like I can manage the school. We have clear expectations, clear structures."

"I found lots of deficiencies in the school- lots, meaning that I personally could not handle."

"I try to spend the majority of my day in the classroom, seeing what kids are experiencing, what teachers are teaching."

"I think I'm definitely a servant leader."

"I weigh heavy in the shared leadership. I don't really like to make decisions by myself. We problem solve together."

"I feel like I have transformed the school."

Open Coding: Low performing school / Workload / Teacher focused / Instructional leadership / Shared leadership / Servant Leader / Transformational

Axial Coding: Focus on instruction / Shared decision making

Culture

The culture "is positive and we are collaborative." "We are very collaborative here, we work together. There's not an option- that's just the way that we do things."

"I think they would say that I have an open door policy where I am accessible."

"Working on recruiting those quality teachers and finding ways to keep them here."

..."high percentages of teachers that enjoy working here and want to work here, which also results in low teacher turnover"

"Keeping kids at the center."

Open Coding: Input / Collaborative / Openness / Recruit and retain teachers

Axial Coding: Collaborative with open communication and recruitment of talent

Discipline

"If I get the behavior and the climate and culture, right, then achievement is going to start going up-we're seeing it."

"Teachers say discipline is so much better." "Hands down our RTI-B team… it's consistent."

Discipline and student achievement "go hand in hand."

"As suspensions and office referrals have decreased student achievement and student growth has increased. And I think that's a direct result of kids being in class--other kids being able to learn-- instructional time is not wasted on behavior."

Open Coding: Consistency with behavior plan and team approach with implementation / Teacher buy in / Problem solving for behavior / Student achievement increased

Axial Coding: Consistency with behavior plan and team to raise student achievement

Selective Coding: Instructional focus, shared leadership, collaboration, retention and recruitment of talent, behavior team and plan are perceived as the leadership changes made to reduce disciplinary infractions.

Table 4.6

Data Sorted in Levels of Coding for Research Question: In urban schools that reduced disciplinary infractions what leadership changes were made?

Raw Data	Open Coding	Axial Coding	Selective Coding

Culture

"…there's a realistic view, especially this year, this is hard sometimes."

"…there was a real lack of authentic communication between administration and teachers."

"It was more of a keep your head down, duck and cover. Hopefully, nobody will notice you then you won't get in trouble kind of feeling."

"I've been through three administrators…every year there was a mass exodus."

