A Superintendent's Trust-Building Practices with Principals: A Case Study

by

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Abstract

Researchers have identified the benefits of trust within school organizations from various perspectives, but little is known about trust between a superintendent and campus principals. School districts are under great pressure to increase educational outcomes. Structurally, educational leaders depend on each other to reach goals. The purpose of this case study was two-fold: to identify practices Alabama superintendents use to build trust with campus principals and to identify similarities and differences of both perspectives. Data sources for this study included five semi-structured interviews with four principals and one superintendent from a small district in Alabama, semi-structured meeting observations and a superintendent trust survey. Coding of all data points revealed four themes involving trust-building practices that the superintendent employed with principals, including 1) communicates, 2) empowers, 3) makes informed decisions, and 4) models norms. Analysis from both the superintendent and principals' data included all four themes. On the other hand, only principals reported the sub-theme of risk-taking. While generally code frequencies across themes were similar for both parties, the principals' perception concerning empowerment and communication was greater than the superintendent. Knowledge of these specific leadership practices may help school superintendents build trusting relationships with campus principals for the sake of district-wide improvements.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter I: Overview of the Study

Beginning in the early 2000s, educational researchers identified the benefits of trust in school organizations (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Burke et al., 2007; Fukuyama, 1995; McAllister, 1995). The majority of trust research takes place at the school-level; there is a lack of research regarding trust between the superintendent and principals. The leadership team of the superintendent and principal influences the success of all members of a school district (West & Derrington, 2008). Waters and Marzano (2006) concluded that superintendents influenced student outcomes through the campus principal. The potential impact of the superintendent-principal relationship on the broader school organization requires further research. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to gain a better understanding of the nature of trust between superintendents and principals, to identify the unique practices that superintendents use to develop trust, and to compare the superintendent's perspectives on trust-building practices with the principals' perspectives.

The primary research question guiding this study was, "what practices do superintendents employ to develop trust with principals?" The study also sought to examine similarities and differences between the perspectives of the superintendent and principals. The study included a small suburban district on the outskirts of a large city in Alabama that serves almost 2000 students in grades prekindergarten through 12. Data collection included in-depth interviews, observations, and surveys from one superintendent and four principals. Collectively, data provided practical information regarding how superintendents can build trust with principals.

Background of the Problem

Trust within the public education system has become an important issue in today's era of increased accountability (Daly, 2009; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Increasingly, federal and

state governments use policies to elicit change in public schools by holding them responsible for student outcomes (O'Day, 2002). Governing bodies respond to the pressure of the global economy by raising academic standards (Bottoms & O'Neill, 2001). O'Day (2002) stated that increased public scrutiny was not surprising given that public school revenue totaled over $706 billion in the United States in 2015-2016 (Public School Revenue Sources, 2019). The increase in government oversight may negatively impact the professional collaboration and sharing in schools (Mintrop & Trujillo, 2007), which reduces the likelihood of successful reform (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004).

Change initiatives and increased policies place educational leaders under great pressure. As the top instructional leader, superintendents are responsible for implementing structures and creating conditions to develop principals professionally to increase educational outcomes. However, Chhuon et al. (2008) found that there is a lack of connection between superintendents – or district offices – and their principals. Principals are often isolated from other principals and district office leaders (i.e., curriculum coordinators, superintendents), reducing access to information, resources, and communication, and therefore impacting trust (Finnigan & Daly, 2017). In the absence of trusting relationships, organizations use rules and regulations to ensure compliance with policies and change initiatives (Fukuyama, 1995). Since trusting relationships among school district leaders may support improvement (Copan & Knapp, 2006), researchers must explore the practices that foster trust between superintendents and principals.

The hierarchical organization of many public schools leaves educational leaders dependent on one another to accomplish objectives, personal agendas, and desired outcomes, creating a sense of vulnerability among parties (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). Principals depend on district curriculum directors, who, in turn, depend on superintendents. District directors rely on

campus principals to meet deadlines, improve student outcomes, and endorse the district vision. Principals need superintendents to support their unique personnel and operations objectives. Despite the dependence on one another, the physical separation of schools and central offices reduces the opportunity for the regular social interactions that develop trust (Chhuon et al., 2008). Forsyth et al. (2011) found that within this interdependent environment of vulnerability, that trust can replace formal controls and increase cooperation. Sitkin and Stickel (1996) suggest that formal control may increase distrust.

The literature is rich in the benefits of trust within organizations (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Burke et al., 2007; Fukuyama, 1995; McAllister, 1995). Burke et al. (2007) found that trust can exist on a variety of levels throughout an organization, including among teams, among leadership, and among employees. Organizations with high trust benefit from increased communication, collaboration, and creativity (Fukuyama, 1995). Bryk and Schneider (2002) found evidence that suggests that educational leaders may leverage relational trust as a resource to increase efficiency, program stability, and to promote positive outcomes. Despite the known benefits of high-trust organizations, central office leaders (i.e., superintendents) continue to emphasize policy development to improve school outcomes (van Maele et al., 2014).

A trusting relationship can benefit both the superintendent and the principal. School improvement is grounded in trust, collaboration, and relationships. Finnigan and Daly (2017) found that it can be challenging to grow and maintain these elements of a trusting relationship with a high principal turnover. Consequently, superintendents must work to reduce the campus leadership churn and positively influence a principal's job satisfaction (Hatchel, 2012). Research suggests that a superintendent's trustworthiness influences a principal's willingness and effort required to make school improvements (West & Derrington, 2008) and remain committed to the

district's vision (Burchfield, 2012). Until trust is well established, some principals may perceive the superintendent as manipulative and unsupportive (Noppe et al., 2013). When followers trust their leader, they are more likely to engage in risk-taking behaviors that increase their work performance (Mayer et al., 1995).

The superintendent-principal relationship is one of interdependence. Trust and communication are important elements of their positive relationship (Lawson et al., 2017; West & Derrington, 2008). Superintendents have a direct impact on principals through promotions, work assignments, salaries, and dismissals. The principal also serves as a valuable resource for superintendents in terms of providing student data and mentoring personnel (Bird, 2011). A positive relationship between a principal and central administration can increase the principal's commitment and enable district structures to work more effectively (Burchfield, 2012). Both the superintendent and the principal play a part in cultivating conditions that foster relational trust to meet their objectives and influence change at the school level.

Amid greater expectations, increased accountability, and increased pressure, many educational leaders rely on collaboration to enable change (Daly, 2009; Mintrop & Trujillo, 2007). Wilson (2009) found that distrust within the organization can prevent forward movement. Similarly, Bryk and Schneider (2002) and Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004) found that distrust can negatively impact collaborative relationships. In a climate of distrust, leaders report negative effects on morale, innovation, and relationship building (Wilson, 2009), and engagement (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Kouses and Posner (2003) stated, "…before people will be willing to follow a leader's vision or act on a leader's initiatives, they must trust their leader" (p. 404).

Researchers have identified effective trust-building practices for leaders in various school contexts (see Browning, 2014; Cosner, 2009; Daly & Finnigan, 2012; Forsyth et al., 2011; Kellogg, 2017; Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Principals build trust with faculty through repeated social interactions (Cosner, 2009; Daly & Finnigan, 2012), modeling norms (Kellogg, 2017; Tschannen-Moran, 2014), visioning (Forsyth et al., 2011; Tschannen-Moran, 2014), communication (Browning, 2014; Kellogg, 2017; Lawson et al., 2017; Tschannen-Moran, 2014), building relationships (Browning, 2014; Kellogg, 2017) and coaching or supporting (Browning, 2014; Tschannen-Moran, 2014).

Other researchers who studied trust-building practices that district leaders use with school personnel identified communication as key factor (Lawson et al., 2017). Superintendents build trust with principals and key stakeholders (i.e., school board members) through communication (Huang, 2012; Kellogg, 2017), building relationships (Huang, 2012; Kellogg, 2017), transparency (Bird, 2010; Kellogg, 2017), modeling norms (Kellogg, 2017), and intentional or mindful actions (Huang, 2012; Lawson et al., 2017). To date, few studies exist regarding the specific trust-building practices that superintendents use with principals.

Purpose of the Study

The literature is rich concerning the trust between key school stakeholders (i.e., students, teachers, parents, and principals) but limited concerning the relationship between superintendents and principals (Adams & Miskell, 2016; Chhuon et al., 2008; Louis, 2007). Little is known about the specific practices or behaviors that superintendents rely on to cultivate trust with principals or about the principals' perceptions of those behaviors. Trust between the superintendent and district administration must be earned, nurtured, and sustained (Bird, 2010) and can increase order and reduce the uncertainty during challenging times (Holmes & Rempel, 1989). Further

investigation of the trust practices between the superintendent-principal relationship is worth further investigation.

Research Questions

This study investigated the following research question:

1. What practices do superintendents employ to build trust with campus principals?
2. What similarities exist between the superintendent's and principals' perceptions regarding trust-building practices?
3. What differences exist between the superintendent's and principals' perceptions regarding trust-building practices?

Overview of Research Design

Given the limited research on trust between superintendents and principals, this study employed a qualitative case study methodology to gain a greater, in-depth understanding and create a detailed description of practices (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Mertler, 2018; Yin, 2017). A qualitative study allowed for an in-depth exploration of trust-building practices employed by superintendents. Purposeful sampling included the nomination of participants by educational experts (Mertler, 2018).

Data collection relied heavily on semi-structured, in-depth interviews capturing the views of one superintendent and four principals within the district's natural setting (Mertler, 2018; Seidman, 2006). The open-ended interview questions and observation forms reflected the five facets of trust (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999) and current research concerning leadership trust-building practices (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The study's design allowed for triangulation through a comprehensive analysis of interviews, observations, and surveys (Creswell & Poth,

2017). Triangulation ensures that research findings are valid and trustworthy (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2017).

The researcher used an inductive design approach and analyzed data through In Vivo Coding and descriptive coding techniques. In Vivo Coding, which relies on the participants' natural language, is an acceptable choice for small-scale studies (Saldana, 2015). The researcher reduced codes to categories and themes, resulting in assertions (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Saldana, 2015). Data points included in-depth interviews, observations, and surveys. The researcher conducted interviews with the superintendent and principals and observed participants interacting with one another during meetings and while fulfilling their roles within the school context (Angrosino, 2007). Observational notes were framed around existing research regarding leadership trust-building practices. Campus principals completed a trust survey, framed by the six dimensions of trust, measuring trust in the superintendent (Hatchel, 2012). Both the collection and analysis of data from multiple data points ensured triangulation.

Theoretical Framework

The researcher used Hoy and Tschannen-Moran's (1999) widely accepted facets of trust and research in educational leadership to frame this research study. The five trust facets include competence, honesty, benevolence, openness, and reliability. The research on trust included school and district-level trust and leadership trust-building practices.

Assumptions

The researcher made several assumptions regarding this study. The primary assumption of this study was that the relationship between effective superintendents and principals is built on trust. Another significant assumption of the study was that the superintendent holds primary responsibility for developing a trusting relationship with their principals, and that the

superintendent does that through specific practices. The researcher also assumed that the interviews would require follow-up questions aimed at deepening understanding. The researcher mitigated these assumptions through self-reflection and mentor support during both the analysis process and multiple coding sessions.

The researcher also assumed that the participants provided honest answers to interview questions. To increase the likelihood that participants respond honestly, the researcher ensured confidentiality before and during the interview process. All interviews took place privately as well. Despite ensuring confidentiality, the researcher assumed that participants might respond with restraint or false statements.

Limitations

The primary limitation to the scope of this study included the purposeful sample of one superintendent and principals in one suburban district in Alabama. This type of non-random sampling technique is "sometimes referred to as judgment sampling because individuals making up the sample are believed to be representative of a given population," which may increase inaccuracies in the sample selection (Mertler, 2018, p. 231). Because respondents represented a single school district in a suburban town of Alabama, the results may not be generalizable to the wider population of superintendents and principals. The sample size was small and participation was voluntary. As such, relevant or significant observations might be limited.

Another limitation was the researcher's inability to control the environment in which the interviews and surveys were conducted; therefore, distractions and conditions may have altered the participants' responses, including accuracy and attention to details. Additionally, interview participants were not always articulate or perceptive (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). Lastly, flaws may exist in the survey.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study involved the insights gained into the essential relationship between superintendents and principals in ensuring that school districts address accountability measures and both create and sustain effective learning organizations. District-level leadership is correlated with student achievement (Marzano & Waters, 2009), yet often organizations overlook the value of interpersonal relationships when faced with increased pressure to improve student achievement (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). The actions of district leaders, like the superintendent, affect a principal's ability to be responsible for school-level outcomes (Marzano & Waters, 2009). Within the complex organization of a school district, many forces compete for improvement (Forsyth et al., 2011). In this way, trust is a significant and valuable resource that both superintendents and principals can use to execute the district vision and fulfill objectives (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Forsyth et al., 2011; Tschannen-Moran, 2014; van Maele et al., 2014).

This study is a valuable contribution to the field of educational leadership because it directs one's attention to the issue of trust between superintendents and principals, which is lacking in the literature. The superintendent-principal relationship is a powerful force for change within the school district. Daly and Finnigan's (2012) work in social network analysis suggested that the principals of low-performing schools have fewer trusting connections to central office leaders; this finding highlights the value of superintendents building trust with principals for the sake of student outcomes.

Educational leaders, including assistant superintendents, directors, principals, and assistant principals, may use the results of this study to learn how to build trust with other administrators and how to leverage trust to meet objectives. "Trustworthy leadership is at the heart of productive schools" (Tschannen-Moran, 2014, p. 14). Consequently, identifying

practices that build trust between superintendents and principals may foster success in school districts across the country.

Definition of Terms

The definitions of terms for this study came from the current literature. While the operational definitions are listed below, many terms are explained in more detail in Chapter Two, or as needed.

- District Leadership – District-level coordinators, directors, and superintendents.
- Facets – Specific elements or dimensions that combine to form a concept, such as trust.
- Principal – The persons of highest authority in an institution.
- Professional Learning Community (PLC) – An ongoing process in which educators collaborate to collect, analyze, and respond to student data to ensure student learning (DuFour, 2004).
- Superintendent – The person who manages or superintends to an organization.
- Trust – "An individual's or group's willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the latter party is benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open" (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999).

Summary

This chapter presented a synopsis of the study through a description of the background, purpose, and significance of the study, as well as the methodology. This chapter also included the researcher's assumptions, the study's limitations, and relevant terminology. Chapter Two comprises the theoretical framework of the study and a review of literature related to the study's research questions. Chapter Three includes the research methodology used to conduct the study,

including the collection and analysis of data. Chapter Four contains a description of participants, data analysis, and findings. Chapter Five closes with an overall summary of the findings, connections to literature, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Chapter Two provides a review of related literature and serves as the framework for understanding the nature of trust, how trust develops in schools and the outcomes of high-trust environments. The review of literature also explores leadership practices that build trust, the roles and relationships of superintendents and principals, and the value of trust in that relationship. The theoretical framework for this study comes from the existing research regarding leadership trust-building practices. The literature review begins with the definitions of *trust* and *trust facets.* Trust research includes school and district-level trust and leadership practices that build trust. The literature review also includes an explanation and discussion of the leadership roles of superintendents and principals as well as the nature of those relationships.

Defining Trust

Defining trust is challenging because it means different things to different individuals. Trust is a multifaceted construct – that is, it is comprised of many dimensions. Mayer et al. (1995) defined trust as "the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other party will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to control the other party" (p. 712). Rousseau et al. (1998), in a study of trust across multiple disciplines, defined trust as "a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another" (p. 395). Sheppard and Sherman (1998) viewed risk – or having something invested – as a prerequisite of trust. Rotter (1967) conceptualized trust as a trait that exists within an individual and relates to their propensity to trust. Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (2000), to unify the various definitions of trust, established the following:

> Even once we have a common definition of trust, the reality of trust will not be the same at all times and in all places. The importance of each of the facets depends on the referent of trust (who is being trusted) and the nature of the interdependence between parties. (p. 558)

In addition to the varying definitions of trust, researchers have uncovered a variety of types as well. Among these types of trust are interpersonal trust, collective trust, and relational trust.

Interpersonal trust can be described within two dimensions, including the cognitive and affective. The cognitive dimension of interpersonal trust may include issues of reliability, honesty, and fairness, and the affective dimension may include overall concern or benevolence for another party (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). In this study, trust between the superintendent and principal is an affective personal belief resulting in the individual perceptions of other's behavior (Adams, 2019).

Collective trust is defined as the generalized trust found in organizations (Kramer, 2010) and conceptualized "as a collective property of role groups" (Adams & Forsyth, 2013, p. 3). Collective trust results from the social interactions of group members and the trustee, specifically when observed behavior matches expectations (Adams & Forsyth, 2013). Additionally, collective trust is based on the members' previous knowledge and stereotypic beliefs regarding the organization (Kramer, 2010).

Another type of trust is relational trust. Bryk and Schneider (2002) conceived relational trust as the "distinctive qualities of interpersonal social exchanges in school communities and how these cumulate in an organizational property" (p. 12). Relational trust involves the trust relations among pairs of individuals who base the decision to trust on the perceived benefits of

the relationship. Bryk and Schneider found that relational trust forms during social exchanges within each unique relationship (i.e., relationships between superintendents and principals).

Facets of Trust

Researchers from a variety of disciplines have identified differing characteristics and meanings of trust (see Adams et al., 2008; Adams & Miskell, 2016; Baier, 1995; Fullan, 2007; Handford & Leithwood, 2013; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999). Table 1 provides a summary of trust facets found across the existing literature. Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999), through a meta-analysis of the dimensions of trust, established the most widely accepted definition of trust in education and, consequently, the one used in this study. They concluded that trust is an individual's or group's willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the latter party is benevolent, honest, open, reliable, and competent. Hoy and Tschannen-Moran, in this single-factor model, concluded that the five facets of trust (benevolence, honesty, openness, reliability, and competence) vary depending on the purpose or context of the relationship, the level of interdependence between people, and the maturity of the relationship (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999; Tschannen-Moran, 2014; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998).

Table 1

Facets and Dimensions of Trust Across Literature

	Benevolence	Honesty	Openness	Reliability	Competence	Integrity	Respect	Risk & Vulnerability
Adams et al., 2008	X			X	X	X		
Adams & Miskell, 2016	X	X	X	X	X			
Bryk & Schneider, 2002	X				X	X	X	
Daly & Chrispeels, 2008	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Handford & Leithwood, 2013			X	X	X	X	X	
Heron, 2009	X	X	X	X	X			
Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999	X	X	X	X	X			
Mayer, 1995	X				X	X		
Mishra, 1996	X		X	X	X			
Romero & Mitchell, 2018	X				X	X		
Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000	X	X	X	X	X			X
Tschannen-Moran, 2017	X	X	X	X	X			

In a more recent study, Handford and Leithwood (2013) synthesized the results of 18 trust studies across disciplines to identify 13 characteristics related to leader trustworthiness. Handford and Leithwood concluded that the most salient characteristics included the leader's competence, consistency, reliability, openness, respect, and integrity. These characteristics closely aligned with Hoy and Tschannen's facets of trust. Handford and Leithwood included integrity and respect, whereas Hoy and Tschannen-Moran included honesty and benevolence, two similar characteristics.

The trust between superintendents and principals shares similar qualities as the trust between teachers, principals, students, and parents. In a qualitative study examining how superintendents engender trust within a school district, Herron (2009) found that the same trust facets identified by Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (i.e., benevolence, competence, honesty,

openness, and reliability) were antecedents of trust in the superintendent. Within this context, openness and competence had the greatest association to trust when applied to the superintendent. These findings supported the use of Hoy and Tschannen-Moran's five trust facets as the framework for this study.

Benevolence. Benevolence involves the belief or confidence that something one cares about is not harmed by the person one is entrusting (Baier, 1995). The perception of benevolence also includes mutual goodwill, or personal regard, and respect (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

Reliability. Reliability refers to the idea that one can depend on another consistently. Within an interdependent, trusting relationship, partners have a sense of confidence that the other will do what is expected (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). People perceive reliable leaders as predictable and fair (Butler & Cantrell, 1984; Fullan, 2007).

Competence. Competence is the ability to perform a task as expected as it relates to functional, work-related skills, such as pressing for results, setting standards, and solving problems. Trust-based competence involves one's reputation (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Competent leaders effectively execute their role responsibilities (Daly & Chrispeels, 2008).

Honesty. Honesty is essential to trust and involves character, integrity, and authenticity (Cummings & Bromiley, 1996; Rotter, 1967; Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Tschannen-Moran (2014) stipulates that one's reputation for high integrity develops when their actions match their words. Teachers are less likely to risk vulnerability under suspicion of the leader (Tschannen-Moran, 2003).

Openness. Openness involves making oneself vulnerable through sharing ideas and information freely, allowing for the release of control (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Tschannen-

Moran (2014) concluded that when one shares feelings, judgments, and intentions through open communication, trust develops.

Additional Facets. Researchers have identified additional trust characteristics and attribute both within the school context and outside of the school context (Adams et al., 2008; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Burke et al., 2007; Daly & Chrispeels, 2008). Dirks and Ferrin (2002) point out that researchers are generally undecided about whether differences among the definitions of trust impact how trust develops among members of a school community. Romero and Mitchell (2018), in a qualitative study of teacher trust in district administration, argued that trust is not a single-factor model but a multifactor model with first-order factors that include benevolence, competence, and integrity.

Although similar to honesty, researchers view integrity as a dimension of trust and define it as the consistency between one's words and actions (Adams et al., 2008; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Handford & Leithwood, 2013; Mayer et al., 1995; Romero & Mitchell, 2018). The extent to which a trustee is believed to adhere to sound moral and ethical principles describes one's integrity (Colquitt et al., 2007). Handford and Leithwood (2013) define integrity as a trait "…describing a perceived pattern of alignment between another's words and deeds…" (p. 198).

Several researchers also include respect as a dimension of trust. Respect refers to the recognition of the value of others through genuine listening and consideration of others (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Daly & Chrispeels, 2008; Handford & Leithwood, 2013). Leaders demonstrate respect when they acknowledge the contribution of others and act in a fair manner (Handford & Leithwood, 2013).

A willingness to risk vulnerability also appears in trust research (Burke et al., 2007; Daly & Chrispeels, 2008; Lapidot et al., 2007; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). One's willingness to

be vulnerable to another party creates an opportunity to reciprocate trust in a relationship. Hoy and Tschannen-Moran's (2000) factor-analysis study found the willingness to risk vulnerability, along with five additional facets, formed the construct. Reasonable trust requires confidence that another party will demonstrate goodwill, which establishes vulnerability on the part of another (Baier, 1986). Daly and Chrispeels (2008) studied how the facets of trust relate to adaptive and technical leadership and found that respect, risk, and competence had the highest predictive relationships with both types of leadership.

Trust Research

Researchers have studied trust within a variety of educational contexts. From a school level perspective, research examines trust as it relates to teachers, principals, and students. Literature from a district level perspective includes trust associated with organizational improvements, district stakeholders, school boards, and leaders. Researchers have also investigated the development of trust and specific leadership practices that build trust.

School Level Trust

Adams and Forsyth (2013) described schools as "social systems defined in part by their relational networks, coordinating structures, and interdependencies, vulnerabilities, and behavioral expectations" (p. 2). Given the social structure and nature of schools, the type of trust found in school is referred to as relational trust, or the trust between two individuals (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Researchers have studied the relational trust between and among key school players (i.e., teachers and students) as well as the collective trust with school stakeholders.

Teachers. Ciulla (2014) stated that trust is an emotional framework and that "without trust, there can be no cooperation, no community, no commerce, no conversation" (p. 117). Trust is related to increased collaboration among school staff (Louis, 2007; Tschannen-Moran, 2014;

West & Derrington, 2008), which supports positive outcomes in the classrooms. When a teacher demonstrates professional competence and a commitment to students, their peers trust them (Tschannen-Moran, 2009).

Trusting relationships within a learning community promote more effective professional conversations among teachers (Tschannen-Moran, 2014; van Maele et al., 2014; West & Derrington, 2008). More specifically, trust is an essential element in the creation of collaborative teams within a demanding school context (van Maele et al., 2014). Using a mixed-methods study investigating professional learning communities (PLCs), researchers found that a lack of trust prevented the ongoing development of PLCs and impacted communication and decision-making during change within the district office (Abrego & Pankake, 2011). They concluded that a trusting environment sustained the PLC, specifically during superintendent turn-over. Other researchers identified that both teachers and principals in the PLC believe in the value of acting in the best interest of the child, which influences positive decision-making (DuFour & Eaker, 2010; Louis et al., 1996; Seashore Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011).

Researchers reported that collaborative processes within schools grounded in honesty, sharing, and trusting relationships supported a culture of professional learning and a climate of trust (Adams, 2016; Cranston, 2011; Sergiovanni, 2005). Finnigan and Daly (2017) found that trusting relationships form when one permits themselves to be vulnerable and share thoughts, ideas, and experiences. This transparency among parties increases professional discussions and encourages teachers to take greater risks in their instructional practice (Coburn & Russell, 2008; Daly et al., 2010).

High relational trust in an organization supports the development of a professional community who cooperate to solve problems and share accountability (Bryk & Schneider, 2002;

Tschannen-Moran, 2014). With high trust, collegial groups experience less vulnerability, increased autonomy, and greater relational support, all of which increase the likelihood of successful inquiry and action (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). In other words, "When trust levels are high, and communications are optimal, organizational rules and role structures are more supportive of professional autonomy and discretion" (Lawson et al., 2017, p. 41). Furthermore, teacher teams with high trust experience greater transparency and open discussion regarding their craft. These teams also experience greater emotional support, which ultimately improves progress (Daly et al., 2010).

Principals. Generally, when an organization has high levels of trust, employees work more effectively together (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Finnigan & Daly, 2017), resulting in greater cohesiveness (Zand, 1997). Van Maele et al. (2014) suggested that trustworthy principals set a tone in the school climate that may alter teachers' perceptions of students and parents; in other words, trust is a resource the principal may use to influence teachers' attitudes and beliefs. Principals are indirectly involved in the development of trusting relationships between teachers and parents and also teachers and students (van Maele & van Houtte, 2015).

