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## The evaluation of school principals and its effects on transformational leadership

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## ABSTRACT

### THE EVALUATION OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AND ITS EFFECTS ON TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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Principals are leading schools during a time of continuous change. Society, students, and expectations are always evolving and school principals are focusing much of their work on transforming their students and schools. However, prior to the 21<sup>st</sup> century there was little attention paid to the performance evaluation of school principals. The Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA) enacted new law on how principals are to be evaluated in Illinois. This study researches the influence that the performance evaluation process, under the constraints of PERA, has on the transformational leadership abilities of school principals. This study also researches the influence of the evaluator-principal relationship on the principal's transformational leadership abilities. It concludes with findings that support the use of many of the practices embedded in PERA paired with the development of supportive relationships between evaluator and principal.

NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY  
DEKALB, ILLINOIS

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THE EVALUATION OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AND ITS EFFECTS ON  
TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

BY

CHRISTOPHER R. SILAGI  
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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
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DEPARTMENT OF LEADERSHIP, EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY, AND  
FOUNDATIONS

Doctoral Co-Directors:  
Kelly Summers and Stephen M. Tonks

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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my loving family. Specifically, this is dedicated to my loving wife, Mary and my two beautiful children, Keegan and Noelle.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

School leadership plays a significant role in the educational process and can have a significant impact on student learning outcomes (Mendels & Mitgang, 2013). Second to the classroom teacher, the school principal has the greatest effect on a child's learning (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2006). The role of the school principal is wide ranging and critical. The school principal can have a direct or indirect effect on virtually all aspects of education in K-12 schools, including school culture, teacher confidence and motivation, instructional practice, and community relations (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999).

However, prior to the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century there was little emphasis in the education field on the performance evaluation of school principals. School districts across the country utilized a variety of evaluation processes and tools, and little research regarding evaluation systems was available (Clifford, Hansen, & Wraight, 2012). The relevance of school leadership is inarguable, and yet there has been a long-standing disconnect between leadership and performance evaluation assessment (Derrington & Sharratt, 2008). Specific to Illinois, mandates to principal performance evaluation were not formally introduced until the Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA) of 2011. PERA mandates the final summative evaluation of principals must be completed no later than March 1 of the current school year. PERA stipulates that there shall be two parts to a principal's performance evaluation. Part one is based on student

achievement, which accounts for no less than 30% of the final summative evaluation rating. The second part of the performance evaluation is based on the professional practice standards outlined by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) and must account for a minimum of 50% of the final summative performance evaluation rating; however, districts can choose which section should account for more. PERA mandates the final performance evaluation ratings must fall into one of four categories: Unsatisfactory, Needs Improvement, Proficient, or Excellent. In addition, the principal must complete a self-assessment that also must be considered in determining the final rating.

PERA provided a shift in accountability not only for principals but also for those who evaluate them. Evaluators are now held to a prescribed format in which to evaluate and assess principals. Performance evaluation can be utilized to guide professional learning or improve the organization as a whole, or used as a performance evaluation tool (Portin, Feldman, & Knapp, 2006). Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) identify transformational leadership styles as the ideal type of leadership and argue efforts should be put forth to improve the transformational leadership abilities of our school leaders.

### Theoretical Constructs

Transformational leaders inspire and motivate followers while also successfully implementing change in schools (Leithwood, 1994). Transformation occurs within organizations when followers sacrifice their individual wants and desires for the greater benefit of their organization (Bass, 1985). Transformational leaders have a great effect on followers' motivation, effort, and productivity (Bass, 1985). Leithwood and colleagues (1999) suggest transformational leadership is the preferred model for educational leadership because schools are

undergoing great change due to public and political pressures. Thus, transformational leaders are needed to lead our schools through such complex changes. Bass's model of leadership includes components that he defines as both transformational and transactional. The transformational leadership components within his model are charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration. For example, transformational leaders typically use their charisma to inspire their followers to sacrifice personal wants for the greater good of the organization. In addition, they understand the individual needs of each follower and they provide individualized mentorship (Bass, 1985). The transactional leadership components are contingent reward and management by exception. For example, transactional leadership typically involves the exchange of promises and rewards between the follower and leader. The leader rewards the follower with recognition or money for their achievement of a goal (Bass, 1985). Bass developed the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) to measure leadership behaviors. The MLQ can be completed by followers or by the leader himself. The MLQ has been utilized in the study of transformational leadership in business, politics, and education (Bass, 1985).

Leithwood extended Bass's (1985) theory of transformational leadership to look specifically at the education field. Components of successful transformational leadership include building school vision and goals, providing intellectual stimulation, offering individualized support, symbolizing professional practices and values, demonstrating high performance expectations, and developing structures to foster participation in school decisions (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). Leithwood and Jantzi's (2000) theory of transformational leadership rests on the assumption that school leaders are leading during a time of immense change that includes more accountability, a demand for community input, and changes in the structuring of schools.

Bass (1985) and Leithwood (1994) have found that transformational leadership is a preferred leadership style for school leaders. Bass's development and use of the MLQ in education and non-education fields has demonstrated the effect transformational leaders have on followers' efforts and motivation. Leithwood's (1994) specific focus on educational leaders and transformation in schools further supports Bass's theory.

### Problem Statement

The principal plays a pivotal role in the success of Illinois schools, and yet little attention has been paid to how principal performance is evaluated (Clifford et al., 2012). While PERA provides guidelines for evaluating principals, there is little evidence that such guidelines positively affect principals' transformational leadership abilities. In today's changing educational climate, transformational leaders are needed more than ever (Leithwood, 1994). Thus, knowing what components of PERA have the greatest effect on principals' transformational leadership abilities is essential to the continued improvement of Illinois schools.

### Purpose

Transformational leadership style has been found to be an effective leadership style for school principals (Leithwood et al., 1999). It has also been found to be a prerequisite leadership style for shared leadership (Marks & Printy, 2003). The professional growth of school principals is essential because of the important role they play in education. One way to promote professional growth is through the evaluation process (Mendels & Mitgang, 2013). The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of the performance evaluation process on principals'

transformational leadership abilities. Additionally, this study explored how the supervisor-principal relationship affects the leadership abilities of the principal.

### Significance of the Study

This study is significant because a principal's leadership has an effect on student learning, the school culture, teacher motivation, and community relations (Leithwood et al., 1999; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2006). Transformational leadership has been found to be a successful leadership model in education (Bass, 1985). Leadership assessment plays an important role in promoting the professional growth of school principals (Portin et al., 2006). Thus, understanding how principal evaluation affects transformational leadership abilities will enable supervisors to better enhance the professional growth of school principals while working under the guidelines of PERA.

### Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are principals' perceptions of the evaluation process?
2. What influence does the evaluation process have on a principal's transformational leadership abilities?
3. Are there specific components of the evaluation process that have a greater influence on a principal's transformational leadership abilities than others?
4. What influence does the supervisor-principal relationship have on a principal's transformational leadership abilities?

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Transformational Leadership Theory

James Macgregor Burns explored leadership theory through the examination of political leaders in history. Prior to what is now known as transformational leadership, Burns (1978) used the term “transforming leadership.” In his 1978 book *Leadership*, transforming leadership occurs when one or more persons engage in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality. Transforming leadership is focused on broad goals such as justice and equality, and in transforming leadership individuals put aside personal interests for the pursuit of higher goals for the organization (Burns, 1978). Burns describes transforming leaders as differentiators of their leadership style to meet followers’ preferences. In adjusting to their followers, transforming leaders demonstrate they can anticipate responses from followers. Their adjustment is for unifying individuals toward common goals or purpose in the organization (Burns, 1978).

Burns’s (1978) review and theory of leadership also included the idea of transactional leadership, which “occurs when one person takes the initiative in making contact with others for the purpose of an exchange of valued things” (p. 19). In historical context, Burns notes this occurred when the colonists gave beads to Native Americans in exchange for real estate. In such an instance, both leaders’ groups benefitted from the transaction. Burns believed transformational and transactional leadership to be at opposite ends of a leadership spectrum.

The difference between transactional and transformational leadership is that transactional leadership is only an exchange of something of value, while transformational leadership asks for sacrifices from followers within an organization. Burns (1978) theorized that transformational leadership was needed to promote change or establish mass movements. Burns theorized that transactional and transformational leadership functioned separately from one another.

Bernard Bass (1985) built on Burns's (1978) theory of transformational leadership by extending his research and theory into the business and public sectors while Burns's work focused primarily on politicians and historical figures. Bass differed from Burns in that he believed transactional and transformational leadership built on one another. Bass defined transformation as occurring when followers sacrifice their own self-interest for the betterment of the organization, when followers begin to have their awareness raised regarding the value of reaching desired outcomes and see a path for reaching outcomes, and when followers' needs and wants go beyond the simple desire of safety and security. Bass found the four components involved in transformational leadership to be charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration. Charisma and inspiration would eventually be categorized under idealized influence in Bass's six-factor model of leadership.

Bass (1985) also extended Burns' (1978) theory of transactional leadership. While Burns describes transactional leadership as an exchange of valued things accompanied by mutual benefits by those involved in the transaction, Bass breaks transactional leadership into two components. The first is contingent reward. In contingent reward, transactional leaders identify the requirements needed for their subordinate to accomplish a task or reach an outcome. The leader then identifies what their subordinates may need or want as motivation to put forth effort toward achieving the desired outcome. The leader then clarifies what the follower will receive

for his/her efforts in achieving the outcome. In the transactional leadership model, the follower is motivated by the reward that is promised by the leader for his or her work in accomplishing a task or reaching a goal (Bass, 1985). Bass's second component of transactional leadership is management by exception. In this model the supervisor monitors subordinates to identify if they are breaking rules or standards of the organization. If so, the supervisor takes corrective action (Bass, 1985).

Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) differ in their theories of transformational leadership in notable ways. Burns believed that transformational leadership had only occurred if a society or group had benefitted morally from one's leadership. On the contrary, Bass conceived that transformational leadership can occur and be effective regardless of whether there was a moral benefit.

Bass (1985) recognizes that leadership is more than managing individuals in an organization. While leaders are both transactional and transformational in varying intensities at different times, there is a greater need for transformational leadership to take place in organizations. Transformational leadership is needed to achieve greater outcomes for organizations (Bass, 1985): "The transformational leader can move those influenced to transcend their own self-interest for the good of the group" (p. 15). Transactional leaders accept their organizational culture and work within the confines of what has already been established, whereas the transformational leader changes the organizational culture (Bass, 1985).

Transformational leaders stand up for what is morally right instead of promoting what is popular or may make others happy at a given time. They raise others in their organization through inspiration (Bass, 1985). The following is a more detailed review of the components of transformational and transactional leadership as defined by Bass.

### Charismatic Leadership

Leaders possess charisma when by the power of their own personality they have a profound effect on their followers. Bass (1985) described charismatic leaders as being self-confident, self-determined, and freed from their inner ego. Bass believes charisma to be the most important of the transformational leadership characteristics; however, transformational leaders at the highest level must have all characteristics. Charismatic leadership is essential in complex organizations such as educational institutions in which budgets are tight and policies must be followed (Bass, 1985).

Charismatic leaders understand the needs of followers and can build excitement about their mission and the organization's goals. They elevate followers through their words and actions (Bass, 1985). Charismatic leaders are optimistic about their followers and their abilities. This then transcends into greater confidence being possessed by the follower (Bass, 1985).

### Inspirational Leadership

Charismatic leaders are inspirational to their followers. Inspirational leaders add an emotional quality to the influential process by appealing to the sensation of followers (Bass, 1985). Inspirational leaders communicate their vision and arouse followers through symbolism and persuasive language. This arousal occurs because their message communicates a vision of a better, much improved situation (Bass, 1985).

The inspirational leader builds confidence in followers by making use of the Pygmalion effect. In the Pygmalion effect, the leader has high expectations for one's followers; he or she

has confidence in one's abilities and expects that his or her followers will do well. Due to these beliefs, followers perform better for the inspirational leader than they do for the leader who does not hold such beliefs (Bass, 1985).

### Individualized Consideration

Transformational leaders understand each individual's talents and abilities. They give individuals autonomy to utilize their strengths in the organization and to give their input in organizational decisions. While the leader has greater expertise than his followers, he/she is friendly, caring and acts as if he/she is one of them. The transformational leader can walk in the shoes of his/her followers, allowing one to empathize with those followers (Bass, 1985).

Leaders who demonstrate individual consideration mentor their followers to help them reach their fullest potential. This mentorship is differentiated based on the individual's strengths and weaknesses (Bass, 1985). The leader understands that all followers are different and thus does not treat all followers the same. While mentoring, the transformational leader also counsels followers, providing guidance to them on both work-related and non-work-related issues. This includes listening to followers about their anxieties, home and family problems, and personal issues (Bass, 1985).

Transformational leaders utilize less formal, face-to-face communication with their followers. Examples of this include daily conversations during the workday about subordinate progress toward objectives, responding to questions, and taking an interest in individuals. Informal communication has been found to be more effective than formal communication such as memos and scheduled meetings. The use of informal communication also makes the leader appear less superficial to followers (Bass, 1985). The transformational leader understands

followers want to be in the know about the happenings of the organization. Thus, he/she communicates relevant information to followers as much as possible (Bass, 1985).

