A Case Study: Perceptions of Rural School Principals that Utilized the Transformation Turnaround Model for School Success and Sustainability

By

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Abstract

This qualitative case study identified how rural school principals utilized the transformation turnaround model in conjunction with the eight turnaround principles to promote and sustain academic success within their schools. The transformation turnaround model focuses on the following key strategies: replace the principal and work towards increasing teacher and school leader effectiveness, include comprehensive instructional reforms, increase instructional time, create a community-oriented school, and provide operational flexibility and sustained support for all members of the faculty and staff. The transformation turnaround model is paired with the following eight turnaround principles: school leadership, school climate and culture, family and community engagement, effective use of data, effective use of time, effective staffing practices, effective instruction, and effective curriculum, assessment, and intervention systems. These principles should help promote academic success and sustainability within the school. The eleven participants selected for this study are all rural school principals located in the State of Alabama. Each rural school principal was chosen due to their schools' participation in the school improvement grant (SIG) for the state. The eleven rural school principals each gave insightful commentary regarding both the transformation turnaround model and the eight turnaround principles assisting in the success factors related to each school. The data, acquired through in-depth electronic video conference interviews with each principal, the statistical data from the state report card and follow-up interview questions for clarity, solidified that the transformation turnaround model and the turnaround principles were effective in providing the positive support necessary for each school's success.

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Chapter I: Introduction

"Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go." T.S. Eliot

American culture has continuously pushed for greatness and the American education system is no exception. Historically, the American education system began with the one room schoolhouse (Thattai, 2001). The first teachers in this country focused on the literacy, religion, and family values of each student, but the education system has grown into both federal and state-regulated systems that teach all subject areas to millions of students from diverse backgrounds (Thattai, 2001). Most of the children in the United States were required to at least complete elementary school in the early 1900's (Thattai, 2001). Education was limited for women at first, but both male and female students have been included since the 1920s. The need to educate students continued to grow throughout the 1950s and expanded not only to local state governments but also to the federal level to help students attend school daily. The federal government infused itself throughout the American education system to help guide, fund, and direct the nation's schools toward our technological future and help make our students competitive with other nations around the globe.

The world was changing rapidly, and the federal government knew they had to help the school systems keep up with technological advances. Some major events that sparked the federal government's involvement with schools was the Soviet spacecraft Sputnik launch in 1957, the first human space flight in 1961, and the landing of Apollo 11 on the moon in 1969. Each of the space initiatives and technological advancements led to a push in school reform around the country. The reform came in the form of a publication called *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (1983). This book focused on the achievement gap between middle-class, white Americans and impoverished minorities. This achievement gap was recognized

through the use of data on standardized tests. Earning a high school diploma will often not help a student attain employment because many entry level jobs do not exist anymore for high school graduates. Technology has created a very competitive workforce with over seventy percent of available careers requiring either programming certification, trade school certification, military experience or a four-year degree from a university or college (Acker-Hocevar et al., 2012). Students across all k-12 schools should have access to rigorous and free public education, but unfortunately impoverished and minority families tend to be located in lower-performing schools (Peske & Haycock, 2006). The cycle of graduating students that are ill-prepared for the work force once they graduate must be addressed and rectified (Sheehy, 2012).

The federal government attacked the struggles within the school system by developing several different programs that focus on improving the inadequacies within school districts. This started with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1988), which focused on transforming requirements for schools to force accountability based on student. Next came the No Child Left Behind Act (2001), which identified struggling schools and provided guidelines called Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) that categorized what schools needed to be successful. The schools that did not make AYP each year were placed on a failing school list and labeled as needing corrective action. The intervention strategies within the guidelines of NCLB and the AYP categories were the same for all schools across the country and did not show a true representation of which schools were failing and which showed true success (Rosenburg, 2011). The AYP categories included poor achievement, safety issues, student behavior, attendance, personnel turnover rates, and parent surveys.

The Obama administration implemented several policy changes to alleviate the education system's struggles with NCLB. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was

amended and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) was added to help assist public education in 2009. Over twelve thousand schools were able to receive additional assistance from the federal government because of the combination of funding from both acts (Taylor, et al., 2010). The federal government's response to this issue was to provide more funding across the country to schools. According to the United States Census Bureau, the federal government increased spending from $246 billion to $620 billion per year on education between 1983 to present day (2018). This breaks down to spending $5,692 per student to present day spending of $12,296 per student (USCB, 2018). The funds are collected locally from property taxes. Each state has its own formula for allocating funds, and the federal government focuses the funds on the education of groups with low socioeconomic status or distinct groups like rural communities.

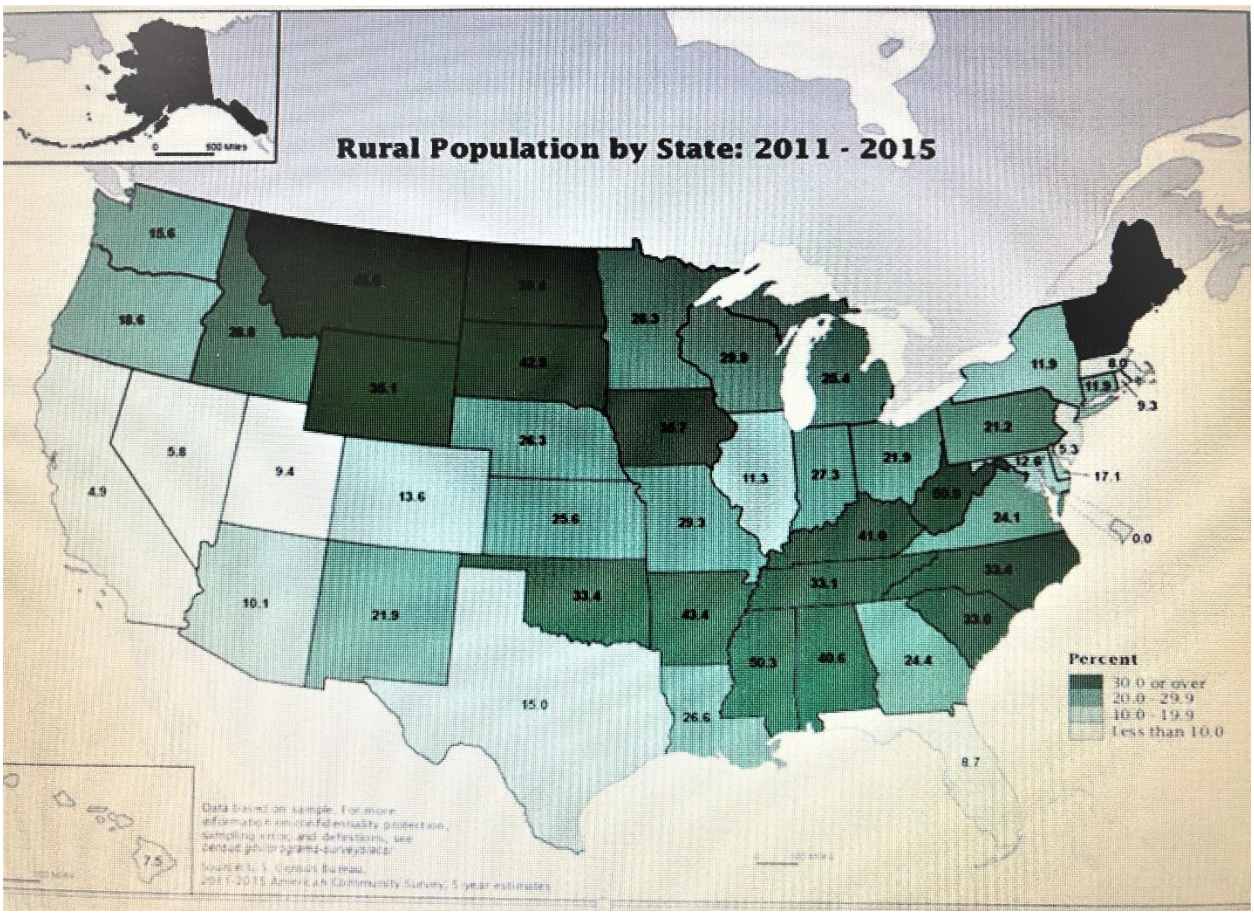
In addition to increased funding, the US government restructured the approach to school improvement and in 2010 developed the school improvement grants (SIG) that incorporated four models for school turnaround. Each of these models focused on a school's particular need, but not all of them best fit the entire school system's situation. The four school districts could use the following four school models: school closure, school restart, school turnaround, and school transformation (Herman et al., 2008; Le Floch et al., 2014; Rosenburg et al., 2014). The school turnaround model requires school districts to remove the principal and over fifty percent of the faculty, the school closure model requires school districts to remove all faculty and staff, the school restarts can be charter schools or redistricting of students within that school district, and the transformation model, which is the most popular throughout the country, focuses on improving the staff and instructional leadership within the school, and requires the removal of the principal but not the removal of school faculty or staff.

The school improvement grant models for school turnaround cause significant problems in rural schools. Rural schools struggle with a variety of issues, but most of them revolve around funding and inadequate staffing of the schools. Each school is very different in climate, culture, location, funding, and local support, so it is necessary for the schools to focus on the learning needs and operational needs of that population and not simply mimic another school or school system (Stoll, 2009). One school may need to have a remodeling and repair budget and another school might need to focus on personnel funds, supplies, or technology. Each school must maximize on present needs and not attempt to outdo another school. Students in rural schools throughout the state must be given a positive learning environment and the resources necessary to succeed, but each school is not receiving the resources they need (Lindahl, 2011). More in-depth research focusing on successful rural schools in Alabama is necessary to gather, document, and use to help struggling rural schools (Lindahl, 2011).

Problem Statement

Most school turnaround research in the country has been focused on urban school systems, while less than ten percent of the research has been conducted on rural school systems (Hardre & Sullivan, 2008). Rural schools enroll roughly twenty-four percent of the country's student population, and urban/suburban schools account for the other seventy-eight percent (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2014). States with the largest rural populations include Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, North Carolina, Maine, North Dakota, Montana, Alaska, and Wyoming (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016, p.2). The complete Map is listed below.

Figure 1. The Population by Percentage in Rural Areas by State: 2011-2015 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016, p.2).



Twenty-three percent of rural school districts are in the Southern states (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). In the United States, there are almost eight thousand rural school districts which make up over half the school districts in the country, but little to no research has been conducted related to school turnaround success or lack thereof (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Alabama is considered a rural state by the Census Bureau because forty-five percent of the population lives in a rural area (USCB, 2018). Almost forty-two percent of Alabama's student population attends a rural school system. Research has shown that students that attend a rural school tend to live in poverty, come from diverse backgrounds, have limited opportunities to expand their career options within their local towns once leaving school, have parents that are

limited in their education levels, and lack experience exploring larger towns for career opportunities (Harmon, 2001; Howley et al., 2005; Masumoto & Brown-Welty, 2009; Starr & White, 2008). Rural communities also have a high number of adults that only have a high school diploma or General Educational Equivalent (GED) or dropped out of high school altogether. Rural communities have large numbers of impoverished minority students that do not academically perform as well as students from urban or suburban communities (Horst & Martin, 2007; Johnson et al., 2002; Johnson et al., 2014).

The Alabama State Department was aware of the difficulties rural schools were facing and knew it was time for assistance. The Alabama Accountability Act of 2014 allowed students to have the following options in choosing their pathways for education which included the ability to transfer schools in the same school system or transfer to another school system or use the state tax credit of $3,500 to attend a private school (The Alabama Media Group, 2015). Also, during this time, the Alabama State Department of Education and the University of Alabama, Auburn University, and Samford University worked together to develop and received a grant that focused on rural school turnaround. Project Alabama Consortium for Rural Turnaround (PACT) allowed each of the universities to create and implement school leadership turnaround programs that aligned with Alabama's Plan 2020, which focused on student achievement, graduation rates, and the development of strong school administrators. Both the ALSDE and the universities wanted students to be able to qualify for university placement and be prepared to seek out internships related to the student's career choices. Under the PACT grant, the universities created a master's-level program for educators that aspired to become instructional leaders. The students enrolled in the PACT program at each of the list universities would receive an additional endorsement of "Rural School Turnaround Leadership" specialist once they completed the program. Each

university made their PACT program unique to the university and had specific guidelines for recruiting students that were best suited for that program. Each university also developed the curriculum and tailored the instruction to reflect the needs of rural schools and school systems.

Alabama rural communities have the same issues as rural communities around the country. The goal is to utilize programs such as the PACT program, the transformation model, and the eight turnaround principles to help develop successful school leaders, so they can work within the rural schools of Alabama and create a tradition of stability and success.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this case study was to identify Alabama rural school principals that have successfully completed the transformation school model, have utilized the eight turnaround principles, and have sustained success within their schools. The focus was on schools that have utilized the transformation model. The principals could work at an elementary, middle, or high school. The focus was on how these principals affected the following areas within their schools to cultivate success and transformation sustainability: culture and climate, the internal and external partnerships between faculty, staff, parents, and community stakeholders, and any other external factor that helped support the school's success. The goal was to identify key components of success that each of the principal's shared and that can be utilized within other struggling rural schools.

Conceptual Framework

Gathering and identifying successful rural schools is challenging because of the limited information available related to rural schools. Successful rural turnaround schools have several traits that separate them from the rest of the schools. These traits include recruiting and retaining

high quality teachers, providing exceptional professional development for all staff members (Chance & Sequra, 2009; Dean, 2005), working with the community, local businesses, and parents to encourage support for the students (Chance & Sequra, 2009), emphasizing the importance of completing the educational process through high school, creating a foundation of high expectations with achievement, and establishing a positive climate and culture to scaffold into a culture focused on learning (Bottoms, et al., 2004; Carter et al., 2009; Chance & Sequra, 2009). Not only should the positive attributes of rural schools be identified for school success, but there also must be criteria for what is needed for a turnaround school to be successful. These attributes and criteria will often be the same. Transformation turnaround model schools gain part of their success from the community, parental involvement, and strong leadership guidance from both teachers and school administration (Brinson et al., 2008, p.17). Leadership has been identified as one of the essential parts of school success because school leaders contribute to the following: shaping a vision of academic success for all students, creating a climate that enhances education, cultivating leadership in others, improving existing instruction, and managing people, data and processes to foster school improvement (Wallace Foundation, 2011). The conceptual framework for this research blends the guidelines of the transformation model and the eight turnaround principles of best practices within the education system. The following figure shows each of the areas of focus for this research and how they could be used together to help rural school principals move their schools toward success and sustain that success.

Figure 2. Indiana Department of Education. (2010). 1003(a) Turnaround Principle Intervention.

U.S. Department of Education (2010). Guidance on School Improvement Grants (SIG Transformation Model). Under Section 1003(g) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. Washington, DC.

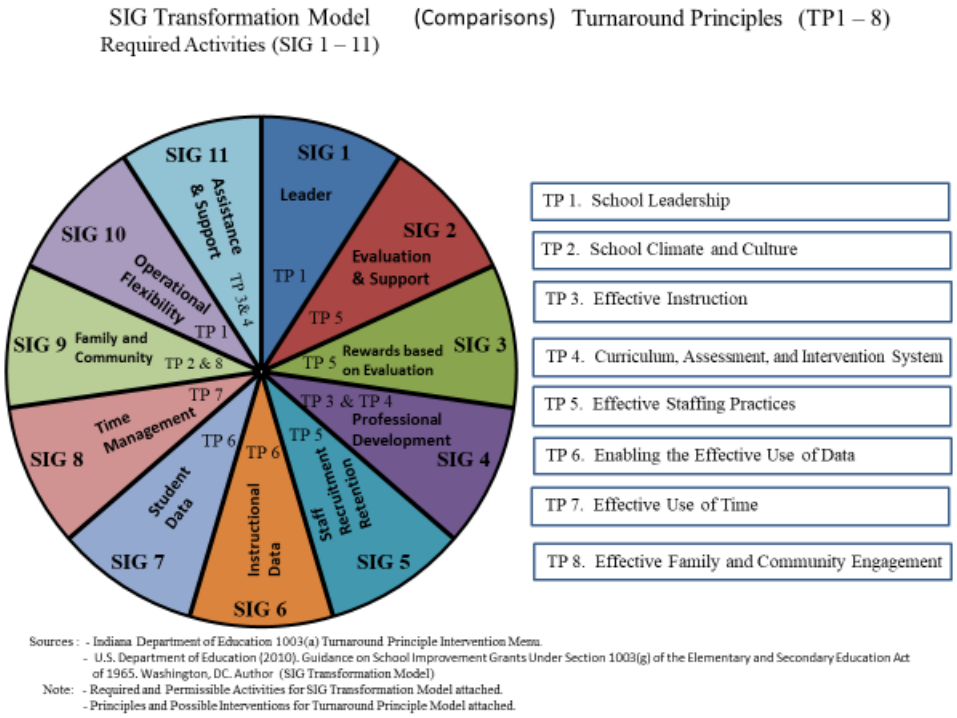


Figure 2 above shows a true comparison of both the transformation model and the eight turnaround principles. The transformation model focuses on providing the school with a framework to start implementing positive change within the school. The eight turnaround principles create an effective step-by-step guide for principals to become strong, effective leaders and guide their schools to success. The eight turnaround principles include: school leadership, school climate and culture, family and community engagement, effective use of data, effective use of time, effective staffing practices, effective instruction, and effective curriculum, assessment, and intervention systems. Many researchers believe that utilizing the eight principles is the best method for attacking the issues failing schools have and the best method for

implementing strategies that will promote success over time with structure, dedication and commitment to school and community needs (Bell & Pirtle, 2012; Forner, et al., 2012; Gorman, 2012; Copeland et al., 2013; Maxwell, Locke & Scheurich, 2013). The goal is to develop strong principals that can take over rural schools and provide structure within the school for success and sustainability in the future.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What factors do principals in rural schools perceive as the contributing reasons to their success using the transformation model?
2. What factors do principals in the identified rural schools perceive as potential challenges in continuing their success?
3. Are there significant differences/similarities in how each school principal went about attaining turnaround success and sustaining it by using the transformation model and the eight turnaround principles?

Significance of this Study

The significance of the study is to identify key factors related to school turnaround success and sustainability to assist rural school principals in Alabama. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2014), twenty eight percent of the nation's schools are in rural areas, but the percentages are much higher for states in the South. The following percentages of rural schools located in Southern states are based on the 2013-2014 totals listed on the NCES (2014) website: Alabama, forty-three percent; Georgia, thirty percent; Mississippi, forty-nine percent; South Carolina, forty percent; Tennessee, thirty-four percent; North Carolina, forty-one percent; and Florida, twelve percent, which was much lower than other states due to the number of schools throughout Florida. Families living in rural areas unfortunately tend to be

impoverished families. Alabama has one of the larger percentages of students living and going to school in rural areas, schools with larger percentages of minority students, and schools which tend to trend low in academic achievement (Hargreaves et al., 2015; Harmon, 2001). Superintendents of Alabama Executive Director Ryan Hollingsworth stated, "there is a severe shortage of teachers in rural areas and it is very evident within the secondary schools both middle and high school" (Crain, 2019, p. 1).

Hopefully, the data gathered from the principals in this study will shed light on what transformation model methods for school turnaround school leaders in rural areas can use to formulate a plan of action to generate success for the students in their schools. Strong conversations with community members, parents, teachers, school administration, and school board members about the achievement, growth, and social/emotional needs of all students should be the priority for each school (Forner, et al., 2012). It is imperative that students have individuals who provide a foundation of support for the students' academic goals and career aspirations and that this strengthens the students and the communities in which they live (Forner, et al., 2012).

Research Design

The research conducted for this study was a qualitative case study of rural school principals that completed the transformation model and continued to sustain success. Qualitative research is defined as a method of research that collects informative conversations among target groups of individuals or communities to develop a picture of what is happening in that community and why it is happening (Bhat, 2019). Researcher Bromley (1990) stated that a case study is a "systematic inquiry into an event or a set of related events which aims to describe and explain the phenomenon of interest" (p. 302). Qualitative data can come from a variety of

resources, such as documentation of events, archival records, interviews, direct observations, and physical artifacts (Yin, 1994). It is important for researchers to be able to align their research questions with different forms of qualitative research (Zucker, 2009). Qualitative research allows the researcher to collect relevant information from different groups to analyze what they felt was important and integral to the success of the school. Interviews for this research study were conducted with only the principal of each school selected to participate in the study. The goal was to get a clear picture of what central themes or strategies that the principal implemented proved to be most effective for that school's success. All of the principals' responses were recorded, transcribed, coded, and placed into themes. This process allowed the researcher to compare all of the principals' responses in the hope that several key themes related to their schools' success would surface in those interviews. School artifacts, such as historical data related to the schools, the state report card, and the school's continuous improvement plan, were also analyzed and compared to the information collected during the one-on-one interviews.

Limitations of the Study

1. Only rural school principals in the State of Alabama were included in the study.
2. Only schools that utilized the transformation turnaround model were included in the study.
3. The Schools were not classified as either elementary, middle, or high school but varied in the configuration. Some of the schools were k-12, middle, or high schools.

Assumptions

1. The assumption that the description of each school and the data provided by the principals from each school was a truthful and accurate portrayal of their perceptions of how the schools are maintaining their success.
2. Each of the principals selected for this research study agreed to participate in the one-on-one interviews.

3. The transcribed information from each principal was accurate and organized correctly into reoccurring themes that reflect the key factors of success within each school.

Definition of Terms

- Administrator role – to oversee the daily operations of schools, but specific responsibilities differ between organizations. School Administrators are the important link between students and local communities.
- Autocratic leadership (also known as authoritarian leadership) – a leadership style characterized by individual control over all decisions and little input from group members. Autocratic leaders typically make choices based on their ideas and judgments and rarely accept advice from followers.
- Case study – a study of an individual unit, person, family, or social group, usually emphasizing developmental issues within the environment or relationships with the environment, especially to compare a larger group to the individual unit.
- Criterion sample – selecting cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance.
- Communities of practice – "Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis" (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002, p. 4).
- Democratic Leadership – also known as participative leadership or shared leadership is a type of leadership style in which members of the group take a more participative role in the decision-making process.

- Faculty development – the process of providing educational and coaching to faculty members to help them improve their work performance, particularly in the areas of teaching, grant writing, and conducting research.
- High-achieving schools – schools that have three or more consecutive years of student achievement scores above the national average.
- High-poverty schools – Those schools where more than sixty-five percent of the students receive free or reduced-price lunch.
- Learning organization – Argyris and Schon (1996) defined organizational learning as the "…process of detecting and correcting problems to improve organizational effectiveness" (Finnigan & Daly, 2012, p. 44).
- New teacher induction programs – standards to provide school leaders with a framework for supporting new teachers during their first two to three years in the classroom.
- Project Alabama Consortium for Turnaround grant - this organization provides professional development for instructional leaders who are serving in low-performing rural schools.
- Restructuring – the fundamental transformation of the philosophical, organizational, and cultural underpinnings of a school.
- Rural schools – rural schools are those that serve communities of twenty-five hundred or fewer populations.
- Rural, Fringe – census-defined rural territory that is less than or equal to five miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is less than or equal to two and a half miles from an urban cluster.