In a qualitative study of high school principals, Cosner (2009) found that principals increased building level capacity through the development of collegial trust among faculty. Similarly, Lawson and colleagues (2017) determined that teacher trust among staff and with the principal facilitated the adoption of innovative practices in odds-beating schools. Even more relevant to this study, the researchers stressed the importance of district-level support and resources as it relates to innovation:

> The trust-communication connection between district central office leaders, particularly superintendents, and principals facilitates policy innovation

> implementation, and the same can be said of important relationships between district office leaders and front-line professionals, especially teachers. (Lawson et al., 2017, p. 55)

A trusting relationship between the principal and teacher directly impacts outcomes. Tschannen-Moran and Gareias (2015) explored the principal-faculty relationship, as it relates to school climate and student achievement. They found that trust levels impacted teacher perceptions of instructional leadership, teacher professionalism, academic press, and community engagement. This high level of trust becomes a moral resource of the principal for school improvement as stakeholders feel more attached and committed to the mission and results of the school (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

Tschannen-Moran (2014) found that when teachers trust their principal, they remain open to the principal's thoughts and ideas. Tschannen-Moran also found that principals may build trust with teachers by employing practices that align with the five facets of trust. More specifically, principals increase trust through accurate and consistent communication (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Handford & Leithwood, 2013), authentic relationships, and the extension of professional autonomy (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Browning (2014) found that to build trust with teachers, heads (principals) must engage in the following practices:

- openly admitted mistakes
- offered trust to staff
- actively listened
- provided affirmation
- made informed/consultative decisions
- was visible around the school

- remained calm and level-headed
- mentored and coached staff
- cared for staff
- kept confidences (Tschannen-Moran, 2014, p. 29).

When trust is present between the principal and teachers "…teachers are more willing to share their thoughts, feelings, and ideas, making these valuable resources available for school improvement" (Tschannen-Moran, 2014, p. 29).

Trust develops differently among individuals and groups because of personal expectations and interactions (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Principals perceive trust in teachers in terms of competence, reliability, and commitment; teachers judge principals based on caring, integrity, and openness (MacNeil et al., 1998; Spuck & MacNeil, 1999).

Students. Many factors influence student outcomes in high-performing schools, yet trust has been directly connected to student achievement (Adams & Forsyth, 2013; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Goddard et al., 2001; Hoy et al., 2002; Munguia, 2016; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015). Even though trust exists in various contexts, the collective trust that teachers hold in students has a direct impact on student achievement (Goddard et al., 2009; Goddard et al., 2001). In a study of 64 elementary schools, Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2015) found that student achievement was correlated with trust, principal behaviors, and climate. Most significantly, principal behaviors and climate explained variances in student achievement. Researchers have documented higher math and reading achievement scores in schools with higher trust (Adams & Forsyth, 2013; Goddard et al., 2009), as well as increased academic productivity with increased relational trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

Munguia's (2016) study demonstrated the connection between the success of English

language learners and the principal. She explored the practices that principals use to support elementary teachers of English language learners and found that trust was an essential component. More precisely, the principals' trust in teachers promoted collaboration and collegiality, which influenced the development of a professional community. Among the five primary findings in the study, the principal's ability to implement a culture of high expectations and trust supported teachers in the instruction of English learners.

Evidence of trust-filled relationships in schools, especially trust among teachers, precludes student achievement (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Goddard et al., 2001; Hoy, 2002). Louis and colleagues (2010) studied leadership behaviors and student achievement and found that teacher collegiality held more weight on student outcomes than trust in the principal. Their findings suggested that specific principal behaviors impacted student outcomes more significantly than emotional factors such as trust. Similarly, Bryk and Schneider (2002) found that relational trust does not directly impact student learning, but it "fosters a set of organizational conditions, some structural and others social-psychological" (p. 116). In this way, collective trust is similar to social capital because it increases cooperation and spurs action among faculty and staff (Sergiovanni, 2005). Still, some researchers have found that teachers demonstrate greater performance when they hold great trust in the principal, which directly and indirectly impacts student outcomes (Forsyth et al., 2011).

District Level Trust

In educational settings, trust is important in many efforts in support of improvement, innovative change, and reform, as it strengthens the organization's ability to adapt (Daly et al. 2015; Kochanek, 2005; Louis, 2003; Van Maele et al., 2014). School climates grounded in trust support honest dialogue among teachers about school issues and concerns, including plans for

improvement (Kochanek, 2005; Sweeney, 1991).

Organizational Improvements. The relational trust between district office leaders is a predictor for organizational improvements (Lawson et al., 2017). Relational trust, defined as the interpersonal exchanges in a group setting, appears to be key to reform because it is naturally embedded in the daily routines of schools among all stakeholders (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Through trust and respect, personnel will embrace reform and confront challenges with innovative practices involving risk-taking (Sorenson et al., 2011). As an illustration of the vital connection between trust in district administration and teachers, Adams and Miskell (2016) asserted that "trust in district leaders is a resource that on the surface seems to be a condition that enables teachers and central administrations to work cooperatively toward shared goals and aims" (p. 677).

Pamela Adams (2016) concluded that system leaders, such as the superintendent, can influence the organization using collaborative processes that emphasize relationships grounded in mutual respect and trust. Adams' study revealed that a district's use of collaborative processes resulted in the principal's perception of positive relationships with district leaders built on trust. In such, "understanding practices that build trust has the potential to shape how district leaders lead and manage system-wide improvement efforts" (Daly & Chrispeels, 2008, p. 769). Since district trust encourages cooperation towards a common goal, knowledge and awareness of it helps leaders determine the system's capacity for school improvement (Adams & Miskell, 2016).

Adams and Miskell (2016), in a study of teacher trust in the administration, discovered that a teacher's trust beliefs are associated with their level of commitment. These findings suggested that district trust had more influence on teacher commitment than principal trust. In a more recent study, Adams (2019) established that district leadership influences the work of

teachers through the psychological effects of trust. This finding supports the earlier determination that teachers' positive judgments of central office leaders "likely add to the psychological safety that teachers experience in a trusted environment, whereas negative discernments naturally elicit self-protective responses that undermine competence support" (Adams & Miskell, 2016, p. 14).

Much research points to trust as a resource for organizational improvement (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Forsyth et al., 2011; Tschannen-Moran, 2014; van Maele et al., 2014). Trusting teacher-principal relationships enhances teacher motivation and openness to embrace school goals (Cosner, 2009; Heavey et al., 2011; Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Trust within the organization increases feelings of safety and security and reduces the sense of risk associated with change (Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Sorenson et al., 2011). Since district administrators "bridge critical boundaries between schools and the larger external context in which schools must adapt" (Adams, 2019, p. 2), researchers generally agree that their actions impact student outcomes (Johnson et al., 2014; Rorrer et al., 2008; Sharratt & Fullan, 2009; Trujillo, 2013). Consequently, district office administrators, including the superintendent, may leverage trust as a resource within the organization to meet district objectives.

Trustworthy leaders and high-trust cultures are associated with effective organizations (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Daly & Finnigan, 2012; Forsyth et al., 2011; Tschannen-Moran, 2014). A meta-analysis of trust in leadership demonstrated a relationship between high trust and job performance, turn-over, job satisfaction, and commitment to leader decisions, which all directly impact the organization's performance (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). These findings suggest that the superintendent's actions are critical in the trust-building process and that given the current high-stakes environment, building trust is key (Chhuon et al., 2008).

Forsyth and colleagues (2011) examined collective trust in school leadership and found it was a critical part of the organizational performance. Specifically, organizational structures influenced collective trust and innovation, and change required strong collective trust. In the same vein, high trust deepens organizational change (Daly et al., 2010). Zand (1997) claimed that leaders could leverage knowledge, trust, and power collectively to meet organizational goals to increase overall commitment and cohesiveness.

Stakeholders. Increased stakeholder trust in districts helps central office administrators, such as the superintendent, navigate controversial issues, differences in values, and community divisiveness (Green, 2012; Huang, 2012; Jimenez, 2012; Poynton et al., 2018). High-trust relationships with stakeholders help districts share power and build a more cohesive community that results in informed decision-making (Poynton et al., 2018). Trusting relationships encourage stakeholder engagement through deep discussions, as well as collaborative problem-solving (Gudowsky & Bechtold, 2013; Langsdorf, 2003; Nabatchi, 2010), which are essential for district operations (Cooper & Christie, 2005).

A recent mixed-method study demonstrated that public school districts could increase stakeholder (i.e., parents and community) trust through training programs (Poynton et al., 2018). These stakeholder-training programs fostered relationships between parents and district leaders and included topics such as school finance and curriculum (Poynton et al., 2018). Other practices that build trust with parents include collaborative processes (Adams et al., 2009), quality communication (Adams & Christenson, 2000), and helpful interactions (Abdul-Adil & Farmer Jr., 2006).

School Boards. Trusting relationships on all levels within the school district matter. The superintendent must forge a positive relationship with the school board members to implement

school board policies successfully (Smoley, 1999). Duvall (2005) suggested that a strong relationship must exist to influence trust-building among parties. Between the superintendent and school board, both parties can develop the relationship through regularly sharing knowledge and information, which impacts district culture and climate (Newton & Sackney, 2005). While both parties play a role in the relationship, Andero (2000) maintained that the school board must first trust the superintendent to make competent decisions. Often, this is a challenging request, given the politics and power struggles of today (Mountford, 2004).

Researchers demonstrated a connection between a new superintendent's formal entry plan and trusting relationships with school boards (Huang, 2012; Jimenez, 2012; Smith, 2012). The formal entry plan included the communication of clear strategies to address primary district issues. Further evidence suggested that strong communication between the superintendent and school board members helps develop trusting relationships (Huang, 2012; Jimenez, 2012; Newton & Sackney, 2005; Smith, 2012). Both superintendent and board members indicated that regular communication promoted trust more than any other practices (Smith, 2012).

In a study examining the school board-superintendent relationship and mistrust, Bowers (2017) found that the relationship is quite malleable; in other words, members can mend negative relationships of the past to form new positive ones. In this context, the new superintendent forged new relationships through genuine displays of respect, personal regard, integrity, and competence in their job. Relationship repair was intentional and substantial work was required.

District Leaders, Superintendent and Principal. To date, researchers have examined the role of trust among teachers, between principals and teachers, between students and teachers, between district leaders and schools, and between the superintendent and school boards. However, the research regarding the trust between superintendents and principals is limited

(Adams & Miskell, 2016).

In a mixed-methods study to determine what forces or factors account for better outcomes for odds-beating schools, Lawson and colleagues (2017) found that trust is an important leadership quality and a facilitator for innovation and implementation for all district administration. Participants identified trust as a critical component of the superintendent and principal relationship. Most importantly, all odds-beating schools had high levels of both trust and communication between district leaders and principals. Similarly, Burchfield's research suggested a positive relationship between principal trust in central administration and principal efficacy and commitment to the district (2013). This finding affirms Bryk and Schneider's (2002) assumption that "the social relations of schooling are not just mechanisms of production but are a valued outcome in their own right" (p. 61).

A few noteworthy doctoral dissertations have examined trust between superintendents and principals from both lenses. Julie Hatchel (2012) examined principals' perceptions of the trust-building characteristics of their superintendents. Hatchel concluded that the principals' level of trust in their superintendent influences their willingness to take risks and affects their job satisfaction. She also found that generally, principals held positive perceptions of superintendents' trust-building behaviors and that their perceptions of superintendents' benevolence and openness were less positive than competence, honesty, and reliability. These data supported Kellogg's (2017) findings in her qualitative study of superintendents, which resulted in three important themes concerning the building and sustaining of trust with principals—communication and transparency, relationship building, and modeling expected behavior. From the principals' perspective, three similar themes emerged, including open communication, building relationships, and extension of trust, or autonomy. Kellogg's findings

affirm the changing nature of the role of superintendent and the crucial element of collaboration.

Furthermore, in a case study of one superintendent's supporting practices towards principals, Codd (2016) found that ultimately the superintendent created the conditions that supported leadership development by leveraging trusting relationships; more specifically, the superintendent listened, displayed vulnerability, and cared for others. In this instance, trust facets included openness, vulnerability, and benevolence. Browning's (2014) multi-case study of independent schools affirmed the importance of openness when he examined how transformational school leaders build trust with the Chair of the school's governing body (district leaders) within the context of transformational leadership. He determined three common trust-building practices that heads (principals) employed to build trust with chairs (district leaders) that included the development of strong relationships, openness, and transparency, as well as meeting regularly. Collectively, this research suggests that the facets of trust between superintendents and principals may differ from other school contexts.

Daly and colleagues (2015) investigated the topic of trust between district office leaders and principals in underperforming districts in a study using social network analysis. Among 78 educational leaders in an urban school district, they found that perceptions mattered as it relates to trust. Leaders who perceived limited trust among colleagues were more likely to report difficult relationships with district leaders, which aligns with previous research that suggests that those who trust less, have less positive professional relationships (Troman, 2000). Surprisingly, they found that leaders who perceived high-trust climates were viewed as difficult, which according to Daly and colleagues, suggested that "the mismatch of trust perceptions among leaders may result in the formation of difficult ties" (Daly et al., 2015, p. 26). This unexpected finding affirmed the significance of this study, in that knowledge of the nature of trust and trust-

building practices can help superintendents prevent the formation of difficult ties with others. Equally significant in their findings is that male leaders with a long tenure were generally perceived by others to be the most difficult. Their work connects to Bryk and Schneider's (2002) conclusions on how it is challenging to collaborate and build consensus in low-trust environments because leaders who perceive less trust find others to be difficult to work with professionally.

In a mixed-methods study of school administrators that examined the impact of nontraditional leadership factors, researchers identified the importance of leaders establishing and maintaining strong relationships built on trust as it relates to emotional intelligence. They found that collaboration is a by-product of effective relationships first built on trust (Maulding et al., 2012). When Sterr (2013) studied how superintendents support principals for effective leadership and increased student achievement, she also affirmed the need for strong relationships between principals and superintendents. One of four findings related to trust was that the willingness to trust the other to make well-informed decisions resulted in effective leadership (Marzano & Waters, 2009).

In a recent study, to determine effective leadership practices, researchers compared practices of rural superintendents to Waters and Marzano's (2009) findings concerning the six leadership practices linked to student achievement (Forner et al., 2012). Forner and colleagues confirmed that both superintendents and principals emphasized the essential nature of trust. A reoccurring theme in the principals' responses was the importance of receiving autonomy in decision-making, which was cited the most as "does not limit principal's authority" (Forner et al., 2012, p. 9).

In a mixed-methods study investigating key elements of successful "odds-beating

schools" during policy implementation, Lawson and colleagues (2017) found that a vertical relationship existed between superintendent and principal grounded in reciprocal trust. Relationships were based on clear communication and were mutually constitutive, meaning that they shared responsibility in creating and maintaining the relationship (p. 42). The results confirmed "a potent combination of communication, trust, and collaboration in the odds-beating schools" across all district areas (Lawson et al., 2017, p. 60). The researchers discovered that district office administrators' supported behavior determined how principals and teachers managed policy implementation. As such, the trust between the superintendent and principal indirectly impacts school outcomes because it contributes to a principal's willingness and effort required to make school improvement (West & Derrington, 2008).

Development of Trust

Trust is a powerful framework for the district administration to leverage to increase cooperation, community, and conversation with their campus principals. The trusting relationship between principals and superintendents includes expectations and responsibilities under high-pressure and accountability. Subsequently, trust can serve as a valuable resource in achieving and sustaining district-wide reform and is a precondition to such a relationship (Ciulla, 2014). Therefore, of value to superintendents is knowledge of how trust develops and the understanding that "…trust building is one of the central mechanisms through which supervisors exert their positive influence on subordinates" (West & Derrington, 2008, p. 52).

Although the structural interdependence and vulnerability within schools create a natural condition for trust to form, other factors influence its formation (Adams, 2019). There are inherent factors that contribute to the development of trust when parties originally meet. Initially, social similarity may predispose one to trust another because they share similar ethnicity,

religion, culture, value system, or physical appearance (Kochanek, 2005; McKnight et al., 1998; Powell, 1996). In the school context, a parent may inherently trust the principal because they attend the same church. One's reputation may also increase the likelihood of initial trust because it insinuates professional competence and predictability (McKnight et al., 1998; Powell, 1996).

Stereotyping may influence initial trust levels as one creates generalizations based on, for example, gender or occupation. In this instance, a male high school student may be reluctant to trust a female automotive teacher initially. Schools and school leaders may inherently receive initial trust based on a social symbol or proxy, which is referred to as institutional-based trust. For example, parents trust a teacher because they are certified, and teachers trust the principal because of their assumed role. Also, parents entrust their children with school members (proxy) and hold high expectations for care and learning, but the level of trust varies based on the parent's culture (Kochanek, 2005; Lareau & Horvat, 1999).

Though many professional relationships begin on a foundation of trust due to individuals' inherent nature to trust, dynamic interactions with leaders develop stable trust incrementally over time (Kochanek, 2005). Once initial trust is established, repeated face-to-face, social interactions sustain trust; however, these predispositions must be accompanied by other facets of trust, such as competence, honesty, and benevolence, or trust will diminish (Kochanek, 2005; McKnight et al., 1998).

The social context influences the trust formation between parties (Tschannen-Moran, 2014), as does social ties (Daly & Finnigan, 2012; Deal et al., 2009). As the level of interdependence fluctuates in the relationship, vulnerability and trust levels change, too (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Given the nature of relationships in a social network, reputations matter, and key players wish to maintain a positive reputation for trustworthiness to gain

advantages. In this way, the network encourages trustworthy behavior in players (Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 1993).

Trust-Building Leadership Practices

The relationship between trust and practices vary based on the referent and the nature of the relationship (Burke et al., 2007; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). This finding suggests that, for example, there are leadership practices that principals use to build trust with teachers, which may differ from the practices that superintendents use to develop trust with principals. Table 2 summarizes the most significant literature of trust-building practices of school leaders, including principals, district leaders, and superintendents. In some cases, similar themes were combined, or themes were recategorized to represent the research adequately and fairly to the best of the researcher's ability. For example, Northfield (2014) did not explicitly use the phrase, make informed decisions. However, his conclusion and description of task ability fell under that theme.

Table 2

Trust-Building Leadership Practices in Schools

	Communicates	**Builds Relationships**	**Extends Trust**	**Transparent**	**Models Norms**	**Supports/ Coaches**	**Intentional/ Mindful**	**Makes Informed Decisions**
Bird, 2010	S			S				
Browning, 2014	P	P	P	P	P	P		P
Hoy et al., 2014							P	
Huang, 2012	S	S					S	
Kellogg, 2017	P, S	P, S	S	S	S			
Lawson et al., 2017	P, S, DL						P, S, DL	
Northfield, 2014	P					P		P
Tschannen-Moran, 2014	P			P	P	P		

Note: DL = District Leaders; P = Principals; S = Superintendents

Intentionality. In a 2015 qualitative case study that studied how school leaders regain trust with stakeholders, the principal employed purposeful, mindful strategies related to the trust facets of openness, competence, and reliability. For instance, strategies included a conscious commitment to communication, strong relationships with parents, and shared decision-making within the school community (Brown, 2015). Hoy and colleagues (2006) explored trust as a school condition that fosters mindful actions and determined that to build a trust-filled culture, leaders purposefully remained sensitive and open to the day-to-day operations, including mistakes and problem-solving. In their words, "faculty trust promotes school mindfulness and mindfulness reinforces trust" (Hoy et al., 2006, p. 251). Lawson and colleagues (2017) explored the role of district and school leaders' trust and communication in odds-beating schools and uncovered a theme that trust-building opportunities are not coincidental or haphazard. They concluded that effective communication and trust-building "are enabled by deliberately designed organizational routines" (Lawson et al., 2017, p. 47).

Communication. Trust is associated with the communication process (Bird, 2010; Browning, 2014; Huang, 2012; Kellogg, 2017; Lawson et al., 2017; Northfield, 2014; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998). In particular, effective communication is critical in establishing trust between the district office and campus principals and can serve as a source of empowerment to achieve and sustain district-wide reform (Knapp, Honig, Plecki, Portin, & Copland, 2014; Lawson et al., 2017; West & Derrington, 2008). Superintendents who build strong, trusting relationships based on frequent communication within the school community remain in position longer and achieve greater success (Jimenez, 2012; Macaluso, 2012; Smith, 2012).

Authentic communication increases trust and facilitates the change process (Johnson et al., 2014; Tschannen-Moran, 2014; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015; West & Derrington, 2008) through the cultivation of personal and professional relationships (Kellogg, 2017). While face-to-face interactions are essential to developing trust, Huang (2012) found that meaningful communication through frequent email builds interpersonal relationships because it leads to the increased flow of information. West and Derrington (2008) insisted that effective communication "…is first built on a foundation of trust. Thus, the first step in successful superintendent-principal communication is establishing trust" (p. 49). Significantly, communication is valuable because it promotes collaboration rather than competition (Adams, 2016).

Effective communication is a powerful leadership practice that increases trust (Burke et al., 2007; Jimenez, 2012; Lawson et al., 2017; Zepeda & Mayers, 2013). Lawson and colleagues explored the trust-communication connection of district and school leaders and believed that it is an "intra organizational phenomenon" that is an integral part of future innovation (2017, p. 31). They determined that essential in the development of trust was ample time for interactions with all campus leaders and clearly defined organizational structures and processes that promote authentic relationships. Principals are often isolated from other administrators, which reduces access to information, resources, and communication (Daly & Finnigan, 2012; Finnigan & Daly, 2017).

Data indicated that by initiating trust-building activities focused on openness and communication, district administration might demonstrate clearer intentions and expectations to principals (Six, 2004). District administration can allot time for authentic discussion and problem-solve with campus principals to foster mutual respect and increased trust (Kellogg, 2017). They may use leadership meetings to engage in trust-building activities, celebrate or

recognize an individual's accomplishments, and assess the current level of trust (Chhuon et al., 2008). Lawson and colleagues (2017) also found that consistent informal and formal meetings and professional conversations about instructional issues can build trust, as well as data meetings and professional development.

Social Interactions. According to some researchers, trust develops and deepens within relationships through gradual social interactions (Johnson et al., 2014; Walton, 1998; Zucker, 1986). With repeated, daily interactions with one another, trust deepens relationships (Sorenson et al., 2011). Through time and presence, central office administrators provide consistent support and respectful feedback, which develops trusting relationships (Agullard & Goughnour, 2006; Johnson et al., 2014).

Trust is associated with increased interactive circumstances among campus members. Cosner (2009) found that high school principals successfully developed collegial trust on campus by creating multiple opportunities for teachers to interact and spend time together. "In the absence of such direct exchanges, individuals may rely on personal reputations, or in their absence, more general social similarities in making judgments" (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p. 14).

Through social network analysis, Finnigan and Daly (2017) suggested a relationship between the number of social ties and the amount of time one spends with another and increased trust. Zucker (1986) found that as relationships grow, trust deepens, and the level of authenticity increases as well, which forms a bond that protects against disagreements or differences in opinions (Rousseau et al., 1998). In contrast, Dirks and Ferrin (2002) found that the length of time in a personal relationship had no relationship to trust development, and one's propensity to trust had only a small relationship.

Coaching, Support, and Vision. Burke and colleagues (2007) created an integrated model of trust in leadership across multiple disciplines to examine factors that fostered trust in leaders. Through this meta-analysis, the researchers developed 25 propositions, several of which relate directly to practices that influence trust in leadership. Leaders build trust with followers by establishing a clear, compelling direction and functional norms for the organization. The researchers also found that how leaders created and managed teams and coached individuals influenced trust in leadership. These practices relate to Tschannen-Moran's (2014) connection between the five facets of trust to the five functions of instructional leaders. She stated that trustworthy leaders "construct a shared vision, model trustworthy behavior, provide coaching, manage the environment, and mediate breakdowns of trust" (Tschannen-Moran, 2014, p. 268).

Modeling Values and Norms. A few researchers have uncovered the importance of leaders modeling values and reinforcing norms as practices that build trust (Browning, 2014; Kellogg, 2017; Tschannen-Moran, 2014). The cultural norm of cooperation, instead of competition, facilitates trustworthy behavior on campus (Tschannen-Moran, 2001; Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). Leaders who reinforce the value of authentic relationships and encourage shared decision-making promote the development of trust among teachers (Tarter et al., 1989; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998). When leaders bypass top-down methods for more collaborative approaches to managing and leading (Ansell & Gash, 2008), they reinforce the values they wish to see in others.

Kutsyuruba and Walker (2015) analyzed existing literature regarding trust among educational leaders from a living organization viewpoint. They concluded that during challenging times, leaders fostered trust through modeling values in all their actions and demeanors. Repeated enforcing and reinforcing norms and expectations among the faculty

assisted the development of trust within the organization (Burke et al., 2007; Cosner, 2009; Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2015). As reported by Kellogg (2017), the most effective characteristics and practices include integrity, consistent communication, and how to support school employees. On some level, modeling relates to the leader's reputation and values, which, according to Tschannen-Moran (2014), plays an important role in the early stages of trust development.

Transparency. As maintained by Bird (2010, 2011), the superintendent's attitude, behavior, and practices surrounding school finance influences trust-building with district stakeholders. He purported that school spending and budgeting presents an opportunity to build integrity and demonstrate competence with principals, district administration, teachers, parents, and the community. Bird also determined that transparency in all financial matters supports continuous improvement across the district and builds trust with key players. Superintendents, who formalized their interactions and communications with stakeholders through committees, forums, and councils, reduced negative perceptions and increased trust (Bird, 2010).

Makes Informed Decisions. Some researchers have noted the importance of leaders' decision-making process as it relates to collaboration, information, and skills (Browning, 2014; Lawson et al., 2017; Northfield, 2014; Tschannen-Moran, 2014; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015). Shared decision-making through collaboration supports the development of trust between leaders and followers (Lawson et al., 2017; Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Dirk's and Ferrin's (2002) work highlighted leaders' use of participative or collaborative decision-making techniques as a way of fostering trust.

When studying new principals, Northfield (2014) discovered that they fostered trust with employees through professional knowledge in school leadership and management. Northfield also determined that task ability supported decision-making, which built trust. Lawson and

colleagues (Lawson et al., 2017) determined that the development of trust results from intentional decisions that leaders routinely make. Browning (2014) discovered that when principals made uninformed decisions, staff members were left "feeling directionless, or in 'no-mans' land, wondering what has happened and if the issue had been swept under the carpet" (pp. 398-399). Browning concluded that effective decision-making involved the principal reacting within a reasonable time frame, consulting others, and considering alternatives viewpoints.

Other Practices. In Dirk's and Ferrin's (2002) four-decade analysis of trust in leadership outside of educational settings, findings indicated that specific leadership styles and practices increased trust in leadership. Leadership practices that precipitated trust included ensuring fair procedures, outcomes, and interactional processes, as well as managing expectations. They concluded that transformational and transactional leadership styles also contributed to the development of trust in leaders. Transformational leadership is characterized as acknowledging and meeting followers' psychological needs, which motivates them to exceed expectations (Bass, 1985), while transactional leadership involves a conscious awareness of the leader to engage in valuable exchanges with others in order to meet personal or organizational objectives (Burns, 1998).

Forsyth and colleagues (2011) studied collective trust among faculty, students, and parents and concluded that specific leadership behaviors promoted teacher trust in the principal. School leaders demonstrated the facets of trust, such as competence, openness, and honesty, frequently in action and during personal contact with others. The researchers found that leadership behaviors mattered more than managerial behaviors. For example, a principal's ability to establish a collective vision for the future was more valuable than day-to-day management (Forsyth et al., 2011). Principals who "expect, respect, and model organizational citizenship"

through routine norms, cultural beliefs, and member attitudes increased trust on campus (Forsyth et al., 2011, p. 169).