### Intellectual Stimulation

The transformational leader communicates ideas that allow followers to think of possibilities they may have never considered, thus encouraging intellectual stimulation. He encourages followers to analyze, problem solve, and comprehend new ideas or processes. The transformational leader is knowledgeable about his field of work. Intellectual leadership is most needed when organizations face unstructured problems, lack of structure, and inadequate work conditions (Bass, 1985). The transformational leader's intellect is important, but how that intellect is communicated is more important. Followers must be able to understand the leader's communication without being left confused or unclear (Bass, 1985).

The transformational leader is proactive in his action to implement ideas, never settling for the status quo when there are possibilities for improvement. They also understand when they are creating stress on followers by engaging them in useless tasks and providing irrelevant work. The transformational leader prioritizes objectives and provides clarity to followers through clear communication (Bass, 1985).

Bass (1985) found that transformational factors are correlated and do not stand alone. Each leader is weaker in one of the areas, but transformational leaders possess each of the leadership characteristics in varying intensities, and each leadership type is needed to transform an organization. Furthermore, the needs of followers can adjust to the intensity and type of leadership style (Bass, 1985).

### Transactional Leadership

Bass (1985) extended Burns's (1978) definition of transactional leadership to consider the supervisory-subordinate relationship. Bass described the transactional leader's relationship with followers as one where there is recognition of what the follower wants to get from one's work and exchanges rewards for accomplishment of tasks. Bass breaks transactional leadership into two categories: one of contingent reward and the other management by exception. Both are transactional but differ greatly in their effectiveness.

### Contingent Reward

An example of using contingent reward is when the leader breaks tasks down for followers from simple to more difficult and gives positive feedback after the accomplishment of each task. In this form of leadership, reward usually takes place in two forms, either by praise or monetary (Bass, 1985).

On the contrary, the idea of contingent punishment is paired with contingent reward. Contingent punishment can take place in various forms, including communicating failure to meet the task, a letter of reprimand, loss of wages, or termination. Bass (1985) found that employees perform better when receiving positive feedback from their supervisor for achieving goals. The contingent reward strategy can provide followers with role clarity, satisfaction, and produce higher levels of performance (Bass, 1985).

Incentive payment plans are an example of contingent reward and fall under the category of transactional leadership. Bass (1985) found that incentive payment plans can improve performance when expectations regarding goals and payment are clearly outlined for

employees. However, Bass found that incentive payment can also cause a rift between followers and leaders. Incentive plans can make the self-interest of the follower the top priority instead of the growth of the organization. Conversely, Bass discovered salaried employees are more likely to take time to proactively plan, self-direct, and remain committed to the organization. Bass recommends proceeding with caution when considering incentive payment plans and basing incentives on the quality of work rather than the quantity of production.

In addition, the use of contingent reward can result in followers feeling as though they are being manipulated by leadership in the workplace because of the use of payment for performance (Bass, 1985).

#### Management by Exception

An example of management by exception could be described as the salesperson who will only hear from a manager if he or she is not meeting goals or if something goes wrong.

Management by exception accepts the “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it” motto (Bass, 1985).

Followers only receive communication if something goes badly. Thus, the communication is negative and many times punitive in nature. Many leaders use management by exception because they are overloaded with responsibilities and may not have enough time to implement transformational leadership practices such as mentoring and individualization (Bass, 1985).

Management by exception is different from laissez-faire leadership because the leader pays attention to whether goals are met and takes action if they are not, whereas the laissez-faire leader simply does nothing.

### Transformational Leadership Assessment

The basis for Bass's (1985) book, *Leadership and Performance Beyond Expectations*, is multiple findings that support transformational leaders being the most effective at improving followers' efforts, maximizing followers' performance, and maximizing followers' job satisfaction. Bass utilized leadership questionnaires to survey subordinates in a variety of fields, including education, military and business. Bass surveyed educational administrators, army leaders, business managers, and undergraduates of universities. His leadership survey would transform into what is known as the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire.

The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) has been adjusted over the years as new research in the field of transformational leadership has emerged. Bass and Avolio (1990) based the MLQ on the three constructs of transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and laissez-faire or non-leadership. There are two forms of the MLQ, a self-rating form completed by the leader and a form completed by the subordinate.

As part of the validation for the MLQ, Bass (1985) conducted a study of 176 Army officers. They were asked to complete a leadership questionnaire about their immediate supervisor. It was found that the transformational leadership components and contingent reward were found to have a positive effect on subordinate effort, satisfaction with leadership, and subordinate performance.

In another study Bass, (1985) asked 198 college undergraduates to read a biography about a current or past leader and then complete the leadership questionnaire with the leader in mind. His findings identified the transformational leadership components of charisma, being inspirational, providing individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation as being

possessed and utilized by the leaders who were studied. Management by exception was found to have negative effects on work performance, job satisfaction, and satisfaction with supervisor. Management by exception was found to have no effect on getting followers to demonstrate extra effort to perform beyond expectations (Bass, 1985).

In a survey of 256 managers from Fortune 500 companies, using a shorter version of the leadership questionnaire, Bass (1985) found that the characteristics of transformational leadership had the strongest effect on willingness to put forth extra effort, satisfaction with one's supervisor, and appraised performance. Contingent reward had a positive effect as well, but management by exception had a negative impact.

In each of Bass's (1985) studies he found positive effects on subordinate performance, satisfaction with supervisor, and effort correlating with transformational leadership components and the component of contingent reward. The transformational characteristics were typically greater than contingent reward, and management by exception either had a negative effect or no effect. The characteristics of transformational leadership along with contingent reward were found to have correlation with an active-proactive leadership style. Bass (1985) found an active-proactive leadership style to be essential for high-performing organizations. Bass' research also supported the use of his Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire for future studies.

Using the MLQ, Bass (1985) found positive relationships between perceptions of school leadership effectiveness and followers' satisfaction with their leader. Three studies have shown such positive relationships, one in New Zealand and two in the U.S. Bass found followers were more willing to demonstrate extra effort when working for a school leader who demonstrated the transformational leadership characteristics of charisma, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Bass's work would ultimately be extended by Kenneth Leithwood

and other leadership researchers in the education field, showing a connection between effective principal leadership and transformational leadership.

Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) provide the background and relevance for transformational leadership in organizations. This foundation is important because Leithwood built on Bass's research by focusing specifically on transformational leadership and its effects in schools. Many of the transformational leadership characteristics that Bass describes in his model are interpreted through the lens of school leadership by Leithwood. Leithwood (1994) finds transformational leadership to be the preferred leadership style for principals as they lead change processes. This is relevant because one of the goals of the current study is to determine the effect that performance evaluation has on the transformational leadership abilities of school principals.