- Rural, Distant – census-defined rural territory that is more than five miles but less than or equal to twenty-five miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is more than two and a half miles but less than or equal to ten miles from an urban cluster.
- Rural, Remote – census-defined rural territory that is more than twenty-five miles from an urbanized area and is more than ten miles from an urban cluster.
- School reform – the name given to the goal of changing public education. Historically, reforms have taken different forms because the motivations of reformers have differed.
- School turnaround – a dramatic and comprehensive intervention in a low-performing school that produces significant gains in achievement within two years and readies the school for the longer process of transformation into a high-performance organization.
- Sustained school improvement – when a school can maintain and continue to improve over a three-year period.
- Targeted support and improvement – the State's methodology for annually identifying any school with one or more "consistently underperforming" subgroups of students based on all indicators in the statewide system of annual meaningful differentiation, including the definition used by the State to determine consistent underperformance (Southern Regional Education Board, 2020)
- Teacher retention – a field of education research that focuses on how factors such as school characteristics and teacher demographics affect whether teachers stay in their schools, move to different schools, or leave the profession before retirement.
- Teacher recruitment – the active process to seek out new individuals to work with a school or school system.

- Teacher mentor – an encourager with which to exchange ideas. This person helps to improve others by guiding them to be more self-reflective and suggests resources and new approaches to improve the mentee's teaching.
- Transformation model – the most used turnaround model of the four options. This model allows for the most flexibility for the school to work towards academic success.
- Transformational leadership – leadership style in which the leader identifies the needed change, creates a vision to guide the change through inspiration, and executes the change with the commitment of the members of the group.
- Turnaround principles – the eight principles created to describe the school improvement areas.
- Turnaround School Leaders Program – created by the Alabama State Department of Education, University of Alabama, Auburn University, and Samford University to help principals expand their leadership capabilities with the knowledge to assist rural Alabama school districts in critical need for highly qualified SIG school administrators.
- Qualitative research – a market research method that focuses on obtaining data through open-ended and conversational communication.

Summary

Chapter 1 outlines the direction of this study by detailing the history of school reform, explaining the purpose behind school turnaround models, and highlighting the need for documentation of how rural turnaround school principals help their schools become successful and maintain that success. Chapter 1 highlights the conceptual framework of the transformation model and the eight turnaround principles. The chapter includes the description of the purpose of the study and how it relates to principals that have completed the transformation model in their

schools. This chapter also includes the research questions, research design, possible limitations to the study, the assumptions of the study, and the definition of key terms related to this work.

Chapter 2 organizes relevant literature related to this study. Chapter 2 also details a timeline for education reform and history, a description of each turnaround model, detailed description of the transformation turnaround model as it relates to the eight turnaround principles and the school turnaround building blocks for success, details of the eight turnaround principles, rural schools' history of education and school turnaround models, and rural school information both nationally and within the state of Alabama.

Chapter 3 organizes the type of methodology used for this study and includes the research design process. This section includes the purpose of the study, details related to the communities and the demographics of each school, the research questions, and how the data will be collected, organized, and analyzed.

Chapters 4 and 5 organize the data, descriptions of what was found during the research, the research questions answered, details of what was found, how that information may be helpful for other schools, and suggestions for future research.

Chapter II: Literature Review

"Children are the priority. Change is the reality. Collaboration is the strategy."
Justin Billings, Washington State Superintendent

Over the last 30 plus years, school improvement research has led to the development of school turnaround models. The term school turnaround has only been used for the past eight to ten years, but the concept has been building since the early 1980s. School turnaround is a necessity to help school systems identify major problems and develop strategic plans to help combat struggling or failing schools. School turnaround models are not just focused on the students and the teachers but also encompass the school system, the community stakeholders, parents, and the school's leadership team. The goal when using each of these models is to increase stakeholder buy-in and focus on collaborative initiatives that will help low-performing schools obtain academic success.

A thorough review of the academic literature related to school turnaround success suggests that it is necessary for all school leaders to build a strong portfolio of relevant strategies to combat decline of struggles within their schools. This literature review focuses on the following: the history of school turnaround, each model of school turnaround, the eight strategic turnaround principles, and the social network analysis theory, which relates to internal school partnerships.

An extensive survey of published scholarly studies was used to create this literature review. Resources for this study include the utilization of multiple electronic databases, such as ERIC, EBSCO, Google Scholar, ProQuest, the Indiana Department of Education, the Wallace Foundation, Opportunity Culture, and the U.S. Department of Education.

History of School Turnaround

Ronald Edmonds and his team were the first pioneers of school turnaround, focusing their efforts on creating schools that were academically effective for students (Raptis & Fleming, 2003). Edmonds (1979) stated that effective schools are created by the following six characteristics: strong administrative leadership, high expectations for students, orderly atmosphere, basic skills acquisition, the ability to change the school from a negative pathway towards a positive one, and continuous student progress monitoring. Edmonds and his team took those characteristics and partnered with the Wallace Foundation, an education philanthropists' group, to create a list that defines success in a school as the following: a clear mission statement, high expectations, instructional leadership, frequent monitoring of student progress, opportunity to learn and student time on task, a safe and orderly environment, and home-school relations. (Kutash, et al., 2010)

Once a list of characteristics was established as a guideline for all successful schools, it served as a pathway for other programs to be developed to help struggling systems. The following is a list of those programs:

- School Choice: According to the Wallace Foundation, school choice programs were developed in the 1990s to allow parents choices of what schools their children could attend **(**Kutash et al., 2010). School choice has a variety of options available to students such as online/virtual schools, career technical education schools, homeschooling, and school vouchers,
- Charter School Movement: Charter schools have a lot of freedom in how the school is organized, the choice of curriculum, the staffing of the school, and the

scheduling. They are viewed as prime candidates to take over and turn around failing schools **(**Kutash et al., 2010).

- Small Schools: The small school movement was predicated upon the belief that a personalized learning environment in small schools can make a significant difference in the academic achievement of high-needs students **(**Kutash et al., 2010).
- NCLB and Comprehensive School reform: This reform bill from the federal government focused on standardized tests and data analysis to improve student learning.

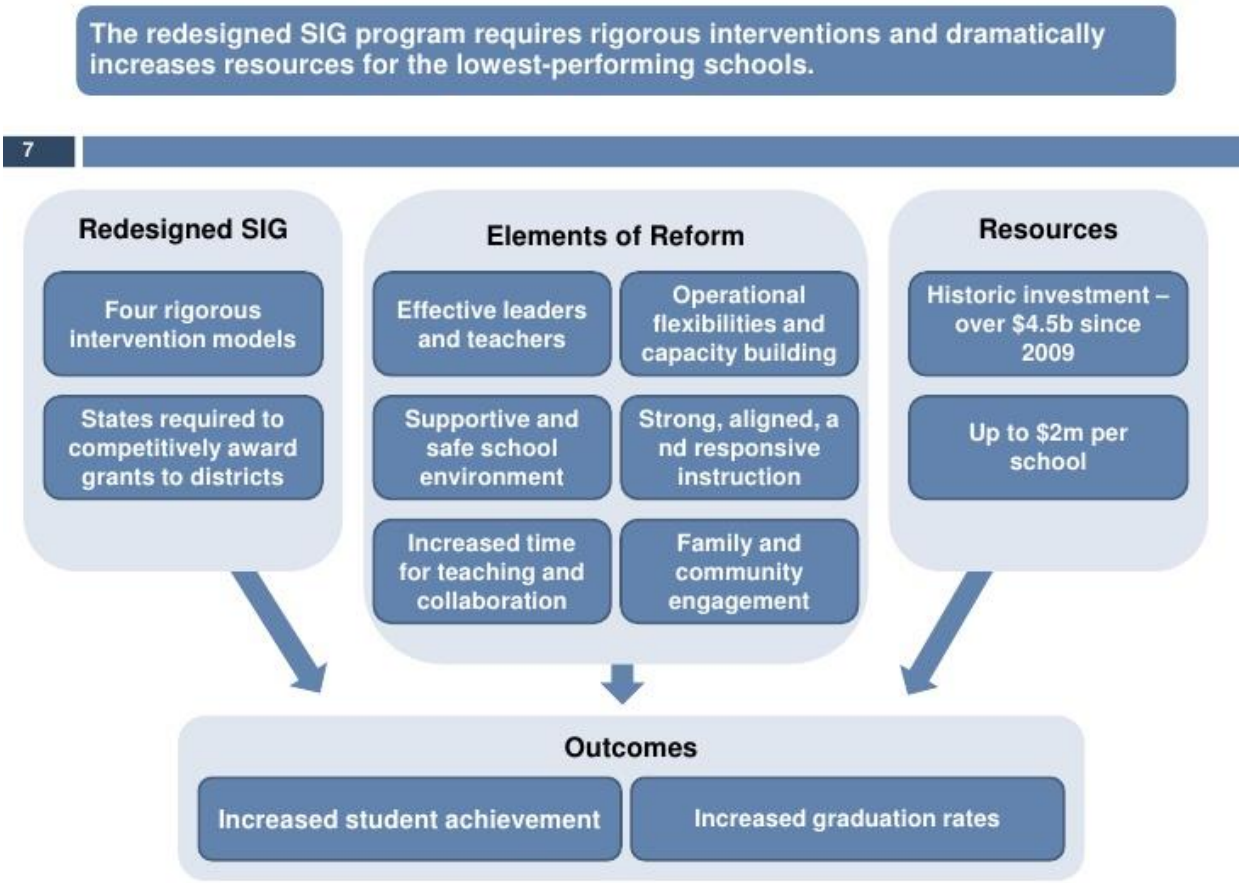
Each of the programs listed above have shaped the way for the four turnaround models being used today.

Four School Turnaround Models

The federal government utilizes each of the four models of school turnaround to determine if a school system will receive funding under the school improvement grant or the race to the top grants. The race to the top grant was introduced by the Obama Administration in 2012. This was a competitive grant process to help schools accomplish four key areas of reform: create rigorous standards and assessments, incorporate better sources to collect and disperse data to teachers and parents, provide more support and professional development to school faculty, and provide resources for rigorous intervention in schools (Centre for Public Impact Foundation, 2016). The school improvement grant was also available to struggling schools and incorporated the four school turnaround models in 2009. The assumption behind the design of the school improvement grant-funded school-reform models is that schools that are struggling commonly serve economically challenged communities and often have weak leadership and poor

instructional practices due to a lack of quality professional development for teachers (Dee, 2012; LeFloch et al., 2014). The implicit motivation behind SIG-funded interventions is that effective reforms of such schools must be extensive and multi-faceted rather than marginal or targeted (Dee, 2012). The models include school turnaround, transformation schools, restarts, and closures. Each one of the models can be used to effect change and generate school improvement in the school district. Schools receiving the school improvement grants can use any of the four models, but most of the schools chose the transformation model with seventy-one percent implementing that model, twenty-one percent implementing the turnaround model, five percent implementing the restart model, and three percent choosing school closure (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Once the federal government and the State Department of Education get involved with a school system, their teams must decide which model best fits the school system's situation. The school improvement grant (SIG) was used to support low-performing schools by providing school leaders resources to improve intervention in the school. The figure below shows the strategies used to help struggling schools develop a plan to increase student achievement (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Figure 3. U.S. Department of Education (2010). https://www2.ed.gov/programs/sif/sigoverviewppt.pdf.

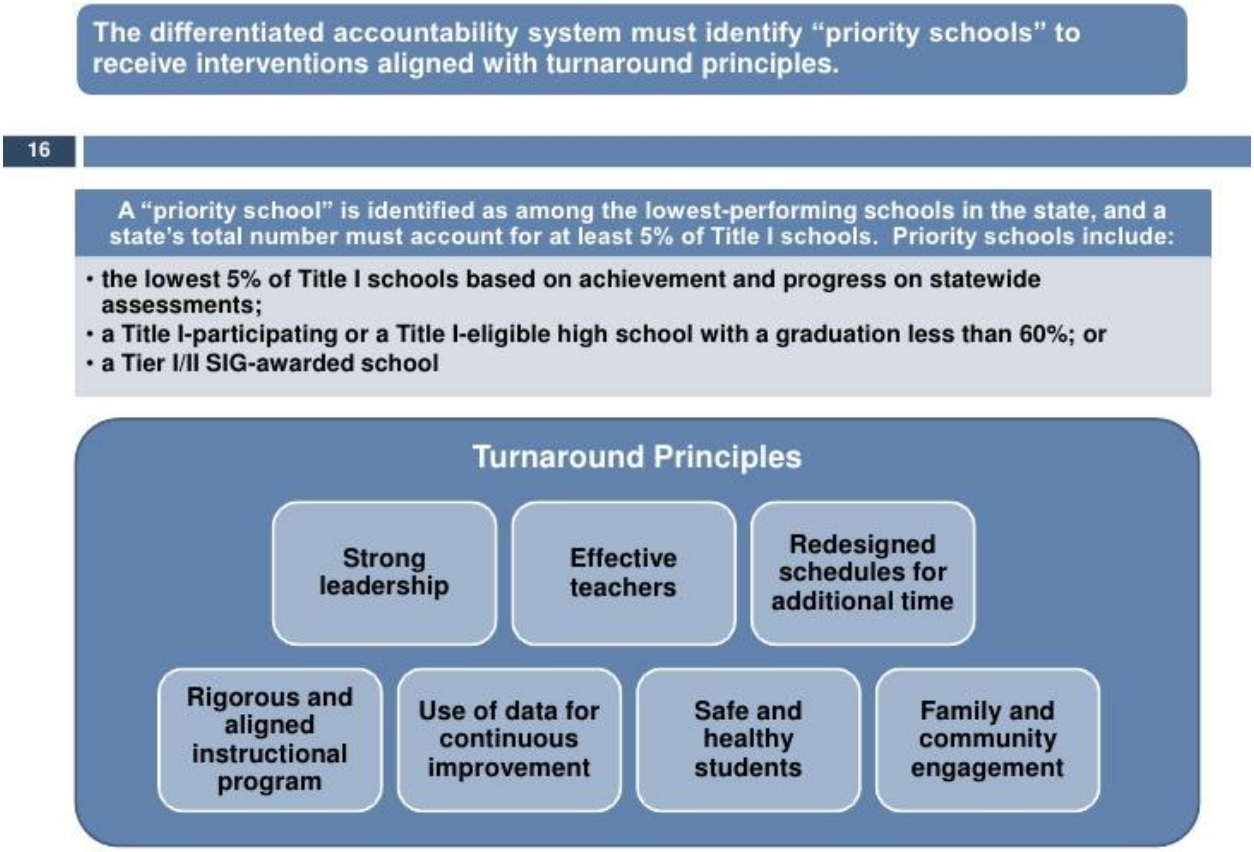


Schools cannot be successful unless they are fully supported at both the federal and state level each year, and this is very true of schools that have completed one of the school turnaround models and want to maintain that success in the future. Kristine Ferris (2012) stated that one of the most challenging aspects of successful school turnaround is to locate and hire great teachers and provide them with continuous support. Schools that are struggling need skilled, passionate teachers and administrators to achieve success (Ferris, 2012). The goal is to find strong individuals who can work together for the academic success of their students. According to Ferris (2012), the six key components to successful school turnaround are the following: strong school leaders, empowered teachers, team approach to the problem, additional

training/professional development, prestige of the position, and compensation (Ferris, 2012). Each of these components require the faculty and staff to be completely committed to continuing a positive pathway to success for the school and the students.

Implementing any program and expecting immediate results is not reasonable. Progress is slow and hard, and it takes time to generate constructive feedback that best fits the needs of each individual school and adjust accordingly. According to Ellen Holmes and Staci Maiers (2012), sustainable change in schools requires reform to be implemented over three to four years and managed strategically to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of a given comprehensive school improvement plan. One of the factors that can contribute to a school's success is to create an environment with teacher buy-in. If the faculty and staff are behind the changes being made at the school, then the school will show signs of improvement. Holmes and Maiers (2012) reported that schools showing early signs of success from the first year of implementation of a comprehensive school reform plan share several factors in common: collaboration, data, increased skills, increased expectations, changes in beliefs and dispositions, development of meaningful partnership and wraparound services, and increased parent engagement. Each of the signs listed above represent what should be seen when a school is finally reaching its achievement goals. The school improvement grant (SIG) also included turnaround principles for success. This grouping of principles continuously evolved as more information was gathered on what was needed for schools to successfully transform them from a failing school to a successful school. The following chart represents the initial turnaround principles that would help school leaders towards success (U.S Department of Education, 2010).

Figure 4. U.S. Department of Education (2010).
https://www2.ed.gov/programs/sif/sigoverviewppt.pdf



The first of the turnaround models was created to give a school a complete overhaul and replace most of the staff (Lefloch et al., 2014). To receive the funds for the school improvement grant, schools must be identified as Tier I or Tier II including the following: schools that have not made adequate yearly progress for at least two consecutive years, schools in the state's lowest quartile of performance based on proficiency rates, and schools identified by the SEA as a persistently the lowest-achieving schools (Redding et al., 2015). A school may also be identified as eligible if the high school has a graduation rate of less than sixty percent over several years (Redding et al., 2015). Once the schools are identified, the principal will be removed, and no more than fifty percent of the faculty and staff can be hired back within the first year of school

improvement (Redding et al., 2015). School improvement is a very time-consuming process and normally takes three to five years to complete. Multiple staff interviews are completed, parent and community surveys are completed, and all data must be analyzed, deciphered, and used to create the necessary changes to the individual school and the school system.

The second model is related to restarting a school. This process can be very sensitive to a school system and community, especially if the school has been part of that community for several generations. The purpose behind a restart is to reorganize the school and allow a qualified charter management organization (CMO) or education management organization (EMO) to partner with the school system to start or convert an existing school into a charter school (Redding et al., 2015). All of these schools will have their own management systems to follow. There is not enough data to prove or disprove if charter schools are improving student performance. According to the Center for Research on Education Outcomes (Woodworth et al., 2015), CMO have similar performance levels as the traditional public schools with whom they co-exist. The only guarantee for success is for the school administration to work closely with community leaders to make sure funding, policy, and staff hiring/termination practices are consistent, and the school's mission and vision are obtained. Any restart relies heavily on community leaders and the organizations with which the community has partnered.

The third model focuses on school closure. The option to close a low-performing school is considered the most drastic of the four interventions and is often employed for schools considered beyond repair or reform (Devarics & O'Brien, 2011). This model can be especially problematic for low-performing schools in rural districts since they may not have an alternative school for students to attend (Dervarics & O'Brien, 2011). Before utilizing this model, the research conducted by district officials in several large cities and collated by Lucy Steiner (2009)

offered four pieces of advice to those considering school closure. The advice related to school closure focused on the data of the school and if the school was failing, public input, providing support to families and teachers that will must transition schools (Steiner, 2009). The use of the school closure model should be a last resort due to the effects it has on the other schools in the district because those schools must absorb those students.

Transformation Turnaround Model: The Most Comprehensive Model for School Systems

The Visual comparison chart listed below shows how the transformation turnaround model and eight turnaround principles can be meshed to support rural school principals with their goals of success and sustaining that success.

Figure 5. – Comparison model: SIG. Transformation Model and The Turnaround Principles

Turnaround Intervention Menu- Indiana Department of Education 1003(a), 2018.

School Improvement Grant- Transformation Model (2015).

SIG Transformation Model Required Activities (SIG 1 – 11)	MODEL COMPARISONS AREA TOPIC	Turnaround Principles (TP1 – 8)
SIG 1: "Replace Principal who led school prior to commencement of the transformation model."	LEADERSHIP	TP 1: "School Leadership - Ensure principal has the ability to lead the turnaround effort…" (1) Review performance of current principal (2) Replace or convince SEA (State Educational Agency) principal has ability to lead turnaround effort and (3) provide principal operational flexibility in areas of scheduling staff, curriculum and budget.
SIG 2: "Implement rigorous, transparent and equitable evaluation and support systems for teachers and principals, designed and developed with teacher/principal involvement" SIG 3: "Use evaluation and support system to identify and reward school leaders, teachers and other staff who, using model have increased student achievement and high school graduation rates. Remove those personnel who, after ample opportunity to improve have not done so."	EVALUATION/SUPPORT	TP 5: "Effective Staffing Practices -Ensure that teachers are effective and able to improve instruction by: (1) reviewing the quality of all staff and retaining only those who are determined to be effective and have the ability to be successful in the turnaround effort; (2) preventing ineffective teachers from transferring to these schools; and (3) providing job-embedded, ongoing professional development informed by the teacher evaluation and support systems and tied to teacher and student needs. Possible Interventions include - Replace ineffective teachers and staff ; and - Implement a comprehensive induction program for new teachers."
SIG 4: "Provide staff ongoing, high-quality, job embedded professional development (e.g regarding subject-specific pedagogy, instruction that reflects a deeper understanding of the community served by the school or differentiated instruction)" … and designed with school staff to implement successfully school reform strategies.	PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	TP 3: "Effective Instruction – Provide high quality, job embedded professional development. Strengthening the school's instructional program based on student needs and ensuring that the instructional program is research-based, rigorous, and aligned with State academic content standards." TP 4: "Curriculum, Assessment, and Intervention System - Ensuring teachers have the foundational documents and instructional materials needed to teach to the rigorous college and career ready standards that have been adopted."

1 of 3

SIG Transformation Model Required Activities (SIG 1 – 11)	MODEL COMPARISONS AREA TOPIC	Turnaround Principles (TP1 – 8)
SIG 5: "Implement such strategies as financial incentives, increased opportunities for promotion and career growth, and more flexible work conditions that are designed to recruit, place, and retain staff with the skills necessary to meet the needs of students in the school, taking into consideration the results from the teacher and principal evaluation and support system."	HUMAN RESOURCES	TP 5: "Effective Staffing Practices Possible Interventions. - Revise the schedule to create time for professional learning communities ; - Implement a comprehensive induction program for new teachers ; - Provide additional resources in classrooms via teacher grants or rewards; - Provide staff with leadership opportunities ; - Prove staff with professional development reading and literature ."
SIG 6: "Use data to identify and implement an instructional program that is research-based and vertically aligned from one grade to the next as well as aligned with State academic standards." SIG 7: "Promote the continuous use of student data (such as from formative, interim, and summative assessments) to inform and differentiate instruction in order to meet the academic needs of individual students."	DATA MINING	TP 6: "Enabling the Effective Use of Data – Use data to inform instruction and for continuous improvement, including by providing time for collaboration on the use of data Use data to implement an aligned instructional program; promote the use of data to inform and differentiated instruction."
SIG 8: "Establish schedules and strategies that provide increased learning time, meaning using a longer school day, week, or year schedule to significantly increase the total number of school hours to include additional time for "… core subjects, other subjects and teacher collaboration.	TIME MANAGEMENT	TP 7: "Effective Use of Time – Redesigning the school day, week, or year to include additional time for student learning and teacher collaboration."

SIG Transformation Model Required Activities (SIG 1 – 11)	MODEL COMPARISONS AREA TOPIC	Turnaround Principles (TP1 – 8)
SIG 9: "Provide ongoing mechanisms for family and community engagement."	ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS	TP 2: "School Climate and Culture - Establish a school environment that improves school safety and discipline and addressing other non-academic factors that impact student achievement, such as students' social, emotional, and health needs. Provide social-emotional and community-oriented services/supports." TP 8: "Effective Family and Community Engagement - Provide an ongoing mechanism for family involvement in school decision making and understanding student progress."
SIG 10: "Give the school sufficient operational flexibility (such as staffing, calendars/time, and budgeting) to implement fully each element of the transformation model to substantially improve student achievement outcomes and increase high school graduation rates."	OPERATIONS	TP 1: "School Leadership – sub point (3) provide principal operational flexibility in areas of scheduling staff, curriculum and budget."
SIG 11: "Ensure that the school receives ongoing, intensive technical assistance and related support from the LEA, the SEA, or a designated external lead partner organization (such as a school turnaround organization or EMO)."	ASSISTANCE/SUPPORT	TP 3: "Effective Instruction Possible Interventions include - Instructional Coaches; - Adjust schedule to include extra minutes per week outside of the school day for required teacher collaborative planning time and professional development; - Implement a system of peer support and assistance to foster the needs of educators" TP 4: "Curriculum, Assessment, and Intervention System Possible Interventions. -Interventionist; - instructional coach lesson modeling."