Leadership Roles and Relationships Research

Educational researchers have studied the specific roles of the American superintendent and principal to better understand the positions within society. The literature defines the superintendent and principal's duties, responsibilities and requirements since the inception of the positions and acknowledges the historic changes. Researchers have also examined the nature of the working relationship between the superintendent and principal.

Role of Superintendent

By the late nineteenth century, in response to increasing numbers in schools across the country and a shift to an industrial society, American schools became organized hierarchically to increase efficiency and control (Agullard & Goughnour, 2006; Spring, 2017). The first state superintendent was established in New York in 1812 to manage funds and the school system, as well as communicating with the state legislature (Butts, 1953). Then, under constitutional law, the State departments were established to maintain local control, and most major cities followed suit by the late 1800s (Knezevich, 1984; Kowalski & Brunner, 2011). While currently, all American states have state-level superintendents, the nature of the roles varies as it relates to the selection process, relationship to and the authority over the state board of education, and required credentials (Kowalski & Brunner, 2011).

By the mid-1800s, many local school districts employed superintendents (Grieder et al., 1969), and by the end of that century, most city school districts employed superintendents (Kowalski & Brunner, 2011). According to Kowalski (2003), the impetus of the ubiquitous

creation of the position of the superintendent included larger city districts, consolidation of rural districts, compulsory education, and increased accountability.

Initially, the superintendent's role primarily pertained to the implementation of a common curriculum through the monitoring of classroom instruction (Spring, 2017). However, some researchers concluded that superintendents acted as school board clerks and figureheads (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Petersen & Barnett, 2003). The general purpose of school boards was writing policy and overseeing school district operations (Bjork, 2014). Interestingly, throughout the evolution of the role, superintendents maintained a clear focus on curriculum leadership, especially through a political lens (Campbell & Greene, 1994; Johnson, 1996; Norton, Webb, Dlugosh, & Sybouts, 1996; Spring, 2017).

Since the 1800s, changes in economics, politics, and technology have influenced the role of the superintendent (Bjork, 2014). After World War I, superintendents emphasized their role as executive managers (Bjork, 2014), but by the late twentieth century, superintendents were called to address greater global needs and strategies for improvement (Johnson, 1996). Regardless of the time, superintendents played a crucial role in ensuring safety, cohesion, and collaboration within the central office to support improvement efforts (Agullard & Goughnour, 2006).

Raymond Callahan (1966) conceptualized the role of the superintendent that evolved into four positions, then Theodore Kowalski (2001) added a fifth. Callahan perceived the superintendent as a teacher-scholar, which involved instructional supervision and theoretical study. In the late 1800s, superintendents viewed themselves as teachers, not managers or politicians. Callahan also framed the superintendent as a manager, which was evident in the 20th century during the industrial age. The superintendent was required to manage resources and facilities, standardize operations, and develop budgets (Callahan, 1966).

After the economic Depression of 1929-1939, the superintendent's role was conceptualized as a democratic leader in part because of the need to lobby for scarce resources. Then, according to Callahan (1966), social issues contributed to the changing role of the superintendent as an applied social scientist. These issues included a growing dissatisfaction with democratic leadership, increased funding for social science research, and growing criticisms of the education system.

Lastly, Kowalski and Brunner (2011) conceptualized the superintendent as a communicator as our country transitioned from manufacturing to computer technology because of the high demands for school reform through collaboration. The role of communicator was evident as superintendents were required to communicate openly and debate topics to alter institutional cultures to accept change. Interestingly, these role conceptualizations broadly align with the Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards for School Leaders of the mid-1990s (Bjork, 2014), which outline essential knowledge and skills of school leaders (Murphy & Shipman, 1998).

Many superintendents first served as a teacher, then assistant principal or principal followed a member of the central office (Kowalski et al., 2011). A majority hold at least a master's degree in educational administration (Glass & Franceschini, 2007) and a state certificate (Bjork, 2014). According to the 2010 survey data, 76% are male, 94% Caucasian, and the median age is 55 years-old (Kowalski et al., 2011). Nationwide, the average tenure for a district superintendent is about three years in urban settings and six years in rural and suburban settings (Grissom & Andersen, 2012).

The role of today's superintendents varies based on the district size, however generally, they ensure implementation of state mandates and regulations, as well as provide support to local

schools. The superintendent is the key leader and proponent of curriculum policy that meets the needs of all students (Andero, 2000). With this immense role comes the responsibility to maintain a keen awareness of current economic conditions and social or political change (Kowalski, 2006). As the chief executive officer of the district, Kowalski (2006) maintained that specific duties included:

- advising the school board
- recommending new personnel
- ensuring state and federal compliance
- preparing district budgets
- leading long-range planning
- providing oversight of instructional programs and student performance
- determining the organizational structure of the district
- influencing building maintenance and new construction

Other general roles also include public relations, board and staff communications, networking, attending staff and board meetings, and political involvement (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Petersen & Barnett, 2003). Kowalski and colleagues (2011) identified the following challenging issues in order of importance that confront superintendents: financing schools, school board relations, assessment of student learning outcomes, goal setting, changing priorities in the curriculum, management, and accountability.

The history of the office of superintendent in Alabama is like that of other places in the United States. The Public Education Act of 1854 established a statewide public system for children in Alabama (Hall, 2015). An experienced teacher and brigadier general, William F. Perry, was elected to the office of the state superintendent along with three commissioners per

county—usually judges—and three trustees in each township. The state superintendent controlled all Federal and State educational funds. Both the commissioners and trustees were elected by the local people; however, the commissioners controlled school finances, while the trustees established local schools and employed teachers (Weeks, 1971).

The Alabama State Board of Education was created in 1868 during the era of Reconstruction. The Board's primary reign involved administrative and legislative power over all educational facilities within Alabama. The state superintendent established an expansive curriculum that included orthography, reading, penmanship, arithmetic, geography, history, grammar, composition, philosophy, astronomy, bookkeeping, and more (Weeks, 1971).

In 1856, the Public Education Act was revised to improve efficiency throughout the system. As a result, counties saw changes in funding, and the governor required an annual report from the state superintendent. Additionally, the revision replaced commissioners with elected county superintendents. These local superintendents monitored instructional methods, courses, and management of schools. The local superintendent also created an annual report to the state superintendent that included the number of children served, state of school facilities, and recommendations for improvements. The governor expected the local superintendents to influence public opinion regarding the education system (Weeks, 1971).

To increase effectiveness, the Alabama Association of School Boards [AASB] (2017), in the "School Boards and Superintendents Roles and Responsibilities, 2017" report, distinguished between primary responsibilities of school superintendents and the local school board in these areas: general functions, relationships, meetings, policy, budget and finance, curriculum and instruction, personnel, students, facilities and community engagement. According to the AASB,

the parameters and explicitly defined roles promoted equitable learning for all students and increased accountability.

Superintendents in Alabama must meet specific requirements to hold office. While it is not required that they live within the district, they must hold a degree from a four-year university or college, hold an Alabama certificate in administration and supervision, and have at least five years of experience in public school work (*Alabama code title 16. Education § 16-9-2*, 1975).

Alabama currently has 137 school superintendents, with an overwhelming majority earning over $100,000 annually (Mackey, 2018). The state superintendent is appointed by the State Board of Education. Dr. Eric Mackey currently serves as the 37th state superintendent (Grain, 2018). Superintendents of local educational agencies in Alabama are either elected or appointed based on the laws of the local community.

Role of Principal

The first principal positions were created in the mid-nineteenth century in urban school districts in response to organizational restructuring (Knezevich, 1984; Rice, 1969; Rousmaniere, 2007; Spring, 2017). The historic role of the principal as the headteacher has remained consistent since the conception of the position (Cuban, 1998; Hallinger, 1992; Tyack & Hansot, 1982). The unwritten job description for the first principals encompassed the supervision of teachers, a school-based representative to the central office, and a manager, and the position was typically granted to the teacher with the most experience or willingness to do the work. The position was one of authority over the school campus and included managing courses and discipline (Rice, 1969; Rousmaniere, 2007; Spring, 2017).

As a middle manager between the campus and the central office, the position of principal required loyalty to both their schools and district superiors (Cuban, 1988). The principal's level

of responsibility varied; in some districts, the principal was head of several schools, yet in other situations, they performed trivial secretarial type tasks (Rice, 1969). By the end of the nineteenth century, most city schools included a principal, yet the role was nonexistent in rural schools due to financial resources (Knezevich, 1984; Rice, 1969; Rousmaniere, 2007; Spring, 2017).

In the early twentieth century, the role of the principal did not generally include teaching, and the primary responsibilities pertained to the central office. The principal focused on overseeing the teachers and coordinating with the central office (Rousmaniere, 2007) because district officials valued efficiency over instructional supervision (Cuban, 1988). During this time, additional central office-level positions developed, including directors of special programs, deans, and assistant principals (Rousmaniere, 2007). University programs in educational administration grew and included courses in law, finance, management, and curriculum (Goldhammer, 1983; Peterson, 1937), and states developed administrative certificates (Campbell, 1987). After World War II, district administrators filled principal positions with married men "to resolve a perceived masculinity crisis caused by too many women in elementary schools" (Rousmaniere, 2007, p. 17).

As stated by Hallinger (1992), by the 1960s, principals were called to reconnect to the role of teacher and viewed instruction as their primary focus in the face of several new federal programs. The 1970's school curriculum reform efforts altered the principal's role to one of the curriculum managers. Principals also provided support to classroom teachers, lead the charge for school change, and ensured compliance of federal programs (Boyd & Crowson, 1981; Goldhammer, 1983; Hallinger, 1992; Spring, 2017). For the first time, principals were viewed as change agents (Campbell, 1987; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982). Beck and Murphy (1993)

argued that reform efforts during this time were a catalyst to a more humanistic approach for school leaders that included increased community engagement.

In the 1980s, policymakers viewed principals as key to great reform efforts in the hopes of increasing educational outcomes (Barth, 1986; Cuban, 1998). Effective schools required strong administrative leadership skills, which became the impetus for new principal standards and roles (Drake & Roe, 1986; Hallinger, 1992; Wimpelberg, 1990). According to policymakers of the time, a lack of principal curriculum knowledge and leadership skills caused problems within American schools, although districts did little to address this changing role (Hallinger, 1992).

During this time, researchers studied the role of principals as it relates to factors that influence school effectiveness, which resulted in a concentration on instructional leadership (Bossert et al., 1982; Boyd & Crowson, 1981; Drake & Roe, 1986; Edmonds, 1979; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982; Wellisch et al., 1978). In theory, as instructional leaders in the 1980s, principals developed a clear school mission, monitored progress, coordinated curriculum, and maintained high expectations for students and staff.

On the contrary, in practice, Leithwood and Montgomery (1982) reported that a principal's primary activities were administrative, despite the understanding that effective principals were instructional leaders. The principal's tasks included maintaining the daily operations, managing pressures for change, and administering student discipline (Boyd & Crowson, 1981; Krajewski, 1979; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982). In a report on principals' behaviors, Morris (1981) also alluded to a unique skillset for principals that required them to navigate the district rules to attain the following: maintain the school site, protect the school from uncertainties and adapt district policies to the special needs of the school.

A high volume of educational research in the 1990s spurred examination and reform in schools. Researchers and formal reports, such as the Carnegie Forum on Education entitled "A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century, The Report of the Task Force on Teaching as a Profession" (1986), appealed for the restructuring of schools, school-based management, and the inclusion and increased responsibility of parents and teachers (Elmore, 1990). The reform also included a continued effort in changing the principal's role to one of the instructional leaders with control of the curriculum to improve student learning. In these reformed schools, a principal's decision-making process was more collaborative, inclusive, and communicative (Hallinger, 1992).

At the turn of the 21st century, despite the accepted idea of principals as instructional leaders, the principal was mostly engaged in management tasks. Daily activities included scheduling, reporting, and dealing with problems and crises (Fink & Resnick, 2001). The principal's role gradually increased in complexity to include coaching teachers, building community relations, managing school finance, and monitoring student learning (Beausaert et al., 2016; Ozer, 2013).

Recently, educational research has stressed the importance of the principal's role as an instructional leader as it relates to student outcomes (Alig-Mielcarek & Hoy, 2005; Heck, 1992; Leithwood et al., 2006; Miller et al., 2010). Today's researchers agree that principals with strong instructional leadership work collaboratively with teachers and coaches to use data to improve the teachers' practice (Blase & Blase, 1999; Davis et al., 2005; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Waters & Marzano, 2006). Effective principals regularly observe classrooms and provide feedback to teachers (Blase & Blase, 1999). In other words, to be an effective campus leader, principals must manage and supervise every aspect of the school.

As maintained by a 2011 perspective by the Wallace Foundation (Harvey & Holland, 2011), effective principals of today are responsible for several key practices to improve student learning. Those practices include shaping a vision of academic success, creating a hospitable climate, cultivating leadership, improving instruction, and managing the campus for school improvement. Related to this study, creating a hospitable climate requires the principal to develop a caring, trusting school climate so that teachers perceive honest intentions. According to this report, principal leadership was second to teacher quality for school improvement. (Harvey & Holland, 2011).

The reforms of the early twenty-first century impacted the role of the principal in Alabama. No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) maintained that principals use best practices and educational research to drive improvements. NCLB increased pressure and accountability on principals for the collection and reporting of school data and student achievement (Wilmore, 2002). In Alabama, reform efforts involved principal professional development and new evaluation programs, such as the 2002 Professional Education Personnel Evaluation Program (PEPE), which included thirteen evaluation criteria for administrators (2019). The PEPE reform efforts were grounded in the belief that principal leadership skills influenced effective schools. A decade later, LEADAlabama replaced PEPE and was different on several levels. LEADAlabama is a formative evaluation for school leaders that is more reflective and included a self-assessment component for individual growth (2019).

To enhance school leadership among principals and other administrators, the Alabama State Department of Education established eight standards for school leaders for the state. The standards call leaders to establish and cultivate an inclusive school vision that maximizes student learning through continuous improvement measures. The State also expects principals to

leverage technology, school-community relationships, and financial resources to produce the greatest outcomes. The State addresses the issue of trust within the standards as it expects school leaders to exemplify honesty and integrity in all professional practice.

- Standard 1: Planning for Continuous Improvement
- Standard 2: Teaching and Learning
- Standard 3: Human Resource Development
- Standard 4: Diversity
- Standard 5: Community and Stakeholder Relationships
- Standard 6: Technology
- Standard 7: Management of the Learning Organization
- Standard 8: Ethics (Alabama State Department of Education, 2005)

Superintendent-Principal Relationship

Despite tremendous obstacles to daily work, such as time constraints, unwilling employees, and budget issues, effective superintendents and principals must forge a collaborative and competent team. Coplan and Knapp (2006) visualized and emphasized the necessity of a "coherent bridge" between the school and central office as a structure for system-wide improvements that promotes communication (p. 93). To improve student performance, schools need visionary principals and superintendents who are highly skilled and knowledgeable (Waters & Marzano, 2006). The superintendent-principal relationship, or team, is the bridge between school and central office.

Within the hierarchical school system, the superintendent's formal role in the central office is one of authority over the principal. It is the responsibility of the superintendent who holds greater power to build and sustain a trusting relationship (Tschannen-Moran, 2014).

Superintendents accomplish this interdependent work with principals through positive relationships, connections, and responsiveness to needs (Goleman, 1995; West & Derrington, 2008). The superintendent plays the leading role because his behavior and decisions directly affect the principal (West & Derrington, 2008). However, despite the authority the superintendent has over the principal, they are mutually dependent upon each other to meet both campus and district objectives. Tschannen-Moran (2014) found that in interdependent relationships such as this, each member desires to believe that the opposing member is benevolent, honest, open, reliable, and competent, which are the facets of trust.

School stakeholders scrutinize the interactions of the superintendent-principal team (West & Derrington, 2008); therefore, they are models of appropriate behavior. Principals desire equal treatment from the superintendent among their peers (Lapierre, 2007; West & Derrington, 2008), and "Superintendents desire principals who demonstrate integrity and courage, a strong work ethic, and a commitment to communicate" (West & Derrington, 2008, p. 38).

Both superintendents and principals affirm that trust is an essential component of a strong, professional relationship (Derrington, 2007). Superintendents value principals who build trust with their staff, contribute to the professional growth of the team, set goals based on district or state initiatives, and help manage the media. Indicators of trust in the most effective superintendent-principal teams include expression of thought without fear of reprisal; cooperation; feelings of inclusion and value; honest communication; confidence in team members' abilities; commitment; and, support (West & Derrington, 2008).

Without a high-trust relationship between superintendents and principals, it is unlikely that the principal will endorse the district's vision for reform and change (Louis, 2003), especially with work intensification and job-related stressors (Wang et al., 2018). In a recent

study that examined principals' job satisfaction with their work intensification, the researchers determined that as work intensified, motivating factors impacted job satisfaction. Those factors included organizational support and the principal's relationship with the superintendent (Wang et al., 2018). According to West (2011), barriers that prevented the development of an effective superintendent-principal relationship included poor performance, unprofessional behavior, negative attitudes, lack of trust, and poor communication skills.

Collectively, this literature review has identified the nature of trust in schools, including essential facets, characteristics, and practices trustworthy leaders demonstrate. This review explored how trust is fostered within an organization and between parties. Finally, the review included a historic description of the roles of superintendent and principal, as well as the nature of their working relationship.

Chapter III: Methods

School districts are under great pressure to increase educational outcomes. Structurally, educational leaders depend on each to reach goals (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002), and trust facilitates the necessary cooperation to get things done (Sitkin & Stickel, 1996). While educational researchers have examined trust at the campus level, little is known about the practices that superintendents use to develop trust with principals. Further knowledge regarding these practices and the benefits of high-trust organizations may help districts emphasize trusting relationships in place of strict policy controls to meet goals and accountability measures.

This study is framed theoretically around the most prominent research on trust in education. Survey questions rely predominantly on Hoy and Tschannen-Moran's (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999) single-factor model that include the five facets of trust, which are benevolence, honesty, openness, reliability, and competence, as well another dimension found within the research, willingness to risk vulnerability. The interview questions and observations are grounded in existing research on the trust-building practices of school leaders.

The following chapter includes the research purpose, significant, design, questions, data collection methods, and analysis. This chapter chronicles the qualitative research methods used to uncover practices that superintendents employ to build trust with principals. Given the lack of research and the need to explore the topic on a deeper level, the most appropriate approach is the single instrumental case study, which focuses on one bounded case (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to identify specific practices that superintendents employ to build trust with principals. The case study also sought to reveal both

the superintendent's perception, as well as principals' perceptions of the superintendent's trust-building practices. Since there is a significant research gap concerning trust between superintendents and principals, this study contributes to the greater body of knowledge by uncovering the unique perspectives of both parties across school configurations, years of administrative experience, gender, and length of time in a professional relationship with the superintendent.

Significance of the Study

Research demonstrates that district-level leadership is correlated with student achievement (Marzano & Waters, 2009). Consequently, the superintendent-principal relationship is a critical element in school districts' efforts to create and sustain effective learning organizations and is of value to study. Trusting relationships are a financially free resource school leaders may use to increase cooperation and organizational improvements (Forsyth et al., 2011). Superintendents need more information involving how to build trust with principals to leverage this free resource.

More specifically, this study was a valuable contribution to the field of educational leadership because it identified specific trust-building practices of superintendents, which is lacking in the literature. Since schools benefit when campus administrators have trusting connections to central office leaders (Daly & Finnigan, 2012), more information regarding practices that build trust is valuable to educational leaders across the country. This study provides educational leaders with practical suggestions to foster trusting relationships for organizational improvements.

Research Design

To uncover specific trust-building practices of superintendents with campus principals,

the researcher selected a qualitative case study methodology, which allowed for deeper understanding and explanation of practices within a unique case (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Mertler, 2018). According to Creswell and Poth (2017), case study research is defined as a "qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information, and reports a case description and case themes" (pp. 96-97). As such, this case study permitted the examination of a school organization within the context of a real-life setting (Yin, 2017). Case study research is a well-respected, generally accepted methodology in the field of education because it provides a comprehensive strategy of inquiry (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Yin, 2017).

More precisely, to dive deeper into the nature of trust-building practices between superintendents and principals, the researcher employed an instrumental case study (Stake, 2005). According to Stake (2005), an instrumental case study provides focused insight into research questions by studying a bounded case. This research study required a need for additional understanding of behaviors and practices of several individuals within a common relationship found in public school district contexts—the superintendent-principal relationship. This single, within-site case study allowed the researcher to explore how the superintendent builds trust with campus principals through a collection of several unique, in-depth experiences.

Research Questions

The researcher relied upon three sources of data to conduct this study. Interviews and observations conducted with both the superintendent and principals, as well as a survey conducted with only principals. Analysis of these data points served to answer the following questions:

1. What practices do superintendents employ to build trust with campus principals?
2. What similarities exist between the superintendent's and principals' perceptions regarding trust-building practices?
3. What differences exist between the superintendent's and principals' perceptions regarding trust-building practices?

Participants, Background, and Setting

This single case study relied upon a purposive sampling technique, which involves the intentional selection of individuals or sites (Creswell & Poth, 2017). In this case study about trust, the superintendent sample must demonstrate the ability to build trust with principals; in other words, a trusting relationship must exist between parties. Consequently, the population included Alabama public school superintendents who foster trust with principals. Currently, there are one-hundred and thirty-seven superintendents in Alabama (Mackey, 2018). To identify a particular sample who exhibited that criteria, the researcher employed a judgment sampling technique "whereby people or other sampling units are selected for a particular purpose…because individuals making up the sample are believed to be representative of a given population" (Mertler, 2018, p. 231). To do so, the researcher contacted educational experts to recommend superintendents who have a reputation for fostering trust and would benefit the study. Two experts nominated the same individual, who thus became the sample.

Additionally, the study included the population of K-12 Alabama public school principals who serve under a superintendent who fosters trusting relationships. Naturally, the four principals who serve under the identified sample superintendent within the same district were included in the study. Once the potential sample superintendent was identified, the researcher contacted him via email explaining the purpose of the research project to request his district's

participation. The superintendent, referred to as Superintendent Miller, and principals within the district agreed to participate.

The research setting was a small district located in a suburban town in Alabama with a population of 9,322 (Edwards, 2018), referred to as Masonville School District. In August 2019, the district was home to almost 2000 students in grades prekindergarten through twelfth (Smith, 2019), organized on three main campuses, including an elementary, middle, and high school. The student population includes 52% Caucasian, 32% African American or Black, 8% Asian, and 8% Hispanic, with 17% eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. The district's most current report card grade is an 81 (Alabama State Department of Education, 2018).

The voluntary participants were comprised of one male superintendent and four principals, which included one female and three males, all of whom were Caucasian. All principals have worked under the superintendent between one and three years, and three of the four principals reported having a previous relationship with the superintendent in another school setting or within social circles. Additionally, three of the four principals have served as an administrator for seven or more years.

Principal Tailor is a Caucasian male who currently serves as a district-level coordinator, but formerly served as a principal in the district under Superintendent Miller. His early experience in education included teaching middle school history and reading. He worked as an instructional coach and an assistant principal in Masonville School District prior to becoming a principal. Principal Tailor has worked with Superintendent Miller for less than three years.

Principal Fisher is a Caucasian male with almost nine years of administrative experience in Alabama and also served as an instructional specialist. As a principal, he worked with Superintendent Miller previously in another district and was recruited to come to Masonville

Schools the previous year.

Principal Weaver is a Caucasian female with over 15 years of experience as a school administrator. Her past experiences include serving as a special education teacher and a program specialist. She also worked with Superintendent Miller in a previous district and was recruited by him to work in Masonville Schools.

Principal Potter is a Caucasian male who spent the majority of his early years in education as a high school athletic coach. Later, he served as an assistant principal and principal in several Alabama districts for almost 20 years. He knew Superintendent Miller through coaching circles, family and friends, and he was also recruited to serve as the high school principal in Masonville Schools.

Superintendent Miller is a Caucasian male with nearly 30 years of experience in education, which includes a variety of classroom, athletic, and administrative positions in the state of Alabama. He earned both a Master of Education and a Doctor of Education in the field of educational leadership. His classroom experience included teaching high school history and government, while his coaching experience included football and basketball. He has served a total of 19 years as an administrator, including assistant principal, principal, and assistant superintendent. Before his current appointment, he served as superintendent in three other school districts in Alabama.

Superintendent Miller noted that his key leadership strengths were in the areas of communication and decision-making. Regarding communication, he stated that he is a good listener, is quite approachable to others, and is comfortable talking with many people. He is strong at decision-making as evidence by his stated ability to listen before acting and evaluate alternatives as it relates to the bigger picture and unintended consequences. Table 3 summarizes

the demographic data of all participants.

Table 3

Participant Demographic Data

Participant's Position	Grade-Level	Gender	Race	Years of Administrative Experience	Years working with Superintendent
Superintendent	K-12	M	Caucasian	20	N/A
Principal #1	PK-4	M	Caucasian	7-9	3
Principal #2	5-7	F	Caucasian	10+	4
Principal #3	8-12	M	Caucasian	10+	3
Principal #4/ District Coordinator	K-6/K-12	M	Caucasian	1-3	3

Data Collection

The single case study's comprehensive design included interviews, surveys, and observations (Creswell & Poth, 2017), which ensured triangulation (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). Data collection relied heavily on semi-structured, in-depth interviews to capture the views of one superintendent and four principals within the district's natural setting (Mertler, 2018; Seidman, 2006). "Because leadership is so dependent on relationships, qualitative interviewing that captures both ends of these relationships can be particularly helpful. Given its focus on whole organizations and systems, interviewing strategies that seek out different vantage points on organizational events can capture how it is enacted and experienced across the organization." (Knapp, 2017, pp. 28-29). The interviews served as one research instrument, along with a trust survey used to gather the principals' perspective of the superintendent's behavior and characteristics. Lastly, the researcher relied upon semi-structured observations to collect nonverbal reactions and to better understand how the superintendent interacts with principals (Mertler, 2018).

Before all research activities, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved this project involving human subjects (see Appendix A); therefore, the interview and observation protocols met established guidelines and ethical principles. A semi-structured interview protocol was used

to collect information from the superintendent and principals. The protocol included a brief introduction and ample time at the beginning of the interview, using broad questions to help participants feel comfortable (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). As the process continued, the interview included several open-ended questions to gain each participants' unique perspective, thoughts, and feelings. Preceding all interviews, participants signed the informed consent form, and the researcher established the ground rules. Participants were notified and reminded of the purpose of the research project, the approximate length of the interview, and the confidential nature of all information they provided.