### Transformational Leadership Theory in Education

Principal leadership in education is essential because leadership has been found to affect student achievement (Seashore-Louis, Dretzke, & Wahlstrom, 2010). Seashore-Louis et al. investigated school leaders' behaviors to determine if leadership behaviors contributed to student achievement. Specifically, they identified the behaviors of instructional leadership, shared leadership, and trust. Instructional leadership is defined as the ability to improve classroom practice. Shared leadership is defined as engaging leaders at many levels. Trust relates to the importance of a leader's emotions in motivating high performance. In total, 8,391 teachers were surveyed regarding principal leadership behaviors. Standardized testing scores were utilized between 2005 and 2008 to measure student achievement. It was found that these behaviors do affect student achievement. When these behaviors are considered together, the effect on student

achievement is greater. Furthermore, it was found that principals affect student achievement through the work of teachers, and thus the impact is indirect (Seashore-Louis et al., 2010).

Knowing that principal leadership has an impact on student achievement, Kenneth Leithwood (1994) extended both Burns's (1978) and Bass's (1985) theories of transformational and transactional leadership and applied them specifically to education. His theory of transformational leadership rests on two assumptions. The first assumption is that instructional leadership is the preferred image of leadership in education. The second assumption is that school leaders will be leading during a time of change and restructuring of schools in the future (Leithwood, 1994). School restructuring includes the ongoing changes that education faces across the country. Such restructuring includes a demand for more accountability, allowing for more community input and demands for adjustments in leadership structures (Leithwood et al., 1999).

Leithwood (1994) argued that there is more of a need than ever for transformational leadership in schools and that more than just instructional leadership is needed. Instructional leadership is a first-order change that focuses on changing instructional practices in schools. While instructional change is needed to improve learning outcomes for students, it is not sufficient to restructure schools. For withstanding change, transformational leadership is needed in combination with instructional leadership (Leithwood, 1994). Transformational leadership in the context of education is a second-order change, which allows for building school culture, gaining commitment from followers, establishing school objectives, and influencing followers to change behavior for the sake of the school as an entire organization (Leithwood, 1994).

Hallinger and Heck (1998) built on the work of Leithwood (1994) by proposing four school conditions of a school leader's influence on followers. These conditions include purposes

and goals, school structure and social networks, people, and organizational culture (Leithwood et al., 1999).

Purposes and goals refer to the leader's ability to clearly communicate and provide direction for school improvement efforts. Transformational leaders influence the school improvement process both through a collaborative approach by involving staff and by assuring the awareness of school improvement initiatives through communication (Leithwood et al., 1999). School structure, social networks, and people focus on the relationships and roles of people within the organization. Relationships among staff members are essential for effective curriculum and instructional changes. Furthermore, the structure by which schools operate affects such changes. Schools that have structures (i.e., school improvement teams, leadership structures) that enable collaboration and professional learning are effective in their efforts for school change (Leithwood et al., 1999).

The condition of organizational culture focuses on the leaders' ability to establish shared values and beliefs in the school's mission. The effectiveness of organizational culture depends on the extent to which such beliefs are held by a school's teachers (Leithwood et al., 1999). Leithwood and Janzti's (2000) model of transformational leadership in education encompasses several actions that are necessary on the part of school leaders. These actions include building school vision and goals, providing intellectual stimulation, offering individualized support, symbolizing professional practices and values, demonstrating high performance expectations, and developing structures to foster participation in school decisions.

Leithwood (1996) found that successful educational leaders build their vision through clearly communicating their vision to all school stakeholders, building excitement about what can be accomplished by staff and by clarifying the school's mission through practical

implications for school programming (Leithwood et al., 1999). Leithwood (1996) found that transformational school leaders develop consensus about school goals through continual articulation and references to school goals. Successful transformational leaders also expect individuals and groups to set goals and assure that goals align to the school's mission. They support their staff and are a reference when needed to assist in the goal-setting process. They establish a process in which individuals and teams can set and review goals (Leithwood et al., 1999). Leithwood (1996) found that transformational school leaders create high expectations by only accepting top-rate performances from subordinates and by expecting all staff to demonstrate their best effort at all times. Furthermore, they create high expectations by being student centered and clearly communicating their moral values (Leithwood et al., 1999).

Developing the people within a school organization is essential to its success. The interpersonal practices of providing individual support, creating intellectual stimulation, and modeling values encompass practices that directly affect people in school organizations (Leithwood et al., 1999). Providing individual support is a key component to transformational leadership. In providing support geared toward the individuals in the organization, the leader is able to assist followers in working through issues they may encounter in their daily work (Leithwood et al., 1999). Through a review of 14 studies Leithwood (1996) found that providing individualized support to followers in a school setting involves treating staff with respect, recognizing staff for achievements, listening to staff input in the change process, and providing encouragement as they work toward objectives. Furthermore, school leaders provide individualized support by paying close attention to individual followers' needs and interests (Leithwood et al., 1999).

Creating intellectual stimulation can take several forms in an educational setting. It can occur by the leader persuading a teacher to research a new instructional practice and implementing it into daily practice. Formally, it can occur by engaging teacher teams in long-term professional development programs for the benefit of the school's broader mission (Leithwood et al., 1999). Leithwood (1996) found that intellectual stimulation can be enhanced in schools by leaders through encouraging staff to learn and implement new practices without pressure or penalty for mistakes, requiring colleagues to support opinions with quality reasons, and by allowing staff to share their learning with others through structured professional development (Leithwood et al., 1999).

Modelling important practices and values can have a direct effect on teachers' self-confidence about their own abilities (Leithwood et al., 1999). Leithwood (1996) found practices associated with modelling values include demonstrating commitment to all facets of the school, modeling commitment to professional learning through requested feedback from teachers, and through modeling newly learned techniques as one problem solves alongside staff (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000).

Much of a school's success is dependent on the culture established within the building. Transformational leaders greatly impact culture through their actions (Leithwood et al., 1999). Leithwood (1996) found that school leaders impact culture through several practices. Some of the most effective practices include using continual symbolism and references to school goals, using collaborative structures to share in collective decision making, and creating time in the schedule that allows staff to have collaborative plan time (Leithwood et al., 1999).

Within his model, Leithwood (1994) did not dismiss the component of charismatic leadership. Charisma, relevant to school leadership, generates hope for the future and excitement

for future work. Charismatic educational leaders inspire their followers to believe they can accomplish things they may have never thought possible. Furthermore, charismatic educational leaders are highly respected and are symbols of success from the perspective of their followers (Leithwood et al., 1999).