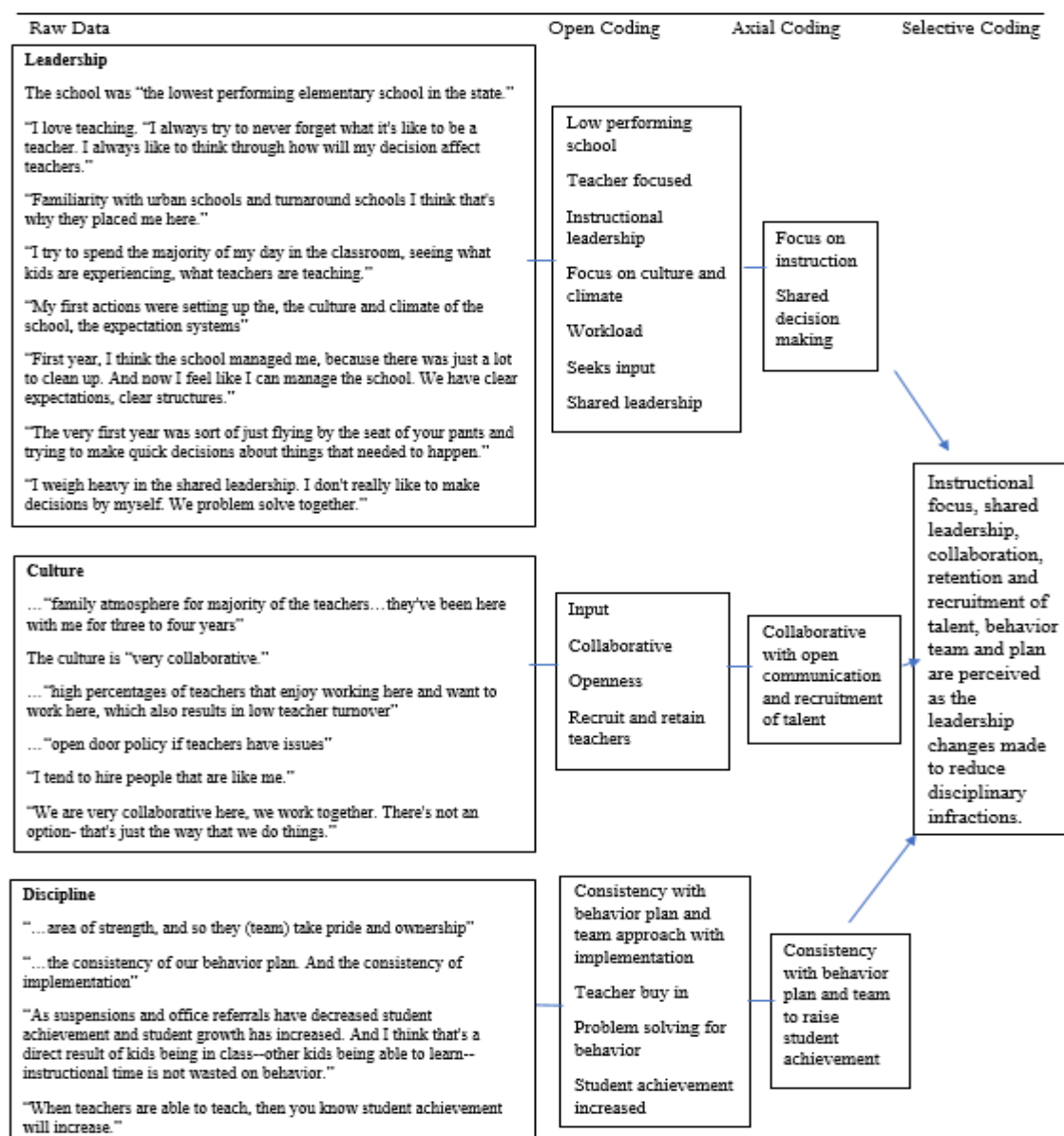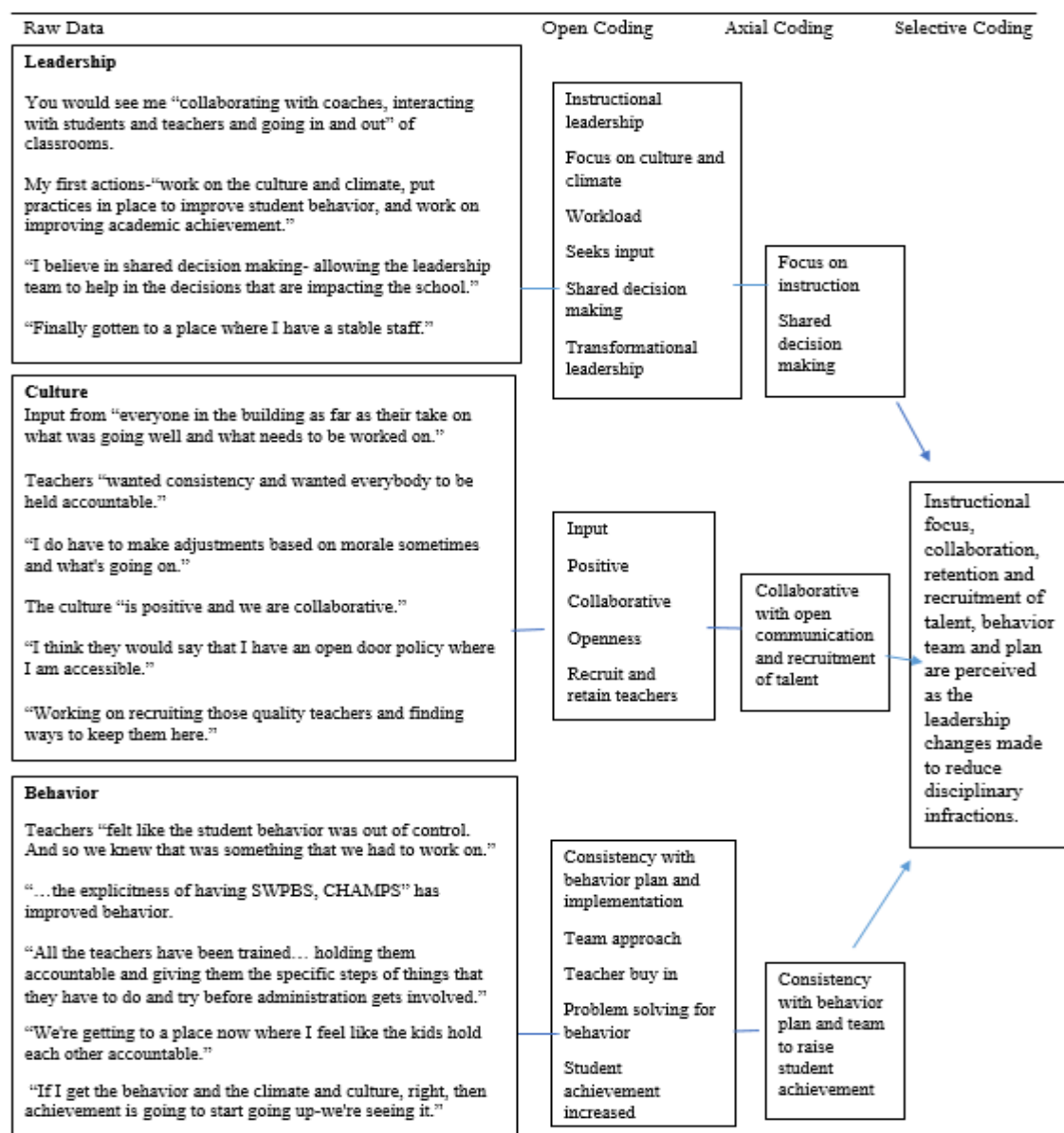