Sources : - Indiana Department of Education 1003(a) Turnaround Principle Intervention Menu.
- U.S. Department of Education (2010). Guidance on School Improvement Grants Under Section 1003(g) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. Washington, DC. Author (SIG Transformation Model)

Note: - Required and Permissible Activities for SIG Transformation Model attached.
- Principles and Possible Interventions for Turnaround Principle Model attached.

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The transformation model is by far the most popular among school improvement grantees because it provides more flexibility than the other three options (O'Brien & Dervarics, 2013). The federal government set the guidelines for the transformation model, which include several

required steps and additional options to help support schools in becoming successful. Unfortunately, there is limited research on the success rate of implementing the transformation model, so more research is required. No other universal school improvement option is available (Barley & Wegner, 2010).

Under the transformation model, O'Brien and Dervarics (2013) state that schools are required to do the following: replace the principal (unless the principal has been in place less than two years), reward staff who increase student achievement and remove those who do not, implement comprehensive instructional reform, increase learning time, and provide ongoing high-quality job-embedded professional development. Rural schools use the transformation model because it requires the least number of individuals to be replaced. In a rural setting, having to replace even the principal can be a struggle due to a lack of applicants for the position (Bell & Pirtle, 2012). According to both Bell and Pirtle (2012), the other models cannot be used in a rural school system due to the following reasons:

- Restart model – Rural areas are so remote other organizations will not or are not able to move to those rural areas.
- School Closure – This is not an option because students cannot transfer schools because the distance is to great between schools.
- Turnaround – Recruiting and retaining staff is already a struggle in rural schools, so removing several staff members would be almost impossible to replace, and this model requires replacing fifty percent of the staff.

School transformation can be created in several ways, such as the basic response to instruction model (RTI), the school transformation leadership actions and competencies, or the restart guidelines. (Hardee, 2015; Lefloch et al., 2014) The transformation model can be the most

effective in a school because each school culture and climate is different, and this model would allow the principal to match the model's guidelines to the school. Ellis (2005, p.200) concluded that "today's flagship is often tomorrow's abandoned shipwreck" in education. The goal is not to allow the transformation turnaround model to become a shipwreck but to allow the school's principal and faculty time to use the model effectively.

The opportunity of cultural principles program is a more deliberate approach to effectively helping a school become more academically sound. This program focuses on teachers and their success because if the teachers are happy and successful, then their students should also be happy. This program has components that center on the teaching staff and their needs. The opportunity culture website states that school leaders and their teachers decide which guidelines of the opportunity of cultural principles program can be used along with the transformation model to help guide students to success. The teachers have several different options to choose from, such as multi-classroom leadership, specialization of instruction, class-size change, and time swap (Opportunity Culture, 2012-2019). The transformation model within rural schools allows the principal flexibility to be more creative with schedules and course structures, which provides more planning time for each teacher and more collaboration time for staff members (Bell & Pirtle, 2012). This approach to using a school transformation model is very different than most models because the teachers have much input in this process.

Most schools around the nation utilize the Response to Instruction (RTI) program. This program allows schools to target students who struggle academically and students with behavior issues. According to the RTI action network (2020), the RTI program can be used to help students that are not academically successful and those that have behavior issues that are impacting their learning and disrupting the learning of others in their classes. The RTI action

network (2020) states that all schools should have the following components in place for student success: high-quality scientifically based classroom instruction, on-going student assessment, tiered instruction, and parental involvement. Each of these components are necessary for the success of at-risk students and can positively affect the academics and behavior of at-risk students if used correctly. Unlike school turnaround models, the RTI program helps fix smaller pockets of issues at a school and should be the first step toward helping the entire school become successful.

Principals using the transformation model must encourage the support of stakeholders to help with the school's goals (Kutash et al., 2010). Principals and their teams must give a clear vision to all stakeholders and the community, including the ultimate vision and their plans for reaching that vision (Kustash et.al., 2010). Community and school faculty buy-in is the hardest thing to do for the principals because they are faced with many individuals that only have negatives to say about the process. Constantly highlighting school successes will help change negative opinions. Most school communities need to have a clear understanding of what changes create positive change and must learn not to focus on the negatives related to change (Kustash et.al., 2010). Within Alabama's state plan for education, community engagement is one of the highest priorities (US Department of Education, 2010). According to the details in Alabama State Department of Education Plan 2020 for school turnaround, communities will have a say so in the school improvement plans, and surveys will be conducted to monitor the school's progress (US Department of Education, 2010). Everyone in the community will have access to this data to provide feedback.

There are limitations to each of the school turnaround models. Darrel Burnette (2010) stated in one of his articles that the Education Secretary Arne Duncan expressed the need for

quick reform in low-performing schools, which included adding charter schools and removing underperforming principals and teachers. The transformational model fit most school systems within the state of Alabama due to a lack of potential candidates for teaching and administrative positions. This model put the least amount of stress on school systems to find candidates to fill these positions. This model created the most buy-in from the community, faculty, and staff.

Eight School Turnaround Principles

Both the Indiana State Department of Education and the Alabama State Department of Education have identified that the eight school turnaround principles can help guide schools to be successful. Alabama State Department of Education's 2020 plan, which focused on individual children's developmental skills to prepare them for graduation but also prepared them for college and/or career. The Alabama State Department of Education differentiated support plan (2011, p.5) states the following two goals as what defines a prepared graduate:

1. One who possesses the knowledge and skills needed to enroll and succeed in credit-bearing, first-year courses at a two- or four-year college, trade school, or technical school without the need for remediation.

2. One who possesses the ability to apply core academic skills to real-world situations through collaboration with peers in problem solving, precision, and punctuality in delivery of a product, and has a desire to be a life-long learner.

With these goals in mind, the Alabama Department of Education team approved the use of the eight school turnaround principles. The eight school turnaround principles listed in the differentiated support guide for continuous improvement are the focus for Alabama priority and that list include: school leadership, school climate and culture, effective instruction, effective

curriculum, assessment and intervention systems, effective staffing practices, effective use of data, time management, and family and community engagement (Alabama Department of Education 2011, p.6; Rosenburg et al., 2014; Duke, 2006; Wallin & Newton, 2013; Maxwell et al., 2010; Indiana Department of Education, 2018; Lefloch et al., 2016). The eight turnaround principles are a set of guided steps that school leaders can utilize to help guide them toward success and to safeguard them from roadblocks that might stop that success. The principles somewhat vary from state to state.

Principle 1: School Leadership

Leaders influence student learning by helping to promote vision and goals and by ensuring that resources and processes are in place to enable teachers to teach well (Leithwood & Rielh, 2003). The school leadership principle is broken into several parts which include: a school improvement plan, a school mission and vision statements, climate surveys, focus groups, data protocols, goal setting, observation forms, an evaluation system, a master schedule, a behavior system, curriculum guides, a lesson plan format, staffing protocols, a leadership professional development plan with opportunities for staff, and faculty, parent, and student handbooks (Mississippi Department of Education, 2015; Indiana Department of Education, 2016). Rural schools face larger challenges when developing or attracting strong school leaders. Some issues facing rural schools include a lack of qualified applicants, retaining highly qualified teachers and school principals, poor resources, older buildings, limited technology, and a community culture that places little to no value on the importance of education (Jimmerson, 2005; Jordan & Jordan, 2004).

Alabama's Plan 2020 focuses on all levels of education in the state but has clear guidelines set for priority schools. The school leadership in the priority schools hired and

supervised all teacher placements, budgets, and school schedules (pg.78). This was part of building school leadership capacity within these struggling schools by allowing the principal to work with the Alabama State Department of Education and utilize the guidelines set by the state's plan.

Leithwood and Riehl (2003) argue that the following three categories will help principals turn their schools into successful schools: setting the direction of the school, developing the staff of the school, and developing the organization of the school. Each of these areas build strength in the community, positively affect staff morale, and set clear and precise goals for the school. School principals must create a plan for improvement, follow the plan, and only make changes when necessary. A school principal should not be afraid to change what is not working. Because teachers and their professional performance are directly impacted by the leadership in the school, the establishment of high-quality sustainable educational leadership is essential to the continual growth of schools (Cook, 2014). Any large change needed in the school improvement plan should be considered for one of the four models of turnaround (Lefloch et al., 2014). All school-wide plans should be created and implemented in the best interest of the students (Wallin & Newton, 2013).

Principle 2: School Culture and Climate

The second turnaround principle combines school culture and school climate. Dr. Kent Peterson and Dr. Terrence Deal (2002) defined school culture as embedded beliefs, characters, and stories that create the internal personality of a school. The climate of a school is determined by the students, teachers and the community's perceptions related to the school. Culture and climate are inseparable when discussing the success or lack of success within a school. Dr. Peterson and Dr. Deal (2002) assert that schools can use professional language and common

goals to increase success or use negative language and create a poisonous environment that can greatly diminish the success of a school.

Schools face several underlying problems that restrict the push toward success. These problems range from funding issues within the school and school districts, negativity posted on social media related to the school and staff, poor attendance of faculty and students, a lack of technology for faculty and students, deteriorating facilities, high staff turnover rates, limited recruitment of highly qualified staff, and limited parent, community, and stakeholder support (Mazzeo & Berman, 2003; Brown & Green, 2014; Balitewicz, T., 2015). These problems are even more prevalent in rural school systems, especially concerning the lack of qualified teachers and administrators (Wood et al., 2013).

A positive school climate and culture is imperative to a school's success. According to Killion (2012), the school principal creates a positive school culture full of clear expectations and goals, motivates others to help lead the school to success by providing leadership opportunities, and focuses on generating an environment full of creative ways to learn for the faculty and students. School principals are not only key in making sure a school's faculty and staff are focused on improving student achievement, but they also ensure that the school's educational team has high morale by providing an environment that supports, develops, and promotes success for the faculty (Wood et al., 2013). Successful transformational school principals prioritize school goals and focus on the early successes to gain a sense of positivity that builds momentum in the school (Barrett, 2012).

Negativity from the school principal, staff, parents, students, or the community can cause a negative impact to the school's culture and climate. This is especially apparent if school principals are not frequently communicating with faculty and staff, not promoting or reinforcing

school goals, frequently absent from their schools, not promoting positive school events on social media, not utilizing data to help student achievement, or providing constructive feedback to faculty members (Finch & Mirecki, 2013; Meyers & Murphy, 2007; Duke, 2006). To reverse negative school culture and climate within struggling schools, a common practice is to remove the school's principal and or part of the faculty (Meyers & Murphy, 2007; The Wallace Foundation, 2011.

Working to get the right team in place in a school, especially when it is a rural school, can have significant impacts on the success of the school's culture and climate. Rural school districts struggle to find qualified faculty to fill the hiring needs of their schools, making it even more difficult to find personnel who are the perfect fit for the school (Jordan & Jordan, 2004; Jimmerson, 2005). Rural schools, especially high schools, have a multitude of issues recruiting qualified administrators and faculty because teachers are required to teach several different classes and administrators must take on additional duties on top of managing the school (teaching, coaching, etc..). In addition, there is also a limited amount of the following: technological resources, classroom resources, community resources, and professional development for both administrators and teachers (Mazzeo & Berman, 2003; Brown & Green, 2014; Rosenburg, 2011). Hiring local community members is an option that can help build a positive culture and climate and keep the population thriving. Encouraging individuals that live in the area to stay and pursue a career locally is an approach many rural school system use. "Growing your own" leadership teams and teaching staff is a win for the school system and for the community (Bell & Pirtle, 2012). Partnerships with local universities and small neighboring districts can help rural systems create a built-in recruitment system for finding successful school leaders and faculty members (Forner, et al., 2012; Eargle, 2013).

Principle 3: Effective Instruction

Effective instruction encompasses many strategies to ensure impactful and meaningful learning that can foster academic success for all students (Forner, et al., 2012; Hargraves & Fink, 2004; Mathew, 2012). The Indiana Department of Education (2018, pg. 12-14) suggests the following for fostering effective instruction: conduct administrative walkthroughs, perform informal and formal teacher observations, utilize data, evaluate lesson plans, identify and post-lesson objectives, provide student and school climate surveys, interview students related to their perceived educational experience, document teacher certification, monitor and document content/grade level meetings, observe and evaluate formative and summative data assessments, monitor discipline reports, create school focus groups, and provide parent and student handbooks.

Effective instruction looks different in each school because school leadership works to find what programs are the best fit for the students' needs. Schools throughout the country have their own missions, visions, or goals, but all schools must have effective instruction to obtain their visions. The school's principal must focus on hiring highly qualified teachers that share the same educational beliefs the school system wants to achieve. According to the Public Impact (2008) that created a teacher's guide for school turnaround, competency is a pattern of thinking, feeling, acting, or speaking that causes a person to be successful in a specific job or role. The teachers selected for a turnaround school must be competent in their teaching abilities because they are the front line of academic success in a turnaround school. It is important to stress the level of talent a school's teachers and administrators must have to successfully run a turnaround school. States should work hard to make the turnaround schools the most desirable to work at because they allow successful teachers more opportunities for advancement in their careers

(Rhim et al., 2014). Teachers that take on the task of working at low-performing schools should have access to extensive professional development opportunities. Rural transformation schools have the following positive traits: less job stress, smaller class sizes, fewer meetings, increased parent involvement, and less discipline issues (Beesley et al., 2010). Schools can also use community and university partnerships to create opportunities for potential teachers. Cultivating strong, dedicated teachers in a community is the best way to help students. Karin Chenoweth (2015) states that only by combining knowledge and expertise can educators hope to ensure that all students learn what is expected. Effective instruction starts with engaging lessons and collaborative support from the administration. The next step as stated by Sharon Barrett (2012) is that school principals should focus on and be fearless data hounds. Schools can only become more academically successful if open, transparent conversations are being made about data results with the teachers. Data driven decision making is very important because it identifies the academic strengths and weaknesses of the students giving school leadership the ability to prioritize learning goals. Progress monitoring helps leaders know what strategies they have implementing are yielding results. Plus, regular meetings with the turnaround team allows school leadership to problem-solve and continue their work towards school success. School teachers and leaders must be innovative if the school's progress becomes stagnant. The transformation model is a way for educators to develop strategies that work for their schools and communities in their unique contexts. Finally, the principal should consistently drive the school's leadership team towards more and more success. The idea is not just to meet the goals set forth by the team but to try and exceed those goals. The key is using the right data to drive change (Barrett, 2012). All of this must be a team effort from every stakeholder.

The need for all school principals to build relationships within their communities is imperative to the school's success. School principals are called to develop meaningful relationships with diverse stakeholder groups representing varied interests, positions, cultures, needs, values, and beliefs about education (Abaya & Normore, 2010; Henry & Woody, 2013). School leaders can help promote effective instruction by building strong relationships with their faculty and staff. They should engage stakeholders in the decision-making process to provide an opportunity to develop shared expectations for school-wide success (Lastater, 2016). The goal should be to build a level of trust between school administration and all faculty and staff. The key considerations in the development of trusting relationships include respect, competence, personal regard for others, integrity, vulnerability, honesty, openness, and reliability (Bryk & Schenider, 2002; Tschannen-Moran, 2004). Moolenaar (2010) stated that the closer the principal is connected to his or her teachers, the more willing the teachers are to invest in change and the creation of new knowledge and practices. Teachers cannot create a collaborative environment on their own. Assistance from the administrative team with schedules, professional development days, or common planning times help teachers have flexible time to work with their colleagues. Policies and incentives must encourage trust among teachers and among teacher teams, and existing policies should not get in the way of collaboration and the coordination of teams (Vincente, 2017). This shows that ongoing transparent dialog with teachers and community stakeholders helps build trust and understanding of the goals and vision the school leaders have put in place for the school.

School relationships should be multiple layers and should include not only the administrative team and the teachers but also the students. Bower's (2006) study described sustaining school turnaround by having a collaborative effort between the principal and teachers.

The study found that relationships are the first step in attempting to turnaround a school and sustain those efforts. Relationships transform into shared leadership which leads to collective leadership actions (Bower, 2006). Relationships built between the administrative team and the teachers leads to better relationships being built with the students. Students deserve to feel valued, and the most effective teachers understand how to provide every student with a sense of worthiness (Breaux & Whitaker, 2006). Relational trust is the glue that binds people together and motivates them (Salina et al., 2017), so it is imperative that teachers find a way to do this with their students for academic success to occur. School principals and faculty must spend most of their days listening to one another to develop a cohesive work environment that will build higher morale at the school with all stakeholders (Salina et al., 2017).

Principle 4: Curriculum, Assessment, and Intervention Systems

As a nation, we are starting to focus on what is needed to make our schools successful and help the development of our children throughout their educational careers. School turnaround models allow school systems to have a foundation of guidelines to follow to help make sure all their district schools are successful. School turnaround models were placed under the continuous school improvement plan for each school in the state. The original team put in place by former Alabama State Superintendent Dr. Bice divided the state into sections so that each team leader had anywhere from ten to fifteen counties for which they were responsible. Each of these teams worked closely with other departments in the state to help develop plans that would help struggling schools become more successful. These departments included Alabama Math Science Technology Initiative (AMSTI), Student Assessment, and Special Education divisions to name a few. The goal of each team was to utilize the eight school turnaround principles to develop action plans that each school could follow and be successful with. Also,

the team leaders worked very closely with each of the superintendents in their school systems to keep them abreast of what was going on within each school.

The Alabama Department of Education's plan 2020 (Alabama Plan 2020, 2015) utilizes the turnaround principles for curriculum, assessment, and interventions within priority schools. The focus was to "align curriculum, resources, and assessment with college- and career-ready standards, implement research-based instructional strategies, use formative assessments to guide instruction, and provide appropriate interventions to meet the needs of all students" (Alabama Plan 2020, 2015, p.78). Each school listed as a priority school in Alabama receives differentiated support for curriculum and assessment needs from the state department related to their specific continuous improvement plan. This approach allows the state department to focus on only the continuous improvement plan for each school and their most immediate needs. Those needs will lead the school towards one of the school turnaround models. Research completed by Steiner and Hassel (2011) shows there are two major factors that affect turnaround success: the characteristics and actions of the turnaround principal and the support for dramatic change that the principal and staff receive from the district, state, and/or other governing authority. Using those two factors will help guide school leadership toward one of the school turnaround models.

Curriculum, resources, and assessments should be designed to flow together and enrich a child's experience through the educational process. Between the years 2005 and 2009 the Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement organization developed a way to link curriculum, resources, and assessments together to help school systems analyze student achievement results and identify high and low performance areas (Rowan, Correnti, Miller, & Camburn,2009). Each school system must develop a comprehensive implementation plan that includes information about how leadership roles are determined, what school personnel

responsibilities are, what the funding resources are, timelines, and monitoring strategies to help ensure successful results as each of these areas are aligned (Rowen, et al., 2009). Vertical and horizontal alignment work is strengthened when teachers collaborate within their grade levels and across grades (Rowen, et al., 2009). Instructional staff benefit from ongoing professional development that builds their capacity to do alignment work, but lack of adequate professional development becomes an obstacle for teachers working towards improving student learning (McGehee & Griffith, 2001; Phelps, 2005). Focusing on the faculty and building strong school leadership teams with direct responsibilities for focusing on identifying the instructional needs of individual students and the professional development needs of teachers should be common practice among school districts (Chenoweth & Theokas, 2012).

Principle 5: Effective Staffing Practices

School principals are the driving force of academic success within their schools. The Alabama Plan 2020 for effective staffing practices include the following: "recruit and hire effective leaders and staff; evaluate the strengths and areas of need of current staff; provide effective professional development aligned with the school improvement process; establish a comprehensive system to support teachers with content, pedagogy, and implementation of college and career-ready standards (CCRS); establish a comprehensive system to support teachers struggling with meeting the instructional needs of students with disabilities, low achievement, and English language students (ELS); realign and retain staff as needed" (Alabama Plan 2020, 2015,p.78). It is imperative that school systems hire and retain the best individuals for their schools. The largest problem associated with the educational system is keeping teachers. Daniel Heller (2004) stated that 29% of new teachers leave the profession within the first three years of their career. This is attributed to the following at a minimum: lack of professional

development, challenging classes or large class sizes, no mentoring support, difficult relationships with parents, working with veteran staff members, isolation, large workload, and the climate/culture of the schools (Heller, 2004). Teaching can be a profession where an individual can feel isolated from their peers and unable to collaborate or observe other teachers to help better their teaching ability (Benner & Partelow, 2017). Heller (2004) also states that the lack of exposure to a school or school system early in the educational process on the collegiate level for aspiring teachers is a problem because the students do not get enough exposure to the profession until the end of their degree program. Young teachers are being set up for failure before they start their careers. Benner and Partelow (2017) assert that new teachers should be able to utilize structured planning time for coaching and mentoring, and veteran teachers should be encouraged to pursue leadership roles.

"Once recruited, qualified teachers must be improved through on-target, on-time, and on-task staff development programs, and these teachers must be retained for the benefit of the students the school district serves" (Bland et al., 2014, p.1). Principals and veteran teachers play a big part in helping young teachers build the confidence they need to become master teachers. New teachers deserve to be given the professional development time needed to become familiar with the school system, job responsibilities, and the culture of the school (Bland et al., 2014).

The school districts also have a responsibility in helping schools recruit strong teachers. The relationship between the human resource director and school leadership teams must be strong so that the school leadership team trusts the district will work hard to hire the best teacher recruits for the school (Hitt & Meyers, 2017). It is the responsibility of the school district to develop ways of enticing teachers to work in their districts. Gheith and Aljaberi (2018) stated that teachers must have a wide variety of teaching skills to help assist the diversified needs of all

their students, and well-developed current professional development is the best way to set teachers up for success in the classroom. Marketing and developing a strong brand and high-quality professional development for the district is a great start. Schools that fall into one of the turnaround models should consider hiring a turnaround specialist. "The turnaround specialist can serve as the point person for recruiting, retaining, and sustaining talent" (Hitt & Meyers, 2017, p. 9). This would provide a built-in support system for the school and help build stronger relationships throughout the entire faculty. Successful leaders work hard to help their staff become stronger and more confident in their abilities to help support and guide their students toward academic success (Chenoweth & Theokas, 2012). It is imperative that school leadership focuses on relationships and not becoming autocratic leaders. Autocratic leadership within a school places high value on order, rules, and structure, but does not promote collaboration and creativity among staff members (Kars, Mehmet, & Inandi, 2018). School principals should work towards the goals or vision of the school and hire individuals that share those common ideas. Utilizing a democratic leadership style within the school helps all staff members feel supported, opens lines of communication between all faculty and staff members and helps build the faculty's confidence that their ideas will be recognized, evaluated, and considered to help support the school's vision (Kars et al., 2018).

Most school districts hire local individuals for their schools because there is not a large enough applicant pool from outside the area that have applied. This limits the diversity of the skill set found in each teacher that applies because most of the individuals would be graduating from the same universities (Engel & Finch, 2015). School systems should be more open to recruiting individual principals and teachers from around the state and or the country. Effective hiring practices focused on targeting specific skill sets lead to educators that are more passionate

about teaching their subject areas and that can move the school and the district toward the goals, mission, and vision of the school.