### Transformational Leadership Effects in Schools

Marks and Printy (2003) studied the effect of transformational leadership on school performance and the relationship between transformational leadership and shared instructional leadership. Their study included 24 schools (eight elementary, eight middle, and eight high schools) across 16 states in 22 districts. They surveyed 910 teachers, conducted interviews with 25-30 teachers at each school, and evaluated over 5,000 assignments. For the purposes of their study, transformational leadership was defined as providing intellectual direction, empowering teachers, structuring decision-making processes, and providing stimulation to the organization. Shared instructional leadership was defined as involving active collaboration of principals and teachers on issues of curriculum, instruction, and assessment (Marks & Printy, 2003). In studying the relationship between transformational leadership and shared instructional leadership, it was found that transformational leadership was a necessary condition or prerequisite for shared instructional leadership to develop. A principal must demonstrate vision, consensus building, and inspiration before he/she can share in matters of collaborative leadership in curriculum and instruction (Marks & Printy, 2003). This finding supports the need for transformational leadership in our schools. Furthermore, it was found that when transformational leadership was combined with shared instructional leadership, there was a significant positive impact on student achievement and effective teacher practices.

Leithwood's (1994) framework for assessing transformational leadership shows that the psychological dispositions of teachers are affected by transformational leadership. These dispositions are teachers' perceptions of school characteristics such as school culture and school decision-making processes. The second psychological disposition is teachers' commitment to change. The third psychological disposition is organizational learning. This is defined as collective capacity development in teachers. Leithwood's (1994) model also demonstrates that transformational leadership affects four outcomes. These outcomes are school restructuring initiatives, teacher-perceived student outcomes, student participation, and student achievement.

Teachers and administrators from restructuring schools were surveyed in five of Leithwood's (1994) seven studies. The term "restructuring" refers to change in the instructional practice of the school, the implementation of new instructional programming, or the large change in school expectations for all programming. The largest number of participants in one study was 289. Variants were tested using LISREL VI analysis in five of the seven studies. Evidence shows that the framework explained 80% to 90% of the variation in teachers' perceptions of school characteristics, 40% to 50% of the variation in teachers' commitment to change, and 50% of the variation in organizational learning. The framework explained between 40% and 50% of the variation in teachers' progress with restructuring initiatives and between 45% and 70% of the variation in teacher-perceived outcomes. There was little or no variation in student participation or student achievement (Leithwood, 1994).

In summary, these results demonstrated that transformational leadership had a direct impact on both the progression of school restructuring and teacher-perceived student outcomes. An example of teacher-perceived student outcomes is teachers' responses to students' academic goals outlined in policies and their perception about whether those goals are being met because

of the policy implementation. In addition, transformational leadership had a direct effect on teachers' personal goals relevant to their professional growth (Leithwood, 1994). Leithwood found that the effects of transformational leadership are just as impactful in schools as they are in non-school organizations. Leithwood's study of transformational leadership found no positive effects with management by exception in educational settings.

Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) surveyed 1,762 teachers and 9,941 students in a large school district to determine the effects of transformational leadership on organizational conditions and student engagement. Organizational conditions included Hallinger and Heck's (1998) purposes and goals, organizational culture, and structures and organizations of schools. Leithwood and Jantzi also included school planning and classroom conditions as other organizational conditions for the study. School planning was defined as decisions on school goals. Classroom conditions was defined as instructional services such as interventions and instructional planning. The teacher survey focused on school conditions and transformational leadership, and the student survey focused on school engagement and family educational cultures.

The transformational leadership of a school principal was found to have a significant effect on organizational conditions that exist in schools. On the contrary, transformational leadership had weaker effects on student engagement. Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) attributed this weaker correlation to the variable of family educational culture. In that study, family educational culture was defined as the norms and values held by the family about intellectual work and school work. This replaced the typical variable of socioeconomic status (SES). While the principal's transformational leadership was found to have an effect on student engagement, family educational culture had a much stronger effect (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000).

In a review of empirical research of 40 studies that examined the relationship between principal behavior and school effectiveness, Hallinger and Heck (1996) found that principal leadership takes place indirectly through efforts to influence others. Furthermore, it was found that a principals' personal characteristics influence how they enact their roles (Hallinger & Heck, 1998). This finding that principals lead through their influence on others supports Leithwood's (1994) findings on the effects of transformational leadership on students. Leithwood concluded that effects on students are most often mediated through teachers in a school. The effects of transformational leadership have been measured by Leithwood through teacher-perceived student outcomes. Teachers responding to a survey about the effects of innovative practices implemented in their classrooms as a result of school initiatives showed a positive effect on their perceptions of student outcomes (Leithwood et al., 1999). Transformational leadership demonstrates an indirect effect on student outcomes such as participation and achievement, but there is not enough evidence to conclude a direct effect (Leithwood et al., 1999).

Teachers' commitment to change is greatly impacted by the transformational leadership ability of school leaders. In a survey of 534 of teachers, transformational leadership had direct and indirect effects on teachers' commitment to change. Components of transformational leadership that had the highest correlation to gaining such commitment were vision building, intellectual stimulation, developing consensus, and high performance expectations (Leithwood et al., 1999).

The MLQ was used to survey 100 principals about their superintendents' transformational leadership behavior. It was found that superintendents displaying the transformational leadership component of intellectual stimulation had the greatest effect on principals' work motivation (Leithwood et al., 1999).

The need for transformational leadership in education is clear in a time of great change for schools. Today schools face accountability mandates, a call for more transparency, demands to restructure leadership and gather community feedback and input. There is a positive relationship between transformational leadership and effective schools. This positive relationship is found in 20 studies that demonstrate a positive correlation between transformational leadership and its effect on students, perceptions of leaders, followers' behavior, followers' psychological states, and organizational-level effects (Leithwood et al., 1999).

The research supporting the positive effects of transformational leadership in schools is important in this study because this study sought to find the effect that performance evaluation can have on principals' transformational leadership abilities. There are many transformational leaders in principal positions, yet there is little known about the best ways to further grow their transformational leadership abilities. Specifically, this study researched the effect the performance evaluation has on principals' abilities to promote change in their buildings. In Illinois, a set of mandates under PERA require multiple components to be used in the evaluation process. An additional interest of this study is to determine the effect that each of these components has on the transformational leadership abilities of school principals. The first of these components, standards, is discussed in the following section. PERA requires the use of standards that correlate to the Illinois School Leaders Licensure Consortium standards to be utilized as part of the evaluation process.