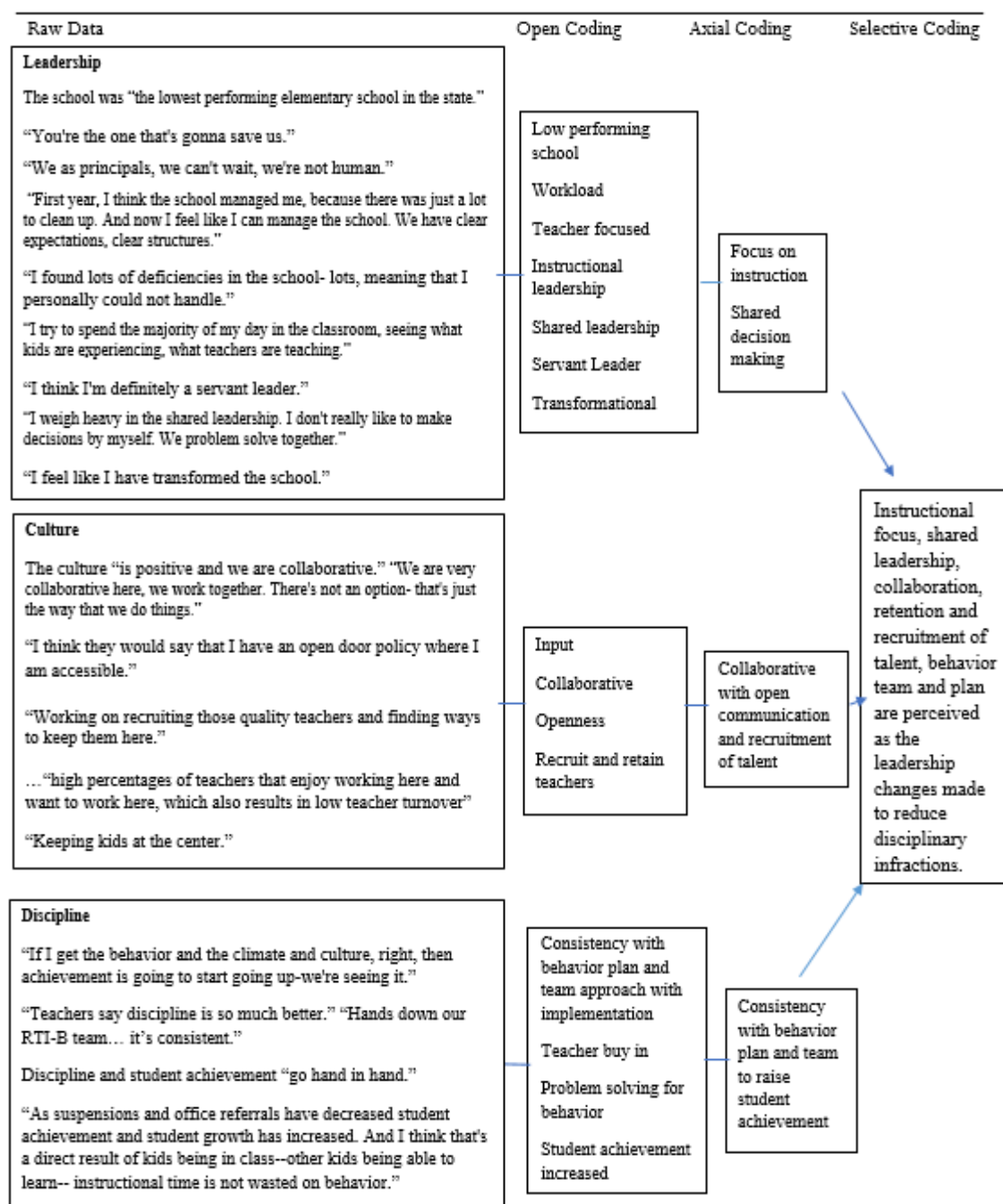"We were bleeding new teachers…like we were always just like a revolving door."