Principle 6: Enabling the Effective Use of Data

The Alabama State Department of Education's Plan 2020 (2015, p.78) suggests "utilizing data to make instructional and curricular decisions, use data to identify and prioritize needs, provide professional development on analyzing and using data to inform instruction and provide collaborative time for review and use of data".

Data can be used many ways in a school setting to help improve the school internally, externally, and academically. School leaders can use data to positively affect how stakeholders, parents, teachers, and students perceive the school (Schildkamp et al., 2017). The goal is to utilize surveys to find weaknesses and fix them to improve the school. School leaders must have open discussions with faculty and community stake holders to gather evidence that identifies the most successful programs for student achievement (Hattie, 2015). "Strong leaders create and model norms for data conversations, specifying what materials and attitudes teachers should bring to the meetings" (Goodwin, 2015, p.78). High impact practices of instruction can come in many forms, such as degrees of errors/taking risks in the classroom, teacher collaboration, teachers becoming visible learners to better their craft, teacher appraisals which impact student learning, and teacher observations (Hattie, 2015). Within each practice, data can be collected to analyze effective instruction which in turn leads to greater student success (Hattie, 2015). School principals should work towards finding a variety of sources to collect data to guide improvements that are needed at the school (Herman et al., 2008). Examples of school-level data sources could be school problem-solving teams, school behavior teams, discipline reports, student work samples, the attendance of both students and teachers, class sizes, instructional

time, the skill level of the staff, and formative or summative assessments. Each school should determine how they want to approach utilizing data within the school, so it can be used most effectively. Schools that take a vested interest in the teachers' need for collaboration in the content area and allow the teachers to work together to drill down to identify student academic weaknesses using vertical teams, content area teams and grade level teams will see the most success in their students' academic growth and proficiency (Chenoweth, 2010). School leaders must help teachers become more confident at effectively utilizing data to improve their student's academic growth. Professional development should be offered routinely to help the teachers analyze and interpret their students' strengths and weaknesses (Lange et al., 2012). A "professional development plan" must be implemented "to provide adequate time to discuss data at staff meetings and pre-approved professional development days when students are not in session and the school leaders should pay significant attention to educating teachers about the types of data the school collects" (Lange et. al, 2012, p.3).

The goal of every school principal should be to create a school that focuses on data-driven instruction and should provide the training and time for the teachers to be successful in this endeavor (Lange et al., 2012). Teachers should feel supported when it comes to interpreting data, and strong leadership will help guide the faculty towards a collective group responsibility for every subject area's data and not make it individualized (Goodwin, 2015).

Principle 7: Effective Use of Time

The state of Alabama's Plan 2020 team felt it was very important to focus on the use of time spent in schools working with students and the time teachers were given for collaborating with their peers (pg.79). The Center for American Progress stated that teachers in the United States spend twenty-seven hours teaching each week compared to Singapore teachers teaching

seventeen hours and Finland teachers teaching twenty-one hours (Benner & Partelow, 2017). Teachers in the United States are expected to utilize an hour of planning time a day to complete all lesson plans, communicate with parents, attend meetings, complete grading, and utilize data to help their students be successful (Benner et al., 2017). Professional development should be offered during the school day and not after school or use whole-day professional development days during the school year (Brown et al., 2016). Professional development that happens throughout the school day allows for more collaboration among teachers, mentoring, classroom observations and instructional rounds, data meetings and vertical teaming (Brown et al., 2016). The hope would be that teachers would take more initiative if they were supported in their own personal growth as educators. The Center for American Progress (Benner, et al., 2017) stated that innovative school schedules should have time for planning with peers, constant promotion of collaboration among teachers, flexible school schedules and small group instruction or intervention. The shift of focusing on innovative school schedules not only benefits the students but also the teachers, and the goal is to decrease the teacher turnover rate (Brown et. al., 2016). The best way to increase better time management is to include all your stakeholders in decisions related to the creation of school schedules. This process should include the school systems calendars, class schedules, class course selection, and after school events. Once there is collaboration among the faculty, parents, and students about how the school should be run and the best ways to use time effectively throughout the school day, then all stakeholders will see significant progress in academic achievement by the students (Strom, P., Strom, R., & Single-Arrington, 2016). One article (Strom et al., 2016) introduced several innovative ways a school could help change the school schedule and increase better use of time during the school day, such as changing the times of the school day to allow students to increase the amount of sleep

they receive each night, having a set schedule for testing so they do not overlap each day, having scheduled tutoring time, increasing access to technology before, during and after school, assisting students with study, planning, and relaxation techniques. School systems should constantly be looking for ways to improve student and faculty performance. The more buy-in all stakeholders have in their system, the more success everyone involved will witness. Incorporating a growth mindset within a school also increases effective use of time because the goal of a growth mindset is to increase the positive support the students are receiving in their relationships with faculty members and other students (Hanson et al., 2016). When students feel supported and encouraged, this eliminates discipline issues which increases instructional time during the day. The response to instruction/intervention (RTI) program was introduced into schools as a method of improving teacher effectiveness and student academic progress (NCLD, 2018). The RTI program was placed in every school across the United States through a mandate from the Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) in 2004. Response to instruction, also known as intervention, is a tiered system that progressively increases the amount of support a student will received based on the student's unique academic needs (Hite & McGahey, 2015). Students are assigned strategies by their teachers to help increase their progress in their classes. If the child continues to show deficiencies in that core class, then the teacher meets with the RTI team and discusses alternative strategies that might help the student progress more effectively within that class (Hite & McGahey, 2015). The purpose behind the RTI model is to help students before failure is a concern and help them move towards academic success (Hite & McGahey, 2015). The goal is to identify struggling students early in the educational process and help prevent increased weakness in all core subject areas, thus decreasing the amount of time necessary for remediation later in the student's educational career (Johnson et al., 2006).

Another important factor in helping schools utilize time effectively is with school-wide positive behavior interventions and support program (SWPBIS). Behavior is a concern in all schools and takes up a considerable amount of the faculty's, staff's, and administrative team's time. The goal related to school-wide positive behavior interventions and support programs is to decrease behavior problems in classrooms and increase instructional time for teachers. Researchers (Houchens, Zhang, Davis, Niu, Chon & Miller, 2017) found that schools with the SWPBIS programs showed slightly higher academic progress than schools without the program. SWPBIS is another way for teachers to build relationships with their students and help guide individual students to correct or change negative behavior for the betterment of their academic career. This program is not just for the general education population of the school but also includes special education students. All students can benefit from strategies that focus on both their academic and social needs. SWPBIS program/model is like the RTI model because it is also three-tiered. As the students move through the tiers, they are provided more and more intervention strategies to correct their behavior issues, which leads to more instructional time in the classroom (Chitiyo & May, 2018). The first tier is utilized by all faculty to help assist their students with class routines, class rules, and expectations while the second tier focuses on creating small groups that identify individual student behavior needs, and the third tier has individual and specialized strategies to help students one-on-one (Chitiyo, et al., 2018. There are some questions that should be addressed before putting strategies in place at a school or in a classroom using the SWPBIS model. Are they compatible with the schools' policies and trialability? Does it have relative advantage? Is it a better strategy than the one already in place (Chitiyo, et al., 2018)? Researchers (Better-Bubon, Brunner, & Kansteiner, 2016) state that the use of data related to PBIS students can be focused on academic achievement and school safety,

which is improved if the school includes professional development for teachers and makes them aware of the impact they make on their students if they follow this program. This includes looking at school change, staffing, instructional practices, and a rewards system for students (Better-Bubon et. al., 2016). All of these factors relate back to time and the need to make sure all students are getting the supports they need, and teachers are working hard to evaluate the students' deficits, so they can provide the support the students' needs to catch up academically and socially.

Another way a school system can use time effectively is to create professional learning communities for their faculties. A professional learning community provides opportunities for teachers to have collaboration time with their peers to discuss and analyze student data (Dufour & Eaker, 1998). Professional learning communities (PLC) can incorporate all school data whether it is standardized tests, RTI information or SWPBIS information. The vision behind PLC's was the idea of collaboration and support for teachers provided by other teachers and the leadership team (Smith, 2012). Watson (2014) stated that professional learning communities are about school change and focusing on student learning. Bolam et al. (2005) had a list of elements which centered around and focused on students having school pride, encourage teachers to constantly improve their craft, collaborate with peers and provide quality professional development. PLCs can be used to help teachers during RTI time, data meetings, SWPBIS, vertical alignment meetings, grade-level and subject area meetings, instructional rounds, formative/summative assessments, developing student action plans and any other time teachers would benefit from collaboration to help decipher and identify strategies to assist struggling students (Hollingsworth, 2012). PLCs can be scheduled during the school day, after school, once a month, or during planning times (Smith et al., 2012). The time benefit for utilizing

collaboration among teachers during a PLC is tremendous because it allows the teachers to express their opinions and ideas about student achievement and progress (Fullan, 2014). PLCs give teachers a voice to help assist in their students learning and behavior. The instructional leadership support of PLCs and the collaboration of the school faculty cultivates relationships among the staff for the betterment of the students (Smith et. al., 2012). It is important for the school administrative staff to truly evaluate the placement of their teachers throughout the building and identify areas where co-teaching might be beneficial and focus on the master schedules to utilize common planning times so the teachers are in closer proximity to one another which eliminates wasted time transitioning to different locations in the building (Chenoweth, 2015). Collaboration should not just be limited to other teachers, but also stakeholders (Fullan, 2014). Increasing the list of resources provided by stakeholders would allow schools to collaborate and generate ideas, generate resources, and grow partnerships/relationships with the community (Fullan, 2005). Collaboration is the key in helping faculty members have buy-in at the school and want to inspire a culture of positivity, academic achievement, and supportive social needs.

Principle 8: Effective Family and Community Engagement

Alabama's plan 2020 (p.79) states that effective family and community engagement means to "hold community meetings to review school performance; discuss the school interventions to be implemented; complete school improvement plans in line with the intervention model; collect perception surveys; engage parents, family and community in the school learning process with a focus on academic achievement for all students". Family engagement with the school is very important because students learn more and feel secure if the family trusts the school community (Weiss, et al., 2010). The U.S. Department of Education

(2010) defines family and community engagement as developing parents and the community as involved partners to be supportive of classroom instruction at both school and at home. Schools are an important part of the communities where they are located and are one of the best ways to bring families together (Jacobson et al., 2016). School leadership must work hard to ensure that all families are included and welcomed into the school community. Parents want to help and encourage their children to do academically, but they require help and guidance from their children's teachers to ensure proper academic support (Epstein, 2018). School leadership, teachers, and support staff must work closely with the families in their communities to support the academic and social and emotional needs of the students (Weiss et al., 2010; Indiana Department of Education, 2018). Maria Quezada (2016) provides an example of building stronger communities with local schools and parents with the idea of co-empowerment. Co-empowerment builds the parents' confidence to share ideas with their children's school and strengthen their relationships with school leaders. This idea enables school leaders, faculty, and staff to understand the students' family dynamics so they can better address the students' needs, thus forming strong ties with the parents and community stakeholders (Quezada, 2016).

The California Department of Education (2015), for example, felt it was import to make their campuses warm and friendly for all visitors, make sure each campus was very clean and safe for all students, build strong relationships with the stakeholders and community and to over communicate to families. The goal for all schools must be to encourage the parents to be part of the school and make them feel welcome in the school at all times. Partnerships must be created between parents and the schools to ensure the students will be successful (Dufour et. al., 1998). Two of the most important ways that a school can promote increased parental involvement in all the socio-economic groups within the school is to make sure the school is inviting and provides

continuous communication for the parents (Park & Holloway, 2018). School leaders can use a variety of communication tools to encourage parents to help support their children's academics at home, to publicize events happening at the school, to share curriculum updates and changes, and to provide tutoring schedules and academic updates for each class (Park & Holloway, 2018). Some of the tools that educators can use to support parental involvement are the following: email, parent phone calls, newsletters, social media, school websites, texting, parent communication applications like Remind 101 and ClassDojo and live gradebooks, such as I-Now, which is used in Alabama. It is important for the schools to try different avenues of communication to reach the parents (Park & Holloway, 2018) It is also very important for school administration and faculty to take into consideration different cultures and their attitudes toward education when encouraging parental involvement (Jeynes, 2018). It is a fine line to maintain balance between all stakeholders in a school setting and work towards creating a culture and climate that is welcoming to parents and also works well for the faculty and staff (Jeynes, 2018). Epstein et al. (1997) developed six areas of focus important for parental involvement. The areas of focus were centered around parents, school communication, promoting parent and student volunteering programs, work with parents and stakeholders to improve the school, strengthen school programs and providing support so students at home could successfully complete their lessons. Each of these components reiterates the need to form partnerships with the parents and community stakeholders to assist the students with all facets of the educational process. It is imperative that the schools include parents and the community in the decisions made at the school level to ensure their support. Schools are encouraged to include parents and community leaders in their parent organizations and include parents in designing the school improvement plan and other school committees so that the community has a voice concerning what happens in

the school (Rapp & Duncan, 2012). Schools must also increase the number of parents that volunteer at the school. Parent volunteers decrease as the students get older, so it is necessary for school leaders to develop opportunities for parents to come to the school and volunteer, whether it is a sports event, school play, PTO/PTA, school open house or parent/teacher night (Rapp & Duncan, 2012). It is an investment of personal time, finances, and a commitment of working together that enables students to be more successful, well-rounded citizens (Fusarelli & Militello, 2012). Sagor (1993) suggested the following categories that could help school leaders and parents produce mature and confident students by creating a sense of belonging for all students, celebrate academic successes, empower students, and help promote a sense morale worth and necessity to give back to their community. The more involved the parents are with their children's educations and the more support they receive at home, the higher the students' achievement scores are likely to be (Rapp & Duncan, 2012). The goal of every school system must be to work with the community and help parents mold their children into healthy, successful, and confident members of society.

Alabama's Plan 2020 (2010) states that turnaround models should help struggling schools build internal and external support for the school and build capacity to sustain continuous improvement. Sustaining school turnaround is a difficult thing and must be the priority of all schools going through the turnaround process because the work is only worth the effort for as long as it is sustained. Schools that focus on culture and achievement show higher rates of success, than schools that only look at academic achievement (Fullan, & Pinchot, 2018). Fullan and Pinchot (2018) developed a list of eight factors that could transform a school and can lead to sustained success. Within those eight factors, the researchers established that the principal must be the lead when it comes to learning at the school, focus on inequity, empower strong teacher

leaders, encourage school wide positivity, communicate in detail the school's mission, use best practices and study student data, only focus on the facts, and build strong relationships with the community (Fullan, & Pinchot, 2018). Each of these factors lead to turnaround success, but the last one resonates the most because it promotes learning from others and other systems. Partnerships with other schools or districts can generate new and innovative ideas that will help re-energize and transform a school (Fullan, 2005). Changes within the school system promotes success and sustainability in schools working on turnaround (Copeland, et al., 2013). School leadership must make significant changes within the school, such as increase student/teacher attendance, decrease discipline referrals, revamp programs, hire effective staff, facilitate engaging classroom practices, and increase parent and community partnerships (Copeland et al., 2013). School culture improvement is also necessary for turnaround to be sustained (Fullan, 2005).

Rural School History and School Turnaround

All of the turnaround models and the eight turnaround principles can be harder to complete in a rural school setting. Rural areas are defined in several different ways but tend to relate to the size of the population in that area and the distance from a large, urban community (Ayers & Center for American Progress, 2011). The authors Hammond and Hammond erroneously (1927) stated that individuals who live in rural settings have transitioned from being the most productive and hardest working group in America to the group that is the poorest, the least educated members of society. The foundation of this country transferred from an agricultural mindset to a capitalist mindset with most of the power given to the wealthy (Surface & Theobald, 2014). This mindset shifted the country's thought process even though most of the population still lived and worked in rural areas. As the industrial revolution took hold in the

United States and urban cities started to grow, new roads were built, the need for one room schoolhouses disappeared, and rural schools were consolidated to help provide services for a larger grouping of students (Bard et al., 2006). The growing opinion in the United States from the 1900s on was that small schools could not possibly prepare students for the higher order thinking necessary to keep the nation safe and advance our technological needs as a country (DeYoung & Howley, 1992). The opposite viewpoint that emerged during the 1990s was that rural schools were important, and that local communities relied on the schools to be the community's main source of income and social interaction (Ilvento, 1990). The American government went back and forth over the years giving support and taking support away from rural communities and farmers (Surface et. al., 2014). Over the years, the idea that individuals who live in rural areas are backwards-thinking, uncouth, ignorant of the world, and unintelligent has grown and is now reinforced by television shows and the media (Surface et al., 2014). The reality is that rural areas and the schools located in these remote areas struggle with finances, teacher and administrator recruitment, lack of technology and minimal support from the parents and community (Ayers & Center for American Progress, 2011). Most rural areas of the United States have high concentrations of poverty-stricken families, but they tend to have closer ties to their families and the community (Ayers & Center for American Progress, 2011). Looking at statistical information across the United States shows that fifty-seven percent of the school districts within the country are rural, within that number roughly twenty-three percent are minority students and almost fifteen percent are special needs students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009; Johnson, & Strange, 2007). Across the United States, rural communities consist mostly of White families except in the South in which rural communities consist mostly of African American populations (Johnson & Strange, 2009). This statistic holds

true for rural Alabama, especially in the southernmost part of the state (Lindahl, 2011). Rural schools have large minority of student populations in the southern states, but faculty and staff are not very diverse as compared to urban schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). Rural schools, whether they are in the South or somewhere else in the country, spend less per student and less on resources for students than urban communities (Johnson & Strange, 2009). The economic decline in most rural areas contributes to the decrease in population, the dramatic decrease in funding for local schools, and the increased isolation of families still living in rural areas (Redding et al., 2012). According to Redding et al. (2012), "low population density together with family isolation and community remoteness uniquely characterizes a rural area" (p. 7). Parental involvement generates a positive impact on a student's educational outcome and achievement (Jeynes, 2011; Rosenberg et al., 2014). A major problem that rural schools face is a lack of parental involvement, which can cause decreased student motivation and poor attendance (Rosenberg et al., 2014). Parents who are not involved in their children's education is not always a result of parents being disinterested in being involved with the school, but other conflicts arise with inflexible job schedules and the times schools are open, lack of transportation, lack of parents' confidence in their own education levels, or a misunderstanding of the value of education on a person's life (Rosenberg et al., 2014; Williams & King, 2002). The geographic location of a school can cause difficulties with commutes time for the parents, thus decreasing the amount of time for parental involvement and making extra-curricular activities nearly impossible for many rural students (Rosenberg et al., 2014). Title-I funding for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act provides the most federal funding to support schools with high concentrations of low-income students (Ayers & Center for American Progress., 2011) The U.S. Department of Education has grant opportunities for rural schools that fall in the category of

low-income schools and allow those schools to use the funds to recruit/retain teachers, fund activities to promote parental involvement within the school and provide quality professional development for teachers, develop creative schedules for school activities to increase parental involvement, and provide opportunities to both parents and students to help them with their educational goals, such as, adult education or night classes (Rosenberg et al., 2014). Rosenberg and his team identified the following characteristics that can only be associated with rural school systems: distance to urban areas, location with low population density, small community size, and lack of availability to external supports related to educational processes for staff and students.

Rural School Principals

The leadership role of rural principals can look very different from school to school. The need for the principal to serve in a variety of capacities in the school is necessary because of small staff size, the geographical location of the school, the racial make-up, and the type of stake holder support (Parson, et al., 2016). Rural schools in Alabama account for a large portion of the state's overall academic performance because of the large percentage of schools in rural areas (Johnson, & Strange, 2007). Williams and King (2002) developed a list of six struggles facing rural school principals and their school improvement teams across the United States. Those struggles include: a shortage of highly qualified teachers and administrators, inadequate community and parental involvement, quality professional development, low expectations of the school and students, resistance to change, and a failure to prepare students for the twenty-first century and technology advancements. Rural school principals in Alabama tend to be very different around the state and from district to district or school to school depending on the racial makeup of the school, political views, dominant religious viewpoints in that area and the type of

person leading the school (Lindahl, 2011). Additionally, being a principal in a rural community depends heavily on culture, local issues, how the school system is structured, and the political environment of that area (Hallinger, 2016). Rural school principals, unlike urban school leaders, must be aware of a variety of unique issues only found in rural areas that could affect student academic success. Extended travel time on buses in mornings and evenings can cause sleep deprivation that affects student performance (Reeves, 2003). Rural school principals must also identify alternative methods of locating educational resources for their students due to the distance that separates rural schools from most libraries, museums, and post-secondary schools (Lindahl, 2011). The school principal is often considered a prominent person within the community and is expected to help address the community's needs (Wieczorek & Manard, 2018). There are several theories related to educational leadership and some of those examples are: transactional, participatory, instructional, and transformative (Wieczorek et. al., 2018). A leader that is transactional responds to the situation that arises at the school then goes back to the status quo once the situation is resolved (Miller, 2012). A leader that allows the faculty and staff to help with all decisions made at the school level would be classified as a participation leader (Leithwood et al., 2006). School leaders that focus on the professional development needs of the faculty and staff in an effort to improve the instruction for the students are classified as instructional leaders (Southworth, 2002). Transformative leaders look at their school population and determine how to promote a more inclusive environment for all students to help promote learning, growth, and achievement while also addressing ethnicity issues (Kose, 2007). Rural school principals must collaborate and use the style that best fits the team and the community partners. The idea of school culture and the community's needs is a recurring theme with rural school principals, and it shapes their approach when addressing the school's goals, visions for

the future, and the community's concerns or expectations (Hallinger, 2016). The greatest struggle is to find quality individuals that want to work in areas with limited staff, limited support systems, limited budgets, and sparse community stakeholders. These issues are prevalent for rural school leaders in every state throughout the country (Parson et.al., 2016).