## ISLLC Standards and Their Use in Principal Evaluation

The first set of standards included in PERA for principal performance evaluation are known as the Illinois Standards for Principal Evaluation. These standards align with the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards that were developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers, a group comprised of acting state superintendents. The use of these standards for utilization in the evaluation of school principals was signed into law by Governor Quinn in 2011 (Senate Bill 7, 2011). However, they have been used in principal preparation programs and evaluative tools since 2006 (Derrington & Sharratt, 2008). The standards provide a framework for effective principal practice and are used in the professional practice portion of principal performance evaluations. The standards are broken into six categories: living a mission, vision, and belief for results; leading and managing systems change; improving teaching and learning; building and maintaining collaborative relationships; leading with integrity and professionalism; and creating and sustaining a culture of high expectations. The standards are listed and defined within the Illinois Administrative Code. Within the code there also indicators of each standard. Each of the six standards is described in greater detail below.

The first standard is living a mission and belief for results (Senate Bill 7, 2011). This means that the principal develops a vision in collaboration with the school community, which is a common expectation that all students will be prepared for future endeavors such as college and careers. Within this standard it is expected that the principal holds staff accountable for student achievement results by holding conversations with individuals and teams of teachers.

Standard number two is leading and managing systems (Senate Bill 7, 2011). This means that the principal creates a safe learning environment in which students and staff are productive in their learning. The principal allocates resources and time appropriately to assure the highest level of efficiency in school systems. Efforts within this standard include effective scheduling, prioritizing, and utilizing school improvement planning to monitor achievement outcomes.

The standard of improving teaching and learning encompasses a wide-range of actions and expectations for the school principal (Senate Bill 7, 2011). Within this standard, the principal works collaboratively with all school stakeholders to improve student learning and instructional practice. Indicators of success in this standard include developing frameworks for instruction, evaluating instruction, selecting and retaining quality staff, and providing professional development that is relevant and correlated to school improvement plans.

The fourth standard is building and maintaining collaborative relationships (Senate Bill 7, 2011). This means that the principal establishes relationships with teachers, students, parents, and community members. Indicators of success within this standard include gaining feedback from stakeholders regarding instructional programming, engaging families in their child's education, and utilizing collaboration in the change process.

The fifth standard is leading with integrity and professionalism (Senate Bill 7, 2011). This standard means that the principal creates an environment where the highest standards of professionalism, honesty, and integrity are displayed. Indicators of success in this standard include treating all people fairly, demonstrating support for staff, and recognizing and understanding diversity within your staff. The principal creates a climate in which varying points of view are accepted and equity is ensured.

The sixth standard is creating and sustaining a culture of high expectations (Senate Bill 7, 2011). This means that the principal establishes a culture of high expectations for student learning and behaviors by focusing on students' social and emotional learning. Indicators of success within this standard include the alignment of consistent values and behavior expectations to school improvement plans. In addition, the school principal is successful within this standard by creating a culture where school staff focus on both the academic and social-emotional needs of students.

Starting with common standards that spell out key behaviors and competencies of successful principals establishes clear expectations for those being evaluated (Mendels & Mitgang, 2013). The ISLLC standards were found to be a more reliable measure of principal effectiveness than previously used measures to evaluate principals (Derrington & Sharratt, 2008). The standards have multiple uses as well. The ISLLC standards are used many times in principal preparation programs because they describe key behaviors and attributes of successful principals. By 2006, over 43 states were using the standards in some fashion in their principal licensing programs. When researchers asked superintendents to rate functions based on their significance or insignificance related to the ISLLC standards, they found that superintendents who evaluated principals were mainly focused on the standards that best correlated to instruction, student achievement, and how a principal acts as an instructional leader (Babo & Ramaswami, 2011).

While ISLLC standards were originally designed for principal certification, they are now being used in various states for principal evaluation. Derrington and Sharratt (2008) concluded that a new principal may be confused when he or she is evaluated using different standards than

those used in their certification process. Bolton (1980) contends that evaluation is a recognized method to guide growth and improve performance.

Derrington and Sharratt (2008) researched the following questions: To what extent are ISLLC standards used in the supervision and evaluation of principals in Washington State? What strengths are reported by superintendents and principals using ISLLC standards for evaluation? What problems are reported by superintendents and principals using ISLLC standards for evaluation? Of the 237 superintendents who responded to a survey that was emailed to them, 16% of them responded that they used the ISLLC standards exclusively for evaluation of principals. This study focused on only those superintendents and their principals. Telephone interviews were utilized to interview those superintendents. Each superintendent was asked the same set of questions. Items were ranked by frequency of being mentioned. Superintendents came from a range of districts with enrollments varying from 375 students to over 15,000 students. In addition, the 98 principals from the superintendents' districts were surveyed.

The results showed that 16% of superintendents utilized the ISLLC standards exclusively for principal evaluation, while 28% indicated that they used the standards somewhat in their evaluation of principals. Superintendents most frequently alluded to the fact that the standards are clearer, aligned with current principal responsibilities, and better indicators than previous standards as the main reasons for changing to the ISLLC standards. Superintendents most frequently mentioned the current alignment with school reform and leadership and the fact that the ISLLC standards provide specific criteria as the strengths of the standards. The principals agreed most strongly that the standards current alignment with school reform and leadership was the greatest strength of the ISLLC standards. When identifying problems with the ISLLC

standards, the superintendents and principals had the highest agreement in the perception that the criteria were too redundant. In addition, both superintendents and principals showed strong agreement behind the notion that the ISLLC standards are cumbersome and there are too many items. Additionally, it should be noted that many principals indicated that process is more important than the standards themselves. The principals' survey comments often indicated that self-reflection and conversations with their evaluators about professional development were most beneficial to their growth. In conclusion, the superintendents using the ISLLC standards for evaluation of principals believed them to be useful and stronger than previously utilized evaluation tools (Derrington & Sharratt, 2008).

In a study that surveyed 52 New Jersey superintendents Babo, (2010) sought to find out if certain ISLLC functions were deemed more important than others when evaluating principals. Of the 52 superintendents who completed the survey, 92% of them were from suburban districts. Survey research was used as the data collection tool for this study through a 66-item forced-response multiple-choice questionnaire that was emailed to the participants. Functions served as more detailed descriptors for each of the six ISLLC standards. The superintendents rated functions as essential, important, somewhat important, or insignificant. Babo (2010) found that all of the standards and their functions were considered essential or important. These consistent ratings across all of the standards and functions show a level of credibility for the ISLLC standards (Babo, 2010). Within the study, it was found that some standards and functions were rated as more essential than others. The most essential task was considered to be under ISLLC Standard 3, which focuses on providing a safe learning environment. Specifically, the function of accounting for and providing for the safety and welfare of students and staff was rated by 96% of the respondents as essential. Each of the standards had functions that rated highly as essential

tasks. Being an advocate for children under Standard 6 rated as 87% essential, implementing a plan to achieve school goals under Standard 1 rated as 81% essential, modeling ethical behavior under Standard 5 rated as 79% essential, nurturing a culture of trust under Standard 2 rated as 77% essential, supervising instruction and nurturing a culture of high expectations under Standard 2 rated as 73% essential, and building relationships with families under Standard 4 rated as 61% essential. In conclusion, each of the standards was found to have importance when applied to specific tasks that principals must accomplish in their roles. Furthermore, superintendents found each of the standards and their correlating functions to be essential or important to include in principals' evaluations (Babo, 2010).