The recorded interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes and were later transcribed. The researcher designed the semi-structured interview questions to reflect current educational research and to elicit specific information regarding how the superintendent builds trust with principals. Before conducting the interviews, the researcher tested all questions with three current campus administrators from a different school setting to reduce unclear language, ensure appropriate pacing, and increase valuable responses. Initial questions included basic information regarding the participant, which gradually led to more probing questions regarding the principals' perception of the superintendent and practices that build trust. Harrell and Bradley (2009) referred to this type of questioning as an inverted funnel, which is helpful when dealing with sensitive or personal topics. At times, the researcher asked participants to expound on vague comments or provide specific examples of generalizations. In some situations, the researcher redirected the participants when their responses were not directly answering the question. During all interviews, the participants were encouraged to speak openly about their experiences and reassured of confidentiality to facilitate participation.

According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2016), interviews encourage deeper probing, clarification, and the capturing of unique perspectives. The interview questions addressed all three research questions and were conducted with both the superintendent (see Appendix G) and principals (see Appendix F). For example, one broad superintendent interview question was How would you describe your relationship with campus principals? On the other hand, a principal interview question was What are some ways the superintendent builds trust with you? How so? Examples? Both the superintendent and principals were asked how they believe trust develops between the two of them, and the researcher usually probed the participant for specific examples when appropriate.

As a secondary source of data, principals completed the Superintendent Trust Survey (see Appendix C). This additional source of data helped establish trustworthiness and consistency of facts (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Once approved by the IRB, the researcher contacted all principals via email to provide them with a link for the electronic survey, which required participants to respond to 10 general demographic questions and a series of 24 Likert-type statements. The five facets of trust (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999), and the additional dimension of willingness to risk vulnerability, were the basis of survey statements. These dimensions of trust included benevolence, honesty, openness, reliability, competence, and willingness to risk vulnerability. Participants selected one of six responses to statements that ranged from "*never*" to "*always*"; a 6-point Likert scale did not allow for a mid-point, which may misrepresent results (Garland, 1991). One statement related to benevolence was that the superintendent acknowledges the successes and contributions of site leaders. Another item that involved honesty was the superintendent's words and actions are in alignment. Table 4 includes sample survey statement items. The survey was created by a former doctoral candidate from

California State University at Fullerton, Julie Hatchel, who provided permission to use in this study. Hatchel determined the reliability of the survey through pilot tests (Hatchel, 2012) (see Appendix E for Survey Permission from Julie Hatchel).

Table 4

Sample Survey Items Regarding the Facets of Trust

Facet	Item
Benevolence	The superintendent expresses interest in my well-being.
Competence	The superintendent seeks all relevant information prior to making a decision.
Honesty	The superintendent demonstrates ethical behavior.
Openness	The superintendent shares the rationale behind decisions.
Reliability	The superintendent can be counted upon to provide accurate information to principals.
Willingness to Risk Vulnerability	I am comfortable sharing a contrary opinion with my superintendent

Observations served as the third source of data, which contributed to the in-depth case study (Yin, 2017). The researcher contacted the superintendent's administrative assistant to arrange for three formal observations during regularly scheduled leadership meetings. Throughout the year, the superintendent meets with all campus principals and district-level coordinators Monday of each week. On three separate occasions, the researcher attended leadership meetings to conduct semi-structured observations of participants interacting with one another while fulfilling their roles within the school context (Angrosino, 2007). The researcher's role was as an observer as a participant, in that she remained foremost an observer, but also had some level of interaction with participants (Glesne, 2006). The superintendent introduced her to the participants at the beginning of each meeting, and she explained her primary purpose and ensured the group's high level of confidentiality. She conducted all notetaking while sitting slightly off to the side of the large table group. The observation note form was grounded in current educational research regarding leadership trust-building practices and included a column

for descriptive and reflective notes to "shed light on emerging patterns" (Mertler, 2018, p. 202) (see Appendix D).

Data Analysis

Interviews, direct observations, and surveys served to uncover specific practices that superintendents use to build trust with principals. Moreover, these data also provided insight into the similarities and differences in perceptions between the superintendent and principals, as it relates to leadership trust-building practices. By corroborating evidence within these sources, the researcher established trustworthiness and consistency in facts, which resulted in greater confidence in discoveries (Brazeley, 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2017; Mertler, 2018; Yin, 2017).

Interviews

To ensure the accuracy of responses, the researcher collected interview data using a recording device. Computer software transcribed audio recordings into print, which the participants were invited to critique for accuracy. Based on Saldana's (2015) recommendation, this novice researcher utilized manual coding with hard copies of audio transcripts using a word processing application and codebook, which is a "set of codes, definitions, and examples used as a guide to help analyze interview data" (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011, p. 138). In qualitative research, coding the text involves assigning tags or labels to chucks of words or phrases to establish category names and uncover patterns or themes (Saldaña, 2015).

The initial phases of coding the printed interview transcripts involved several readings in becoming familiar with the content. As part of the organization process, the researcher then read each transcript individually, recorded notes, and highlighted key phrases of text, which were recorded in the codebook. Similar concepts and repeated phrases were groups together within a table and reduced, when applicable, to categories related to current research regarding leadership

trust-building practices (Brazeley, 2013).

During the interpretation process, the researcher relied upon inductive analysis to develop broad, general themes from a limited number of data (Creswell & Poth, 2017; DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011; Mertler, 2018). The inductive design resulted in detailed data that was analyzed throughout the research process by coding and categorizing to identify themes and patterns, which resulted in assertions (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Madison, 2011; Saldaña, 2015). After several coding sessions, initial codes became more focused through the elimination of irrelevant text, a combination of smaller categories, and division of larger ones (Saldaña, 2015). Current theoretical knowledge about leadership trust-building practices served as a foundation of themes when applicable (Wolcott, 1994).

The researcher employed the In Vivo Coding approach, which involved assigning a label to a section of interview transcript data to ensure the researcher captures the true meaning of the participants' responses (King, 2008; Saldaña, 2015). In Vivo coding required the researcher to use the exact language of the participant as codes, which grounded the results in the participants' perspective and preserved the true meaning of their views (Saldaña, 2015). This type of coding is recommended for interview transcripts because it allowed the researcher to develop a new understanding of the phenomenon of how superintendents build trust with principals (Saldaña, 2015). The researcher also employed the use of analytic memos and field notes throughout the coding process to enhance the reflection process and the development of concepts in the data (Saldaña, 2015), which involved a separate notebook for ideas, questions, and reflections. Continuously, the researcher referenced the notes to discover patterns and make connections while interpreting data.

Once the researcher analyzed the data and identified potential themes, she created

visualizations to assist in simplifying and making sense of the interview data. She looked for similarities and differences between words and phrases, as well as potential relationships (Saldaña, 2015). Throughout this fluid phase, the researcher was engaged in a data analysis spiral that included re-reading interview transcripts, re-classifying codes into themes, and developing new interpretations of data (Creswell & Poth, 2017). In this respect, the visualizations served as a research tool. She created a chart for each theme and related categories, as well as the letter *I* to represent interview data. Under each category, the researcher included supporting codes using the participants' natural language. When applicable, the researcher attempted to categorize codes under related themes from the theoretical framework of current educational research (Brazeley, 2013).

Observations

The researcher observed participants for approximately two-three hours during regular leadership meetings, for a total of almost eight hours of observation. Typically, principals, coordinators, directors, and the superintendent attended the meetings, which resulted in approximately nine participants at the large conference table. During all observations, the meeting tone was light and positive, and participants' body language signaled a sense of comfort. The setting was a district-level conference room connected to a couple of district personnel offices, which included a beverage area. Some participants used electronic devices during the meeting, while others recorded notes traditionally on paper. There was no formal meeting agenda; however, the superintendent began each meeting with a brief positive opening statement, then gave the floor to the attendees. Each provided a status of events and affairs for their campus or area of responsibility, while others listened and asked clarifying questions. Occasionally, attendees used humor or personal comments, but most meeting conversations pertained directly

to the business at hand.

Direct observations were loosely framed by existing research knowledge regarding leadership practices that build trust. The researcher employed descriptive coding to analyze observational notes and determined how those codes related to established categories. The observation protocol included a mapping of each observation, the use of field notes, and form to record happenings as they occurred. The semi-structured observation form consisted of a three-column table that included established research-based leadership practices known to build trust and personal reflective notes (Creswell & Poth, 2017). For instance, in the note column adjacent to "communicates", the researcher recorded the following descriptive notes during one observation: all principals share the status of campus, superintendent listens more than talks, positive body language.

The table included rows marked others where the researcher recorded notes that did not immediately conform to an established theme to allow for the development of new categories and themes, For example, she recorded thanked/acknowledged work of others besides the row marked other, but later placed that code under the themes of "models norms" and "empowers."

During the organization phase of analysis, the researcher read each observation form and highlighted and underlined key texts to determine patterns. She conducted several readings of both formal and reflective notes to ensure the accuracy of interpretation and coding categories (Saldaña, 2015). Then, the researcher extracted codes from each meeting form and placed the information on the visualization charts for each theme and related categories, as well as the letter *O,* to represent observation data.

In some cases, during the coding sessions, the researcher changed the category for initial codes. For instance, during one meeting, the researcher recorded that the superintendent provides

factual information to principals regarding complicated state-level decisions adjacent to the predetermined supporting/coaching theme; however, later during coding sessions, she recorded "demonstrates knowledge of complicated state legislature's issues" underneath the theme of "makes informed decisions," on the visualization chart, along with the letter *O* to represent observation data.

Surveys

The researcher used Qualtrics, a web-based survey application, to collect and analyze survey data. Three of the four principals completed the superintendent trust survey. Ancillary questions regarding principals' contact with superintendents included the number of face-to-face hours, professional activities in which they participate, and types of communication the superintendent employs. Additional demographic data were reviewed and summarized. Data from the 24 Likert-type statements assessing the principals' perceptions of trust in the superintendent were calculated for means for each trust facet. Four questions represented each of the six facets to ensure equal and adequate representative of the dimensions of trust. Both individual means and an overall mean were calculated for each facet. Survey responses received the following numeric values to calculate a measure of central tendency: 1 – *never;* 2 – *almost never*; 3 – *sometimes*; 4 – *most of the time*; 5 – *almost always*; 6 – *always*. For example, if a participant stated that the superintendent *almost always* is accessible to site leaders, then their response received a value of five. The remaining demographic questions, such as gender, race, administrative experience, number of hours of face-to-face contact, and length of time in a professional relationship with the superintendent, were collected and described statistically.

Next, the researcher reviewed each of the 24 survey statements to identify superintendent practices that corresponded to the established categories or themes. Statements with a mean of

four or higher were included in the codebook; a mean of four or higher represented the positive selections of *most of the time*, *almost always*, and *always*. For example, she identified that the survey statement "The superintendent can be counted on to do the right thing" had a mean of five. Then, she connected the statement to "reliability" or "follow-through," which was previously identified as a category while analyzing interview and observation data. Once identified, the researcher placed that code, "do the right thing", on the visualization chart under the appropriate category and theme with the corresponding mean value and the letter *S* to signify survey data. Table 5 summarizes the study's data sources and strategies for analysis.

Table 5

Methods – Data Analysis

Research Questions:		
1. What practices do superintendents employ to build trust with campus principals? 2. What similarities exist between superintendents' and principals' perceptions regarding trust-building practices? 3. What differences exist between superintendents' and principals' perceptions regarding trust-building practices?		
Trust Survey	**Semi-Structured Interviews**	**Semi-Structured Observations**
• 6-point Likert Scale • Measures of central tendency • Descriptive statistics • Qualtrics analysis • Reducing to themes by coding • Relating categories to the analytic framework • Frequency Coding	• In Vivo Coding • Reducing to themes by coding • Analytic memo writing • Discovery of patterns through field notes • Relating categories to the analytic framework • Frequency Coding	• Direct observations & observers' comments • Discovery of patterns through field notes • Reducing to themes by coding • Relating categories to the analytic framework • Frequency Coding

To specifically address research questions two and three involving similarities and differences in perspectives, a final method of analysis involved frequency coding as a form of further inquiry and investigation into the collective data. While Saldaña (2015) argues in one text that "frequency of occurrence is not necessarily an indicator of significance" (p. 41), he and other researchers later justify the use of frequency coding in qualitative research:

> However, a lot of counting goes on in the background when judgments of qualities are being made. When we identify a theme or a pattern, we're isolating something that (a)

> happens a number of times, and (b) consistently happens in a specific way. The "number of times" and "consistency" judgments are based on counting. (Miles et al., 2020, p. 282)

In this case study, the researcher used frequency coding to verify hunches and to protect research findings against bias (Miles et al., 2020, p. 282). Within a table that included broad themes for all collected data, the researcher counted and recorded the number of times a code occurred that presented a theme, both for the superintendent and the principals. For example, during the interview process, a principal stated that the superintendent trusted committee members, which counted as an occurrence under "extends trust." The researcher conducted code frequencies to ensure reliability. She used code frequencies on three occasions – after all interviews, after observations, and after survey coding sessions.

Assumptions

The researcher made several assumptions concerning this study. Those assumptions included the assumption that effective superintendents build relationships with campus administrators and that those relationships are built on trust. The researcher also assumed that the superintendent holds primary responsibility for developing these trusting relationships. Additionally, the researcher assumed that interview responses would require the injection of follow-up questions. Finally, the researcher assumed that participants would provide honest answers to all questions.

Credibility

The credibility of this research was established through an agreement to report valid information from all participants. The researcher was truthful in all reporting to establish a valuable study. The researcher achieved credibility within the study by reviewing data, conducting several coding sessions, triangulating data through multiple data points, and ensuring

data aligned correctly with each participant. Interview questions were field-tested, while the survey questions were previously tested for reliability in another study (Hatchel, 2012). Furthermore, the researcher searched for possible variations in understanding the data to reduce personal biases and submitted transcribed interviews to participants for review for accuracy (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016).

Role of the Researcher

The researcher is a doctoral student pursuing a Ph.D. in Elementary and Secondary Supervision and currently serves as a principal and coordinator in a school district that is not associated with this study. The researcher's primary role was to conduct interviews and observations and to collect survey data. Other roles included to discover and create meaning, to adopt an insider point of view, to be flexible and open throughout the research process, and to acknowledge personal values or biases. For instance, the researcher personally views trust as an essential component in the superintendent-principal relationship, and she finds it challenging to work with individuals whom she does not trust.

Ethics

Qualitative researchers are morally bound to conduct research dealing with human subjects in a way that minimizes potential harm (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). The ethical research design included consent agreements, transparency, confidentiality, and explanation of the intent of research procedures and objectives. Namely, the researcher encouraged participants' cooperation by carefully explaining the relevant steps of the research process, fully disclosing all relevant information, and ensuring the confidentiality of all responses (Creswell, 2007). Also, the researcher sought and received approval from the IRB. All participants signed an informed

consent document that informed them of their voluntary participation and the right to withdraw from the case study at any point during the research process (see Appendix B).

Limitations

To reduce limitations, the researcher identified personal beliefs, biases, and values before conducting interviews and observations to ensure accuracy and objectivity. The researcher also incorporated a vetted survey from a previous research study, as well as interviews and observational data for triangulation. During the data analysis phase, the researcher consulted with several experts to discuss the coding process, categories, and proposed themes.

Despite the precautions, limitations exist. For instance, this study relied upon judgment sampling to recruit a superintendent within one suburban district in Alabama. Mertler (2018) referred to this type of nonrandom purposive sampling as "judgment sampling because individuals making up the sample are believed to be representative of a given population," which may increase inaccuracies in the sample selection (p. 231). Other limitations included the inability of the researcher to control the environment in which the interviews and surveys were conducted. Interruptions, such as phone calls, occurred during interviews, which may have influenced participants' thought processes and responses. Additionally, interview participants were not always articulate and perceptive of their thoughts and feelings (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016).

Unfortunately, the voluntary participants represented only a single suburban school district in Alabama. Subsequently, the results may not be generalizable to the wider population of superintendents and principals because the sample size is very small. The small sample size limited the number of observations and interviews, which failed to meet the suggested number of 15-30 interviews for a single case study (Marshall et al., 2013). Furthermore, the researcher

cannot guarantee the degree of honesty of the participants because their responses may be influenced by negative past experiences and not their current context.

An additional limitation includes the use of the survey instrument, which was framed by six facets of trust, including competence, honesty, benevolence, openness, reliability, and the willingness to risk vulnerability. Explicit questions regarding these factors may have possibly inflated or wrongly influenced data analysis that revealed patterns involving the study themes "communicates," "making informed decisions," and "models norms." Specifically, the category risk contained four survey questions, and demonstrated values contained six questions. In future studies to confirm superintendent practices that build trust with principals, researchers should create a survey with statements that equally encompass the themes from this study.

Summary

Educational researchers have identified the benefits of trust within schools (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Burke et al., 2007; Fukuyama, 1995; McAllister, 1995). This study sought to uncover specific trust-building practices that superintendents employ to form trusting relationships with campus administrators. Researchers have found that trusting relationships in schools act as a resource for organizational improvements (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Forsyth et al., 2011; Tschannen-Moran, 2014; Van Maele et al., 2014), especially amid increasing policy controls (O'Day, 2002).

This study added to the body of knowledge in the area of trust at the district leadership level, and more specifically, with superintendents. This qualitative study included in-depth interviews conducted with the superintendent and four principals, as well as direct observations of those participants during regular leadership meetings. The study also included survey data that measured perceived principals' trust in the superintendent. All data collection methods were

grounded in the dimensions, or facets, of trust and other significant educational research about leadership trust-building practices. Interview data were analyzed using In Vivo Coding, analytic memos, the discovery of patterns, and reducing themes by coding; observational data were analyzed using direct observations, observer's comments, and discovery of patterns; and, survey data were analyzed using measures of central tendency, descriptive statistics, Qualtrics analysis, and reducing to themes by coding. The researcher analyzed all three data points with the use of frequency coding and relating categories to the analytic framework. To increase transparency, credibility, and dependability, the researcher discussed issues of limitations, assumptions, and ethical considerations.

Chapter IV: Findings

The focus of this case study was to determine specific leadership trust-building practices that K-12 superintendents employ to build trust with campus principals. An additional focus included determining the differences and similarities in perspectives between the principals and superintendent, as it relates to trust-building practices. The superintendent and campus principals comprise a powerful leadership team that effects district results, including student outcomes (Waters & Marzano, 2006). Consequently, the superintendent-principal relationship is beneficial to study because of its broad impact on organizations, and the results of this study are valuable to educational leaders in their efforts to increase local outcomes. This chapter contains a brief overview of the methodology, a summary of findings, implications for practice, and a recommendation for future research.

Research Questions

This study investigated the following questions:

1. What practices do superintendents employ to build trust with campus principals?
2. What similarities exist between the superintendent's and principals' perceptions regarding trust-building practices?
3. What differences exist between the superintendent's and principals' perceptions regarding trust-building practices?

Data Collection

Data were collected through in-depth, individual interviews, observations, and principal surveys. All five participants, including one superintendent and four principals, were employed by one district and comprised the interview sources. Data sources for the superintendent also included observations, while an additional source for principals was a survey measuring trust in

the superintendent. Data instruments included an interview protocol, an observation protocol, and a principal survey. Data collection is summarized in Table 6.

Table 6

Data Sources – Masonville School District

Participant	Pseudonym	Methods	Instruments
K-12 Superintendent	Superintendent Miller	Interview, Observations	Protocols
PK-4 Principal	Principal Fisher	Interview, Survey	Protocol, Survey
5-7 Principal	Principal Weaver	Interview, Survey	Protocol, Survey
8-12 Principal	Principal Potter	Interview	Protocol, Survey
K-6 Principal/ District Coordinator	Principal Tailor	Interview, Survey	Protocol, Survey

Description of Participants and Their Characterization of Superintendent Miller

1. Superintendent Miller is a Caucasian male with 30 years of experience in education, with the last 11 years in district administration. He has served as superintendent in Masonville School District for the past three years. His resume demonstrates a variety of experiences, including high school teacher, football coach, and district curriculum coordinator. When asked about his relationship with Masonville principals, he characterized it as an open relationship.
2. Principal Fisher is a Caucasian male with eight years of administrative experience in Alabama and currently serves at the PK-4 campus. He was recently recruited to Masonville School District by Superintendent Miller, whom he worked under in another Alabama school district. When asked to describe Superintendent Miller, he spoke about his keen ability to articulate his vision through open communication and his willingness to have discussions.

3. Principal Weaver is a Caucasian female with 15 years of administrative experience in Alabama and currently serves at the 5-7 campus. She also worked under Superintendent Miller in a previous district and was recruited by him two years ago. When asked to describe Superintendent Miller, she characterized him as a reliable, genuine person whom everyone connects with, and that he consistently says what he means and means what he says.
4. Principal Potter is a Caucasian male with 20 years of administrative experience in Alabama and currently serves as the high school principal. He has known Superintendent Miller for many years through coaching circles and personal relationships and was also recruited by the superintendent two years prior. He characterized the superintendent's greatest strengths as persistence, handling difficult people, a positive mindset, and the ability to see the big picture.
5. Principal Tailor is a Caucasian male with less than three years of administrative experience in Alabama and currently serves as a district-level coordinator, yet recently worked under Superintendent Miller as a principal in Masonville Schools. During recent school reconfigurations, Superintendent Miller promoted Tailor from principal to district coordinator. When asked to describe the superintendent's greatest strengths, he painted the picture of an adept politician, a human resource leader, and one who can leverage people to get things done. Tailor recounted Miller's capacity for bringing together all stakeholders for one common purpose.

Methods

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all participants for two months on district grounds. The researcher held interviews in an office setting, with a closed door, and with

few minor distractions. Interviews lasted between 30-45 minutes and began with a brief introduction that included the purpose, the assurance of confidentiality, and the reminder that the participant may refuse to participate at any point during the interview process. Interview questions were developed by the researcher and included biographical questions, general questions regarding the superintendent, and specific open-ended questions regarding trust. Interviews were recorded using a personal laptop and generic audio application, then transcribed into text later. All participants were granted the opportunity to review the transcript for accuracy; however, no participant responded to the offer.

Semi-structured observations also occurred for two months in a district-level conference room. With an invitation from the superintendent, the researcher attended three regularly scheduled leadership meetings that included principals, district coordinators, and directors. During these two to three-hour meetings, the researcher recorded detailed notes regarding the superintendent's actions, behavior, and body language on an observation form. The form consisted of a three-column table with the following areas

- theoretical knowledge of leadership trust-building practices (i.e., communicates, builds relationships, and support/coaching)
- direct observations
- reflective notes

The participants were fully aware of the researcher's purpose, but appeared comfortable and forthright during discussions.

Lastly, the researcher sent an electronic survey to principals to measure the level of trust perceived in the superintendent. The survey included ten general demographic questions and 24 Likert-type questions centered around six facets of trust, including "competence," "honesty,"

"benevolence," "openness," "reliability," and "the willingness to risk vulnerability." Despite that the researcher contacted participants three times via email, one participant failed to respond to the survey.

Data Analysis

The researcher relied upon interviews, direct observations, and surveys to reveal specific that superintendents use to build trust with principals, as well as similarities and differences in their perspectives. Through triangulation, the researcher established trustworthiness and consistency in facts by corroborating evidence among these three sources of data (Brazeley, 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2017; Mertler, 2018; Yin, 2017). The researcher also employed other strategies to validate data, including frequency coding to clarify biases, seeking participant feedback, and peer review of the data. The researcher addressed reliability in several ways. For example, she used quality recording devices, including an interview microphone. Also, a full transcription of interviews was printed to reflect participants' pauses, filler words (um, ah), nonverbal communication, and false starts, which provided additional meaning to the text (Creswell, 2007). Lastly, the researcher engaged in at least three coding sessions for all data points.

Interviews. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were analyzed by hand through several rounds of In Vivo Coding techniques to capture the participants' natural language. In Vivo codes captured participants' imagery and metaphors and aided in the development of meaningful categories (Saldaña, 2015). Codes were organized into categories using a codebook, which was later reduced to themes. The researcher framed themes within existing theoretical research regarding leadership trust-building practices but allowed for the development of new themes. Reflective notes and hunches were recorded to aid in the formulation of sound findings. Codes,

categories, and themes were arranged visually in a chart to further assist in the development of understanding. Visualizations and data summary charts helped organize thinking and generate conclusions for the synthesis of data (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). Some visualizations created during the analysis phase are included in this research dissertation as a method of informing the narrative (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Observations. During almost eight hours of direct observations, the researcher used field notes consisting of an observation protocol and form to record happenings. The semi-structured observation form consisted of a three-column table that included research-based leadership practices known to build trust, direct observations, and personal reflections (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The researcher observed and recorded the superintendent's mannerisms, responses, questions, and overall behavior. Notes were recorded in the observer's natural written language.

Following observations, the researcher reviewed the forms to highlight key phrases, recorded further notes, and in some cases, reorganized notes. Given the purpose of the case study, the researcher worked to transform phrases within notes into specific action-oriented categories and themes that illustrated the superintendent's practices. Several coding sessions followed that involved the researcher grouping similarly coded data into categories, searching for combinations of categories, and reducing codes to themes (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Miles et al., 2020; Saldaña, 2015; Yin, 2017). Observation form data were coded into the codebook, organizational chart, and finally, the visualization charts.

Surveys. The researcher summarized demographic survey questions, such as race, gender, and years of administrative experience, and analyzed the 24 Likert-type survey statements for means. Additional questions regarding face-to-face hours, professional activities in which they participate, and types of communication the superintendent were used for

triangulation. Codes from survey statements provided additional corroborating data, which were integrated into existing patterns and codes in interview and observation data.

The final analytic strategy employed was frequency coding. This strategy provided a culminating method of mapping and interpreting the data. Miles and colleagues (2020) explained that "numbers are more economical and manipulable than words" because you can see distributions (p. 283). The addition of numeric values assigned to themes assisted in the content analysis and development of assertions concerning research questions one and two, which pertained to the perspectives of both sets of participants. Frequency coding also reduced the chances of researcher bias while interpreting data (Miles et al., 2020).

Findings

This section includes a presentation of findings from all data sources. An examination of in-depth interview responses, direct observations, and survey results attributed to the development of four themes and leadership practices that the superintendent employed to build trust with campus principals at Masonville School District. Research results are revealed in detail in this section.

Research Question One

Research question one asked what practices do superintendents employ to build trust with campus principals. Data analysis revealed four overarching themes that provided an answer to research question one regarding superintendent trust-building practices with principals. These themes were communicates, empowers, makes informed decisions, and models norms (see Figure 1).