Rural schools not only have to have strong principals but also strong leadership amongst the teachers. The development of a collaborative partnership between the schools and local colleges and universities to provide leadership courses for teachers enhances the academic reform for rural schools (Warren & Peel, 2005). Teacher leader models encourage student academic success because they reflect on their teaching practices to make improvements and promote collaboration with their peers, thus exemplifying the role of a scholar (Eargle, 2013). It is imperative that the teacher leaders within the school are part of the building leadership team because this is the core group that works closely with the principal to generate ideas for school improvement. They also work as mentors for other teachers within the school, present new information to the faculty for professional development needs, and help problem solve curriculum issues (Eargle, 2013). Teachers must have access to high quality professional development and participate in professional learning communities (PLC's) to ensure they have a variety of teaching tools to help students achieve. The Accelerated School Model (ASM) was created to help rural schools change their approaches to helping students learn by increasing school-wide collaboration using professional learning communities (Levin, 1994). This model was broken into two parts. The larger part was identifying the school communities' strengths and weaknesses, defining a clear school vision, setting school priorities regarding change, giving all stakeholders a voice, and using inquiry-based decision-making as the school implements the transformation turnaround model and any of the turnaround strategies (Maxwell et al., 2010;

Levin, 1994). Once the larger components are put into place, the teachers can create partnerships with the community and collaborate with each other to develop innovative strategies to increase student achievement (Maxwell et.al., 2010; Levin, 1994). The ASM is one example of how rural schools can process and initiate school turnaround and make it work for the unique needs of the school. Rural school systems that are in school turnaround normally choose the transformation model of school turnaround because the need to keep as many staff members as possible is crucial to a rural school district (Rosenberg et al., 2014). Most rural school districts struggle with recruitment of teachers. It is important for rural school systems, especially the ones going through the transformation model, to positively brand themselves and the communities in which they are located (Ahearn et al., 2006). Three of the four school turnaround models suggest replacing most, if not all, of the school staff at a school, but in a rural system with few applicants and qualified teachers, this is not possible (WestEd., 2014). School principals must support the staff they currently have and promote a positive environment to entice new teachers and leaders to move to the school's rural location or make the commitment to a longer commute (Ahearn et al., 2006). The schools should create brochures or videos advertising the reasons a person or a family would love to live in the community, to build their professional careers there, and develop strong lasting relationships with the community and school stakeholders (Ahearn et. al., 2006). Schools can utilize state education agencies (SEA's) to help provide funding for career/job fairs, bonuses, stipends, travel expenses, and work with teachers to become certified in other subject areas (WestEd., 2014). Districts should promote extended day opportunities that allow newly recruited teachers the ability to begin building community relationships. Rural schools use extended day services to bridge the academic gap for struggling students and encourage parent, community, and school district relationships. The Full-Service Community Schools Program

allows rural schools to provide external learning opportunities to students through before/after school tutoring. The 21st Century program and other school improvement grants provide community services at the school such as health care services, job training, English language classes, breakfast/dinner services, and after school enrichment courses for students and adults (Ayers et al., 2011). Extended day services in schools allow students the opportunity to have a well-rounded educational experience because it focuses on the needs of the students. Extended day can include the following programs: summer school, Saturday school, weekend school, vocational school, AP/ACT after school or weekend practice sessions, extended school days for all pre-kindergarten or kindergarten, and after school tutoring in core subject areas (DeAngelis et al., 1997; Parrett & Budge, 2009; U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Rural school principals must also increase community relationships to ensure financial assistance and increase volunteer opportunities for localized programs that are school-based or extended day. This assistance can come from local organizations, institutions, or associations, such as, American Legion, Knights of Columbus, Masons, Rotary Club, farmer or agricultural associations, local politicians, cooperative extension services, community colleges, Police/Fire/ Hospital services and or parent-teacher-student organizations (Ahearn et. al., 2006). These small communities must work together for the success of the local schools.

Rural school principals can truly benefit from forming close relationships with local colleges and universities. This mutual relationship can benefit both the schools and the local communities by generating strong school principals that are keenly aware of rural school system difficulties and promote local students to stay in their small community and work in the school system (Versland, 2013). Most rural systems are faced with many challenges, and one of the primary challenges is teacher and school leadership recruitment because of high turnover rates,

isolated locations, and low wages (Hildreth et al., 2018; Versland, 2013). High faculty and staff turnover rates can cause huge problems in the community and be detrimental to the students because they do not have time to build strong relationships with teachers (WestEd., 2014). "Collaborative relationships between university educational preparation programs and rural district partners have the potential to create and support effective leaders equipped with the knowledge and skills to address the academic, social, and cultural needs of the rural school district" (Hildreth et al., 2018). Universities can play a big role in helping school leaders identify the different areas of responsibility that rural school leaders face and prepare them for wearing many different hats throughout the school day in their leadership role (Versland, 2013). According to Hammond, Lapointe, Meyerson, and Orr, "those who are prepared in innovative, high quality programs are more likely to become instructional leaders who are committed to the job and efficacious in their work" (2007). Rural school principals have very few if any mentors to help guide them and most of the time do not have a leader to model themselves, which leads to negative feedback from the stakeholders and other school staff members (Versland, 2013). Universities need to develop very comprehensive programs to assist rural school principals and make sure programs are accessible (Hildreth et. al., 2018). Leadership programs for aspiring rural school principals should be challenging and realistic of the job requirements that candidates face when transitioning to a rural school system (Fusarelli & Militello, 2012). The better equipped a new school principal is when moving into a challenging school or school system, the more likely they will stay and be successful. Principals should be exposed to meaningful internships, provided a mentor, and develop strong relationships and networks with the individuals in his or her cohort at the university level (Fusarelli, et al, 2012). Continued support through professional development programs are also very beneficial to rural school principals

because both school principals and aspiring teachers who want to become principals can receive continued support from a network of educators (Gagnon & Mattingly, 2015). Rural principals can build strong networks with others using technology, university partnerships/cohorts, and strong relationships with other schools within the county and or state (Hargreaves et al., 2015). One example of building strong collaborative relationships with outside stakeholders allows rural school systems the ability to fund or support distance learning classes to help students expand their options within their course requirements (Redding et al., 2012). Professional networks enable rural school principals to less isolated and able to have relevant conversations about strategies or advice about how to improve the learning environment for students (Hargreaves, et. al., 2015). Educators can work with other rural districts and incorporate a multitiered system of supports (MTSS) (Pierce & Mueller, 2018). The MTSS uses the response to intervention model, positive behavior interventions and supports model, and evidence-based practices to help students with their individual social needs and academic needs (Pierce & Mueller, 2018). This model allows schools to collect social, emotional, and academic data on each struggling student. Each of these collaborative models helps not only students and parents but also helps guide principals and teachers toward best assessing the needs of their students. Educators who feel the community is invested in the work they are doing for students ultimately motivate and drive their students toward success (WestEd., 2014).

Each school district should focus on developing meaningful partnerships not only internally with faculty and staff, but also externally with businesses, community leaders, parents, and all other stakeholders. Strong support from local businesses is the key to successfully growing programs that help students explore different career fields and build an academic base for the students and potential career paths (Parrett, et. al., 2009). Researcher Lynn Olson (2018,

p.5) highlighted the program the Tacoma Public Schools created called the Tacoma Whole Child Initiative, there are several steps school principals can use to develop partnerships with the community including:

> Put students and their needs at the center of the partnership; have an aligned vision and common language for successfully integrating social, emotional, and academic development, with partners engaged in the vision; collaboratively develop clear goals and metrics that align with the vision and share data to help drive continuous improvement; select partners who have successfully provided social, emotional, and academic support to the schools; provide high levels of commitment, leadership, and oversight at both the district and school level and through an intermediary organization or nonprofit that can coordinate key players and ensure the right services and partners are brought inside the school and building open, two-way communication both formally and informally, to build trust, transparency, and effectiveness among schools and community partners.

Each of these steps clearly outlines what is required of the partnership between the school and the community/business partner. This type of intense partnership with community sponsors could greatly benefit schools going through transformation turnaround. Collaboration between school principals, teachers, parents, and the community are key to student success (Dufour & Eaker, 1998). Schools establishing strong partnerships with the community can use wraparound support services (Saladis et al., 2016). The wraparound support services can be used by schools to help the whole child on the path to becoming successful citizens. The wraparound support includes helping families have a voice in their child's education, having a supportive team consisting of school faculty, staff, counselors, and parents, collaboration among school staff, families and the community, cultural awareness, individualized plans building on the students' strengths, and

unconditional care to help students successfully become productive and well-rounded adults (Saladis et al., 2016). When assisting students that are from impoverished backgrounds with low academic skills, it is essential to provide support from the school-community partnership to help those students reach and obtain their greatest potential (Wheeler, et al., 2018; Epstein, 2010; Sheridan & Moorman Kim, 2016).

Conclusion

Any school leader utilizing any one of the school turnaround models will face many challenges working toward developing academic success and strengthening school culture and climate. The best framework and guidance for rural school principals is the transformation model. There are many struggles that are compounded in a rural school setting due to a scarcity of qualified teachers, funding, technology support, and parental support, but using the steps of the transformation model along with the eight turnaround principles will help the school leader guide the school to success. Reviewing the literature related to rural school turnaround, the recurring theme for overall success for rural school principals was completing the transformation model to build and sustain partnerships through building a strong school culture within the school and strong relationships with local business and local universities outside of the school. The transformation model is a pathway toward success for rural school principals, but hard work, buy-in from the community, and consistency is the method to sustain that success.

Chapter III: Methodology

"Education must be a great equalizer in our society. It must be the tool to level the differences that our various social systems have created over the past thousands of years." Rajiv Gandhi

Alabama has a diverse population of students and school systems. It is reported by the Alabama Department of Education that the state has 139 school systems and 1463 public schools throughout the state (Alabama Department of Education, 2018- 2019). The state employs approximately 136 superintendents, 2,655 principals and assistant principals, and 46,766 teachers. The highest concentration of employees is located within major cities and geographic areas five to ten miles from the cities, but roughly forty-two percent of the schools within the state of Alabama are considered rural, which puts Alabama about fifth in the nation for the highest percentages of rural schools (Johnson et al., 2014; Tieken, 2014). The National Center of Education Statistics (2006) breaks down individual data for each state by separating the schools and districts into cities, suburban areas, towns, and rural locations. The rural areas also are divided into the following subgroups: rural fringe, which is defined as five miles or less from an urban area; rural distant, which is defined as between five and twenty-five miles from an urban area; and rural remote, which is greater than twenty-five miles from an urban area. According to data from the National Center of Education Statistics (2014), the rural school systems of Alabama have roughly 64 districts out of 137 statewide that are considered rural and 707 schools out of 1637 statewide that are considered rural, which makes forty-seven percent of the districts and forty-three percent of the schools in Alabama rural. This number has only changed slightly over the past few years with an increase of two more school districts bringing the total to 139 and a decrease of 174 schools bring the total to 1463. The differences can be attributed to city school districts being created and school closures and/or the consolidation of schools.

With the daily struggles that rural school systems face, those that are successful should be celebrated and identified. The goal is to isolate the leading factors that help with the school's success and sustainability of that success.

Research Design

Rural school principals in this qualitative study shared their viewpoints, passion, and dedication to their schools and clearly highlight how they became successful. What is qualitative research? The qualitative research method uses a realistic approach to investigate singularities in a "real-world setting where the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest" (Patton, 2001 p. 39; Golafshani, 2002. Qualitative can be "any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 17; Golafshani, 2002. Qualitative research has many different facets. The researcher chose case study methodology for analyzing the information within this study. Case studies only focus on one issue within an organization which needs to be analyzed more thoroughly and do not focus on the entire organization (Yin, 1989). The researcher's case study focused on the accomplishments of rural school principals that have used the transformation model for this study in the state of Alabama. With the assistance of members of the Alabama State Department of Education, the researcher was able to identify eleven rural school principals that completed the transformation turnaround model and made significant gains related to academic achievement. Using qualitative research allows the researcher to examine varying amounts of data for each school and to collect the experiences of the rural school principals related to school turnaround success (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). In qualitative research, the researcher listens and documents the story of everyone interviewed in the study and then dissects the information and organizes each experience into relevant themes related to the

research (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Using the descriptive method, this case study allows the researcher to pinpoint key differences in the perceptions of the rural school principals interviewed at each school.

Qualitative research is the best fit for this type of research design because the individuals that work in the different schools will be able to give their perspectives of what the keys to creating a successful school are and what that success looks like to an outsider looking into that community. The qualitative method helps the researcher understand the experiences, target the belief systems, and isolate the attitudes of the individuals involved with the study, and it also helps the researcher document the interactions with each other (Pathak et al., 2013). Focusing in on the climate and culture of each of the schools identified in this study allows the researcher to gain important insight on the journey each school takes to create a pathway to success.

This case study allows the researcher to develop insight into how each of the rural school principals were able to become successful and generate momentum to sustain that success. The schools should be designated as either focus schools or priority schools in the State of Alabama. Priority schools are defined as the lowest-performing schools in the state. Once a school is identified as a priority school, then the school is placed in a three-year rebuilding process. The first year the state department observes school's leadership and identifies the changes needed related to climate, culture, leadership, or community. In the second and third year, the changes are put into place and monitored closely. Priority schools are schools that are recognized as (State Department of Education, 2011):

- Tier I or Tier II schools that were part of the school improvement grant from the federal government.

- Schools with less than sixty percent graduation rate for two consecutive years.
- Schools with the lowest ranking achievement.

Focus schools are a little different because they do not need school-wide change, but areas of weakness have been identified in two or more subgroups, and a plan will need to be in place to help guide the school to a solution. Those low subgroups normally revolve around math and reading deficiencies. Focus schools also go through a three-year progression of change, but it does not involve the entire school. These schools fall under the targeted support and improvement plan.

Using this method allows the researcher to obtain a copious amount of data related to the experiences of stakeholders (Yin, 2014). During a case study analysis, the researcher will be able to collect detailed information from each individual rural school principal identified as a key player in this study. The goal in this study is to look at this cross-section of schools from around the state identified as rural schools that have obtained academic success and are maintaining that success. Interviews will be conducted with the principals to help collect and organize the elements of success each school utilized in their communities to blaze a pathway to sustained academic achievement in their schools.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify how the eleven rural school principals selected for this study have built academic success and sustained that success through utilizing the transformation model and the eight turnaround principles. The focus will be on the principal's perceptions of how they used the transformation turnaround model and the eight turnaround principles to help obtain success within their school, collect documentation relevant to the

school's pathway for success, but also include the struggles each school faced and highlight the key factors of success whether those factors are similar or different for each school.

So, to clarify, only rural schools in Alabama that have built sustained success over time using the transformation turnaround model will be used within this study. The schools were selected through a process of elimination using the state report card scores, geographic location to verify the school was in a rural area of the state and nominations by the Alabama Department of Education. All the schools are either designated by the state as target assisted, focus or priority schools. All the schools used in this study are classified as rural as outlined by the locale codes from the National Center for Educational Statics (2006), which are rural fringe (41), rural distant (42), and rural remote (43). All the schools within this study have high populations of economically disadvantaged students and have a minimum academic achievement growth of 9% over four years. The rural school principal's perceptions related to their schools with be analyzed, organize. The strengths and weaknesses within each school will be identified. This study will show how each principle used and the transformation model and the eight turnaround principles for success, but it will also enhance the research related to school turnaround for other rural school systems to utilize in the future.

Population and Sample

The researcher prioritized the method of identifying the sample schools. There are multiple methods of choosing samples, but the one that fits this method of research would be criterion sampling. Criterion sampling is defined as selected cases that have predetermined groups of sample subjects that are of importance to the study (Patton, 2002. The criterion of selection in this case study was to identify schools that were rural, schools that fell within the statistical grouping of rural fringe, rural distant and rural remote, attempt to only include schools

that were part of the SIG grant for either cohort I or II for the State of Alabama and only interview the principal in each school. The school would need to have statistical data that shows an increase of academic achievement for three or more consecutive years.

Within the State of Alabama, there are seven hundred-seven (707) elementary and secondary schools that fall in the category of rural schools (NCES, 2013-2014). The researcher was able to identify three of the schools as SIG grant recipients that completed the transformation school turnaround model. Additional schools were nominated by the Alabama State Department of Education. The state helped identify schools that were rural, included the original principal that completed the transformation model and showed academic success through the continuous improvement plan.

The school's principal was contacted by letter explaining the research proposal, how their school was selected and an official request asking the school's principal to participate. A follow up phone call was placed once the letters had five business days to be delivered.

Participant Demographics

Once the eleven schools selected for this study were approved, the participants became the rural school principals within each school. Creswell (2013) stated that purposeful sampling allows the researcher to select individuals that understand the dynamics of the organization and can provide a clear understanding of the organization's climate and culture. The researcher only selected the principal in each of the schools to request an interview. The principal enabled the researcher to collect a clear perspective of how the principal encouraged and obtained higher academic achievement within the schools and what challenges does each school continue to face with maintaining that achievement.

Participants Background Information (Table 1: This information came directly from the interviews with each rural school principal and the Alabama State Department of Education report card 2015-2019):

Hydrogen High School

Principal: Local to the area, highest degree is a doctorate and 26 years education experience.
School: Rural school, Title-I, grades k-12 and high poverty.
Population: 684 students, 3 administrators, 44 faculty members and 18 support staff
Student Demographics: 98.56% African American, 1.15% White, .43% Hispanic, .14% Asian
Faculty Demographics: 91.21% African American, 4.89% White, 77% female and 23% male
Economically Disadvantaged: 74.21%
Students with Disabilities: 14.12%

Helium High School

Principal: Local to the area, highest degree is a doctorate and 13 years education experience.
School: Rural school, Title-I, grades 6-12 and low poverty.
Population: 571 students, 2 administrators, 30 faculty members and 12 support staff
Student Demographics: .88% African American, 94.92% White, 41.86% Hispanic, .18% Asian
Faculty Demographics: 0% African American, 96.07% White, 2.62% two or more races, 59% female and 41% male
Economically Disadvantaged: 43%
Students with Disabilities: 17.16%

Lithium High School

Principal: Not local to the area, highest degree education specialist and 22 years education experience.
School: Rural school, Title-I, grades 5-12 and high poverty.
Population: 504 students, 2 administrators, 30 faculty members and 10 support staff
Student Demographics: 17.86% African American, 74.21% White, 2.18% Hispanic, 0% Asian
Faculty Demographics: 0% African American, 100% White, 80% female and 20% male
Economically Disadvantaged: 57%
Students with Disabilities: 18%

Beryllium Elementary School

Principal: Not local to the area, highest degree education specialist and 19 years education experience.
School: Rural school, Title-I, grades pk-5 and high poverty.
Population: 152 students, 1.5 administrators, 14 faculty members and 4 support staff
Student Demographics: 96.5% African American, 2.63% White, 1.32% Hispanic, 0% Asian
Faculty Demographics: 83.78% African American, 8.11% White, 84% female and 16% male

Economically Disadvantaged: 76%
Students with Disabilities: 14%

Boron Elementary School

Principal: Local to the area, highest degree education specialist and 28 years education experience.
School: Rural school, Title-I, grades pk-5 and high poverty.
Population: 185 students, 1.5 administrators, 20 faculty members and 10 support staff
Student Demographics: 5.14% African American, 78.92% White, 30.81% Hispanic, 10.81% Native American
Faculty Demographics: 3.85% African American, 92.3% White, 98% female and 2% male
Economically Disadvantaged: 72%
Students with Disabilities: 15%

Carbon High School

Principal: Not local to the area, highest degree education specialist and 26 years education experience.
School: Rural school, Targeted assisted, grades 9-12 and low poverty.
Population: 1945 students, 4 administrators, 122 faculty members and 24 support staff
Student Demographics: 22.37% African American, 72.08% White, 3.91% Hispanic, 2.37% Native American
Faculty Demographics: 14.32% African American, 80.69% White, .75% Asian, 2.24% Hispanic, 60% female and 40% male
Economically Disadvantaged: 36.35%
Students with Disabilities: 12%

Nitrogen Elementary School

Principal: Local to the area, highest degree masters and 17 years education experience.
School: Rural school, Title-I, grades pk-3 and high poverty.
Population: 425 students, 2 administrators, 27 faculty members and 10 support staff
Student Demographics: 97.65% African American, 0% White, 0% Hispanic, 1.88% two or more races.
Faculty Demographics: 98.15% African American, 1% White, 86% female and 12% male
Economically Disadvantaged: 76%
Students with Disabilities: 12%

Oxygen Elementary School

Principal: Local to the area, highest degree education specialist and 28 years education experience.
School: Rural school, Title-I, grades pk-5 and high poverty.
Population: 178 students, 1 administrator, 14 faculty members and 4 support staff
Student Demographics: 100% African American, 0% White, 0% Hispanic, 0% Asian
Faculty Demographics: 65.38% African American, 34.62% White, 100% female and 0% male

Economically Disadvantaged: 88%
Students with Disabilities: 16%

Fluorine High School

Principal: Local to the area, highest degree masters and 20 years education experience.
School: Rural school, Title-I, grades pk-12 and high poverty.
Population: 372 students, 1 administrator, 25 faculty members and 8 support staff
Student Demographics: 12.9% African American, 82.53% White, 2.42% Hispanic, 3.76% American Indian
Faculty Demographics: 6.49% African American, 90.26% White, 3.25% American Indian, 80% female and 20% male
Economically Disadvantaged: 69%
Students with Disabilities: 17%

Neon High School

Principal: Not local to the area, highest degree education specialist and 25 years education experience.
School: Rural school, Title-I, grades 9-12 and high poverty.
Population: 360 students, 2 administrators, 40 faculty members and 4 support staff
Student Demographics: 88% African American, 12% White, 14% Hispanic, 0% Asian
Faculty Demographics: 85% African American, 12% White, 58% female and 42% male
Economically Disadvantaged: 64%
Students with Disabilities: 14%

Sodium Elementary School

Principal: Not local to the area, highest degree education specialist and 28 years education experience.
School: Rural school, Title-I, grades pk-6 and high poverty.
Population: 627 students, 1 administrator, 34 faculty members and 9 support staff
Student Demographics: 27.91% African American, 56.3% White, 19.3% Hispanic, 7.34% America Indian.
Faculty Demographics: 10.76% African American, 86.85% White, 2.39% Hispanic, 89.24% female and 10.76% male
Economically Disadvantaged: 80%
Students with Disabilities: 13%

Research Questions

1. What factors do principals in rural schools perceive as the contributing reasons to their success using the transformation model?

2. What factors do principals in the identified rural schools perceive as potential challenges to continuing their success?
3. Are there significant differences/similarities in how each school principal went about attaining turnaround success and sustaining it by using the transformation model and the eight turnaround principles?

Data Collection Methods

The data collected for this case study included a wide variety of sources from archival data, Alabama Department of Education school report card, each of the school's continuous improvement plan and semi-structured interviews of the principal from each school. The data that were collected was retrieved from the state school report card, graduation reports, school website, continuous improvement plan, curriculum documents related to core subject areas, and stakeholder communication with the school.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted with only the school principal. The questions were open ended and allowed for further discussion and or additional questions related to the perceptions of the individuals and how those individuals' opinions describe the success or challenges at that school.

The data collected from each school was organized and evaluated by the researcher. The researcher requested documents from the school related to curriculum artifacts, faculty meeting notes and continuous improvement plan. The school websites were analyzed for additional information related to the schools. Also, the school's state report card was reviewed and analyzed for additional documentation related to the school's success.

The semi-structured interviews of the principals lasted between 30 minutes to three-hours. Each interview was recorded and transcribed. The transcriptions were then organized into codes

and themes related to the research questions. The purpose behind the interviews was to gather information about each of the principals and their school, but to also capture their perceptions of why their school has achieved greater academic success and convey their concerns about continuing that success. Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to expand their questioning when necessary to gather vivid depictions of what the interviewees feel and perceive about their school. Both descriptive and structural questions are used in the interview protocol to obtain the best depiction of what is being asked of each participant in relation to their school. The researcher will be able to gather a clearer picture of what each individual participant thinks and feels about the school.

Each interview began with the researcher describing themselves and defining the purpose of the research. The researcher also explained to the participants that it was only a request for them to be interviewed and that it was completely voluntary. Also, the researcher explained that participation was voluntary, and they could withdraw at any time. Participants were asked to sign the consent form provided by the Institutional Review Board prior to the start of the interview. Once all interviews were completed, the individual was thanked for his/her time, and a brief explanation of what was to come next was presented.

After the completion of the interviews, and the information is organized which reflects the certain themes that show up, then the researcher must work to prove the validity of the information. Using the triangulation process, the researcher was able to check and balance their work to make sure the information is valid, the findings are based only on the data collected, and no bias is shown by the researcher. The data should only reflect the findings detailed by the individuals interviewed and the data collected from those interviews (Bernard & Ryan, 2010; Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014).