The effect of the ISLLC standards usage in the performance evaluation process was examined in the current study. Specifically, this study sought to find the effect that use and integration in the performance evaluation process has on principals' transformational leadership abilities.

#### Research on Current Evaluation Practices and Instruments

The ISLLC standards provide consistency in expectations for school leaders. This is important as many principal evaluation practices have been inconsistent across the United States (Carson et al., 2009). Carson et al. assessed principal evaluation tools and their congruence to improving student learning through the lens of the Learning-Centered Leadership Framework. The Learning-Centered Leadership Framework identifies key components through research that directly relate to improved student achievement. These components are high standards for student learning, rigorous curriculum, quality instruction, a culture of learning, professional behavior, connections to external communities, and professional accountability.

The framework also identifies actions the principal takes to accomplish such components. These include planning, implementing, supporting, advocating, communicating, and monitoring (Murphy, Elliott, Goldring, & Porter, 2006).

Through a systematic approach of gathering tools that included website searches and contacting districts directly, Carson et al. (2009) evaluated the content of 65 principal evaluation instruments across 43 states and the District of Columbia. An iterative and deductive method was utilized in the content portion of the study. Their collection of instruments focused on large urban districts. It is important to note this study focuses on the instrument itself rather than the exact actions of how principals are evaluated. Of the 65 instruments collected, there were 44 of them submitted with supporting documentation such as pre-reflection sheets, etc. The evaluation tools were coded into four categories that included management, external environment, school and instruction, and personal characteristics. The study revealed findings in three areas: content coverage, congruence to the Learning-Centered Leadership Framework, and assessment procedures.

The study found that 25 out of the 65 evaluation tools (38%) cover all six of the leadership traits identified in the framework for learning-centered leadership. All of the tools included at least one of the components. The strongest emphasis of the tools was on high standards for student learning and culture and on professional behavior. When this was broken down into the four coded categories, on average 53% of the tools focused on school and instruction, 15% on management, 9% on external environment, and 22% on personal characteristics. There was great variability within each of these categories, most notably in the area of school and instruction where the lowest percentage of content on a given tool was 23% and the highest percentage was 85%.

Included in the study were assessment procedures. Within this area, only 44 of the tools were taken into consideration because they had full supporting documentation that painted a clear picture of assessment procedures. The findings revealed that 57% of the districts and states used evaluation tools for ongoing professional growth of the principal. Of the 44 tools, four of them were used for summative purposes, and only five of the 44 mentioned use for the purpose of improving student achievement.

Results of this study showed great variability in principal evaluation tools. Furthermore, a very small percentage of tools showed alignment to ensuring rigorous curriculum and quality instruction, which are two components that strongly correlate to student achievement (Murphy, et al., 2006). In addition, most tools did not align to standards set by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (Carson et al., 2009).

Servais (2006) also found that schools lack consistency in their methods for evaluating leaders. She conducted a case study of three educational leaders to identify a means to assess leadership development and performance. Assessing leadership performance is relevant because Marzano et al. (2006) found strong evidence demonstrating the impact of leadership on student achievement. A case study approach was used with three school leaders, which included a superintendent, elementary school principal, and a middle school leadership intern candidate. The school leaders were asked to identify evidence of leadership development and job performance assessment over the past year (Servais, 2006). The participants were presented with a framework of transformational leadership based on six dimensions defined by Leithwood et al. (1999) as creating a shared vision, modeling best practices, setting high expectations for performance, utilizing shared decision making, providing individual support, and developing an intellectually stimulating environment. Participants were provided with a definition of

transformational leadership (Leithwood et al., 1999) stated as the ability to build relationships with a mutual focus on the commitments and capacities of the organizational members. Each of the participants identified themselves as transformational leaders in relation to the noted definitions.

Servais (2006) utilized site observations, field notes, interviews, and leadership performance assessments in her data collection. Performance assessments included a collection of formal and informal artifacts by the participants. Such artifacts included items such as journals, self-reflections, portfolios created with the researcher, and informal feedback from staff and parents. In the data collection process Servais was able to identify three clear outcomes. The first outcome of the study was a lack of formal job assessments for each of the participants. Only the superintendent was formally evaluated, and his evaluation did not correlate to his daily responsibilities. Furthermore, the study revealed that there was a lack of performance criteria identified for each of the three leaders. The principal and middle school intern's daily responsibilities were not formally identified or assessed. Last, the study revealed that all three participants demonstrated a strong desire to measure their leadership performance.

Derrington and Sharratt (2008) found a disconnection between principal leadership expectations and the practice of supervising and evaluating principals in their study of ISLLC standards and their use in principal evaluation systems. This disconnect led Derrington and Sanders (2011) to search for an effective model of principal supervision and evaluation. They did not find such a model; thus, they presented a framework for principal evaluation based on their own research and past experiences. Their method for presenting their principal evaluation framework includes both their experiences as principal and as a superintendent. Strategies proposed within the evaluation framework are based on previous research that Derrington and

Sanders each completed in other studies as well as on others' research relevant to school leadership.

Their evaluation framework includes four strategies: 1) create and maintain a supervisory relationship based on trust, 2) determine the competencies desired through selection of research-based leadership standards, 3) describe performance in terms of the desired competencies by collecting data using multidimensional approaches, and 4) make judgments and decisions based on the closeness of fit between the standards and principal performance as supported by the data.