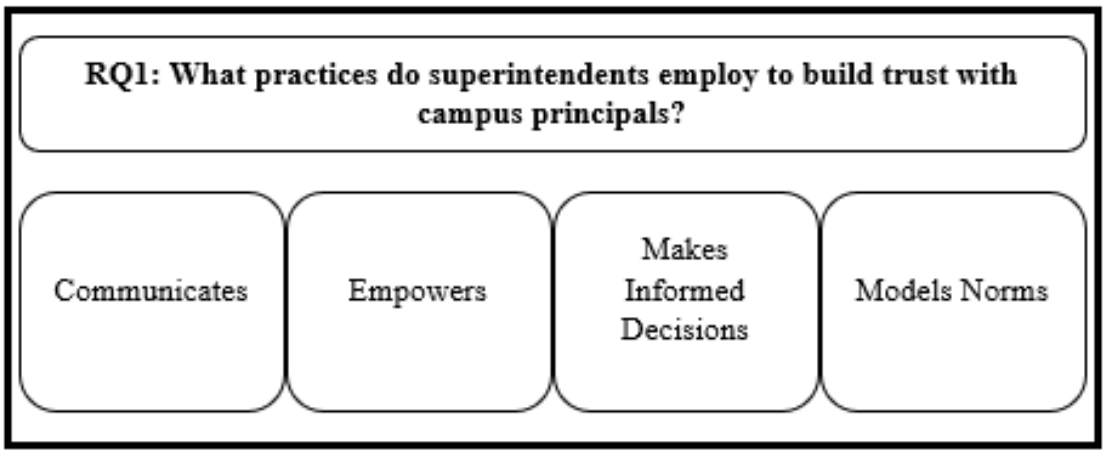


Figure 1. RQ1: Findings – Four Themes

The researcher developed these four themes from multiple coding sessions of interview responses and observational notes, which were organized and summarized into visualizations, including charts and diagrams, during the analysis phase. Phrases from survey statements with a positive mean of four or greater were included, as well. "Communicates," "makes informed decisions," and "models norms" are study themes derived from terminology used in existing literature related to leadership trust-building practices. Empowers is a unique term the researcher captured during the interview with Principal Fisher when he stated, "He empowers us to take control over our buildings and to make tough decisions." The term empowers was used to describe a set of related categories. The four themes and categories are discussed in the following section.

Theme 1: Communicates. During the initial interview coding sessions, multiple codes emerged that signaled the fact that the superintendent relies upon communication to build trust with campus principals. Categories of communication included: listening, clarity, feedback, accessibility, and public relations. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, communication can be defined as "a process by which information is exchanged between

individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior" and "a personal rapport" (Communication, n. d.). Communication involves one's ability to listen well, articulate clear ideas, and influence others, which relate to the coded categories listening, clarity, and public relations, respectively. One element of communication is feedback, and effective communication involves patterns of interactions and recurring cycles, which relates to availability (Burns et al., 2004). Figure 2 illustrates the categories of the theme "communicates".

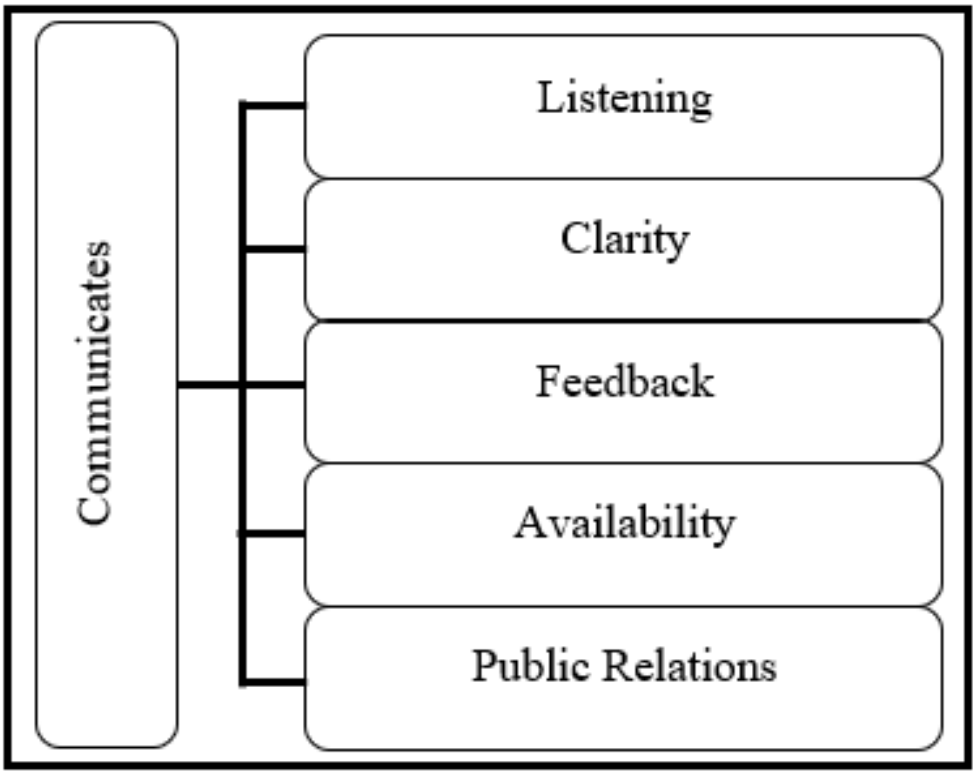


Figure 2. Theme and Categories - Communicates

Listening. Listening emerged from all three data points, including interviews, observations, and surveys, as a practice the superintendent used to build trust with principals. Responses from Principals Weaver and Potter included that Superintendent Miller "listens well," "hears your opinions," and that "everyone has a voice." Superintendent Miller acknowledged his ability to listen well, which was corroborated during all three meeting observations through his

body language—for instance, eye contact, posture, and overall attentiveness. Furthermore, during observations, Miller consistently listened more than he spoke and permitted other participants to speak first. One survey statement with a mean of 4.67 (indicating a positive response) confirmed that Miller heeds the advice and expertise of others in the organization. The following statements also supported Miller's practice of listening:

- Principal Weaver – "He's open to listening, to hearing you out. He doesn't always agree with you, and that's ok. But at least he does listen to you."
- Superintendent – "And, we have those hard conversations…but you know, there are those times that I've got to say, 'Hey, come on now. You know better.' But we're able to have that back and forth."
- Superintendent – "I would say probably the ability to listen before acting."

Clarity. Data from surveys, observations, and interviews provided codes relating to clarity. Principal Potter mentioned that Miller has always been "forthright and clear in what he's doing," indicating a sense of transparency and openness. When recalling a summer leadership meeting before the school year beginning, Principal Fisher described how Superintendent Miller clearly outlined each administrator's role and responsibility, to reduce misunderstandings and increase efficiency. In the following quotations, Fisher explained how he realized the superintendent's vision:

- Principal Fisher – "This is our role. This is our expectation. This is your immediate job. These are your responsibilities. You're going to have some overlap here. So, it was in an attempt to be just crystal clear…it was extremely transparent and clarifying."

- Principal Fisher – “I never had to guess kind of where he stood as far as his vision, as far as his way of doing business. Whether it’s his communication style, his expectations, he implemented—maybe facilitated is a better word—a book study on servant leadership when I was an assistant. That gave a lens, and it just kind of what he believed in.”
- Principal Fisher – “He’s very well rounded in how he communicates and keeps you in the know, sort of in touch with what’s going on.”

The following phrases from survey statements also involved clarity: shares rationale behind decisions (m=4) and provides accurate information (m=4.33). During the interview, Superintendent Miller noted the importance of having face-to-face, candid discussions so that principals can “hear tone and everything” to reduce misunderstandings. The fact that Miller valued and practiced clear communication to build trust was corroborated during meeting observations when he asked principals clarifying questions and explained the nuances of a bond initiative and a state legislature vote regarding the school year calendar.

Feedback. Interview, observational, and survey data supported that the superintendent provided and accepted feedback as a way of building trust. According to survey results, the principals generally believe the superintendent provides feedback to them by the acknowledgment of their successes (m=4). Three principals referenced that Miller willingly accepted feedback in the form of opinions or critiques, which is an illustration of his willingness to risk vulnerability. Also, Miller provided meaningful feedback during conversations. Fisher also stated that Miller gave praise, which was substantiated during meeting observations when Superintendent Miller celebrated the successes or accomplishments of principals in the presence of the leadership team. For instance, he solicited applause for how well a principal facilitated the

Black History Month Program. Miller also was observed seeking input from everyone at the leadership meetings regarding specific issues. His comments, along with principals' statements, that involved feedback included:

- Superintendent – "We need to celebrate this. This is great!"
- Superintendent – "I need your input on the calendar options. Tell me what you think."
- Principal Weaver – "I felt comfortable enough to tell him that."
- Principal Weaver – "He knows that if he asks me a question, I'm gonna tell him what I think…whether it's popular or whether I know that's what he wants to hear or not."
- Principal Fisher – "He's willing to give praise. He's willing to critique, and he's willing to have conversations. He's very well rounded in how he communicates and keeps you in touch with what's going on."
- Principal Potter – "He's good about listening to what, maybe what your plan is, and then adding something, something like, 'Have you thought about this?' or whatever."

Availability. All three data points confirmed that the superintendent made himself available to principals to discuss problems or concerns. On the survey, principals agreed that the superintendent maintained an open-door policy (m=5). Survey data also indicated that the superintendent makes himself available by attending various district meetings, committees, PLCs, and extra-curricular activities. Survey data also specified that the superintendent makes himself available through phone, text, email, and unannounced campus visits. On average, principals have 4-9 hours per month of face-to-face time with the superintendent. Interview and observation data confirmed the superintendent's availability, as seen in the statements below:

- Principal Potter – "He's always available. He's always there. If he doesn't answer right away, he'll get back to you."

- Superintendent – “I give out my cell phone to everybody, talking with people to where they feel like they can reach me, speak to me, and have their issues addressed.”
- Superintendent – “While I’m gone… if you need me, call or text me.”

Public relations. The term *public relations* refers to the state of the relationship between the public and an organization (Public Relations, n. d.), which was a pattern revealed solely in the principal interview data. All four principals maintained that Superintendent Miller was particularly adept at public relations when they described how he deals with difficult people, builds consensus among stakeholders, and negotiates through effective communication to meet objectives. The principals’ statements are as follows:

- Principal Fisher – “The community plays a huge role. They have a strong and heavy voice, which everyone should. You’ve got to know how to navigate. Having candid conversations to ensure that the relationship is strong…that we represent ourselves as a school and district well, is everyone’s goal.”
- Principal Potter – “He understands small-town politics, and I didn’t.”
- Principal Potter – “He’s very positive. He does a really good job of handling difficult people.”
- Principal Potter – “I strive to be more like him in that realm of handling the politics of the matter. He does a great job of that. Because we have some people who are very needy. I’m talking about the City Council, the Mayor, the Board of Education.”
- Principal Weaver – “He really has a way of being able to talk to parents and calm their fears most time. Whatever their angst is. So, I think that’s one of his strengths. He’s a good PR person. Really good with the system. Very much so.”

- Principal Tailor – “He’s an adept politician. And, I mean no negativity in that. He’s a political leader, and I think he’s a human resource leader. He recognizes a finite amount of resources. And so, he’s leveraged people to get some things done.”
- Principal Tailor – “He did bring something that was much needed that we didn’t have. And that is the political. We had the City Council, the government factions, the School Board, and then we had the people on the inside. And, he was able to kind of pull all this together. And not any one group of people, I think, was completely happy with the result, but it was something everyone could live with. And I think that has led to some peace, so to speak…he was able to bring people on board.”

The superintendent’s behavior during leadership meetings confirmed the use of the category of public relations. He emphasized the value of obtaining feedback from the community before making a final decision, encouraged the inclusion of a variety of perspectives in an upcoming district publication, and referenced the critical nature of building relationships with parents. He also reminded leaders to “be mindful when working with the public.” Further, Superintendent Miller shared with the leadership team a positive letter from a parent and connected it to the power of relationships. Moreover, he closed one meeting with several encouraging, inspirational words, including the aphorism, ‘fake it ‘til you make it.’ Additional substantiating interview statements from Superintendent Miller included:

- Example 1 – “We deal with people. We’re not hitting quotas on sales.”
- Example 2 – (Referring to working with parents) “Why don’t we work with each other and why don’t you two deal with the parents and they deal with solutions and we put all that together to create a team that works.”

- Example 3 – "If I'm being fair to people, and I'm trustworthy with people, then when I have to make the hard decisions, for the most part, people give me the benefit of the doubt on those decisions."

Figure 3 summarizes codes and categories for principals' interviews and surveys within the theme "communicates."

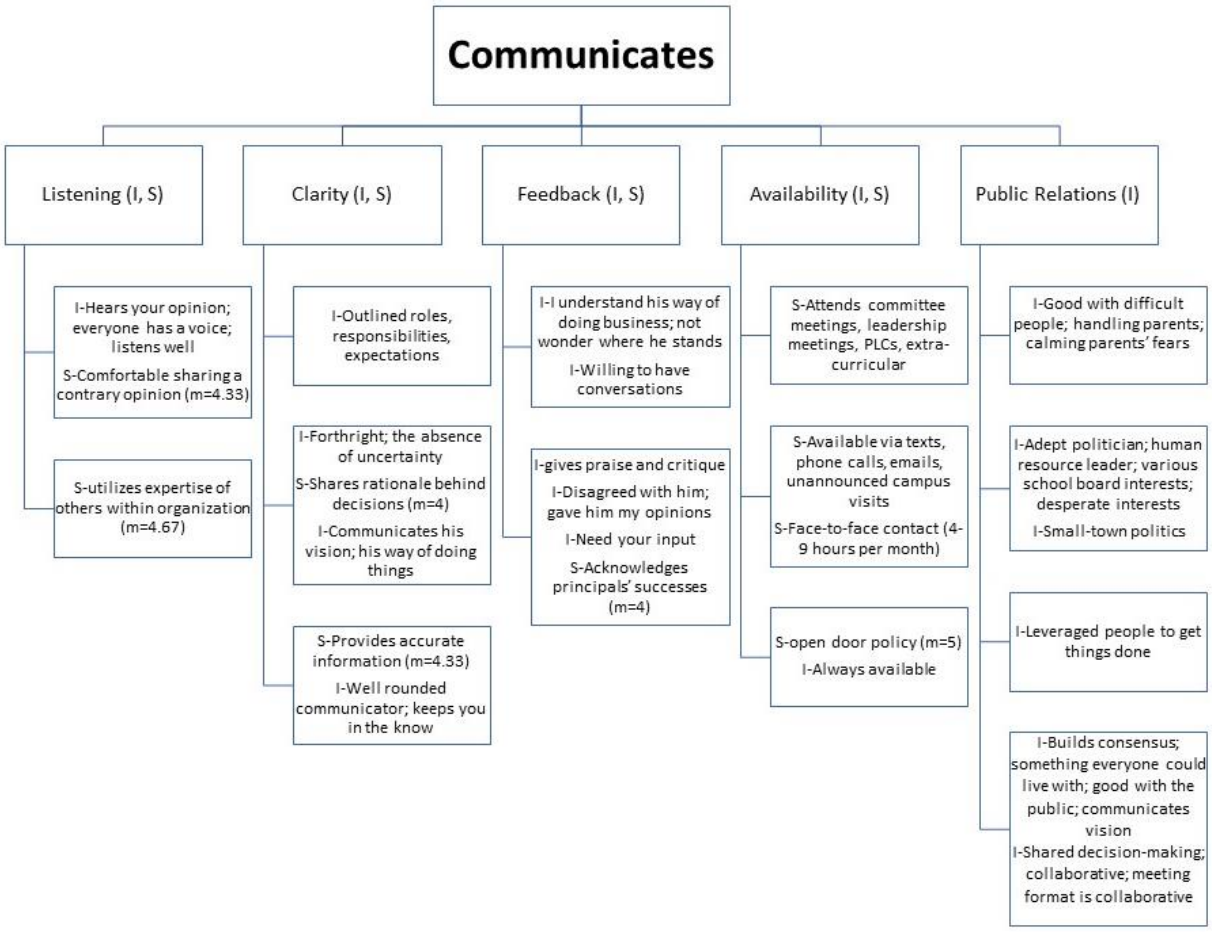


Figure 3. Principals' Codes, Categories, & Themes – Communicates. Note: I = Interviews; S = Survey

Theme 2: Empowers. The second theme that surfaced during the interview and observational coding involved the concept of empowering principals as a practice of building trust. Participants described how the superintendent provided them with plenty of autonomy, support, initial trust, and allowance for risk-taking so that they could perform their principal

duties. Empowerment relates to trust in that “empowerment can change the entire leader-follower relationship from one of hierarchical superiority/inferiority to a more egalitarian relationship built on mutual trust and support” (Burns et al., 2004, p. 435). The superintendent’s willingness to first extend trust empowered principals to take risks in problem-solving and innovative practices. Categories under the theme “empowers” included: autonomy, support, risk, and extend trust. Figure 4 illustrates the categories of the theme “empowers”.

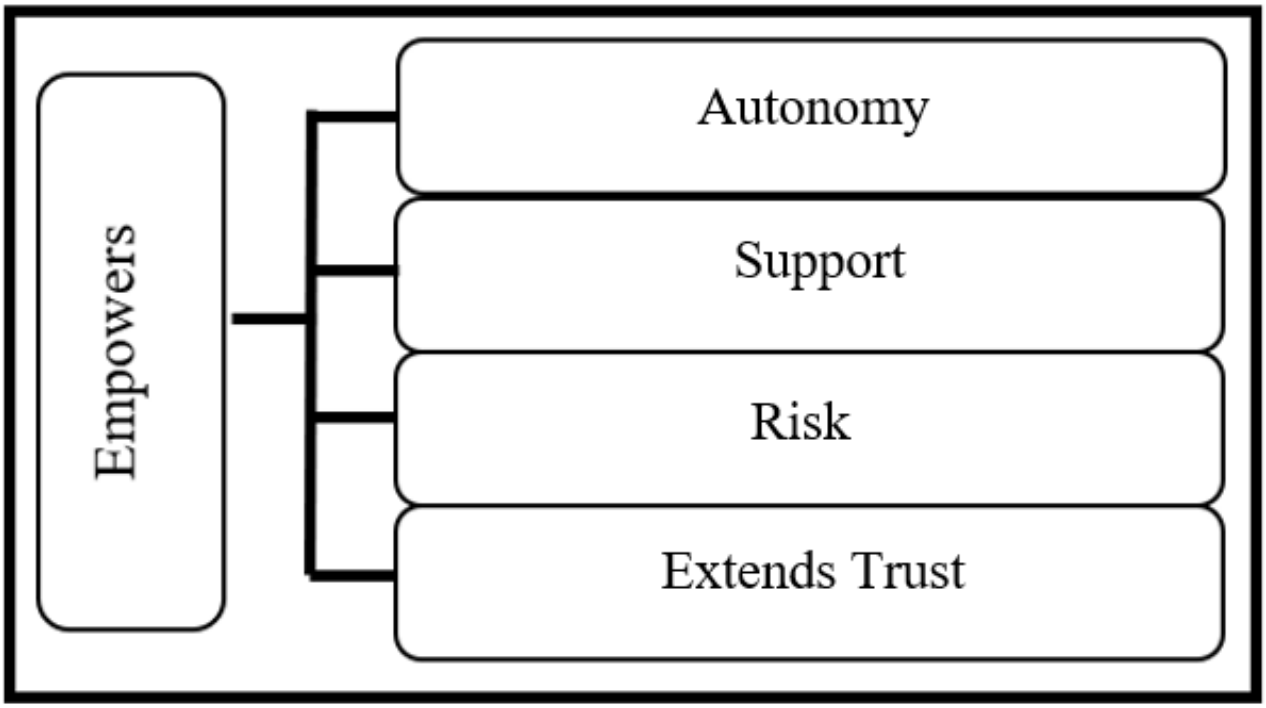


Figure 4. Themes and Categories - Empowers

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, to empower means to “ give someone authority or power to do something, and to make someone stronger and more confident especially in controlling their life and claiming their rights” (Empower, n. d.). Autonomy is the main component that determines whether people feel empowered. Leaders empower staff by providing necessary resources, removing constraints, encouraging decision-making, and rewarding accomplishments, which reflect the category support. Empowerment can increase

productivity by stimulating workers' creativity through risk-taking, which relates to the category risk (Burns et al., 2004).

Autonomy. Interviews and observations provided data regarding the superintendent's use of principal autonomy as a practice that builds trust. No survey statements contained content related to autonomy, and therefore, were irrelevant to this category. All principals expressed anecdotes or responses that described how the superintendent "leaves them alone" or "does not micromanage" them. Superintendent Miller affirmed the use of autonomy when he explained that one of his strengths included the ability to "remove barriers so that principals can do their job."

During three meeting observations, the researcher recorded that the superintendent asked clarifying questions, actively listened, and nodded his head, but did not dictate final solutions except in one circumstance that involved standard course codes. For example, when several participants discussed a district-level transportation issue, the superintendent asked detail-oriented questions about requirements and barriers, but ultimately deferred to the recommendation of the transportation director without interceding. Further interview statements below explained Superintendent Miller's willingness to accept the risk of vulnerability when he extended autonomy to principals:

- Principal Weaver – "I've disagreed with him on a few things. And, I would just say that I don't think that's right. But he would say, 'You're the principal, and the decision's gonna end with you, so if that's what you wanna do, that's what we will do.'"

- Principal Weaver – “If you were on committees with him, he would rely on you heavily to do your part in that committee. And, then, he would trust you. He wouldn’t micromanage you.”
- Principal Tailor – “Never once did he, you know, he would give opinions, but never once did he try to micromanage that system we created.”
- Principal Tailor – “That’s kind of his way of saying, ‘I trust you.’ Because he’s not in my business every day.”
- Principal Potter – “He’s good about letting you find your own way. And at times, that’s good because it lets you find your own because you grow as a person.”
- Principal Potter – “It’s important to have that trust because it makes me want to excel and do a better job. Because if I don’t trust you, I’m always looking over my shoulder, wondering what you’re doing.”
- Principal Fisher – “He doesn’t make decisions and then send them to us. To be the face of the decision, he empowers us to take control over our buildings and to make tough decisions.”
- Principal Fisher – “He says, ‘Hey, I trust you with your building.’ And, he means it. But you know, some people could say that, and then go and do other things that would nullify that.”
- Superintendent – “So, once they know that I’m not going to undercut them, that I’m not gonna…I think that that builds a lot of trust.”
- Superintendent – “What I try to do is let my principals, I empower them to hire the assistant principals they want, as long as I don’t find any reason not to.”

Support. As evidenced in surveys, interviews, and observations, Superintendent Miller supports principals in several ways. Principals reported that he mentors, coaches, and redirects them when dealing with challenging decisions. According to survey data, the superintendent supports principals as evident in his acknowledgment of their successes and contributions (m=4) and in his actions that support district goals (m=4.67). Principal Potter explicitly stated that "When somebody comes in for something, it's his job to find a way to get to the 'Yes.' To support them."

The concept of support through coaching was evident in observations as the superintendent asked open-ended and reflective questions, such as "What are our other options?" And, "How are the lead learners managing that?" Miller's actions supported the district goals, as evidenced when he discussed resources available to assist in standardized test preparation, as well as the addition of new personnel for high-growth areas at the district's expense.

During the interview, Principal Weaver explained the reason she decided to work for Superintendent Miller as she recounted her coaching experience under him in another Alabama school district:

> The one thing I really liked and admired about him and I never told him, I said that's one thing I will miss about you, and one reason I'm coming back to work with you again is that I told him that he helped me become a better leader. Because if I ever called him for advice, he would tell me, 'Well now we hired you to be the principal of that school. So, what do you think?'. And then, he would hear what I had to say. Then, we might reflect on what I said. And if he needed me to go into a different direction, he would kind of lead me into that.

Additional interview data revealed the superintendent's empowerment of principals through direct support and coaching.

- Principal Tailor – "That first year, one of the things that I thought was very important is kind of defining our assessment practices, and he didn't charge me with this, but whenever I said, 'Here's what we're doing,' and then we did it. It was really great work. And he's supported it since. And he didn't come in and try to change any of it…I think there was little trust there because he didn't know how to do it."
- Principal Weaver – "He wouldn't tell me exactly what to do or how to do it, but he would put it back on me. Then, if I guess, came up with the wrong answer to my own question, he would redirect me in some other way."
- Superintendent – "…I think they know that I'm going to back them."

Risk. Data from principal interviews and surveys revealed that the superintendent empowered principals by allowing them to take risks in their work. For example, principals generally agreed that they were comfortable sharing contrary opinions with the superintendent, which demonstrates their willingness to accept vulnerability. Table 7 illustrates the survey section that included four questions about risk and received an overall mean of 5.00, which equates to *almost always*. The researcher assigned the following numeric values to survey responses to aid in calculating the mean: 1 – *never*; 2 – *almost never*; 3 – *sometimes*; 4 – *most of the time*; 5 – *almost always; 6 – always.*

Table 7

Survey Statements - Risk

Statements Related to Risk	Mean
I am comfortable sharing a contrary opinion with my superintendent.	4.33
I initiate new programs at my site.	5.67
I am comfortable sharing innovative ideas with my superintendent.	4.67
I am comfortable taking "calculated risks" when solving problems at my site.	5.33
Total Category Mean	5.00

Note: 1 – *never*; 2 – *almost never*; 3 – *sometimes*; 4 – *most of the time*; 5 – *almost always; 6 – always*.

Interview data confirmed the category risk, as Principal Weaver shared an anecdote about a time when she confronted the superintendent because she firmly disagreed with his decision regarding a special education student, so she approached him "head-on." She recounted that she was very upset and disappointed in his decision, but that she and Superintendent Miller worked through the issue diplomatically and walked away with their relationship still intact. As such, she was willing to make herself vulnerable to the superintendent because of their trusting relationship. Also, Principals Potter and Fisher affirmed the conditions created by the superintendent that allows for risk-taking, as it relates to campus decision-making. In the following examples, Superintendent Miller accepts vulnerability as he encourages risk-taking among principals, regardless of the outcomes:

- Principal Potter – "Failure is not an endpoint. It's a bump in the road, but I want you always to feel like you have the opportunity to fail, not because you're not trying. But, if you try something new and it doesn't work, I want you to say 'Let's come back to it. Let's look at it. Let's revamp. Let's re-evaluate how we handled it.'."
- Principal Potter – "I think having that trust in me gives me the opportunity to fail. To take risks. And it's not the end of the road."
- Principal Potter – "No, he doesn't always agree with you, but that's okay."
- Principal Potter – "One thing is, he's willing to try…"

- Principal Fisher – “In the absence of uncertainty as to how I believe he sees and wants us to move our district and our schools allows us to attack problems with ease. And with confidence. If you come to a point and you have to make a decision, and there may be unintended outcomes or whatever, there’s naturally that ‘iffiness,’ it’s just a clean approach. Because there aren’t question marks as to like, ‘How would he react to this?’.”