The best method of documenting and organizing information into themes for a case study is to use the coding method. Coding is the process that researchers use to collect data during their research study. During semi-structured interviews, the researcher can ask questions that probe deeper into the responses made by the person being interviewed. Any additional questions or responses should be written down as the interview is taking place, so as not to miss any important additional information (Bernard, et al., 2010). Utilizing semi-structured interviews allows the researcher to explore additional questions that only appear during the spontaneity of the interview process. Multiple pieces of data are collected during this time and should be reread thoroughly before the coding process should begin, so a vivid picture of what is being said can be organized by the researcher (Creswell, 2013). Once the researcher is satisfied with understanding the details of the data, then the information can be identified, sorted, and placed within detailed themes. It is imperative that for the data to be useful it should be narrow in focus and reduced to its most simplistic form to transfer that information into codes (Berg & Lune, 2012; DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011). The researcher should utilize coding and develop a codebook. This book would constantly be changed and updated to reflect the changes the researcher discovers during their research to develop a more thorough understand of the data collected in the interview process and how it relates to the theoretical framework of the study (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011). The codebook should be utilized to develop clear, well organized data that is specific to the research study. Bernard, et al. (2003) felt between 50 to 80 codes was enough to include in the codebook, but Creswell (2013) disagree and felt the less codes included in the book would create better, more valid themes. Creswell (2013) believed 25 to 30 codes was a more manageable amount.

Once the codes are in place, then the information can be sorted and finally broken down into themes. The information from the interviews would have to be reviewed several times for clarity, validity, and affirmation that the essence of the information was captured and organized within a manner that is beneficial to the researcher's study.

Conclusion

Chapter three details each part of the researcher's study and organizes the information into the research design, purpose of the study, data collection process, analysis of the data collected and the method of coding. The subsequent chapters will answer the research questions and detail any possible future research.

Chapter IV: Results

The results of this chapter list a detailed report of the findings of the perceptions of eleven rural school principals utilizing the transformation turnaround model and the eight turnaround principles for success and sustainability. Each of the participants shared their experiences related to how the transformation model and the eight turnaround principles helped lead each school on the pathway to success. The researcher was able to develop reoccurring themes that continuously showed up within each interview.

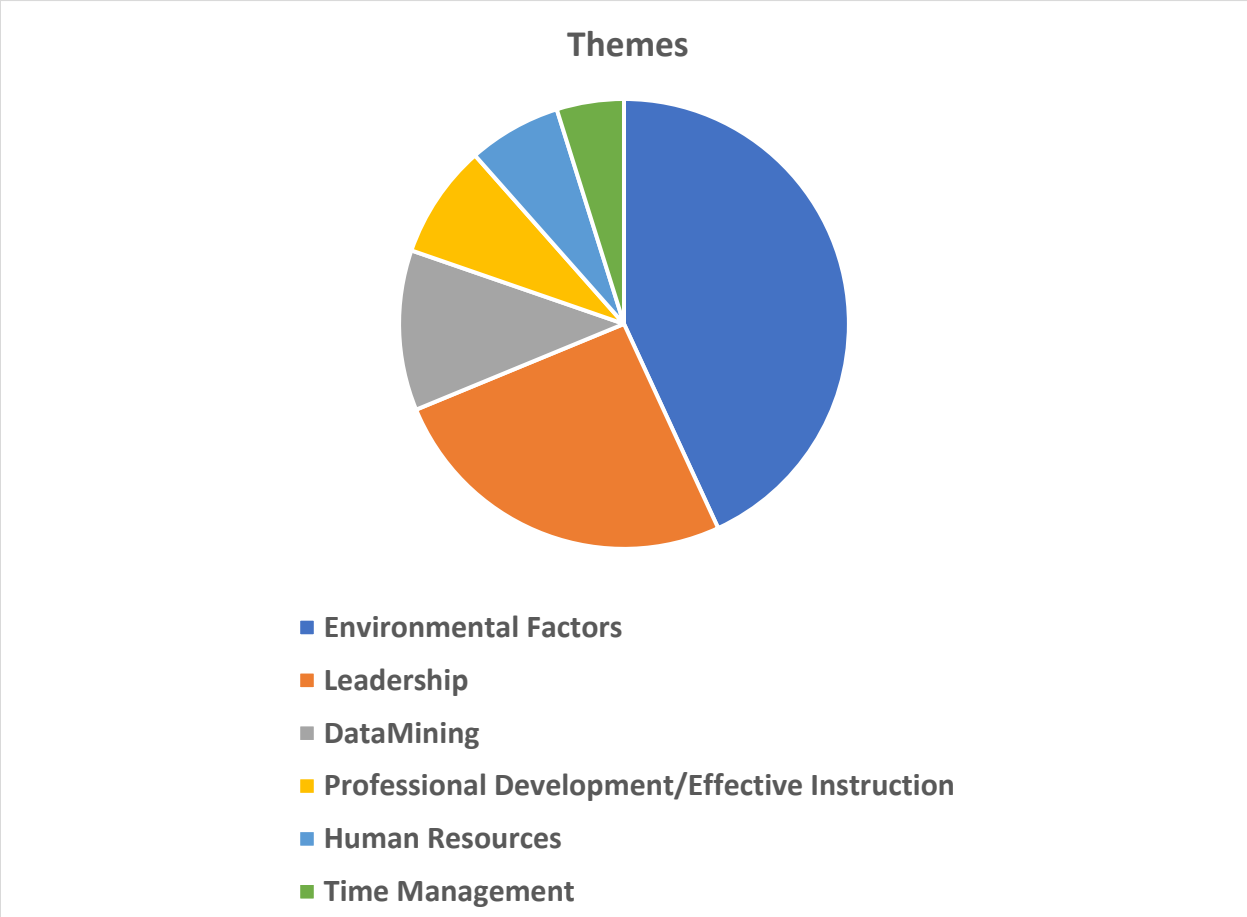
Data Collection Procedures

This case study centered around both electronic video interviews with rural school principals and the state report card for each school using data from the last four years. Both the interviews and the report card data for each individual school showed how each principle utilized both the transformation turnaround model and the eight turnaround principles to help lead their students to academic success and sustain that success. Interview questions were written by the researcher that focused on how each school utilized the turnaround strategies to gain success and keep that success going. "Without good questions, you risk collecting a lot of extraneous information while simultaneously missing some critical information" (Yin, 2011, p. 60). The questions centered around the rural school principal's experience level and the strategies each principal used for their school. The researcher wanted to be able to capture a detailed description of how each rural school faced their unique challenges and conquered them. The interviews were structured so each participant felt comfortable and answered the questions freely. Interviews lasted between one hour and three hours. Robert Yin (2011) stated that the goal of any interview should be to facilitate an environment for each participant to not feel rushed and paint a picture of their experiences for the researcher. Each question built upon the next in its

complexity level to help the researcher gain insight on how the rural school principal attacked the issues within their school and guided their faculty and staff to positive outcomes for their students.

The data collected from each school were organized and evaluated by the researcher. Each interview was transcribed and sorted into an assortment of codes and then narrowed down into six reoccurring themes. Those themes were: environmental factors, leadership, data mining, professional development/effective instruction, human resources, and time management.

Figure 6. Emerging Themes of the Research Study



The researcher not only used semi-structured interviews, but also utilized the state report card data. The school's state report card was reviewed and analyzed for each school which documented the school's success over a four-year period. Each of the 11 schools increased their overall scores in all categories and maintained or improved their scores over the four years.

Table 2: State Report Card Data: Academic Growth, Achievement, Proficiency, and Attendance (Alabama State Department of Education Report card, 2015-2019)

Hydrogen H.S.	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
Report Card Grade	N/A	61/D	71/C	78/C
Academic Achievement	27.02%	32.82%	35.46%	38.71%
Academic Growth	N/A	77.65%	92.65%	94.99%
Proficiency (Math/Reading %)	9.76m/13.48r	15.96m/14.61r	14.29m/19.27r	19.3m/23.06r
Attendance	N/A	22.52%	25.2%	17.15%

Helium H.S.	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
Report Card Grade	N/A	76/C	78/C	78/C
Academic Achievement	47.01 %	42.69%	51.99%	52.48%
Academic Growth	N/A	73.92%	92.28%	85.85%
Proficiency (Math/Reading %)	33.56m /26.85r	27.52m/ 22.09r	33.95m/30.28r	31.95m/31.66r
Attendance	N/A	18.95%	14.95%	6.36%

Lithium H.S.	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
Report Card Grade	N/A	76/C	84/B	85/B
Academic Achievement	46.45%	49.21%	60.77%	63%
Academic Growth	N/A	85.55%	94.14%	95.76%
Proficiency (Math/Reading %)	33.33m/33.46r	18.81%m/36.56r	31.09m/46.15r	34.88m/49.07r
Attendance	N/A	24.91%	23.48%	13.24%

Beryllium Elem. S.	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
Report Card Grade	N/A	64/D	66/D	79/C
Academic Achievement	43.45%	45.43%	47.36%	54.0%
Academic Growth	N/A	75.82%	82.08%	99.05%
Proficiency (Math/Reading %)	20.93m/20.93r	27.96m/16.13r	25.26m/21.05r	36.09m/29.76r
Attendance	N/A	21.79%	30.94%	16.57%

Boron Elem. S.	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
Report Card Grade	N/A	81/B	77/C	88/B
Academic Achievement	54.12%	56.66%	57.87%	74.38%
Academic Growth	N/A	99.52%	92.22%	100%
Proficiency (Math/Reading %)	46.67m/25.56r	43.3m/29.9r	42.86m/30.77r	62.79m/50.57r
Attendance	N/A	9.63%	13.68%	9.8%

Carbon H.S.	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
Report Card Grade	N/A	71/C	71/C	83/B
Academic Achievement	32.6%	39.16%	53.41%	58.83%
Academic Growth	N/A	89.1%	76.80%	94.12%
Proficiency (Math/Reading %)	10.33m/30.16r	22.22m/28.82r	42.08m/37.23r	43.7m/40.43r
Attendance	N/A	36.38%	36.71%	26.23%

Nitrogen Elem. S.	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
Report Card Grade	N/A	37/F	61/C	73/C
Academic Achievement	35.67%	32.92%	41.74%	48.37%
Academic Growth	N/A	N/A	75.83%	90.52%
Proficiency (Math/Reading %)	24.39m/12.9r	24.22m/13.28r	17.39m/26.09r	25.26m/29.47r
Attendance	N/A	22.57%	33.55%	16.86%

Oxygen Elem. S.	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019

Report Card Grade	N/A	55/F	59/F	77/C
Academic Achievement	43.33%	40.24%	41.25%	48.46%
Academic Growth	N/A	62.05%	72.71%	100%
Proficiency (Math/Reading %)	32.18m/16.09r	19.54m/13.79r	20.88m/20.88r	35.44m/20.25r
Attendance	N/A	20.77%	32.42%	16.3%

Fluorine H.S.	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
Report Card Grade	N/A	72/C	75/C	84/B
Academic Achievement	N/A	45.79%	50.62%	55.68%
Academic Growth	N/A	83.38%	75.75%	93.12%
Proficiency (Math/Reading %)	15.32m/31.98r	20.54m/32.59r	25.24m/31.43r	28.28m/35.86r
Attendance	N/A	29.48%	32.7%	21.38%

Neon H.S.	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
Report Card Grade	N/A	62/C	62/C	70/C
Academic Achievement	12.68%	14.62%	21.60%	28.77%
Academic Growth	N/A	79.45%	74.85%	83.41%
Proficiency (Math/Reading %)	.92m/12.15r	0.0m/16.67r	3.19m/8.51r	14.29m/20.1r
Attendance	N/A	24.19%	30.65%	13.25%

Sodium Elem. S.	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
Report Card Grade	N/A	73/C	59/F	78/C
Academic Achievement	63.38%	58.86%	49.0%	55.77%
Academic Growth	N/A	81.68%	62.23%	92.85%
Proficiency (Math/Reading %)	39.73m/43.1r	39.87m/36.93r	22.22m/31.58r	31.3m/35.86r
Attendance	N/A	18.6%	21.51%	9.65%

Research Questions

The research questions listed below guided this study:

1. What factors do principals in rural schools perceive as the contributing reasons to their success using the transformation model?
2. What factors do principals in the identified rural schools perceive as potential challenges in continuing their success?
3. Are there significant differences/similarities in how each school principal went about attaining turnaround success and sustaining it by using the transformation model and the eight turnaround principles?

Setting

This study occurred in a southern state and involved ten different counties. The population of this state is 4.903,185 million and the counties the rural schools are located within range in population from 412,000 down to 8,700 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). Only two of the counties saw an increase in population size, but the other eight counties saw a decrease in population ranging from .26%- 18.0% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). Each of the schools were selected due to their participation either in the SIG- Grant or being listed as a priority school by the State Department of Education and had a significant increase in academic scores over a four-year period. All the schools except for one had a high percentage of economically disadvantaged students, those percentages ranged from 43%- 88 %. All the schools except for one also had low student populations and high percentages of students with disabilities, which ranged from 152 students to 684 students, and the disabilities percentage ranged from 12%-18% for each school. All the schools in this study are Title-I schools.

Participants

Each of the eleven rural school principals were selected due to their participation in either the school improvement grant (SIG) or being nominated by the state department due to their

school priority listing, Title-I status, and the use of the transformation turnaround model. Each of the rural school principals had experience in the educational field from thirteen to twenty-six years. The years of experience as principals ranged from five to fifteen years, and most became principals in the counties, they grew up in. All eleven rural school principals were interviewed. Five of the principals were female and six of them were male. Seven of the principals were African American and four were White. The degree level for each principal ranged from two having a master's degree, six had an Educational Specialist degree and three of the principals completed their doctorate. Two of the principals with a Ph.D. had the most experience in education, but the third had the least amount of experience. Five of the principals interviewed had completed the transformation academy, which was a partnership between the Alabama State Department of Education and the Academic Development Institute. The Academic Development Institute is an organization that works with educators and communities to enhance the learning experience for all students within a school or school district. This program gave the principals strategies to utilize within their communities to help assist in the growing success within their school.

Results

Research Question One: What factors do principals in rural schools perceive as the contributing reasons to their success using the transformation model?

Each of the eleven rural school principals were asked a series of questions pertaining to their school, personal experience level, and contributing factors to their school's success. All the questions related back to the transformation turnaround model and the eight turnaround principles. Throughout the interviews, the researcher found that none of the schools followed the transformation turnaround model or eight turnaround principles to fidelity, but instead used only

what was needed within that school. A prime example would be that the transformation turnaround model includes removing the principal from the struggling school, but only two out of the eleven schools within this study used that part of the model because there was no one to replace the principal. The principals shared their personal perspectives on what it has taken for them to move their school towards academic success and the key focus areas to sustain that success. All the rural school principals provided very detailed information for each question during their interview. Once each interview was completed, the researcher transcribed the information and organized the information into codes. Once this was completed, the codes were then sorted, and the following six themes emerged as the most important ideas relating back to the research questions for this study. The themes developed within this study are the following: environmental factors, leadership, data mining, professional development/effective instruction, human resources, and time management.

Environmental Factors

All the eleven rural school principals felt that the environmental factors related to their school was the most important aspect to success within their school. Providing community, student and parent engagement is a major component of the school improvement grant. This also includes ongoing focus on school safety, discipline issues, student social and emotional needs, and the nurturing of the school climate and culture for all stakeholders. This theme focuses on the school's climate, culture, and family and community engagement. Each of the principals felt building and strengthening these relationships within the community established the foundation of their school's success. The following are examples of the environmental factors within each school that helps constantly build toward their success.

Hydrogen HS principal shared what their school needed related to changing their culture:

"*We started off as a very toxic environment and I knew I had to make drastic changes because we were a failing school. We needed to move the needle culturally before we could focus on academics. So instead of working with academics, I chose to work on discipline with the students and morale with the teachers. I developed a school mantra and included this in everything that occurred at school, which included assemblies, blasted on walls as murals, pep rallies and every conversation with stakeholders*."

Lithium HS principal stated what approach was taken to build morale at school:

"*I use gold stars for my teachers. Each teacher has a board outside their classroom and when I walk by and make informal observations and give out gold stars to the teachers. The teachers love it and get upset if they do not get one. This encourages them to compete to do better and helps me stay connected to my faculty. I also make a point to sign and comment on every single report card each nine weeks and write a personal note for each student. This keeps me connected to the kids and the parents."*

The principal also felt it was very important to be dedicated to your school:

"If you are not working 150 nights a year doing nighttime activities, then you are not being where you need to be for your school and community."

Beryllium ES principal felt strongly that all members of the faculty and staff should be part of the cultural change:

"*I believe in everybody knowing what they need to know from teachers to CNP workers. When we got those test results, I talked with the teachers first, and I shared those results with them. And then, I called in the custodian. I called in the CNP workers. I called in my bookkeeper. I called in the nurse and everyone else because I had to establish the fact that we all play a role at the school. The children benefit when they have clean restrooms*

to go into. They benefit from having a hot meal that is properly prepared, that is presentable on a plate. They benefit from being able to go in the office and engage with the bookkeeper or the secretary or the nurse. We all play a role in this. And I finally got them on my side. I lost a couple of people along the way, but I figured that I would."

Both the Boron ES principal and Oxygen ES principal believed it was very important to constantly promote the school to the community and make it a place that all families can come too:

"As a team, the priority was to combat declining enrollment due to families moving away from the area and make the school more appealing and welcoming to students, parents and the community. Beautification of the campus inside and out was a priority, so we put in a walking track for students and parents, benches, flower boxes, and re-painted the hallways, all with the help of volunteers. Next, a specialized house system was created so all students and faculty felt they were part of a family and had constant support. Finally, we made sure we created a full tummy program and provided a clothing closet with the help of local churches to provide all the basics a family would need. The supplies are delivered to the family's homes if needed."

"I greet everyone at the door and by greeting them, give them a sense of, I am listening, or I am wanting to be engaged in a conversation with you. So, with the culture around here, not just as far as the communication piece, but the entire culture, the climate of the school and all, what I have done is revamp our hallways. The faculty made them into learning portals with character words and things of that nature. So, as a school really wanted to do something that will be eye catching for our babies, as well as our parents to

let them know that we're not only just speaking it, we're actually giving it a display for you all to see."

Oxygen ES principal also promoted the idea of creating partnerships with a variety of organizations to enhance the learning experience of all the students:

"*We have several parents that volunteer. We have groups and organizations that come in to do things for our school, teachers, and students. We try to involve everyone. Several nights a year, we do have nights where we talk about different things, as well as the PTA platform. We utilize it a lot because that's where our parents' voices really can be heard, as well as their concerns. Our school is the hub of the community when it comes to afterschool things. We have two after school programs, but not only do we have two afterschool programs, but we also have parks and rec. The school has camp STEM through 21st century program, and we partner with other organizations to bring in individuals to help expose our students to different types of art, sports, or dance. We try to adjust accordingly to fit the needs of what is best for the students here*."

Nitrogen ES principal felt strongly about seeking out partnerships with the community and especially the local churches:

"*The community, the only way you're going to know what the community needs is you're going to have to get involved in the community. This year, I can go back to this year, last year, going to church services on Sunday. And that is because I wanted to see the community in its authentic state. What was I walking into? Because a lot of the rural communities that I serve, the church is still a big hub. The voice of the spiritual leader is still heard throughout the community. I ask community leaders, what are you going to do*

to support me? How can you support me? This is what I think we need at the school. Can you support me? It is a partnership. It must be a true partnership, and that is with all stakeholders. So, if I had to sum it up, I would say building relationships, making that foundation of that relationship be relevant to the needs of the community, relevant to the needs of the teachers, the school, the students. Just do not do it just because, and get active."

Neon HS principal felt it was important to change the climate of the school and provide more structure for the students:

"*We came in and we put some really stiff mandates on doing stuff that was not productive like fighting at school and we put stiff consequences in place. My team also started a conflict resolution program that had the kids actually talk their differences out and then take a proactive approach to change the behavior. The kids and parents embraced this approach to discipline*."

Sodium ES principal focuses on communication with parents:

"*Constant communication with parents is key to success. The breakdown of communication is what causes problems within a school, but that can be avoided if everyone is communicating with the parents daily*."

This theme encompassed a large portion of what each principal believed was the key to their success. Most of them shared that they are working towards more engaging schools and moving away from traditional learning. Each of the principals had a true passion for wanting success and gave one hundred percent of themselves to the students, teachers, and community they work in. Most felt changing the school schedules, revamping discipline policies, open communication

between all stakeholders, spending time with the community and constantly encouraging the parents to be part of the school whether they are volunteers, coming to games or participating in reading, math or STEM nights makes for a strong culture and helps build success for all the students.

Leadership

The second most reoccurring theme was focused on school leadership. The transformation turnaround model states that the principal should be replaced, but that was not the case for most of the rural school principals interviewed. Most of them either grew up in that area or replaced someone that retired. Rural communities struggle with keeping administrators and teachers because they are normally overextended and must do multiple jobs within the school, which causes burnout, so most school systems will work with the leadership they already have. Each of the rural school principals interviewed for this research study were highly passionate about their jobs and put their hearts and souls into their schools each day.

Nitrogen ES principal shared what each school leader should be:

> "*The school leadership should always be approachable, transparent and have high expectations for everyone they serve*."

Both the Lithium HS principal and the Fluorine HS principal felt it was not an issue to ask for help from the community:

> "*As a school leader, you do whatever you can for your school, whether it is grant writing, providing professional development opportunities for your faculty or asking around the community for individuals to help cut the grass at the school*."

"*As a leader of a school, relationship building is the most important with stakeholders, be professional at all times and ask for help if you need it. I have community partners that would give me additional funds for the school anytime, all I have to do is call and explain our needs*."

"*I don't like the word buy-in because I am not selling anything. We are working this thing out together as a family and as a community for our students*."

The principals of Hydrogen and Helium HS felt creating an effective staff that shared your vision of success was the most important part of their leadership role in a school:

"*I believe in having a shared vision with all of my faculty and staff. Our leadership team is very transparent and makes sure every member of our school (bookkeeper, nurse, lunchroom, custodians, and bus drivers) and all the stakeholders know the school vision and mission. Everyone should know what we are working towards".*

"Creating a mantra for the school and building a clear vision around that mantra, so the students, teachers and parents believe in the changed perception of the school. Build on everyone taking pride and ownership of the school."

Beryllium, Oxygen, and Nitrogen ES principals all attended the transformation academy with the state department, and they felt the strategies they learned plus the support of the state department personnel contributed to their success:

"I am so thankful for our state support person because I feel like if this person was not assigned to us, we would not have moved forward. This person comes and observes, is always available when I call and makes great suggestions, gives advice and helps us trouble shoot."

"The transformation academy gave me a clear focus or pathway to follow to lead my school to success. I learned how to better manage my time to be the most effective leader possible for my team."

"Shared leadership is the key to success in your school. Include as much of your faculty and staff as possible in the decision making. This helps manage your time and generate great ideas."

Nitrogen ES and Carbon HS principals believe that being willing to do all the jobs within the school shows great leadership:

"I feel it is my duty and responsibility to aid the teachers in being successful. I will mentor, provide coaching or model a class lesson if need be. I make sure all my paperwork is complete at night, so I can be out in the hallways or at afterschool activities in the evening to show my support. The community needs to know you are present."

"Any true transformation you have to be all in, so my school is tiny, and I am the only administrator. If I need to roll up my sleeves and be the janitor, so be it, if that helps my students succeed because their environment is clean. If I need to model lessons or teach classes because a teacher is out or struggling with the content, so be it, I will get in that class and teach to help my students succeed. You do whatever it takes."

"Be a servant leader and get your hands dirty and work hard for your students and your teachers. Be selfless. Is the work tiring yes, but worth it!"

Boron and Sodium ES principals shared their belief of always being open to ideas and suggestions from the students, parents, faculty, staff, and community. These ideas can be expressed in person or needs assessment surveys:

"I formed a parent advisory group to come in once a month and tell me things they would like to see improved, changed and discuss any problems they have with the school. I also have a student advisor group and we do the same thing. This helps us improve and meet the needs of our students."