Open Coding: Workload / Lack of communication / High turnover with teachers and administrators

Axial Coding: Workload, communication, and faculty turnover impacted the school culture

Discipline

"There was definitely a lack of respect from the students towards the teacher, from the teachers towards the students, which added to the problem."

"A lot of teachers were scared of the children."

"I am a disciplinarian. I believe in rules and following expectations." "…very explicit with expectations and directives."

"…students knowing they are loved regardless."

"We have to go the extra mile to get a relationship with every student."

"We have a PBIS team… we created a behavior matrix.

Open Coding: Lack of respect / Explicit rules and expectations / Love / Relationship building / Behavior plan and team

Axial Coding: Establishing a positive culture with clear communication and feedback, focus on discipline, student data and professional growth

Selective Coding: Communication, relationships, capacity building, order, consistency with explicit behavior exceptions are perceived as the leadership changes made to reduce disciplinary infractions.

Leadership Changes

"One word- joy." "Positive, just happy smiling faces."

"..we have protocols in place. I know I'm safe in my school."

"You're going to see teachers helping each other-definitely team work." "We're all a family."

The principal created "cadres."

…individual conferences…getting to know me…help us try to do better in areas we are struggling in."

The principal is "trying to build capacity with our teachers…and I feel like that has been sustained."

"We're a data driven family." "We're always looking at how we can improve." "We can't get married to anyone idea…let's look at the data."

"…the consistency piece within the building has changed over the past two years."

"COVID has affected a lot this year."

Open Coding: Positive culture / Safety and order / Discipline / Family oriented / Communication and feedback / Data driven / Consistency / Adjustments made due to pandemic

Axial Coding: Relationship building, explicit expectations, plan and behavior team addressed lack of respect and problematic behavior