Extends trust. Interview evidence with both parties demonstrated the superintendent’s inclination or disposition to trust others first. When leaders extend trust, they show confidence in another’s abilities before experiences, and they maintain strict standards of confidentiality with that person, which may lead to more trust (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Principals recalled a sense of empowerment when the superintendent trusted them to take care of business or confided in them, which the superintendent confirmed. Statements extracted from interview transcripts include, “he trusts me,” “he has confidence in me,” “he believes in me,” and “he trusts committee members.”

When asked to identify the most critical practice for building trust with principals, Superintendent Miller confirmed the extension of trust on four separate occasions. In the following statements, Miller explained how he trusts the principals to address campus-level issues, as well as the essential nature of maintaining confidentiality:

- Example 1 – “The first thing is that any problem that comes to me, anything that’s said to me, I’m gonna send the person back to them to give them the first opportunity to deal with anything. Because I trust them to take care of it.” He commented that principals appreciate the opportunity to fix problems first.

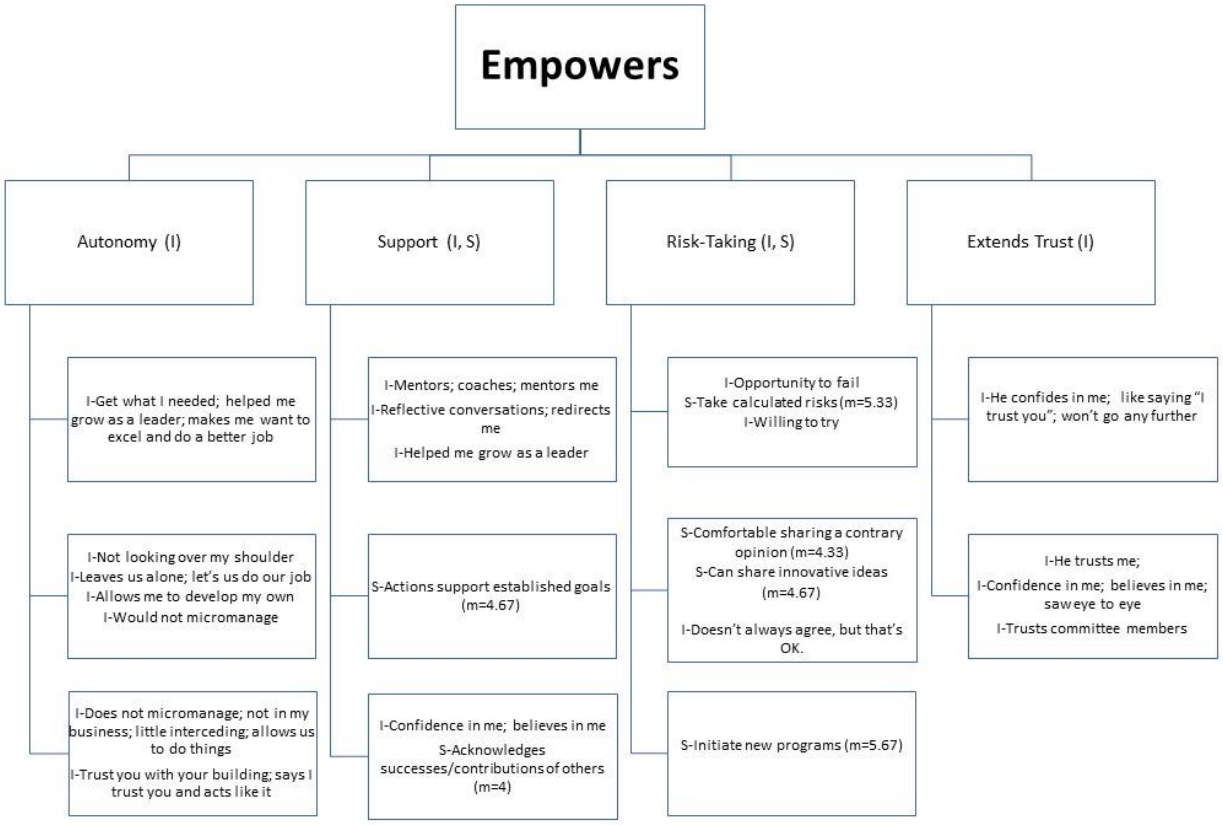
- Example 2 – “When I first became the superintendent, my secretary at the time got really upset with me because she was used to the former superintendent coming out and telling her everything everybody said, and I don’t do that. If somebody talks to me in here (office) unless it’s need to know, I don’t say it to anybody. But, my point being, gossip destroys organizations, any organization.”
- Example 3 – “Gossip destroys organizations, and if I’m not gossiping, then 90% of it is going to go away. So, being trustworthy when people come and talk to me, and keeping it in confidence and not repeating it is important.”
- Example 4 – “Being trustworthy when people come and talk to me. Keeping it in confidence and not repeating it.”

Additional evidence of the extension of trust as a way of creating trust with principals also included the following statements:

- Principal Weaver – “But the fact that he would just reach out to me, let’s me know that he had value in our working relationship and had some confidence in me.”
- Principal Weaver – “He relies on you heavily to do your part, and then he would trust you.”
- Principal Weaver – “I knew he had confidence in me.”
- Principal Tailor – “If I’m being left alone, that means that I’m probably being trusted to do the work, and I feel like he believes in my ability.”

The researcher acknowledged the challenge of observing someone demonstrating the extension of trust explicitly. Nevertheless, observational data collected at leadership meetings that supported the superintendent extension of trust to principals included: (a) the structure of the meetings, whereby all district leaders spoke first, before the superintendent, and under no time

constraints; (b) the tone of the superintendent's responses and questions to principals, which were affirming, accepting and lacking criticism; (c) the superintendent's body language, which included attentiveness through eye contact, smiles, no cell phone use, and good posture; (d) and, the participants' responses, which were forthright and unconstrained. Figure 5 summarizes codes and categories for principals' interviews and surveys within the theme empowers.



Note: I = Interviews, S = Surveys

Figure 5. Principals' Codes, Categories, & Themes – Empowers. Note: I = Interview; S = Surveys.

Theme 3: Makes Informed Decisions. Interviews, observations, and surveys comprised the theme that superintendents build trust with principals by making informed decisions. Decision-making is defined as "the action or process of making decisions, especially important ones" (Decision-making, n. d.). A leader's decision-making is informed by their experiences and skills, and there are several processes and approaches that leaders employ to make decisions

(Burns et al., 2004). Consequently, the researcher used the categories "competencies" and "approach" in the development of the theme "makes informed decisions." Leaders with great responsibilities must also assure focus when solving complicated problems (Burns et al., 2004). Kesting (2006) argued that the focus, or intentions, was a precondition to real-world decision-making. Decision-making involves "cognitive mechanisms such as information processing, maintaining intentions and self-regulation.", and deliberate decision making is based on beliefs, evaluations, and reasons (Betsch & Iannello, 2009, p. 252). The intention in decision-making was a pattern revealed in the data; therefore, the third category was intention. Figure 6 illustrates the categories and theme "makes informed decisions."

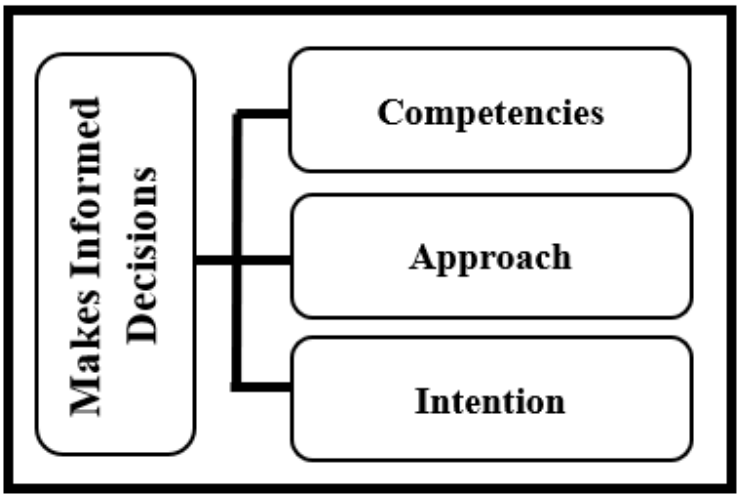


Figure 6. Theme and Categories – Makes Informed Decisions

Principals mentioned the superintendent's variety of experiences and skills, and explained in detail his collaborative approach, while the superintendent discussed the importance of proactive, thoughtful decision-making as the district established policies and procedures. The principal trust survey contained several statements related to the superintendent's decision-

making ability, which are organized and listed after each of the three categories, competencies, approach, and intention.

Competencies. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines competency as "possession of sufficient knowledge or skill" and "legal authority, ability, or admissibility" (Competency, n. d.). Research data from all three sources illustrated the superintendent's competencies, including demonstrating essential leadership skills and having a variety of educational experiences and knowledge. Principal Fisher shared an anecdote about a leadership book study regarding servant leadership facilitated by Superintendent Miller, which impacted his mindset. During observations, the superintendent demonstrated specific knowledge surrounding a complex state legislative issue, other state regulations, and fiscal matters. The researcher also observed Miller as he easily conversed with all district-level experts, such as the special education coordinator, transportation director, and finance manager, using their jargon. Interview transcripts revealed two other instances where principals acknowledged the superintendent's competencies.

- Principal Weaver – "He's been in several different places, and I think because of his various experiences, he kind of knows how to lead us, whether it's with academics or sports, athletics. Whatever it is, he seems to have had prior experience to it. So, he can give us good advice and lead us in a good direction."
- Principal Tailor – "He's doing the work that he's been hired to do."
- Superintendent – "I've been kind of everything in education, from starting out as a para-pro to, ... you know, I've driven buses, and I taught for 11 years as a classroom teacher and coached. And, so I feel like I at least have an understanding of where people are."

With an overall mean of 5.00, survey statements further confirmed the superintendent's competencies. Table 8 lists survey statements and means on competencies.

Table 8

Survey Statements – Competencies

Statements Related to Competencies	**Mean**
The superintendent demonstrates skills needed to perform his/her job well.	5.67
The superintendent completes responsibilities in a timely/efficient manner.	5.00
The superintendent can be counted upon to provide accurate information to campus administrators.	4.33
Total Mean	5.00

Note: 1 – *never*; 2 – *almost never*; 3 – *sometimes*; 4 – *most of the time*; 5 – *almost always; 6 – always*.

Approach. Interview and survey data informed the category approach, which involved how Superintendent Miller tackled district problems. Observational data demonstrated the superintendent's desire for factual information prior to making decisions, as evident in his probing for additional information and his invitation for all district administration to "tell me what you're thinking." Principals stated that he used common sense, a collaborative approach to solving problems, including creative solutions. Three principals suggested that they trusted the superintendent to make sound decisions, while one made no mention of decision-making. Related interview statements regarding his decision-making approach are as follows:

- Principal Fisher – "He boiled it down to saying 'Here's the way I see it. Here's the commonsense piece, but this is what you need to prepare to do."
- Principal Fisher – "So, that was the first time I had to personally digest what he and I talked about, and I thought, 'That was just a sound way to approach it.' Like every angle, every lens, to then make a good decision."

- Principal Weaver – “I really don’t know exactly how that trust was formed other than just the, you know, working together and knowing each other. And knowing from experience the decisions that he made.”
- Principal Potter – “He’s good about listening, and he’s good about coming up with maybe a plan I hadn’t thought of.”
- Superintendent – “The idea is not to just let things go but to make sure that before it becomes a big problem, to correct it in a way that’s not a problem. Being proactive and judicious in the way I carry out those things.”
- Principal Tailor – “If the teachers vote on a committee, and the committee gets to sit in on interviews, they have a voice. Then it’s hard for anyone to be upset about that.”
- Superintendent – “So we get assistant principals together, let them look through the code of conduct. I give them, typically, something like six or eight weeks so that they can go through it and say, ‘Am I happy? Are we happy with this? Are we happy with that? And how do we want to put it together?’ And, I try to give them ownership of that document because they’re the ones who are going to be using that document.”

Table 9 represents survey statements about the approach. A mean of 4.44 supported observational data regarding the superintendent’s quality questioning, including probing, and the inclusion of all various perspectives, to increase understanding for sound decision-making.

Table 9

Survey Statements – Approach

Statements Related to Approach	**Mean**
The superintendent seeks all relevant information prior to making a decision.	4.33
The superintendent utilizes the expertise of others within the organization.	4.67
The superintendent’s decisions support the best interest of students.	4.33
Total Mean	4.44

Note: 1 – *never*; 2 – *almost never*; 3 – *sometimes*; 4 – *most of the time*; 5 – *almost always; 6 – always*.

Intention. Defined as "a thing intended; an aim or plan" (Intention, n. d.), intentions influence our decision-making (Betsch & Iannello, 2009; Kesting, 2006). Synonyms for the word intention include aim, aspiration, plan, objective, and goal. When one is intentional, they are deliberate, conscious, willed, and purposeful (Intention, n. d.). One survey statement – "*The superintendent shares the rationale behind decisions"* (m=4) – related to the intention by describing a deliberate action involving decision-making. The researcher admitted that intention is challenging to observe; however, observational findings supported the occurrence of intentionality: (a) The superintendent asked a principal for additional time to contemplate a matter prior to making a decision; (b) After listening to a principal's thoughts regarding a student program that he wanted to present to the board, the superintendent suggested to first present to his staff to gather additional feedback; and (c) The superintendent reminded participants to "be mindful of your tone" when discussing sensitive topics with parents.

Interviews revealed Superintendent Miller's intentional behavior when making decisions, solving problems, and building trust. Miller told the story of three very skilled district-level employees who were not getting along. He acknowledged that his job was to create situations where all three parties would learn to "value each other's different skill sets." Principal Fisher recalled a story about the first leadership meeting he attended the summer prior to school beginning, and how intentional Miller was during this meeting. The superintendent also provided a narrative that confirmed the intentionality in his actions. The account of the events are as follows:

- Principal Fisher – "I think the one thing that I recall this summer was when I came to one of my first leadership meetings. And, when we sat around the table for the first time in the summer…everyone at the table: CNP, for example, maintenance,

engineering, and transportation; every department was represented. I recall just purpose—and the intentionality of him providing clarity to each of us."

- Principal Fisher – "He always comes off as very calculated and intentional."
- Superintendent – "I'm an old history teacher. And so, I think a lot, especially here about George Washington as the first president, and his role as president and how pressured he was to think about the fact that everything he did set a precedent. So, he was very careful about what he did. And didn't do things without thinking them through. So, you have to be real mindful."

Figure 7 summarizes codes and categories for principals' interview and survey data related to the theme "makes informed decisions".

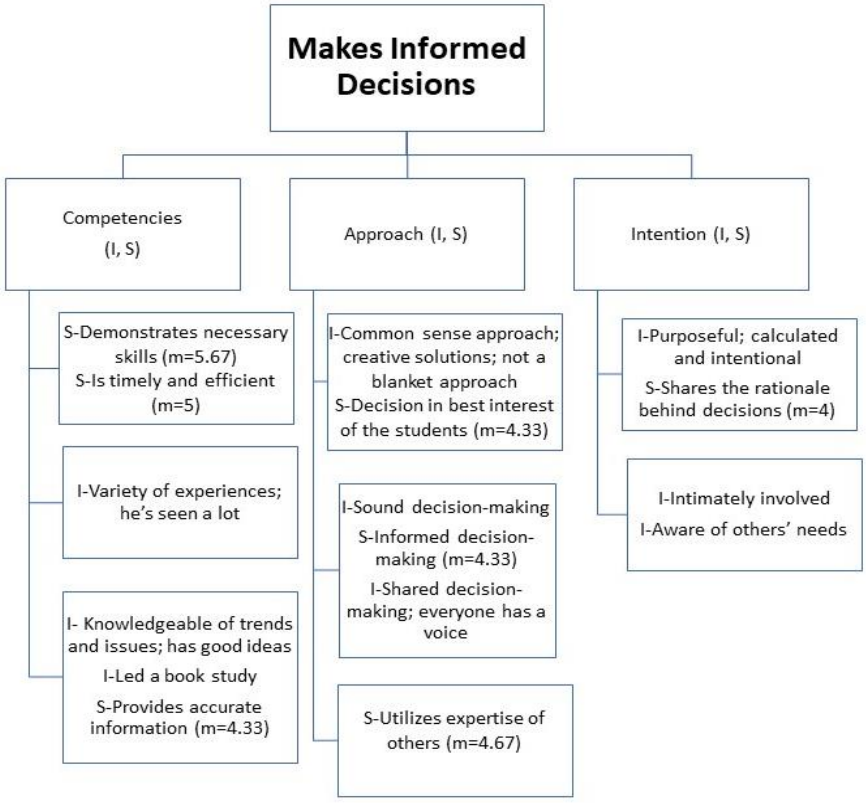


Figure 7. Principals' Codes, Categories, & Themes – Makes Informed Decisions. Note: I = Interviews, S = Surveys

Theme 4: Models Norms. Coding sessions of the interview and observational data revealed the fourth and final theme, "models norms." Norms are defined as "a principle of right action, or value, binding upon the members of a group and serving to guide, control, or regulate proper and acceptable behavior" (Norm, n. d.). Norms may be explicitly stated or implicitly portrayed based on the leader's ability to convey the norm (Burns et al., 2004). Values and attitudes are factors that influence one's inclination to trust another, and thereby support the development of trust (Creed et al., 1996; Zucker, 1986). Patterns that emerged while coding involved the superintendent's demonstration of his core values and alignment of his words to his actions, thereby setting the example for others. Modeling norms relates directly to Kouzes and Posner's (2003) first of the "Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership", *model the way*. As such, the researcher applied the categories "demonstrates values" and "aligns words with actions" to code patterns. Figure 8 illustrates the categories and theme "models norms".

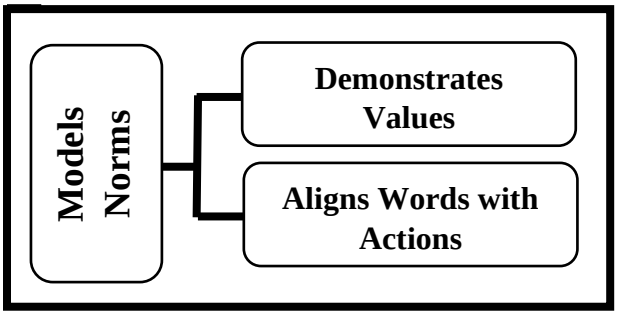


Figure 8. Themes and Categories – Models Norms

Demonstrates Values. Superintendent Miller's demonstration of core values implicitly affirmed expected group norms (Kouzes & Posner, 2003). Evidence from all three data points, including surveys, pointed to the demonstration of core values, such as relationships, honesty, and integrity. The six survey statements below confirmed the category "demonstrates values," which were corroborated with the interview and observational data. Values reflected in the survey statements included integrity, honesty, and relationships and are included in Table 10.

Table 10

Survey Statements – Demonstrates Values

Statement	Mean
The superintendent acknowledges the successes/contributions of site leaders.	4.67
The superintendent holds him/herself accountable for his/her actions.	5.33
The superintendent demonstrates ethical behavior.	6.00
The superintendent acknowledges his/her mistakes, e.g., does not "pass the buck."	4.67
The superintendent responds to my concerns.	4.33
The superintendent can be counted upon to "do the right thing."	5.00
Total Mean	5.00

Note: 1 – *never*; 2 – *almost never*; 3 – *sometimes*; 4 – *most of the time*; 5 – *almost always; 6 – always*.

Observational data affirmed Superintendent Miller's demonstration of values, such as equity, fairness, and respect. This observational data include behavior such as asking the principals to speak first, hiring new district support staff while stressing the importance of sharing the staff equitably among campuses, emphasizing the importance of building relationships with parents, recognizing and celebrating the accomplishments of students, teachers, and administration, expressing gratitude to administrators for work on a specific project, and exhibiting attentive body language (i.e., eye contact, no cell phone usage when others are speaking).

Interview data from both the superintendent and the principals identified the superintendent's value of relationships with others when talking about his recognition and celebration of accomplishments, listening to opinions, and building consensus. The following interview statements support a pattern of honesty, fairness, and valuing others.

- Principal Potter – "That just makes you feel good that somebody values your opinion enough to ask."
- Principal Potter – "He's seen me do it enough…he knows I'm going to do the right thing."

- Principal Tailor – “And not any one group of people, I think, was completely happy with the result, but it was something everyone could live with. And I think that is has led to come peace, so to speak…he was able to bring people on board.”
- Principal Fisher – “Your transparency’s huge. Honesty is huge. Having candid conversations, and just ensure that that relationship is strong and that we represent ourselves as a school and a district well, which of course that is everyone's goal.”
- Principal Fisher – “The leadership book study…That spoke to me, just to what he believed in.”
- Principal Weaver – “…being able to satisfy their (parents) needs. He really has a way of being able to talk to parents and calm their fears most time.”
- Superintendent – “I think when people see that they’re valued, that helps to build trust.”
- Superintendent – “But if people see all the time that there is a pattern of fairness in the way that I deal with people, then when the time comes that I have to part ways, people give me the benefit of the doubt.”
- Superintendent – “It works for me to feel like if I’m doing things in an orderly way and in a proper way, and I’m being fair to people, and I’m trustworthy with people, then when I have to make the hard decisions, for the most part, people give me the benefit of the doubt on those decisions.”
- Superintendent – “And I think that’s the way... I think when people see that they’re valued, that helps to build trust. They perceive that they’re... they perceive that you trust them.”

- Superintendent – “The first year was teaching them one, to trust me, and to value each other.”
- Superintendent – “I’ve learned to put relationships as the most important piece of what I do because I’ve seen the value.”

Aligns Words with Actions. This category of evidence referred to a pattern whereby Superintendent Miller’s actions matched his values, district objectives and goals, or other community norms. Leaders model norms through daily behaviors that “create progress and build momentum,” and these behaviors consistently match their words (Kouzes & Posner, 2003, p. 2). Phrases such as “walks the walk,” “follow-through,” and “does what he says” were coded under this category during analysis. Several survey statements, included in Table 11, with a mean of 4.75, illustrated the superintendent’s practice of aligning words with actions to build trust with principals.

Table 11

Survey Statements – Aligns Words with Actions

Statements Related to Aligns Words with Actions	**Mean**
The superintendent leads others to attain the goals/vision of the district.	4.67
The superintendent’s words and actions are in alignment.	4.67
The superintendent delivers on commitments.	5.33
The superintendent’s decisions support the best interest of students.	4.33
Total Mean	4.75

Note: 1 – *never*; 2 – *almost never*; 3 – *sometimes*; 4 – *most of the time*; 5 – *almost always; 6 – always*.

When asked what Superintendent Miller does to establish trust with him, Principal Fisher conveyed the idea that it was more about what the superintendent does not do, rather than what he does. Fisher deduced, “I think it’s not what else he does, it’s what else he doesn’t do. Like, in the absence of certain behaviors and in the presence of him walking the walk.” Principals

Weaver and Fisher and the superintendent provided additional examples that demonstrate a connection between his deeds and actions:

- Principal Weaver – "I pretty much said, 'You know, you promised me that I would have an SRO.' To me, that's important, and I think we need one, and he made it happen."
- Principal Weaver – "It's really hard to give a single answer other than just my past experience and relationship with him and knowing that what he says he does. He has follow-through, I guess."
- Principal Fisher – "He says, 'Hey, I trust you with your building.' And, he means it. But you know, some people could say that, and then go and do other things that would nullify that."
- Superintendent – "I've told them, and I think both of them know that I'm going to back them and know that I'm going, to be honest with them."

The researcher acknowledged the challenge of observing the alignment of words with actions. Data from meeting observations substantiated the principals' claim that Superintendent Miller aligns his words with his actions, which are illustrated in Table12. When considering corroboration, the researcher connected positive survey statements (with a mean of 4.00 or higher) and interview phrases that related to observed meeting actions; thus, matching the superintendent's words (interviews), or the principals' perceptions (interviews and surveys), with observed actions.

Table 12

Corroboration of Data – Aligns Words with Actions

Observed Meeting Actions	Aligned Evidence S = Survey I = Interview
The superintendent expressed concern regarding a student. The superintendent asked principals to speak to their lead learners (teachers) to gather their feedback on an issue.	S – Decisions in the best interest of students (m=4.33)
At the expense of the district, the superintendent hired new support personnel for student intervention.	S – Actions support district vision/goals (m=4.67) I – "…what he says he does."
The superintendent stressed the importance of parent relationships. The superintendent reminded staff to treat everyone with dignity and respect.	I – "He really has a way of being able to talk to parents and calm their fears most time." I – "We deal with people…not quotas."
In the absence of a principal, assistant principals attended leadership meetings. The superintendent acknowledged an administrator's work on the Black History Month Program.	I – Superintendent stated that he includes employees from across the district to lead, such as on committees. He "uses strengths to team-build." I – "One of the things I try to remember is to celebrate the successes and remembering to tell you, 'You did a great job on this thing.'" S – Utilizes the expertise of others (m=4.67) S – Acknowledges the successes/contributions of site leaders (m=4)
The superintendent's behavior and statements during leadership meetings were free of stereotypes, blame, offensive remarks, or negativity. The superintendent ensured administrators that the additional interventionists would be equitably shared across campuses.	S – Ethical behavior (m=6) S – Do the right thing (m=5) I – "…a pattern of fairness."

Note: 1, *never*; 2, *almost never*; 3, *sometimes*; 4, *most of the time*; 5, *almost always*; 6, *always*

Figure 9 summarizes codes and categories for principals' interviews and surveys for the theme "models norms."