"Using the foundations program in our school helped give the teachers a voice during our leadership meeting, but this is also taken back to the stakeholders to ask their opinion. This gives the school personnel and the community a say so in what the school is trying to accomplish. This helps build capital in my relationship with the community and the faculty even if I have to make a hard-final decision."

Other ideas that each of the principals felt was important regarding leadership within their school was for them to push people out of their comfort zone to make positive change in the school. Signs of a good leader are to believe in your vision for the school, make a plan rooted in that vision, execute the plan, and be persistent because the road to success is hard work. The principals believed it was their job to empower their faculty and provide them with all the tools for success.

Professional Development/Effective Instruction

Professional development goes hand in hand with effective instruction because providing the right training to your teachers gives them the tools to be successful in the classroom with their students. Each of the rural school principals in this research study expressed how important it was to provide their faculty with high quality professional development because it helps the teachers become more confident and more accepting of the changes being made within the school to help the students reach academic success. Each of the principals felt it was imperative

to assist the teachers with their weaknesses within the classroom, which ultimately helps the teachers create more engaging lessons for the students and it breaks the cycle of straight traditional teaching.

Helium HS principal stated:

> *"We have been fortunate with our resources and have been able to provide anything that a teacher has wanted or needed for their classroom or training needs. This eliminates any excuses they have not to help their students. We also have early release Wednesdays built into our schedule for teacher training, faculty meetings and data meetings"*

Hydrogen HS principal tackled professional development needs in a unique way:

> *" Teachers struggle to come to staff meetings or professional development after working eight hours, so I created plus days, and that is where the teachers at each grade level have an entire day of professional development during the school day. Each month on Wednesdays, the different content area teachers have their professional development. The teachers have an entire day to look at data, curriculum, planning or bring in a guest speaker to help train the teachers on effective instruction."*

The rural school principals expressed the importance of effective instruction and the different layers within that instruction. Due to limited faculty members, carving out time during the day for intervention for the students is difficult. The rural school principals in this study worked with their school schedules and faculty to provide time for intervention.

Lithium HS principal reworked the school's schedule to provide more time for effective instruction:

"*We created a skinny period where we do remediation and enrichment, so the kids go to for example math remediation 30 minutes a day and once they have mastered the standards, then they can go to enrichment which is something they want to do like fishing class."*

Boron ES principal explained:

"I encourage specialists to come in and help the teachers with strategies to improve instruction, especially for those students that are struggling, and I implemented 30 minutes a day within our schedule to focus on math and reading. The teachers are able to use the strategies they learned within their small group sessions."

Nitrogen ES principal talks about the use of his faculty:

"I use the counselors, reading coaches, special education teachers and the speech teachers to help pull for intervention time. This allows the teachers to spiral the standards more effectively, so they can move forward, but the students also review old standards during intervention time."

Beryllium ES principle states:

"There is a need for consistency at the school with the schedules and the expectations of the teachers. Each new teacher is part of the buddy system, which is our mentoring program. Effective instruction comes from observing effective teaching as a new teacher."

Data Mining

When analyzing data from a variety of sources and working to find patterns from all the data collected is called data mining (Kumari, 2014). Data mining as it relates to the transformation turnaround model and the eight turnaround principles focuses on:

Transformation Turnaround model

1. Use data to identify and implement an instructional program that is research-based and vertically aligned from one grade to the next as well as aligned with State academic standards**.**
2. Promote the continuous use of student data (such as from formative, interim, and summative assessments) to inform and differentiate instruction to meet the academic needs of individual students.

Eight Turnaround Principles

1. Enable the effective use of data- use data to improve instruction and for continuous improvement, including by providing time for collaboration on the use of data.
2. Use data to implement an aligned instructional program; promote the use of data to inform and differentiated instruction.

The eleven rural school principals that were interviewed collected data from a wide variety of sources. Each of the sources used, helped promote the success of each of their schools. Almost all the schools are title I or receive some sort of federal assistance. Each school struggles with high percentages of students that require free/reduced meal assistance, declining enrollment, high absenteeism rates, economically disadvantaged students, and high special education populations.

The principals were able to combat these struggles with different strategies that fit the needs of their school.

Helium HS and Neon HS principals stated that redoing the schedule provided opportunities for reducing wasted instructional time, helped with transitions, provided more opportunity to attend the career technical center, reduce discipline issues and include intervention time during the school day which previously the schools did not have, but needed:

> *"We implemented a seven-period schedule with a zero period, what we call it. So, we would go first period, zero period, then second, third, fourth, fifth, you know. And during that zero period, we are doing intervention. All my teachers, they take their whole caseload, 25 kids, and they are doing IXL.com during that time. This helps with standard mastery."*

> *"The block scheduling helped in threefold because now we have the lack of minimal transition time, it helped us because our career tech was already on the block scheduling, the school was on periods, so the scheduling was a beast, so it dealt with the scheduling, and it maximized instruction time. Now we go from that 54 to 96-minute blocks. Now strategic teaching and intervention can happen, because the teachers can utilize the type of methods that they want to, due to the extra time."*

Nitrogen ES, Oxygen ES and Beryllium ES principals expressed the need to have the right people in the right place to generate student success and to constantly look at the data and be transparent with their faculty members to move towards growth:

> *"I didn't know that it was going to move the way that it moved, but the foundation was laid for the move when I moved the teachers for it to be possible. Those teachers had, had*

professional development. We had professional learning communities. We have looked at every type of strategy that we could for our weak areas. We have used different technical devices in conjunction with one-to-one teaching. And so, the foundation was there. Those teachers could have moved anywhere and still gotten that level of success. They needed to just be put in the right place, at the right time."

"I think that was one of the things that were missing and also the support of just dealing with student behavior, parent concerns, academic concerns, or woes, I should say. But with all of that, our goal was to go back and look at all of our data points, all of the data, make some changes based on data. We let data drive everything that we do around here via data meetings, grade level meetings or cross curriculum planning. We use data to help combat discipline issues and help our students deal with social and emotional issues. So, with the PD and all of that, I say that that's how some of our success stories started"

The data gathered from surveys given at the school and the community level also helped guide the schools toward success because having those transparent conversations with parents, students and stakeholders helps the school leadership fix perceived problems within the school.

"We do surveys throughout the year, which we get the input from parents, as well as teachers, and that's how we kind of drive that data from the survey into our plans. With all of that, the needs assessment, most of the time, our teachers are pretty good about just saying whatever it is that we need to kind of fix or work on, or it's not just one teacher problem, it's a school wide problem. So, we take that conversation that we have and put it into our plans, as well as what is going to be best for the entire school."

> *"We had to be able to recognize when seasons are changing and when times are changing, and we have to be ready to move with it. But at this point, the biggest hurdle for us will be to sustain where we are. Those practices that we implement, as far as what we are doing, as far as teaching standards, I had to get them out of the mindset, which is the teacher standards, your standards base. Okay. So, keeping that at the forefront. Keep that in the forefront of your stakeholders."*

The driving forces behind school decisions are data. All the eleven rural school principals in this research study felt utilizing the data helped with all facets within their school. Data, as stated above in the personal quotes, were used by each principal to make schedules, increase intervention time for struggling students, help with attendance and discipline issues, faculty placement within the school, college and career readiness, and increase transparency with the students, parents, and community about the needs of the students and the needs of the school. Success among each of these schools only started when the principals identified what the needs were, made a detailed plan and set their plan in motion.

Human Resources

Public School organizations should focus on building strong recruitment strategies to find top educational professionals to hire. This includes making changes in the way individuals are hired and retained within the school systems. "Investments in human capital improve organizational performance—including team effectiveness, employee retention, and innovation—in both the private and public sectors" (Crook et al., 2011). The eleven rural school principals all stated that they spent a lot of their time working on finding and hiring exceptional teachers for their schools.

Helium HS principal stated:

> *“Don’t settle for a mediocre staff, always push for the best.”*

Nitrogen ES principal explained:

> *"To help build a positive culture in your school, try to hire people with heart even if they don’t have the credentials.”*

Beryllium ES principal,

> *“Spend lots of time with the hiring process and make sure everyone gets two interviews. One with a panel and one just with me. I look for trainable people that can be molded and fit the culture of the school.”*

Heart, passion, and a willingness to be trained are all traits the principals were looking for. The researcher found that all the rural school principals wanted to hire only individuals that loved the students and the community.

Time Management

Effective time management is imperative in all schools, but especially in rural schools where the principal wears many hats. Most school principals, have obligations that stem from time sensitive tasks from the central office, managing their school operations, working with instructional coaches and intervention programs, while constantly working on building relationships with staff members (Horng et al., 2010). The need for the principal to prioritize daily tasks helps reduce stress and allows for a more laser focus on the goals the principal and school staff members aspire to obtain for their students.

Beryllium ES principal stated:

> *"Time management is very important because purposeful planning is important."*

Oxygen ES principal felt:

> *"Protecting instructional time is the most important, so we limit assemblies, not making announcements during the day and not allowing parents to bring in food for birthdays during the school day because a ten-minute break would turn into a 30-minute party."*

Neon HS principal expressed:

> *"The transformation academy taught me how to effectively multi-task and to put trust in my faculty to delegate some responsibilities to free up my time. I also learned how to stick to a schedule and not try to be everywhere at one time."*

All the principals in this research study felt it was important to constantly reflect upon your day-to-day tasks and how you can make your schedule benefit you and your school. Each of the rural school principals also stressed the importance of making time for family and self-care, because they felt your success as a principal stemmed from how you balanced your life.

Research Question Two: What factors do principals in the identified rural schools perceive as potential challenges to continuing their success?

Within every school, there are challenges to continuing to be successful, but this is especially true for rural schools due to extra external pressures each of these schools deal with daily. Rural schools' leaders struggle to recruit highly qualified individuals, the schools lack the ability to offer elective courses or dual enrollment courses and funding is a constant issue. Each rural school is unique, and the challenges that the eleven rural school principals faced in this

research study varied from school to school. Within the main themes, the principals listed hurdles they had to face and tackle within their schools and communities to sustain their success. Most of their challenges to sustain success in their schools fell into themes of: Environmental Factors, Human resources, and Leadership.

Environmental Factors

Many of the principals expressed how hard they must work with the parents and the community to encourage buy-in to the schools' vision and mission.

Helium HS principal stated he struggles with parents that do not see the value of education:

> *"One of our limiting factors is trying to get parents to see the importance of education because they are mostly crops and livestock farmers."*

Fluorine HS principal felt his biggest hurdle to our success was trying to keep the parents coming to the school:

> *"We struggle with keeping parents engaged and participating at the school once they get past 4th-grade. There is not a lot of support from home and the parents struggle with low educational level, so they are embarrassed to come."*

Oxygen ES and Neon HS principals also deal with very low participation from the parents:

> *"We struggle with getting our parents to participate at school for after school activities, tutoring due to transportation issues. Also, our teachers struggle with communicating with the parents because the parents are very transient and may not have a phone or internet access."*
>
> *"We struggled as a high school to get the parents to come, so we started family engagement nights like the elementary school and were able to get few more parents. I felt that was not good enough, so we started family engagement nights and targeted*

specific groups to make our parental involvement plan more intentional. Our first one was with seniors only and we focused on work keys since that was part of graduation and it was a success."

Nitrogen ES principal felt the school's biggest hurdle was parent communication:

"Our parents are confrontational and do not understand what the school and students need. It was our job to change the conversations the parents were having with the school related to their child."

The researcher found that most of the schools had issues with funding due to a lack of businesses in the area, so there is not a tax base. The principals expressed the need to constantly rely on grants and money from the federal government.

Lithium HS principal expressed that the school constantly struggles with finances:

"We are limited in the amount of money that we receive, and the county is not able to give us money to do things like mowing the grass or building maintenance. The county only has one maintenance worker for all seven schools in the county. So, we must fundraise and that helps us pay for some of the school's basic needs like the phone bill. As for the grass, we get volunteers from the community. If you school and grounds are maintained, then the kids are more likely to be proud of their school."

Helium HS principal stated:

"Funding limits use when we hire teachers that are certified or want to come to the area, because there is not enough funding per unit. This limits me to hiring only individuals with undergraduate degrees to keep the price down."

Leadership

Rural school principals have many challenges as the leaders of their schools. In many cases they are the only administrators on their campus, so they must handle everything that occurs each day to help the school move forward. Each principal is responsible for strategic planning for academic growth and achievement, effective instruction and professional development for staff members, observations and evaluations, school budget, building operations and maintenance, and working constantly to build relationships with students, parents, and the community. It is the job of the principal to communicate the mission and vision of the school constantly, build strength in the relationships with faculty and use a variety of strategies to help collaborate with parents, faculty, and the community (Wallin and Newton, 2013).

Carbon HS principal feels one of his biggest struggles is with the parents and as the leader of the school he must work closely with the parents to help the school move forward:

> "*My hurdle is helping parents support their student's learning and not the wanting to support but how to support them. We have provided opportunities for several informational meetings the parents can attend to learn about schedules, data, and technology. Collaboration with the parents has helped them understand their child's needs."*

Helium HS principal struggles with maintenance needs at the school because the school is seeing population growth:

> "*We are growing fast, and we are gaining kids and obviously not gaining those units in enough time, and our facility is too small. I have teachers not being able to go into their rooms on their planning period because their classroom is being used. We are running*

out of room to house our students and have no money to add onto the school or add teachers."

Nitrogen ES principal felt the schools greatest challenge was to continue to increase academics:

"*Our greatest struggle is to continue to increase academic achievement with a transient population. We have students that come to us behind the bar. Some go to head start and some do not, but we then get them on track and the parents relocate. The students are shuffled around and then come back to us behind again. This is a constant occurrence because the parents are always looking for better means of living, better job, or better housing. When it does not work, they come back and live with parents or grandparents, and the cycle starts all over. It is my job to make sure I know where they were when they left, so we can pick back up and help them when they come back."*

Beryllium ES principal believes that their struggle as a school is to maintain their success:

"We have achieved so much, but a hurdle for us at this point is to maintain and sustain what we have done and not to say, yes, we are here. To sustain the work and make sure that the practice that we have put in place and that we are operating to fidelity in those strategies."

Human Resources

Sodium ES principal felt the hiring needs of the school were a challenge:

"Hiring is difficult because we have few local applicants, and the larger counties get the first pick."

Neon HS principal struggled with finding good quality teacher applicants from outside the county:

"*Recruitment of teachers is hard because teachers do not want to drive that far, but I believe you do not want to mix the same blood in the pasture. You want to bring in a new bull now and then and that is the same for your teaching staff. You need individuals from outside the county with new and fresh ideas, and it eliminates the issues with family ties and family friends if you need to make tough decisions."*

Hydrogen HS principals' biggest obstacle is not being able to find any qualified applicants especially for math:

"I always tell the applicants to listen to me, and I explain that we do not have a McDonalds or a Wal-Mart and that is when most young applicants walkout. I have not had a certified math teacher in over two years, so that puts my students behind the eight ball already. How can you be competitive with everyone else if you do not have certified teachers? I combat this problem by using Teach for America (TFA) teachers. They only stay two years, but I am always able to have someone fill those positions."

Struggling with the finances of the school, not being able to hire or even find qualified candidates to move the school forward, and trying to work with parents that do not value education or struggle with illiteracy themselves places a huge burden on the schools and school leadership to move their school forward.

Research Question Three: Are there significant differences/similarities in how each school principal went about attaining turnaround success and sustaining it by using the transformation model and the eight turnaround principles?

The themes that were developed within this research study reflect what each of the eleven rural school principals felt were the most important factors to their success. Each theme is directly related to both the transformation turnaround model and the eight turnaround principles.

Five of the eleven rural school principals attended the transformation academy and their approach to planning and obtaining success within their school reflected the transformation turnaround model to create their strategic plan. All the rural school principals used parts of the transformation turnaround model along with the eight turnaround principles.

Differences in the Approach to Success

Within this study, the researcher found that five of the rural school principal's primary focus for school success was the environmental factors that surround the school. They each focused on the climate and culture of their schools first by building strong relationships with students, parents, faculty, and the community. This was their top priority in laying the foundation for their schools' success. The schools were Hydrogen HS, Beryllium ES, Oxygen ES, Nitrogen ES and Neon HS. All five of these principals participated in the transformation academy. Neon HS principal stated:

> *"If you don't build a creative culture that is inviting and makes everybody feel important , then none of the other stuff is effective."*

Oxygen ES felt climate and culture was such a priority he scheduled Saturday training sessions around it and invited the community:

> *" It was important that everyone first learned the difference between culture and climate even if we think we know, so it was important to get a company to come in and give our faculty and community a two-day professional development training so everyone was on the same page."*

Hydrogen HS and Beryllium ES felt strongly about how to change the community's perception of the students and the school:

"I deal with African American students, so I use teachings from Dr. Baruti Kafele. He talks about bridging the achievement gap and the attitude gap. I focus on our attitude toward our students, our attitudes towards our school, so I work on attitude gap because it exists. People have perceptions of us. This is the turnaround model I follow."

"Perception and how we treat everyone that comes to our campus. I will not have a toxic culture. We are professionals, and I do not deal well with toxic people. School culture and climate can make or break a building and your academic achievement."

Nitrogen ES principal needed to peel back the layers of embedded culture that was toxic to transform the school into a healthy environment for all that worked there:

"So, this school had a hidden culture that you are not able to see until you get there and spent some time. The teachers were good at hiding what they were not good at doing, so it came to a point that I had to take the shades off the individuals that felt they did everything right because it was a hindrance to our cause, and those teachers were judging others. This made for a difficult transition and shift in culture, but I kept telling them to listen to me and follow my directives and we will improve. Slowly the transition happened."

The other six schools had different priorities for their school's foundational success. Each of these schools focused on safety, hiring and more parental involvement.

Sodium ES and Boron ES felt they needed to build stronger relationships with parents to improve their support of the school:

"We encourage parents to visit the school on PTO nights and provide babysitters and food. This enables me to speak with parents freely about the need of the school and how

they can help. This helps build a stronger, more welcoming relationship with the parents."

"We have made an effort to welcome our parents every opportunity we can and encourage them to come and volunteer at the campus."

The principal Helium HS made his primary focus school transparency to all faculty and staff members and to focus on safety:

"We received a grant from the safe and civil schools' program, this has allowed us to have a true leadership team, a functioning team. We meet multiple times a month and constantly get stakeholder feedback and every person on the team had to go back to communicate with the stake holders. This helps everyone including the community know what is going on at the school. This has opened up many lines of communication for the school."

Carbon HS principal dedicated lots of time to building relationships with the students:

"Students have to know you truly care about them. I make it a point to listen and hear their side. I stress to my teachers to always say to our students stay focused on your goals and we can help them with other stressful situations in their lives. If the kids know you care, so do the parents and this builds even stronger relationships."

Both Fluorine HS and Lithium HS principals felt that the school's data is the most important aspect of building a school's academic success:

"Everything at a school has to be data driven and I hate using those words because everyone does. We try to focus on how our kids learn the best, and we try to provide the extra help they need each day to generate that success. That could be in the form of food for breakfast and lunch, or in the form of extra intervention time."

"Our goal is to provide as much support to the students as possible. We want to look at our data and help assist students get into college, apply for dual enrollment classes or get into trade school."

Summary

This chapter detailed the findings from every one of the electronic in-depth video conference interviews conducted with each of the eleven rural school principals. A chart that shows the success of each school is also included in this chapter to show the progression of success over four years. Each of the principals gave great insight on how they accomplished their goals for success and have maintained that success. The major themes of this study that directly correlate to the success of each school were: environmental factors, leadership, data mining, human resources, professional development/intervention, and time management. All eleven rural school principals felt the climate and culture of their school was in direct correlation to their success. This was the number one most referenced theme throughout this study. Most of the principal's time and effort was spent building up a strong positive culture within their school. This work also bled over into the community. Each principal felt it was their responsibility to make sure all stakeholders became vested in the school and saw the value of the vision each principal aspired to obtain. Within a school that is performing well, you will see collaboration among staff members, you will see staff members working on multiple tasks for the betterment of the school and the students, and you will see a healthy culture of professional educators that are sharing the workload so the school can progress forward (Wilcox et al., 2014). Each principal stressed how important it is to build trust within the community, so the lines of communication can be open to increase dialogue between the students, parents, teachers, and stakeholders.

Almost all the principals struggled with finances and having the funds to provide the resources their teachers and staff needed to be successful. Each principal spoke on having to write grants, have fundraisers, rely on federal funds, and ask for money or resources directly from the community to get what they need for the school. They also each spoke on how it is a struggle to find qualified teachers for all subject areas for the school to hire. Rural areas do not attract applicants due to the lack of amenities and housing, or it is too far a drive from urban areas, especially for younger teachers. Due to the lack of applicants and not enough faculty members, many rural schools cannot offer electives or career tech courses. The lack of options limits the student's exposure to possible career opportunities.

About half of the principals interviewed for this study attended the transformation academy. The principals that attended this academy all had similar leadership styles and all predominately focused on their school's climate and culture, but the principals that did not attend the academy each had a different focus that led them to success within their school. All the principals used parts of the transformation turnaround model and the eight turnaround principles, but none of them used all the transformation turnaround model or the eight turnaround principles to fidelity. Each of the principals were highly passionate about their school and the communities they served. Each principal was very transparent and candid about their school's struggles, but equally compelled to constantly chip away at those issues until they are fixed. Each principal was open about how they must work tirelessly to continue their success and that quitting is never an option.

Chapter V: Conclusion

This study focused on eleven rural school principals and their path to success and sustainability within their schools using the transformation turnaround model in conjunction with the eight turnaround principles. Each principal gave detailed descriptions of their experiences working on turning around their school and sustaining success. Within this study, the researcher was able to identify challenges each school faced and document each principal's method of facing those challenges head on. This chapter summarizes the highlights of this study and depicts important conclusions brought about by the information within chapter four. The goal behind this research is that other rural schools can benefit from the methods each of these schools used and identify challenges ahead of time and be proactive with strategies to combat those challenges. This chapter also provides recommendations for future research related to this topic.

The evidence collected for this research study was collected from two main sources, which included the electronic video interviews with each of the eleven rural school principals and the Alabama State report card, which lists individual school data from the past four years. This includes the academic achievement scores, growth scores, attendance percentages, demographics for both faculty and students, and the proficiency percentages in both math and reading for each school. After interviewing each of the principals and transcribing their responses, the researcher was able to identify emerging themes from the information collected. Each of those themes helped answer the overarching research questions in this study which are stated in chapter IV. Within this chapter, the researcher identifies the major findings within this study, reflects on the conceptual framework, and suggests recommendations for continued areas of research related to this topic.

Research Study Findings

This research study focused on the perspectives of eleven Alabama rural school principals and what they truly believed lead their school to success and will allow them to sustain that success over the coming years. Each of the principals granted the researcher great insight into the hard work it takes for rural schools to continuously push their faculty and staff towards excellence for each of their students. The information gathered from each principal and the data obtained from the Alabama State Department school report card for each individual school for the past four years, clearly documents the hard work and triumphs of each rural school within this study. The following is a list of findings directly related to each of the research questions within this study.

Research Question One: What factors do principals in rural schools perceive as the contributing reasons to their success using the transformation model?

Each of the eleven school principals identified six themes that contributed to the success of their schools. The themes are environmental factors, leadership, data mining, professional development/effective instruction, human resources, and time management. Each of these themes are directly related to the transformation turnaround model strategies for success. Each of the rural school principals within this study expressed the following similar reasons that contributed to their success. The environmental factors that helped each of the rural schools within this research study achieve success related to constant communication with faculty, parents, students, and stakeholders. Each principal stressed the importance and top priority of building strong relationships with the parents and the community. Making sure the community was built around the school and strong partnerships were formed with the community. Each principal stressed the importance of cultivating a family atmosphere within the school and

community. School faculty and staff encourage families to come to the school and participate in school activities. Each rural school principal also stressed the importance of providing one to one technology for each of the students. Researchers Barley and Beesley (2007) stressed the importance of rural educators and their families cultivating strong ties with the committees they serve; those bonds help build trust between the educators and the community stakeholders.

Strong leadership is also a key component to the success of all the rural schools in this study. Each of the principals showed so much passion and pride for their schools. Rural school leaders are tenacious and put their heart and soul into their work each day. When a leader is committed to a school and community, they are less likely to leave that school and community (Meyer & Allen, 1997). They push for the success of the students, faculty, and community. Rural school principals embed themselves and their family in the community to build trust, and they spend most of their time at school events, church events, and community activities. The rural school principals within this research study stressed the importance of being a servant leader and inspiring faculty to believe in the school and the students. They encourage their teachers to take personal ownership of helping promote the school's success. The administrator's ability to empower the teachers to help with decision making is a successful strategy within the school to allow for more participation from the faculty and staff to support the goals of the school (Scribner et al., 2001).

Both the Transformation turnaround model and the eight turnaround principles stress the importance of data mining as a driving force to guide schools toward success. The data do not just include the academic achievement of the students, but also the social and emotional needs of each of the students. The school must create motivational programs that help students feel a sense of belonging and help them build confidence toward success. All the rural school

principals in this study stated they use data driven instruction to guide their school toward success. Every school had monthly data meetings with faculty to help guide the work that needed to be done in the school. Each of the rural school principals stressed the need to create initiatives, programs, and rewards to promote student success. If students have a true connection and feel safe in their school and their communities, this leads to greater academic, social, and emotional stability (Fitzgerald et. al., 2014). Rural school leaders use a variety of intervention strategies based on student data to help students succeed. Each principal focused on strategic scheduling to include more intervention time during the day and worked to develop afterschool programs that not only supported academic deficiencies, but also included real-world exposure activities such as teaching ballet, tennis, golf and mentorship programs with university partners, fishing, and shadowing programs with corporations. Each principal stressed the importance of providing experiences for the students to help broaden their knowledge of what is out there not only for career purposes, but also enjoyment of life. Students in rural school systems tend to be nervous and lack the confidence to explore career options and educational options outside of their communities, mostly of the fear of the unknown. The rural school principals in this study felt a true obligation to all their students to make them as well rounded as possible academically and socially to build their students confidence, so they are willing to explore career options outside of the community.

Professional development and effective instruction go hand in hand, especially within a rural school. The rural school principals within this research study stated that providing quality professional development for their teachers is a struggle and getting creative with resources, using innovative scheduling and networking with outside organizations is the only way to help assist the teachers with their professional development needs. Each principal interviewed within

this study developed a unique schedule to help assist not only the students with more intervention time, but also the teachers with professional development time and collaboration time with their peers. Each principal created schedules' that allow for professional development during the day and that could be in the form of an early release day, skinny period, or grade level/subject area rotation meetings. Carving out this time during the day allowed for teachers to work with one another and not have to stay after school for training when they are exhausted from the day. The principals worked directly with their central office staff to provide teachers with the professional development training they need regarding effective instruction. Some of the principals also scheduled professional development on Saturdays to help benefit the teachers, but also allowed the parents to join in the professional develop opportunities. Including the parents helped the teachers feel supported and helped the community understand what the school leadership was striving for related to all the students. Quality professional development is not only important for the teachers, but also school leadership. Alabama State Department of Education provided some of the rural principals in this research study, the opportunity to attend the transformation academy and provided additional support to those principals within their schools. The principals that attended this training felt it gave them a better framework to use to help guide their school to success. The principals that attended this training were nominated by their superintendents.

Human resource procedures are different in all school systems but recruiting and hiring faculty members, especially within a rural school system is extremely challenging due to a lack of applicants. Researchers Defeo and Tran (2019) state that hiring procedures can limit your selection of candidates and impact the quality of educational instruction for each student. All eleven principals in this study felt the ability to hire faculty and staff for their school was a huge

benefit. The principals were able to find the right individual for their school and the community. Also, the ability to utilize the Teach for America program has enabled rural schools the ability to fill faculty positions that the school has not been able to fill with a certified teacher. Rural school principals push and spend time hiring individuals that are dedicated and have a heart for the job. Individuals that want to be part of the school family. Research shows that hiring individuals that become connected to the community and feel a sense of place will stay within those communities (Knapp, 2014; Smith & Sobel, 2014). To help embed new faculty in the community, they must be given time to meet, learn and develop relationships with the other faculty members, parents, and stakeholders (Guin, 2004). Each rural school principal in this study felt effective hiring was a major factor to their success as a school.

Effective time management is crucial to the success of any school leader, but especially for rural school leadership, because they are the driving force of the school. The rural school principals within this study felt once they prioritized how they utilized their time during the day greatly contributed to the success of the school. Each of the principals that attended the transformation academy felt the strategies given to them for time management enabled them to better complete multiple things throughout the day. They felt once they found a balance between assisting the needs of the faculty and staff, community needs and personal needs, their stress levels went down, and the overwhelming feeling of going in circles each day went away. Effective time management allowed the principals to departmentalize their day for the completion of tasks. Time management was also important for the faculty to protect instructional time. The principals focused on effective scheduling, which included more professional development for teachers during the school day. Helping teachers with time management by protecting instructional time and observation time by limiting assemblies, class parties, and calls

that interrupt class. ach rural school principal also delegated more effectively certain school responsibilities to create more trust among faculty and staff members. Using faculty members purposefully in the school for intervention, instruction, counseling, and extracurricular activities. Each of these obligations helped strengthen relationships within the school and helped the school move toward success.

Each of the components listed above are major factors of the transformation model and the eight turnaround principals. Each of the eleven rural school principals firmly believed that each of these components are the major factors that lead to their success over the past four years and will help each of them continue that success.

Research Question Two: What factors do principals in the identified rural schools perceive as potential challenges to continuing their success?

Each principal in this study felt they face many challenges each day that affect their success. The main challenges are focused on scheduling, effective hiring, limited tax base and limited bandwidth and internet connection available to students around the county. Each of these areas greatly affect the principal's ability to push for success and to maintain that success within the school.

Rural schools struggle with creating schedules that benefit both the teachers and the students. Due to small faculties and a lack of qualified teaching applicants, many of the faculty member must teach multiple courses, and many of those courses are outside of their certification qualifications. Plus having a small faculty limits the number of electives and intervention courses, if any, that can be offered. With limited courses available to students and teachers teaching outside of their certification area, this reduces the academic and educational exposure

elective courses can provide to students. Thus, not being able to offer additional courses to students affects their career selections as they get older. Also, the additional burden of teaching extra courses and taking on additional responsibilities around the school, causes higher rates of burnout amongst teachers and creates greater teacher turnover. If a school cannot or does not find faculty members that are passionate about the school, community, and students, then it directly affects the climate and culture of the school.

Hiring qualified teachers and providing professional development are also on going challenges the rural principals in this study face daily. Both elements directly affect the success of the school. The rural school environment is very different than an urban school environment, and teachers looking to move to a rural area must be prepared for distrust from the community initially (Barley,2009). Teachers new to the area must build relationships with both faculty members and the community to fit in (Barley, 2009). For example, in rural communities, there is a lack of certified math and science teachers, so schools either go with unqualified applicants or are forced to use remote learning. Rural school principals must pick and choose professional development training based on funding and not every teacher is provided what they need to support instruction in their classroom. So even if the teachers are provided new programs or initiatives to help their students, they are not given professional development or time to learn the program so they can effectively help their students. Also having limited faculty members and most of the time only one administrator on campus hinders the availability of providing intervention time for the students as well. This causes huge problems with hiring because the rural school principals in this study were instructed to only hire individuals with undergraduate degrees because they cost less, but this also means they are the least experienced. Without the ability to provide strong professional development and mentoring to new teachers, those new

teachers struggle, become overwhelmed and eventually resign. Schools, especially rural schools, need a healthy mixture of both veteran and novice teachers to generate new ideas, but to also give the school stability.

Funding is a challenge in rural communities and directly affects a school's success. Most rural schools lack businesses in the community to generate any tax base to help the schools. Also, the property taxes collected within the county do very little to support the schools in the county. This lack of funding directly affects the rural school principal's ability to support new initiatives that will help the school succeed. The principals within this study stated that they receive support from the federal government but have limited funds from the state or the county. They rely heavily on grants to fill in the funding gaps and rely on educational partnerships with Universities to help support professional development needs for the teachers and exploration/exposure lessons for students. Most of the principals stated that they have all the technology they need and each of the eleven schools in this study are one to one with devices for the students, but because of the way federal money and state money is earmarked, they are not able to provide the professional development needed to use all these devices. Many of the teachers and students do not use the devices to their full potential because they do not know how to use them effectively. Another struggle is bandwidth and internet connections throughout rural communities. The students may be able to use their device at school but are unable to use it at home. This greatly limits the students and teachers because remote learning is nearly impossible, students are not able to complete lessons within an online platform, and students are not able to complete research. Sparsely populated rural areas struggle with receiving broadband capability, this is due to the distance between houses which increases the cost of the installation of wireline for the companies and decreases their profit margin (Kruger & Gilroy, 2012). Some of the

communities have been able to implement hot spots for students to use, but most of the students have transportation issues which limits them from traveling to the hot spots or being able to stay after school to use the internet.

Research question three: Are there significant differences/similarities in how each school principal went about attaining turnaround success and sustaining it by using the transformation model and the eight turnaround principles?

The transformation turnaround model incorporates several key items such as removing the principal unless that individual has been in place for less than two years, embed a reward system for faculty that are seeing increases in student achievement, develop strategies that increase effective instruction, focus on schedules to protect instructional time, and provide on the job professional development (O'Brien & Dervarics, 2013). The eight turnaround principles focus on school leadership, school climate and culture, effective instruction, curriculum, assessment and intervention systems, effective staffing practices, effective use of data, time management, and family and community engagement (Indiana Department of Education, 2018; Lefloch et al., 2016). The transformation turnaround model used with the eight turnaround principles provides a solid framework to guide a school towards success.

The schools within this research study used most but not all the transformation model, especially when in the model it states to remove the principal and replace some of the faculty, but rural communities and schools constantly struggle with retaining faculty and staff members. So instead of removing these individuals from their school, they were provided quality professional development and support to help faculty and staff strengthen their instructional skills. The eight turnaround principles help provide a framework of strategies that support the transformation turnaround model. Utilizing both the transformation turnaround model and the

eight turnround principles would provide any school a strong platform to build success and to maintain it year to year.

All eleven rural school principals in this research study used parts of the transformation turnaround model, but not the entire model. Only one school removed the principal, but all the schools maintained most of the school's faculty members. The only significant difference in the pathway to success for each school was that five principals in this study completed the transformation academy versus six of the principals did not attend the academy. Each of the five rural school principals that attended the transformation academy developed their school success by following the framework of the model. Their focus was on building relationships, perception of the school in the community, and the climate and culture of their school. During the conversations for each electronic interview, each of the rural school principals that attended the transformation academy would revisit the need to build relationships in the community and the climate and culture of the school. They each stressed how much that lead to their school's success. All the principals within this research study felt building relationships and the school's climate and culture were important factors for success, but only the principals that attended the transformation academy felt it was the main component of their success. The other six principals felt that focusing on hiring certified faculty, correcting discipline issues within their school, and acquiring funds to help support professional development needs were the major factors that contributed to their success.

All eleven principals struggled with finding quality and certified faculty members. They each felt this was a huge issue for rural school systems. Each of the principals felt developing the faculty members already at the school was more beneficial than trying to find new individuals to

fill the vacancies. The rural school principals in this study also felt finding someone with heart and passion for teaching students in rural communities was a key player.

Some of the other differences between the five rural school principals that attended the transformation academy and the six that did not relate to school discipline. The six rural school principals that did not attend the transformation academy training felt their schools needed to first fix any discipline issue within the school and change the mindset of what was expected by both the faculty and staff. One school included the "Safe and Civil School Program" created by Randy Sprick. This program looks at not only classroom discipline, but also the common areas around the school. This program promotes a safe environment for all students to learn regardless of if they are in the common areas or the classroom. These six principals felt it was important to transform the perception of the school for both the faculty and the students.

The six principals spent a lot of time recruiting and hiring professional educators and provide high quality professional development for their teachers to help promote instruction. Targeting the needs of the teachers first would provide better and more engaging instruction for the students. Focusing on professional development needs also helped teachers build more confidence in their ability to provide better intervention lessons to shore up deficiency in learning and content gaps.

Finally, all eleven rural school principals in this study felt funding was an issue at their school, but the six principals that did not attend the transformation academy made funding one of their primary focuses. The six principals actively networked in the community for funding by partnering with local colleges and universities and focusing on grant writing for additional funding. Each of the six principals felt strongly that having those additional funds for

professional development, campus maintenance and beautification, and support of new programs helped their school be successful and is helping maintain that success.

Limitations and Future Research Considerations

This research study opens a wide variety of potential future research options that relate to rural schools. This study was limited because the focus was only on the perceptions of eleven Alabama rural school principals that have been successful with using the transformation turnaround model in conjunction with the eight turnaround principles. This study did not take into consideration any other rural school principals. Further research could be conducted on other successful rural schools throughout the state that have not used any turnaround model. Half of Alabama is considered rural, so the struggles and success stories could be told by many principals around the state.

The first potential research study comes from the differences between the eleven school principals within this study. Five of the principals attended the transformation academy training in the state and the other six did not. Would the transformation academy have helped the six principals that did not attend the training? Were all the principals in the state successful after attending the transformation academy, or if they were not, what limited their success?

The second potential study comes directly from the principals and their career backgrounds. The six principals that did not attend the transformation academy each had previous careers either in the military or in finance. Each of them was not originally from the rural community they work in. The opposite is true for the five principals that attended the transformation academy. All five are career educators and live and work in the rural area they grew up in. Both groups of principals have led their schools to success, but one group did it

through discipline and funding the other group through community relationships and positive school culture. Researching whether having experience gained from a previous career is more beneficial to a school leader for success and sustainability or being originally from that rural area and spending your entire career in education would help the school leader be more successful.

The third option for research could be related to leadership styles of African American rural school principals versus White rural school principals. Most of the African American principals within this study relied heavily on building relationships with faculty, students, and the community to move their school towards success. In contrast, the Caucasian principals relied heavily on networking with local businesses, finance and grant writing, and expectations of discipline within the school to help guide them to success.

School improvement grants (SIG) are provided to schools that embark on the school turnaround process. This funding includes resources and additional support from both federal and state agencies. Future research should be conducted every two years to ascertain if each rural school principal within this study has sustained success once the funding and additional resources are no longer provided.

Conclusion

This study showed the tenacity and true passion rural school principals have for their schools and communities. The perceptions of each of the eleven principals within this study gave a rare glimpse into their struggles and ultimate triumphs within their schools for each of their faculty, students, and the community. Most of the principals expressed their dread and anxiety when requested to be part of this study, because they did not feel they were successful and that they still had more work to be done. Once they completed the electronic interview, several of the

principals felt relieved and were surprised by how much they had accomplished at their respected schools. One principal stated,

"Wow I feel so much better getting that all off my chest. I cannot believe all that we have done because I have never had anyone ask me to talk about my school. I feel rejuvenated and cannot wait to do more."

Each rural school has a unique set of struggles and the transformation turnaround model along with the eight turnaround principles can help assist schools by giving them a framework to start from. Also, the perceptions of each of these eleven rural school principals should give other rural school leaders strength to know that success and sustainability can be accomplished, but it takes many hours of hard work, dedicated faculty and staff, and a belief that it can be done.

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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 2.5.2020 **Submit completed form to IRBsubmit@auburn.edu.**

Complete this form using Adobe Acrobat Writer ***(versions 5.0 and greater).*** *Hand written copies not accepted.*

1. **PROPOSED START DATE of STUDY:** April 2020 **Today's Date:** February 2020

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

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

2. **PROJECT TITLE:**

3.				
Renee LaBaza Tucker	Doctoral Student	EFLT	ral0026@auburn.edu
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR	TITLE	DEPT	AU E-MAIL
156 Hermitage Pass, Wetumpka, Al. 36093		334-414-0050	renee.tucker@elmoreco.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). _____

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.

Version Date (date document created): February 2020

The Auburn University Institutional Review Board has approved this Document for use from 05/06/2020 to _____
Protocol # 20-201 EP 2005

page x of

Appendix B
Informed Consent

AUBURN UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS, 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
A Descriptive Case Study of the Perceptions of Rural School Principals that utilized the Transformation Turnaround Model for School Success and Sustainability.

You are invited to participate in a research study to describe how rural school principals utilize the transformation turnaround model to gain success and sustain that success each year. The study is being conducted by Renee LaBaza Tucker, Doctoral student, under the direction of Dr. Ellen Reames, Professor, in the Auburn University Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology. You were selected as a possible participant because you are serving as a rural school principal and are age 19 or older.

What will be involved if you participate? If you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to answer interview questions about your experiences as a rural school principal with implementing the transformation turnaround model in your school. The interview process will be a guided interview based on an arranged location and an established format. Your anonymity will be protected. The interview will be recorded by using a digital recorder, transcribed, and each recording will be coded. The recording will be heard only by the principal investigator and the transcriber. The recording and all transcribed information will be destroyed after the research study is completed. Your total time commitment will be approximately one hour.

Are there any risks or discomforts? There are no foreseen risks associated with this study except for the possibility of breach of confidentiality. All information collected during this study will be kept confidential. Information will be reported in an anonymous manner and no identifiable information will be used. All information collected in this study will be kept anonymous. Are there any benefits to yourself or others? If you participate in this study, you can expect to contribute to the knowledge of school turnaround as a rural principal, which will benefit future rural school principals and educational research.

Will you receive compensation for participating? If you decide to participate, there will be no compensation given in this study and no associated cost. If you change your mind about participating, you can withdraw at any time. 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 to participate or to stop participating will not jeopardize your future relations with Auburn University, the Department of Educational Foundations Leadership and Technology.

4036 Haley Center, Auburn, AL 36849-5221; Telephone: 334-844-4460: Fax: 334-844-3072

www.auburn.edu

Appendix C

Sig Transformation Model

SIG Transformation Model – Required and Permissible Activities

https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2015/02/09/2015-02570/final-requirements-school-improvement-grants-title-i-of-the-elementary-and-secondary-education-act

Required Activities

1. Replace the principal who led the school prior to commencement of the transformation model.

2. Implement rigorous, transparent, and equitable evaluation and support systems for teachers and principals, designed and developed with teacher and principal involvement, that a. Will be used for continual improvement of instruction;
b. Meaningfully differentiate performance using at least three performance levels;
c. Use multiple valid measures in determining performance levels, including as a significant factor data on student growth (as defined in these requirements) for all students (including English learners and students with disabilities), and other measures of professional practice (which may be gathered through multiple formats and sources), such as observations based on rigorous teacher performance standards, teacher portfolios, and student and parent surveys;
d. Evaluate teachers and principals on a regular basis;
e. Provide clear, timely, and useful feedback, including feedback that identifies needs and guides professional development; and
f. Will be used to inform personnel decisions.

3. Use the teacher and principal evaluation and support system described to identify and reward school leaders, teachers, and other staff who, in implementing this model, have increased student achievement and high school graduation rates and identify and remove those who, after ample opportunities have been provided for them to improve their professional practice, have not done so.

4. Provide staff ongoing, high-quality, job-embedded professional development (*e.g.,* regarding subject-specific pedagogy, instruction that reflects a deeper understanding of the community served by the school, or differentiated instruction) that is aligned with the school's comprehensive instructional program and designed with school staff to ensure they are equipped to facilitate effective teaching and learning and have the capacity to implement successfully school reform strategies.

5. Implement such strategies as financial incentives, increased opportunities for promotion and career growth, and more flexible work conditions that are designed to recruit, place, and retain staff with the skills necessary to meet the needs of students in the school, taking into consideration the results from the teacher and principal evaluation and support system.

6. Use data to identify and implement an instructional program that is research-based and vertically aligned from one grade to the next as well as aligned with State academic standards**.**

7. Promote the continuous use of student data (such as from formative, interim, and summative assessments) to inform and differentiate instruction in order to meet the academic needs of individual students.

8. Establish schedules and strategies that provide increased learning time, meaning using a longer school day, week, or year schedule to significantly increase the total number of school hours to include additional time for a. Instruction in one or more core academic subjects, including English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography;

b. Instruction in other subjects and enrichment activities that contribute to a well-rounded education, including, for example, physical education, service learning, and experiential and work-based learning opportunities that are provided by partnering, as appropriate, with other organizations; and
c. Teachers to collaborate, plan, and engage in professional development within and across grades and subjects**.**

9. Provide ongoing mechanisms for family and community engagement.

10. Give the school sufficient operational flexibility (such as staffing, calendars/time, and budgeting) to implement fully each element of the transformation model to substantially improve student achievement outcomes and increase high school graduation rates.
11. Ensure that the school receives ongoing, intensive technical assistance and related support from the LEA, the SEA, or a designated external lead partner organization (such as a school turnaround organization or EMO).

Permissible Activities
1. Providing additional compensation to attract and retain staff with the skills necessary to meet the needs of the students in a transformation school.

2. Instituting a system for measuring changes in instructional practices resulting from professional development

3. Ensuring that the school is not required to accept a teacher without the mutual consent of the teacher and principal, regardless of the teacher's seniority.

4. Conducting periodic reviews to ensure that the instruction is implemented with fidelity to the selected curriculum, is having the intended impact on student achievement, and is modified if ineffective.

5. Implementing a schoolwide ''response-to-intervention'' model (required in Alabama).

6. Providing additional supports and professional development to teachers and principals in order to implement effective strategies to support students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment and to ensure that English learners acquire language skills to master academic content.

7. Using and integrating technology-based supports and interventions as part of the instructional program.

8. In secondary schools— **a.** Increasing rigor by offering opportunities for students to enroll in advanced coursework (such as Advanced Placement; International Baccalaureate; or science, technology, engineering, and mathematics courses, especially those that incorporate rigorous and relevant project-, inquiry-, or design-based contextual learning opportunities), early-college high schools, dual enrollment programs, or thematic learning academies that prepare students for college and careers, including by providing appropriate supports designed to ensure that low-achieving students can take advantage of these programs and coursework;
b. Improving student transition from middle to high school through summer transition programs or freshman academies;
c. Increasing graduation rates through, for example, credit-recovery programs, re-engagement strategies, smaller learning communities, competency-based instruction and performance-based assessments, and acceleration of basic reading and mathematics skills; or
d. Establishing early-warning systems to identify students who may be at risk of failing to achieve to high standards or graduate.

9. Partnering with parents and parent organizations, faith- and community-based organizations, health clinics, other State or local agencies, and others to create safe school environments that meet students' social, emotional, and health needs.

10. Extending or restructuring the school day so as to add time for such strategies as advisory periods that build relationships between students, faculty, and other school staff.

11. Expanding the school program to offer full-day kindergarten or prekindergarten.

12. Allowing the school to be run under a new governance arrangement, such as a turnaround division within the LEA or SEA.

13. Implementing a per-pupil, school-based budget formula that is weighted based on student needs.