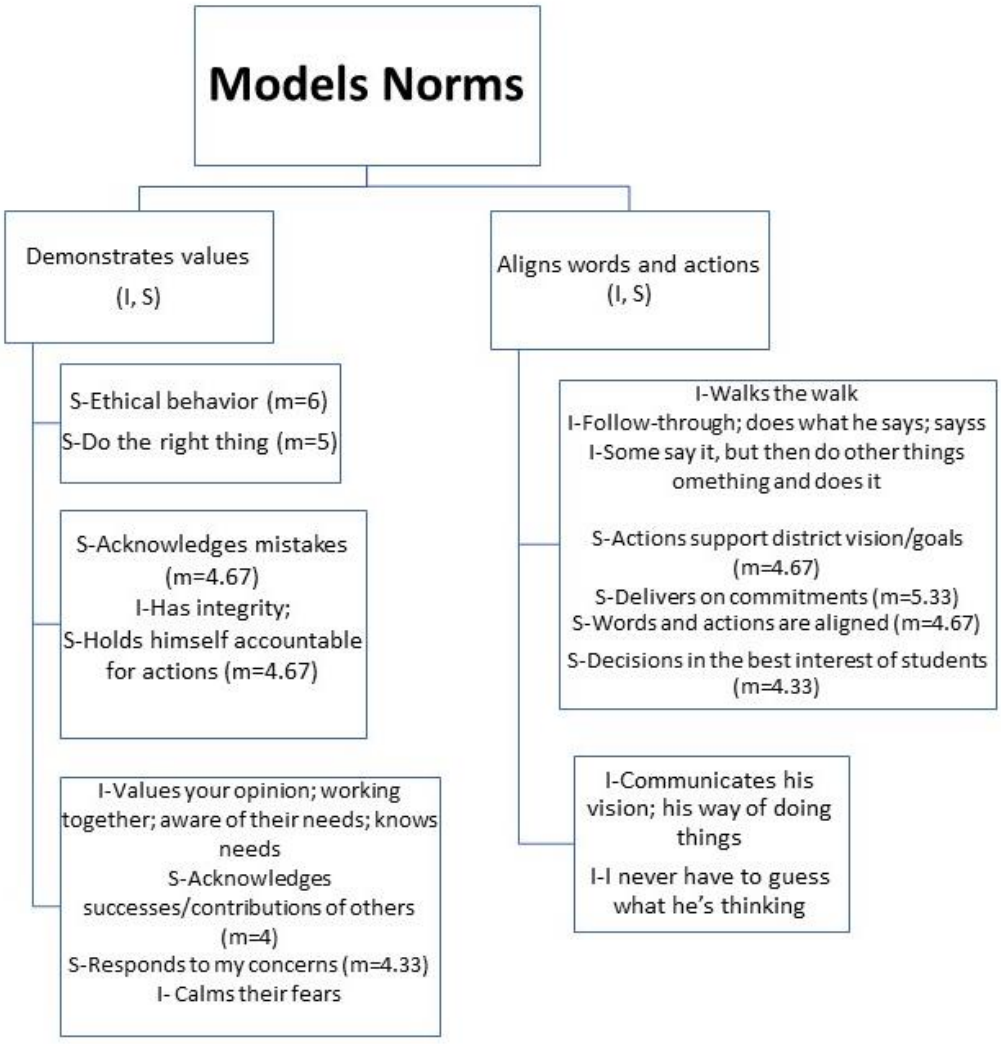


Figure 9. Principals' Codes, Categories, & Themes – Models Norms. Note: I = Interviews; S = Surveys.

Summary of Research Question One. The initial data analysis revealed four predominant themes that address the practices superintendents employ to build trust with campus principals. The first theme, "communicates," included the subcategories "listening," "clarity," "feedback," "availability," and "public relations." The second theme, "empowers," included the subthemes of "autonomy," "support," "risk," and "extends trust." The third theme was "makes informed decisions." This theme included subthemes "leadership competencies," "approach," and "intention." The fourth and final theme was "models norms" and included the subthemes

"demonstrates values" and "aligns words with actions." These four themes, identified through interviews, observations, and survey data, described the practices that the superintendent employees to build trust with principals. Figure 10 presents both the themes and subthemes for Research Question 1.

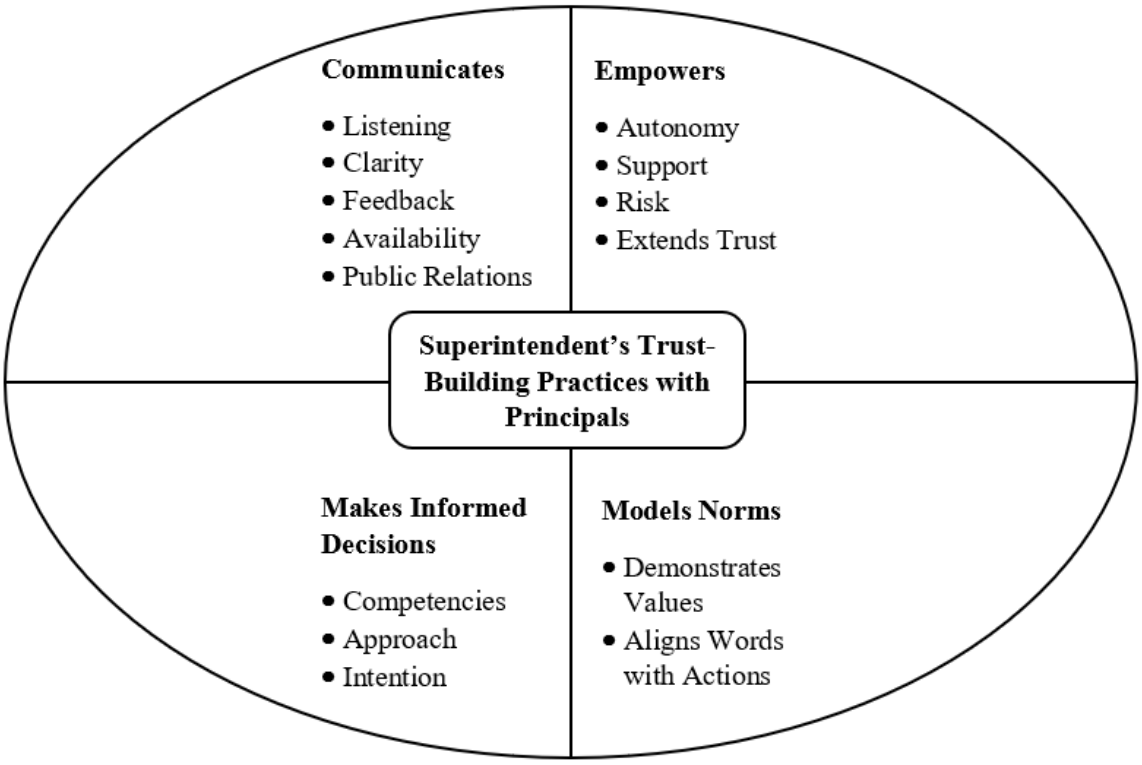


Figure 10. Research Question 1 Themes and Subthemes

Research Question Two

Research question two asked what similarities exist between the superintendent's and principals' perceptions regarding trust-building practices. Generally, the superintendent perceived trust-building practices similarly as the principals, as evidenced by interviews, observations, and surveys. The four overarching themes of "communicates," "empowers," "makes informed decisions," and "models norms" applied to both the superintendent and principals. In other words, both parties perceived that trust is built when the superintendent

communicates effectively, empowers the principals, makes informed decisions and models expected norms. As a means of increasing understanding findings, Table 13 summarizes the data frequency codes of each theme for both parties. Also, Figure 11 provides an additional interpretation and comparison of frequency codes for both parties using percentages.

Table 13

Code Frequencies – Interviews, Observations, and Surveys

Description	Communicates	Empowers	Makes Informed Decisions	Models Norms
Principals				
Interviews	50	61	20	20
Surveys	16	13	17	21
Total	66	74	37	41
Superintendent				
Interview	15	12	14	11
Observations	14	8	5	12
Total	29	20	19	23

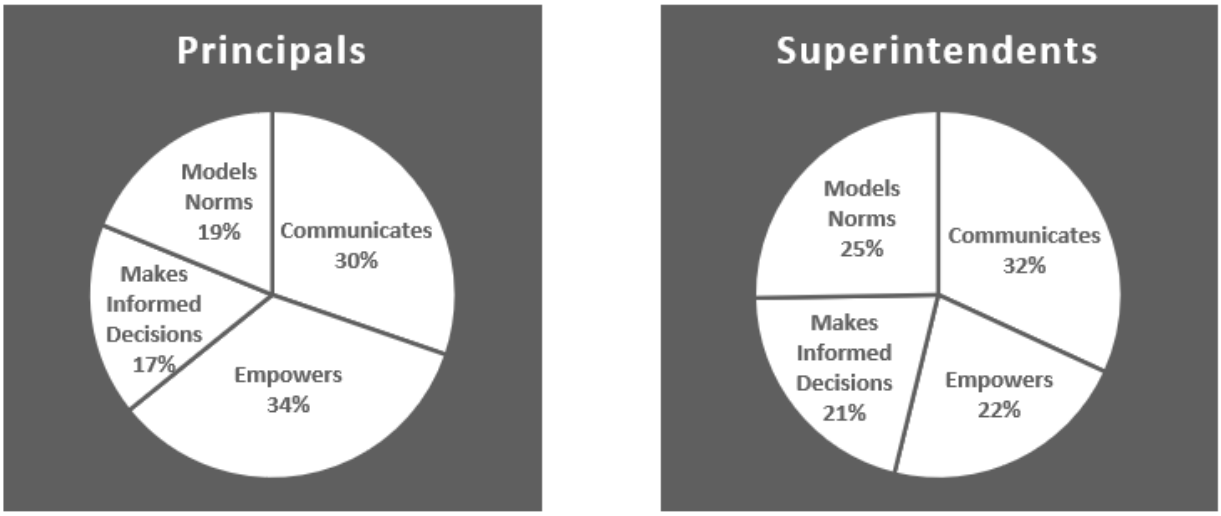


Figure 11. Code Frequencies – Principals and Superintendents

Communicates. The principals corroborated the superintendent's claims that he used the practice of communication to build trust with them. Thirty-three percent of principal data related to communicates, which is similar to the 31% percent of superintendent data displayed in Figure

10. Principals agreed that he makes himself readily available through various methods of communication, such as email, text, and phone, and that he listens well during conversations. Principals also agreed that clear communication, including expectations and accurate information, also built trust. All four principals unanimously confirmed that the superintendent's communication with stakeholders and the handling of public relations helped build trust in him.

Empower. Both the principals and Superintendent Miller provided evidence regarding the theme empower. The superintendent confirmed the principals' belief that autonomy in their work increases trust between both parties. Miller stated that he routinely attempts not to dictate so that principals can do the job they were hired to do, while the principals said that he does not micromanage them. Evidence from both parties established the value of adequate support in building trust. For instance, the principals acknowledged that Miller mentors and coaches them during challenging circumstances, and the superintendent spoke about his use of reflective dialogue. The extension of trust was apparent as the principals recounted occasions when Miller confided in them or provided them the authority to get a job done, which Miller verified when he explicitly stated, "I trust them first.".

Makes Informed Decisions. Both parties subscribed to the idea that the superintendent built trust with principals when he made informed decisions. Nineteen percent of the principal data and 21% of the superintendent data related to "makes informed decisions*"* (see Figure 10). The superintendent's competence, decision-making approach, and intentional actions resonated throughout the data. Principals viewed the superintendent as one with a variety of experiences and skills necessary to complete his work effectively, and Miller confirmed those statements. The superintendent described at length how he approached challenging decisions with adequate time and intention, to be judicious in setting district policies. Principals viewed his approach as

purposeful, calculated, and in the best interest of students. They especially appreciated his commonsense approach and use of others' expertise, which was evident in the observed leadership meetings.

Models Norms. Survey data especially confirmed that the superintendent models norms as a method of building trust, which principals stated during interviews. Superintendent Miller demonstrated personal core values, such as integrity, honesty, and equity, and set the example for others. One principal stated that he "walks the walk," while another noted that he has "follow-through," which the superintendent confirmed. Throughout the interview, Miller mentioned honesty, a pattern of fairness, equity, relationships, and the strengths of others, which were reflected in principals' interviews and meeting observations.

In summary, largely, the principals and superintendent perceived trust-building practices similarly. Analysis of interview, observation, and survey data revealed four overarching themes, including communicates, empowers, makes informed decisions, and models norms for both superintendent and principals. At the same time, while there are slight differences in perceptions, mostly both parties perceived that trust is built when the superintendent employs practices that involve communication, empowerment, making informed decisions, and modeling norms.

Research Question Three

Research question three asked what differences exist between the superintendent's and principals' perceptions regarding trust-building practices. The analysis revealed slight differences in perceptions between the superintendent and principals. Code analysis of data representing the principals' perception resulted in the same themes as the superintendent data—communicates, empowers, makes informed decisions, and models norms. Table 14 illustrates the code categories that comprised the themes that were all identical except one related to

"empowers" – risk. Furthermore, there were minor differences in code frequency data for principals and the superintendent.

Table 14

Similarities and Differences in Themes and Categories

Themes	Categories	
	Principals	**Superintendent**
Communicates	• Listening • Clarity • Feedback • Availability • Public Relations	• Listening • Clarity • Feedback • Availability Public Relations
	Frequency = 66	*Frequency = 29*
Empowers	• Autonomy • Support • Extends Trust • Risk	• Autonomy • Support • Extends Trust
	Frequency = 74	*Frequency = 20*
Makes Informed Decisions	• Competencies • Approach • Intentions	• Competencies • Approach • Intentions
	Frequency = 37	*Frequency = 19*
Models Norms	• Demonstrates Values • Aligns Words with Actions	• Demonstrates Values • Aligns Words with Actions
	Frequency = 41	*Frequency = 23*

Risk. Principals' interviews and survey data contained code patterns of autonomy, support, extends trust, and risk, which resulted in the theme "empowers." Principals reported several examples that indicated that the superintendent refrained from micromanaging, facilitated reflective conversations to support problem-solving, extended trust in them first, and encouraged calculated risks. However, superintendent data lacked evidence of risk. The categories "autonomy," "support," and "extends trust" were uncovered within Superintendent Miller's statements and actions; however, no specific evidence from his perspective related to risk.

Code Frequencies. Another difference in the superintendent and principals' perception of trust-building practices involved code frequencies within themes. Figure 10 illustrates the percentages of code frequencies for both parties. Generally, code percentages resulting in the

theme “communicates,” “makes informed decisions,” and “models norms” were similar for both the superintendent and principals. On the contrary, the code percentage for the theme “empowers” was 12% points higher for principals. From the researcher’s perspective, perception data for principals revealed a greater frequency of codes related to the theme “empowers,” including the subthemes of “autonomy,” “support,” “extends trust,” and “risk.”

Furthermore, the distribution of frequencies was different for superintendents and principals. Figure 10 illustrates a relative comparison of code frequencies for both parties. Code frequencies representing the superintendent’s perception were more equally divided among the four themes, with “communicates” being the greatest at 32% and “makes informed decisions” being the least at 21%. This data suggests that the superintendent believes or relies upon a balanced approach to building trust and does not perceive one practice as being more important than another. On the contrary, code frequencies representing the principals’ perceptions were considerably greater in the themes “empowers” (34%) and “communicates” (30%), and the least was “makes informed decisions” (17%). This contrary data is open to interpretation and may suggest the following: 1) Principals perceive empowerment and communication as more valuable in building trust; 2) Principals believe that the superintendent uses empowerment and communication more often than other practices to build trust; or, 3) Principals do not perceive that the superintendent relies upon making informed decisions and modeling norms as much as communicating and empowering.

In conclusion, the researcher uncovered small differences in perceptions of trust-building practices between the superintendent and principals. Only the principals reported that the superintendent was willing for principals to take risks in their work, which pertained to the theme of empowers. Data analysis also noted slight differences in code frequency data for principals

and the superintendent in the areas of the overall distribution, as well as the themes, "communicate," and "empowers."

Summary

Chapter four reported the research findings for this study. The findings included four themes regarding leadership practices the superintendent used to develop trust with principals, as well as the differences in perception of both parties. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with four principals and one superintendent, meeting observations, and principal surveys measuring trust in the superintendent. The coding of all data points resulted in four themes concerning trust-building practices used by the superintendent to build trust with principals, including communicates, empowers, makes informed decisions, and models norms. Frequency coding provided insight into the similarities and differences in perceptions between the superintendent and principals. Chapter Five offers a final summary of the study, connections to the literature, and implications for practice.

Chapter V: Conclusion

While researchers have studied trust between key players in education, such as students, teachers, and parents, little is known about the specific practices that superintendents use to build trust with school principals (Adams & Miskell, 2016; Chhuon et al., 2008; Louis, 2007). The researcher examined trust-building practices the superintendent employs with principals in a public school district in Alabama, then determined the similarities and differences in the perceptions of both parties.

This area of research is valuable to study because superintendents must work to earn, nurture, and sustain trust with campus principals (Bird, 2010) to increase order and reduce the uncertainty during challenging times (Holmes & Rempel, 1989). Since district-level leadership is correlated with student achievement (Marzano & Waters, 2009), the superintendent-principal relationship merits investigation. New and existing superintendents can leverage trusting relationships to increase cooperation and organizational improvements (Forsyth et al., 2011). Further, superintendents need more specific information involving how to build trust with principals to use this free resource for increased district outcomes. This study provides superintendents practical suggestions to foster trusting relationships with principals within educational settings.

This chapter contains a general overview of the study, connections of findings to current literature, implications for educational practice, and recommendations for future research.

Methods

This instrumental case study included the superintendent and four principals from a small district in Alabama. The source of qualitative data included semi-structured interviews with the superintendent and principals, superintendent observations and a principal survey regarding trust

in the superintendent. The researcher analyzed the data through a variety of methods, including In Vivo Coding, analytic memo writing, relating categories to the analytic framework and frequency coding.

Research Design and Participants

For this case study, the researcher implemented a purposive sampling technique to select one superintendent who worked in Alabama public schools and was known to foster trust with campus principals (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The study also included the population of PK-12 Alabama public school principals who served under a superintendent who fostered trusting relationships. Naturally, the four principals who served under the identified superintendent were included in the study. The research setting was a small Alabama school district with a student population of almost 2,000 and included grades prekindergarten through twelfth. Students were based on three campuses, including elementary, middle, and high school.

The participants comprised one male superintendent, one female, and three male principals. All principals have worked under the superintendent between one and three years, and three of the four principals reported having a previous professional relationship with the superintendent. A majority of the principals have more than seven years of administrative experience. The superintendent's resume included a variety of responsibilities in the field of education in Alabama for the past 30 years, as well as 11 years in district-level positions.

Data Collection and Analysis

Interviews, surveys, and observations constituted this single case study (Creswell & Poth, 2017), which ensured triangulation (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Saldaña, 2015). Interviews and trust survey data were used to gather the principals' perspective regarding the superintendent's trust-building practices. The researcher determined the superintendent's perspective of these

practices through an interview with the superintendent and leadership meeting observations (Mertler, 2018). Table 5 describes the research methods and analysis.

Interviews. The interview and observation protocols met guidelines and ethical principles established by the IRB. A semi-structured interview protocol was used to collect information from the superintendent and principals. Vetted interview questions reflected current trust research and included several opportunities for participants to become comfortable, reflect, and explain practices that build trust.

The researcher manually coded interview transcripts using an In Vivo Coding approach, which captured the participants' natural language (King, 2008; Saldaña, 2015). Phrases and sentences were assigned tags or codes that were analyzed for patterns to determine themes. The researcher also used analytic memos and field notes throughout the coding process, which she referenced to make connections and uncover patterns and themes within the data. To reduce uncertainty and bias, the researcher read and coded all transcripts at least three times, which involved highlighting key text, recording reflective notes, and establishing categories. As the researcher used an inductive approach to combine categories, she created visualizations to help identify themes. As a tool, the visualizations permitted a more fluid approach to analyzing and interpreting the data (Brazeley, 2013) that resulted in four themes with numerous categories framed by existing educational research regarding leadership trust-building practices.

Observations. Using Angrosino's (2007) concept of "observer-as-participant," the researcher observed district-level leadership meetings as a contribution to the in-depth case study (Yin, 2017). The superintendent conducted leadership meetings in a district conference room that included district-level administrators and principals. Meeting participants were assured confidentiality and fully aware of the researcher's purpose. To record notes, the researcher used a

self-created form grounded in current educational research regarding leadership trust-building practices, which allowed for direct observations and reflective notes.

Initial analysis of the meeting observation notes involved reviewing observation forms, highlighting key text, and recording reflective notes to identify codes and patterns. Several readings of both the formal and reflective notes ensured the accuracy of interpretation and coding categories. Observation codes were placed on visualization charts under the related category and theme and assigned the letter *O* to signify observation data.

Surveys. Finally, the principals completed the "Superintendent Trust Survey," which included ten general questions and 24 Likert-type statements (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The survey was framed by the five facets of trust (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999) and the additional dimension of willingness to risk vulnerability (Hatchel, 2012).

The researcher used Qualtrics to collect and analyze survey data. Three of the four principals completed the survey. Additional demographic data were reviewed and summarized. Data from the 24 Likert-type statements assessing the principals' perceptions of trust in the superintendent were calculated for means. Survey responses received the following numeric values: 1 (*never)*, 2 (*almost never)*, 3 (*sometimes)*, 4 (*most of the time), 5 (almost always)*, 6 (*always)*. The researcher reconsidered each survey statement to determine a relationship to the established categories and themes, and statements with a mean of four or higher were recoded as codes, placed on the visualization chart, and assigned the letter S to signify survey data.

Following the coding of all three data points, including interviews, observations, and surveys, the researcher analyzed the summative data by frequency coding. Frequency coding addressed research questions two and three regarding similarities and differences in the superintendent and principals' perspectives. According to Miles and colleagues (2020), this final

coding strategy also verified hunches and protected the assertions from bias. Frequencies were recorded on three separate occasions to ensure reliability.

Summary of Findings

Data analysis revealed four overarching themes that provided an answer to research question one regarding the superintendent's trust-building practices. First, the superintendent communicates on many levels to build trust with principals. Superintendent Miller listens carefully to their opinions, is adept at public relations, and provides principals clear information, including feedback. He makes himself available to principals, which increases the opportunity to communicate. Second, the superintendent empowers the principals, which builds trust. Sufficient autonomy, support, and the allowance of risk-taking empowers the principals to conduct day-to-day business and grow professionally. The extension of trust instills a sense of confidence in the principals and illustrates the superintendent's willingness to risk vulnerability. The findings also revealed a third theme concerning the superintendent's practice of making informed decisions. All data points reflected the superintendent's leadership competencies, sound approach, and intentional nature of his decision-making. Finally, data analysis uncovered that the superintendent models norms, which builds trust with principals. He sets an example for others through the demonstration of his core values via aligned actions and words.

The analysis also uncovered many similarities and few differences in the perceptions of principals and the superintendent, as it relates to trust-building practices. One similarity was that both groups reported the use of four primary trust-building practices, which included communicates, empowers, makes informed decisions, and models norms. Furthermore, except for one category, both principals and superintendent implicitly defined those practices similarly. A key difference in perceptions was that only principals reported how the allowance or

encouragement of risk-taking cultivated empowerment, which increased trust in the superintendent. Additional differences in perceptions included code frequencies, or occurrences. Generally, the code frequencies across the four themes were similar, except the principals' perception of empowers and communicates, which was greater, or occurred more often. Another difference was the distribution of frequencies for both parties.

Connections of Findings to Literature

Trust is defined as "the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other party will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control the other party" (Mayer et al., 1995). Researchers established that high levels of relational trust support problem-solving and shared accountability in organizations, such as school districts (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Trust among employees, such as principals and the superintendent, increases overall effectiveness (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Finnigan & Daly, 2017), cohesion (Zand, 1997), and collaboration (Adams & Miskell, 2016; Adams, 2016). Since district-level administrators' behaviors influence student outcomes (Johnson et al., 2014; Rorrer et al., 2008; Sharratt & Fullan, 2009; Trujillo, 2013), the trust between the superintendent and principals is beneficial to study.

As yet, few researchers have studied trust between the superintendent and principal, and little is known about specific trust-building practices within that context. The following section connects research on leadership practices of school personnel, including principals, district administrators, and superintendents, with the findings of this study. Special attention is given to research that explicitly addressed the superintendent-principal context. Best to the researcher's

knowledge, there exists no research regarding "making informed decisions" as it relates to trust-building within the superintendent-principal context.

Communicates

Lawson and colleagues (2017) identified a trust-communication connection between central office leaders and the principal within odds-beating school districts, which facilitated policy innovation implementation. As it relates to trust between principals and subordinates, researchers have concluded that various elements of interpersonal skills, such as effective communication, were essential to building trust (Browning, 2014; Northfield, 2014). For example, Northfield (2014) discovered that trustworthy principals sought the opinions of teachers, listened well, were open and flexible to judgments or discourse, and managed the flow of information to staff. Northfield's conclusions relate to this case study's findings in that Superintendent Miller practiced effective listening and provided and encouraged principal feedback.

Researchers have also acknowledged the value of leadership transparency in building trust (Bird, 2011; Browning, 2014; Kellogg, 2017; Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Huang identified strategies that successful superintendents use to build trusting relationships with school boards during their entry period and found that "increased frequency of communication created transparency" (Huang, 2012, p. 64). Similarly, Bird (2010, 2011) studied superintendents and the budget-building process and noted the importance of transparency in all financial matters as a method of building trust and reducing negative perceptions of stakeholders. With this case study, transparency is similar to the clarity of communication in that the Masonville School District principals confirmed that the superintendent openly provided information that was forthright, explicit, and accurate.

Interestingly, Superintendent Miller echoed Bird's (2011) portrayal of transparency as an investment. Miller explained that since he treats district employees fairly and builds trust with all stakeholders when tasked to make a difficult decision to let someone go, others extend him the benefit of the doubt. Bird explained trust as an investment this way:

> When the budget numbers change from month to month (or decision to decision), participants stand a better chance of understanding the changes because they have been conditioned to the fluidity of the process. This increases the chances of building trust and reduces the chances of creating suspicion. (Bird, 2011, p. 160)

Superintendent-Principal Context. Findings from this case study indicated the essential practice of communicating, which was also substantiated by Kellogg (2017). Evidence from her dissertation included the value that principals placed on a superintendent's ability to openly or transparently communicate. Kellogg concluded that "A wide variety of communication skills are critical, especially for the superintendent, for the health of the relationships between the principals and superintendents" (Kellogg, 2017, p. iv).

Empowers

While no previous educational literature has explicitly connected the leadership practice empowers to the development of trust, some researchers have reported findings that include this study's categories of empowers, which were autonomy, support, risk, and extends trust—as such, empowering is a new leadership practice that superintendents may use to build trust with principals.

The researcher of this study determined that the extension of trust and confidentiality influenced the development of trust between the superintendent and principals, which aligned with Browning's (2014) findings that principals build trust with teachers by keeping confidences.

Northfield (2014) also found that novice principals who maintained confidentiality and trust in teachers cultivated more trust with those teachers. Superintendent Miller's natural disposition to trust the principals may be a result of previous relationships with three of the four principals in which promises were fulfilled (Tschannen-Moran, 2014, p. 54). Tschannen-Moran (2014) explained the value of extending trust when she stated, "The person extending trust recognizes the potential for betrayal and harm from the other. Taking that leap of faith requires trust. This leap may, in turn, lead to further development of trust when the expected behavior materializes (p. 20).

Forner and colleagues' (Forner et al., 2012) work that identified effective leadership practices as compared to Waters and Marzano's research connects loosely with findings in this study, as it relates to autonomy. Firstly, the superintendents and principals in the study confirmed the essential nature of trust, and secondly, principals' perceived autonomy in decision-making as most important (Forner et al., 2012).

Researchers have discovered that school leaders build trust through coaching and providing support (Browning, 2014; Tschannen-Moran, 2014). In one study, teachers "valued being appreciated and treated like colleagues and professionals, knowing that the Head (principal) was there in the background if they needed support and advice" (Browning, 2014, p. 398). Tschannen-Moran (2014) determined that coaching is one of the five functions of instructional leaders that influence a leader's ability to foster trust, which directly relates to this study's findings. She also proclaimed that as a coach, principals must "foster a greater sense of purpose and competence among [these] educators" (Tschannen-Moran, 2014, p. 260). This finding aligns with Superintendent Miller's assertion that one of his primary responsibilities is to

help employees recognize their strengths and the strengths of others and to "value what people bring to the table."

Superintendent-Principal Context. Evidence from this study reflected the principals' appreciation of the superintendent's support and encouragement of risk-taking, which increased their trust in him. Along the same lines, Hatchel (2012) concluded that a principal's level of trust in the superintendent influenced their willingness to take risks. When Kellogg (2017) studied factors that build and sustain trusting relationships between superintendents and principals, she also determined that autonomy and the extension of trust increased trust, which was evident in this study. For example, Masonville principals overwhelmingly appreciated autonomy in their job, as evident by interview comments such as "not looking over my shoulder," "leaves us alone," "lets us do our job," "does not micromanage" and "little interceding."

Makes Informed Decisions

Scholars have determined that leaders build trust by making informed decisions through collaborative approaches and leadership competencies (Browning, 2014; Lawson et al., 2017; Northfield, 2014; Tschannen-Moran, 2014; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015). A leader's collaborative efforts supported by structures, such as shared decision-making, depend on trust (Lawson et al., 2017; Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Northfield (2014) determined that new principals built trust with colleagues through leadership and management knowledge, task ability, and other competencies; this is similar to this study's finding of the trust-building practice "makes informed decisions."

Only a few researchers have alluded to the intentional nature of decision-making and building trust (Hoy et al., 2006; Huang, 2012; Lawson et al., 2017). Huang (2012) determined that new superintendents built strong, trusting relationships with school boards by intentionally

adopting leadership strategies like entry plans. Likewise, Lawson and colleagues (2017) claimed that leadership trust-building "interactions and opportunities are not coincidental or haphazard in odds-beating schools," but are a consequence of intentional decisions, organizational routines, and structural supports that encourage collaboration and communication (p. 47).

Hoy and colleagues examined trust as a school condition that fosters mindfulness, which they described as a "habit of mind that scans for subtle changes that cause trouble" (Hoy et al., 2006, p. 237). Mindfulness relates to intentionality, in that both involve 'thinking about thinking,' or metacognition (Costa & Kallick, 2008). Interestingly, mindful characteristics of individuals include the consideration of multiple perspectives (Hoy et al., 2006, p. 237), which was evident in Superintendent Miller's practices. Most principals recalled that Miller routinely solicited the expertise and advice of others when making decisions.

Models Norms

Tschannen-Moran (2014) asserted that "the principal's values, attitudes, and behaviors have a significant influence on the culture of the school" (p. 254), and that effective leaders "not only talk the talk of trust but also walk the walk" (p. 256). Tschannen-Moran (2014) proposed that modeling expected values and norms is one of the five functions of instructional leaders that builds trust. Northfield (2014) observed that novice principals built trust by keeping their promises, which relates to aligning words with actions. Teachers trust principals who model expected behavior, like openly admitting mistakes and remaining calm and level-headed (Browning, 2014), which relates to "modeling norms" in this case study.

Superintendent-Principal Context. Kellogg (2017) also determined that both superintendents and principals believed that modeling expected behavior increased trust between them, which aligned with the findings of this study. On numerous occasions, the researcher

observed Superintendent Miller modeling norms, namely honesty, the value of relationships, and equity. The principals confirmed that Miller modeled norms during interviews when they mentioned "values others," "never have to guess what he's thinking," and "walks the walk."

Implications for Practice

Leaders within a variety of school contexts may benefit from the findings of this research study. Precisely, however, superintendents working to build trusting relationships with campus principals may employ specific practices revealed in the data. To build trust, superintendents must communicate with principals on many levels, empower principals, make informed decisions and model expected norms.

Implications for Superintendents

Some of the many roles of school superintendents include teacher-scholar, manager, democratic leader, applied social scientist (Callahan, 1966), communicator (Kowalski & Brunner, 2011), and chief executive officer (Kowalski, 2006). In most, if not all, of these contexts, a trusting relationship with campus principals assists in the development of the "coherent bridge" between the school and central office for system-wide improvements (Coplan & Knapp, 2006, p. 93). Given the hierarchical nature of the school system, it is the responsibility of the superintendent to sustain a trusting relationship with principals (Tschannen-Moran, 2014); thus, school superintendents may benefit from the findings of this case study regarding specific leadership practices that build trust with principals.

Communicates. Communication involves one's ability to listen well, articulate clear ideas, influence others, provide and receive feedback, and be readily available to others (Burns et al., 2004). Lawson and colleagues (2017) cautioned school leaders that effective communication "is not simply about communicating; it also is about the clarity and regularity of messaging…"

(p. 48). Based on the findings of this study, superintendents may consider the following specific communication practices to build trust with principals:

- Listen more than talking, especially to dissenting opinions.
- Clearly explain complicated issues, outline expectations, and provide a rationale for decisions when applicable.
- Consistently provide feedback to principals and use a variety of methods to collect their feedback.
- Be visible and available via an assortment of communication methods.
- Attend to public relations through knowledge of the context, building relationships, and consensus-building.

Empowers. Evidence demonstrated that Superintendent Miller empowered principals to successfully fulfill their roles by removing barriers, such as a lack of resources. Consistently, the principals acknowledged that Miller refrained from micromanaging them and instead extended trust and autonomy that encouraged their professional growth and development. By extending trust and autonomy in decision-making to principals, Superintendent Miller demonstrated a willingness to risk vulnerability because of the possibility of negative outcomes. Findings of this study suggested that superintendents may consider the following trust-building practices to empower principals:

- Explain complicated, state-level issues to positively influence principals' perceptions and help them make informed decisions.
- Draw a distinct line between campus-level decisions and district-level decisions, so as not to undermine principals' authority.

- Create formal structures that provide professional support to principals, for instance, mentor programs.
- Coach, rather than direct – use open-ended questioning techniques to develop principals' problem-solving skills, which will acknowledge their capacities.
- Encourage risk-taking by not overreacting to contrary opinions or creative solutions.
- Create opportunities for reflection to recognize failed attempts and celebrate successes.
- When delegating, trust principals with the work at hand, and refrain from rewriting, countering, or circumventing the final plan or product.

Makes Informed Decisions. To inform their decision-making, superintendents should consider their approach to solving problems, sharpen their overall leadership competencies, and exercise intentional behaviors and actions. Principals reported that Superintendent Miller was aware of the needs of others, knowledgeable of educational trends and issues, and took a common-sense, collaborative approach when making decisions. Based on the findings of this study, superintendents may consider the following practices when making decisions to build trust with principals:

- Maintain critical skills and knowledge involving both instructional leadership and operational management.
- Develop a protocol for decision-making that includes adequate time to consider alternatives and a variety of perspectives, as well as to uncover potential pitfalls.
- When possible, share the rationale behind difficult decisions.
- Be deliberate and intentional in all action and behaviors.

Models Norms. Leaders can cultivate a culture of trust by being a positive role model for others. Most importantly, "Discontinuity between word and deed will quickly erode a principal's ability to lead" (Tschannen-Moran, 2014, p. 256). The daily actions and behaviors of Superintendent Miller included a clear demonstration of his values as an example to principals. He also confirmed a sense of awareness regarding his actions when he confessed, "I don't think that I leverage trust, but I think I can't work without it for the way that I work." These findings suggested that superintendents may consider the following trust-building practices to model the way:

- Determine personal core values and use those to frame behavior and work. Then, continuously reflect to ensure actions align with words.
- Be mindful of commitments.
- Seek first-hand experiences throughout the district; walk in the shoes of custodians, cafeteria workers, maintenance, bookkeepers.

Recommendations for Future Research

Although most of the findings of this study aligned with current educational research regarding leadership trust-building practices, a few areas require additional investigation. This dissertation was one of only a few studies that examined trust at the district level in education, and more specifically, trust-building practices superintendents use with principals. Furthermore, the sample for this study only included one public school district. Because of these reasons, further research is needed for confirmation and replication within other contexts.

Research is needed to further establish and confirm the unique practices school superintendents use to build trust with campus principals, as well as to examine the superintendent-principal relationship further. Research may be conducted within professional

learning communities to uncover evidence-based practices leaders use to build trust. Additionally, some findings of this study do not exist in the current body of knowledge; therefore, more research is required. Specifically, the theme "makes informed decisions" is new information as it relates to trust-building practices the superintendent uses with principals. Similarly, the sub themes of "feedback," "availability," "public relations," "risk," and "intention" require further study for confirmation. Future descriptive studies may investigate the following areas: practices superintendents use to build trust with principals during times of crises, such as pandemics; practices that principals use to build trust with superintendents; a relationship between the superintendent's leadership style and the development of trust with principals; and, how principals and superintendents leverage trust as an organizational resource.

Closing Statement

This case study has identified leadership trust-building practices that superintendents employ with campus principals, as well as the similarities and differences in perceptions between those two parties. Generally, the superintendent and principals recognized that trust is built when a superintendent openly communicates, empowers principals, makes informed decisions, and models the expected norms. In doing so, superintendents leverage trust as a resource for organizational improvements, including student outcomes.

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Appendix A

Institutional Review Board

AUBURN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD for RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

RESEARCH PROTOCOL REVIEW FORM
FULL BOARD or EXPEDITED

For Information or help contact **THE OFFICE OF RESEARCH COMPLIANCE (ORC)**, 115 Ramsay Hall, Auburn University
Phone: 334-844-5966 **e-mail:** IRBAdmin@auburn.edu **Web Address:** http://www.auburn.edu/research/vpr/ohs/index.htm

Revised 2.1.2014 **Submit completed form to IRBsubmit@auburn.edu or 115 Ramsay Hall, Auburn University 36849.**

Form must be populated using Adobe Acrobat / Pro 9 or greater standalone program (do not fill out in browser). Hand written forms will not be accepted.

1. PROPOSED START DATE of STUDY: 11/12/2019

PROPOSED REVIEW CATEGORY (Check one): ☐ FULL BOARD ☐ EXPEDITED

SUBMISSION STATUS (Check one): ☑ NEW ☐ REVISIONS (to address IRB Review Comments)

2. PROJECT TITLE: A Superintendent's Trust-Building Practices with Campus Administrators: A Case Study

3. Julie Norden	PhD Candidate	EFLT	jas0193@auburn.edu
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR	TITLE	DEPT	AU E-MAIL
1701 Williams CT. APT. 1602 Columbus, GA 31904		254-289-8631	norden.j@gmail.com
MAILING ADDRESS		PHONE	ALTERNATE E-MAIL

4. FUNDING SUPPORT: ☑ N/A ☐ Internal ☐ External Agency: _____ ☐ Pending ☐ Received

For federal funding, list agency and grant number (if available). N/A

5a. List any contractors, sub-contractors, other entities associated with this project:

N/A

b. List any other IRBs associated with this project (including Reviewed, Deferred, Determination, etc.):

N/A

PROTOCOL PACKET CHECKLIST

All protocols must include the following items:

☑ **Research Protocol Review Form** (All signatures included and all sections completed)
(Examples of appended documents are found on the OHSR website: http://www.auburn.edu/research/vpr/ohs/sample.htm)

☑ **CITI Training Certificates** for all Key Personnel.

☑ **Consent Form or Information Letter** and any Releases (audio, video or photo) that the participant will sign.

☑ **Appendix A**, "Reference List"

☑ **Appendix B** if e-mails, flyers, advertisements, generalized announcements or scripts, etc., are used to recruit participants.

☑ **Appendix C** if data collection sheets, surveys, tests, other recording instruments, interview scripts, etc. will be used for data collection. Be sure to attach them in the order in which they are listed in # 13c.

☑ **Appendix D** if you will be using a debriefing form or include emergency plans/procedures and medical referral lists (A referral list may be attached to the consent document).

☑ **Appendix E** if research is being conducted at sites other than Auburn University or in cooperation with other entities. A **permission letter** from the site / program director must be included indicating their cooperation or involvement in the project. NOTE: If the proposed research is a multi-site project, involving investigators or participants at other academic institutions, hospitals or private research organizations, a letter of **IRB approval** from each entity is required prior to initiating the project.

☑ **Appendix F** - Written evidence of acceptance by the host country if research is conducted outside the United States.

FOR ORC OFFICE USE ONLY

DATE RECEIVED IN ORC:	_____ by _____	PROTOCOL #	_____
DATE OF IRB REVIEW:	_____ by _____	APPROVAL CATEGORY:	_____
DATE OF IRB APPROVAL:	_____ by _____	INTERVAL FOR CONTINUING REVIEW:	_____

COMMENTS:

Appendix B

Informed Consent

AUBURN
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4036 HALEY CENTER
AUBURN, AL 36849-5221

TELEPHONE:
334-344-4460

FAX:
334-344-3072

www.auburn.edu

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LEADERSHIP AND TECHNOLOGY

(NOTE: DO NOT SIGN THIS DOCUMENT UNLESS AN IRB APPROVAL STAMP WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN APPLIED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

INFORMED CONSENT
for a Research Study entitled
"Superintendent Trust-Building Practices with Campus Administrators"

You are invited to participate in a research study to *determine specific practices that superintendents use to build trust with campus administrators.* The study is being conducted by Julie Norden PhD Student under the direction of Dr. Ellen Hahn Reames in the Auburn University Department of Education. You were selected as a possible participant because you were either nominated as an effective superintendent, or you are a campus administrator that works under a nominated effective superintendent in Alabama public schools. Also, you are age 19 or older.

What will be involved if you participate? As a **campus administrator**, if you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to complete an online survey that may require approximately 15 minutes of your time. You will also engage in a 45-minute interview with the researcher that includes 10-12 questions. Additionally, you may be observed during regular leadership meetings, which may be audio recorded. Both the interview and leadership meetings will be recorded through a voice recording application located on the researcher's personal cell phone. This data will be transcribed by the researcher and then destroyed when the study has been completed. Your total time commitment will be approximately 60 minutes, which includes the interview and survey.

As a **superintendent**, if you decide to participate in this research study, you will engage in a 45-minute interview with the researcher that includes 10-12 questions. Additionally, you may be observed during regular leadership meetings, which may be audio recorded. Both the interview and leadership meetings will be recorded through a voice recording application located on the researcher's personal cell phone. This data will be transcribed by the researcher and then destroyed when the study has been completed. Your total time commitment will be approximately 45 minutes, which includes the interview.

Are there any risks or discomforts? The risks associated with participating in this study are online data being hacked or intercepted: This is a risk you experience anytime you provide information online. There is also a risk of a breach of confidentiality by a chance that your data could be seen by someone who shouldn't have access to it. To minimize these risks, we will use a secure system to collect this data, store all data on a password-protected computer, external drive and cell phone, but we can't completely eliminate the risk. We will use a pseudonym and all identifying information

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will be kept separate from your research data, and it won't be linked to you. We will destroy any identifying information after we finish collecting and analyzing the data.

Are there any benefits to yourself or others? If you participate in this study, you can expect to contribute to the data that could provide knowledge of trust-building practices superintendents use with campus administrators. This will help current district-level leaders build trusting relationships to support ongoing improvements in schools. We/I cannot promise you that you will receive any or all of the benefits described.

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Participant's initials ____

Will you receive compensation for participating? To thank you for your time you will receive a genuine thanks for your participation.

Are there any costs? If you decide to participate, you will not be charged any cost for your participation.

If you change your mind about participating, you can withdraw at any time during the study. Your participation is completely voluntary. If you choose to withdraw, your data can be withdrawn as long as it is identifiable. Your decision about whether or not to participate or to stop participating will not jeopardize your future relations with Auburn University or the Department of Education.

Your privacy will be protected. Any information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential. Information obtained through your participation will be stored securely on the researcher's computer, which will be de-identified and will not include any personal or contact information. If we quote you, we will use pseudonyms (fake names).

If you have questions about this study, *please ask them now or* contact Julie Norden at 254-289-8631 or by email at jas0193@auburn.edu. A copy of this document will be given to you to keep.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Auburn University Office of Research Compliance or the Institutional Review Board by phone (334)-844-5966 or e-mail IRBadmin@auburn.edu or IRBChair@auburn.edu.

HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED, YOU MUST DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT YOU WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY. YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES YOUR WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE.

Participant's signature Date	Investigator obtaining consent Date
Printed Name	Printed Name
	Co-Investigator Date
	Printed Name

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Appendix C

Superintendent Trust Survey

Superintendent Trust Survey

Directions Part I This survey is intended to capture a campus administrator's perspective of trust in the superintendent. For the purpose of the survey, please base your responses upon your current superintendent. Thank you in advance for completing the survey!

Q1 What is your current position?

- ○ Principal (1)
- ○ Assistant Principal (2)
- ○ Other (3)

Q2 How many years have you worked as a campus administrator in your current district?

- ○ Less than 1 year (5)
- ○ 1-3 years (1)
- ○ 4-6 years (2)
- ○ 7-9 years (3)
- ○ 10 or more years (4)

Q3 Including other districts, how many total years have you worked as a campus administrator?

- ○ Less than 1 year (1)
- ○ 1-3 years (2)
- ○ 4-6 years (3)
- ○ 7-9 years (4)
- ○ 10 or more years (5)

Q4 What is the configuration of your school?

- ○ K-5 (1)
- ○ K-8 (5)
- ○ 6-8 (2)
- ○ 9-12, 10-12 (3)
- ○ Other (4) _____

Q5 Gender

- ○ Male (1)
- ○ Female (2)
- ○ Other (3) _____

Q6 Race/Ethnicity (check all that apply)

- [ ] Caucasian (1)
- [ ] Black or African American (2)
- [ ] American Indian or Alaskan Native (3)
- [ ] Hawaiian Native or other Pacific Islander (4)
- [ ] Hispanic or Latino (5)
- [ ] Asian (8)
- [ ] I prefer not to answer (7)
- [ ] Other (6) _____

Q7 On average, approximately how many hours monthly does your current superintendent make face-to-face contact with you? Include regularly scheduled meetings.

- ○ 0-1 hours (1)
- ○ 2-3 hours (2)
- ○ 4-5 hours (3)
- ○ 6-7 hours (4)
- ○ 8-9 hours (5)
- ○ 10 or more hours (6)

Q8 Throughout the year, the superintendent uses the following types of communication. Check all that apply:

- [ ] Announced campus visits (14)
- [ ] Unannounced campus visits (16)
- [ ] Handwritten notes (10)
- [ ] Text messages (2)
- [ ] Phone calls (3)
- [ ] Group/mass emails (1)
- [ ] Personal emails (directed only at me) (13)
- [ ] E-Newsletters (6)
- [ ] Social media messages (7)
- [ ] Blog or video messages (12)
- [ ] Other (15) _____

Q9 I engage in the following activities, which include the superintendent. Check all that apply:

- [ ] District administrator meetings (15)
- [ ] Regularly scheduled coaching or mentor meetings (11)
- [ ] Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) (9)
- [ ] Discussion forums/Advisory groups (8)
- [ ] District committees (12)
- [ ] Extra-curricular activities or events (14)
- [ ] Other (13) _____

Directions Part II The following section addresses a variety of behaviors and characteristics associated with trust. For clarity, items are written in the present tense; please respond to the statements based on your current superintendent.

Please base your answers on your overall experience with the superintendent. Responses are anonymous and will not be linked to specific principals or assistant principals.

Please respond to the statements below.

B1

	Never (1)	Almost Never (2)	Sometimes (3)	Most of the time (4)	Almost Always (5)	Always (6)
The superintendent's actions support the established goals/vision of the district. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○

B2

	Never (1)	Almost Never (2)	Sometimes (3)	Most of the time (4)	Almost Always (5)	Always (6)
The superintendent acknowledges the successes/contributions of site leaders. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○

B3

	Never (1)	Almost Never (2)	Sometimes (3)	Most of the time (4)	Almost Always (5)	Always (6)
The superintendent's decisions support the best interest of students. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○

B4

	Never (1)	Almost Never (2)	Sometimes (3)	Most of the time (4)	Almost Always (5)	Always (6)
The superintendent expresses interest in my well-being. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○

Please respond to the statements below:

C1

	Never (1)	Almost Never (2)	Sometimes (3)	Most of the time (4)	Almost Always (5)	Always (6)
The superintendent seeks all relevant information prior to making a decision. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○

C2

	Never (1)	Almost Never (2)	Sometimes (3)	Most of the time (4)	Almost Always (5)	Always (6)
The superintendent completes responsibilities in a timely/efficient manner. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○

C3

	Never (1)	Almost Never (2)	Sometimes (3)	Most of the time (4)	Almost Always (5)	Always (6)
The superintendent leads others to attain the goals/vision of the district. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○

C4

	Never (1)	Almost Never (2)	Sometimes (3)	Most of the time (4)	Almost Always (5)	Always (6)
The superintendent demonstrates skills needed to perform his/her job well. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○

Please respond to the statements below:

H1

	Never (1)	Almost Never (2)	Sometimes (3)	Most of the time (4)	Almost Always (5)	Always (6)
The superintendent holds him/herself accountable for his/her actions. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○

H2

	Never (1)	Almost Never (2)	Sometimes (3)	Most of the time (4)	Almost Always (5)	Always (6)
The superintendent's words and actions are in alignment. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○

H3

	Never (1)	Almost Never (2)	Sometimes (3)	Most of the time (4)	Almost Always (5)	Always (6)
The superintendent demonstrates ethical behavior. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○

H4

	Never (1)	Almost Never (2)	Sometimes (3)	Most of the time (4)	Almost Always (5)	Always (6)
The superintendent acknowledges his/her mistakes, e.g., does not "pass the buck." (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○

Please respond to the statements below:

O1

	Never (1)	Almost Never (2)	Sometimes (3)	Most of the time (4)	Almost Always (5)	Always (6)
The superintendent utilizes the expertise of others within the organization. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○

O2

	Never (1)	Almost Never (2)	Sometimes (3)	Most of the time (4)	Almost Always (5)	Always (6)
The superintendent is accessible to site leaders, e.g., has an "open-door policy." (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○

O3

	Never (1)	Almost Never (2)	Sometimes (3)	Most of the time (4)	Almost Always (5)	Always (6)
The superintendent invites constructive criticism. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○

O4

	Never (1)	Almost Never (2)	Sometimes (3)	Most of the time (4)	Almost Always (5)	Always (6)
The superintendent shares the rationale behind decisions. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○

Please respond to the statements below:

R1

	Never (1)	Almost Never (2)	Sometimes (3)	Most of the time (4)	Almost Always (5)	Always (6)
The superintendent delivers on commitments. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○

R2

	Never (1)	Almost Never (2)	Sometimes (3)	Most of the time (4)	Almost Always (5)	Always (6)
The superintendent responds to my concerns. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○

R3

	Never (1)	Almost Never (2)	Sometimes (3)	Most of the time (4)	Almost Always (5)	Always (6)
The superintendent can be counted upon to "do the right thing." (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○

R4

	Never (1)	Almost Never (2)	Sometimes (3)	Most of the time (4)	Almost Always (5)	Always (6)
The superintendent can be counted upon to provide accurate information to campus administrators. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○

Please respond to the statements below:

RSK1

	Never (1)	Almost Never (2)	Sometimes (3)	Most of the time (4)	Almost Always (5)	Always (6)
I am comfortable sharing a contrary opinion with my superintendent. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○

RSK2

	Never (1)	Almost Never (2)	Sometimes (3)	Most of the time (4)	Almost Always (5)	Always (6)
I initiate new programs at my site. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○

RSK3

	Never (1)	Almost Never (2)	Sometimes (3)	Most of the time (4)	Almost Always (5)	Always (6)
I am comfortable sharing innovative ideas with my superintendent. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○

RSK4

	Never (1)	Almost Never (2)	Sometimes (3)	Most of the time (4)	Almost Always (5)	Always (6)
I am comfortable taking "calculated risks" when solving problems at my site. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○

End of Block: Default Question Block

Appendix D

Observation Notes Form

Observation Form
Leadership Meetings
Trust-Building Practices

Date:
Attendees:
Meeting Agenda/Objectives:

Observed Practice	Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes
Communicates		
Builds Relationships		
Repeated Interactions		
Transparency/Openness		
Models Norms		
Visioning		
Support/Coaching		
Intentionality/Mindfulness		
Other:		
Other:		
Other:		

Appendix E

Survey Permission

RE: principal trust survey

Julie Hatchel <JulieHatchel@iusd.org>
Tue 8/13/2019 1:18 PM
To: Julie Norden <jas0193@tigermail.auburn.edu>

Hi Julie- I'm so sorry…just now receiving this…

Congratulations on your dissertation work. It's wonderful to see colleagues who are interested in this topic! You are welcome to use the instrument I used in my dissertation work. The survey is in the appendix of the dissertation…unfortunately, I don't have an editable copy that I can forward.

Hope this helps and best wishes to you in the completion of your study! I'd love to hear about your findings when you are finished.

Julie Hatchel
Principal, Deerfield Elementary
Irvine Unified School District

Appendix F

Principal Interview Questions

Principal Interview Questions

1. Please share some of your previous educational experiences prior to your current position as principal/assistant principal. How did you get where you are today?

2. Can you talk a little about your first year being a campus administrator in this district?
    a. What qualities, strengths, or skills do you add to the district's leadership team?

3. How would you describe your relationship with the superintendent? Examples?
4. What do you think are some of the superintendent's greatest strengths as a leader? How so? Stories/examples?
5. How do you think trust develops between you and the superintendent?
    a. Is it intentional, or does it occur naturally?

6. What are some ways the superintendent builds trust with you? How so? Examples? Stories?
    a. What do you believe are the most important practices he uses that promote trust?

7. What are the benefits of having a trusting relationship with the superintendent? How so? Specifics? Examples? Stories?
    a. Can you think of a time when you relied upon trust with the superintendent to get something done?

8. From your perspective, what makes the superintendent trust you?
9. Is there anything more you would like to add regarding trust?

Appendix G

Superintendent Interview Questions

Superintendent Interview Questions

1. Please share some of your previous educational experiences prior to your current position as superintendent. How did you get where you are today?
2. Can you talk a little about your first year of being a superintendent in this district?
3. What would you identify as your greatest strengths as a leader? How so?
4. How would you describe your relationship with campus administrators?
5. Generally, do you believe most administrators trust you?
6. How do you think trust develops between you and the campus administrators?
    a. Is it intentional, or does it occur naturally?
7. What are some ways you build trust with your campus administrators? How so? Specifics? Examples? Stories?
    a. What do you believe are the most important practices you use to promote trust?
8. Can you talk about how you communicate with administrators? Methods? How often? Face-to-face?
9. What are the benefits of having a trusting relationship with campus administrators? How so? Specifics? Examples? Stories?
    a. Can you think of a time when you relied upon trust to get something done?
10. Is there anything more you would like to add regarding trust?