Each strategy is backed by research that supports enhanced principal performance. Creating a relationship based on trust between the evaluator and principal is core to the framework. Derrington and West (2009) found that trust was an important component in assuring that the principal is more open to learning and growing when engaged in the evaluation process with his or her evaluator. The research-based standards that Derrington and Sanders (2011) recommend using are the ISLLC standards. Through an independent study the Department of Education found that the Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education (VAL-ED) tool was the most reliable in evaluating principals. This tool is aligned to ISLLC standards. Furthermore, Derrington and Sharratt's 2008 study concluded that principals and superintendents support the use of such standards because they closely align with the current responsibilities of school principals. Derrington and Sanders (2011) recommended that a multi-dimensional approach should be utilized to provide evidence for the evaluation. In this strategy they proposed the principal should use several approaches to gathering evidence as opposed to a singular measure. Approaches include a self-reflection tool, survey data from stakeholders, and data collection on the school's academic and cultural strengths. Within this strategy Derrington and Sanders (2011) also propose that principals meet frequently with their colleagues to discuss

their evidence in relation to goals they have set with their evaluators. Derrington and Sanders identified that principals found this collegial meeting framework beneficial for principals as they preferred to communicate ideas and potential evidence with others who were going through the same evaluation process. Last, their framework suggests that a specific rubric should be used to assess principal effectiveness because of the multidimensional approach. They suggest Reeves's (2004) rubric, which provides the following criteria: exemplary – illustrating system-wide impact, proficient – demonstrating local impact, progressing – showing leadership potential, and no progress – not meeting standards. Currently, a study of the effectiveness of this particular model has not been completed. Derrington and Sanders (2011) believe this should be the next step in assessing the feasibility of their proposed model.

Further research on principal performance instruments was completed by Clifford and Condon (2010). They sought out all available principal performance instruments, using the criteria that they were to be used for performance assessment, they were psychometrically tested for reliability and validity, and they were publicly available for purchase. Their research found only eight instruments that met these criteria. Furthermore, of the eight instruments only two of them had been created since 2002. The other six were created between 1985 and 1992. Thus, the age of the other six instruments raises questions about the reliability of such assessments and their ability to measure the components of the principal position as it exists in schools today (Clifford & Condon, 2010). Clifford and Condon (2010) used a benchmark of 0.80 to indicate moderate reliability and a benchmark of 0.90 to indicate high reliability. Any reliability rated below 0.80 was considered poor. Of the eight reviewed instruments, only one instrument rated high in reliability, with an alpha of 0.98 for all 12 scales on different forms. That instrument was the Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education (VAL-ED). The 2002 Leadership

Practices Inventory, the second most current instrument, rated as poor in reliability with a score of 0.79.

Researchers found minimal focus in research and practice on the assessment of principal leadership effectiveness (Porter et al., 2010). With this in mind, researchers from Vanderbilt University and the University of Pennsylvania developed the Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education (VAL-ED). The VAL-ED is a tool to assess principals' learning-centered leadership behaviors. Porter et al. conducted a national trial of the VAL-ED to answer the following questions: What evidence is there for the reliability of the score interpretations on the VAL-ED? What evidence is there for the validity of the VAL-ED? To what extent do the VAL-ED's items exhibit bias? What evidence is there to support the VAL-ED's norms, performance standards, and the parallelness of its two forms?

It is important to have a general understanding of the VAL-ED to understand the national trial. The VAL-ED instrument focuses on research-based, learning-centered leadership behaviors, which Marzano and colleagues (2006) research indicates impact student learning more than the principal's attitude or beliefs. The VAL-ED includes six core components (high standards for student performance, rigorous curriculum, quality instruction, culture of learning and professional behavior, connections to external communities, and systematic performance accountability) that intersect on a matrix with key processes (planning, implementing, supporting, advocating, communicating, monitoring). It is a multi-rater assessment tool. The principal, the principal's supervisor, and the all of the teachers rate the principal's learning-centered leadership behaviors. There are 72 items on the VAL-ED, and the evaluators rate the principal using a 5-point scale (1 – ineffective, 2 – minimally effective, 3 – satisfactorily effective, 4 – highly effective, and 5 – outstandingly effective).

In all there were 218 schools that fully participated in the trial, meaning that the researchers were able to gather responses from all three rater groups (principals, supervisors, and teachers). Of the 218 schools that participated, 39% were elementary schools, 32% middle schools, and 28% high schools. Of these schools, 39% were from an urban setting, 39% suburban, and 22% from a rural setting. Schools came from a balance of all regions in the United States. It is important to note that there was an overrepresentation of urban schools in this study, and typically these schools pose more challenges in education. Also, while there appears to be a good balance of elementary, middle, and high schools, this study is not fully representative of the nation's schools, as 75% of America's schools are at the elementary level (Porter et al., 2010). Two parallel forms of the VAL-ED were distributed (Forms A and C), with 103 of the schools using Form A and 115 using Form C. The forms are considered to be parallel, but this study also sought to discover evidence supporting their parallelness.

There was strong evidence supporting the reliability of score consistencies from the national trial data. Total scores for internal consistent reliability ranged from .98 to .99. In measuring the VAL-ED's validity, the study first investigated the possibility of response errors by respondents. It was found that possible errors occurred the most with teachers (11.07%). However, half of these errors were for not checking "no evidence," which would not affect the principal's rating. Response errors by principals and supervisors were less than 5%. The second measure of validity investigated the content relevance of the VAL-ED. The respondents used a 4-point rating scale (1 – strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – agree, and 4 – strongly agree) and were asked if they believed if the majority of items focus on important leadership behaviors (Porter et al., 2010). Only 5% of principals, 12% of teachers, and 2% of supervisors disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. The respondents were also

asked if the assessment was appropriate for use at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. In response to this, 10% of principals, 14% of teachers, and 6% of supervisors disagreed or strongly disagreed (Porter et al., 2010). The respondents were then asked if they understood the majority of the items. In response, 5% of principals, 18% of teachers, and 1% of supervisors disagreed or strongly disagreed. While 18% of teachers not understanding the majority of items appears high, it should be noted that the mean score for teachers on this question was 2.94. Thus, the researchers concluded that the VAL-ED's content is valid for measuring principals' learning-centered leadership (Porter et al., 2010).

Last, in assessing the VAL-ED's validity, Porter et al. (2010) investigated the framework asking to what extent the means for core components differed reliably from one another, the means for key processes differ from one another, and the means for the 36 cells (as the instrument is a 6x6 cell chart) differ from one another. Both exploratory and confirmatory techniques were utilized to investigate differences. Within this investigation it was found that there were significant differences among the processes, components, and cells. These differences indicate that such items do measure distinctions in principals' learning-centered leadership. It should be noted that it can be concluded that the VAL-ED distinguishes core components better than key processes. Also, within this study Form A and Form C demonstrated similar mean scores for differences among processes, components, and cells.

To measure item bias on the VAL-ED, a differentiated item functioning framework analysis using PARSCALE was utilized. Differences among subgroups such as school level, school location, and setting of school were tested. The results yielded evidence that few, if any, items display item bias on the VAL-ED.

In examining the parallelness of Forms A and C, the means of total scores were compared. The forms displayed similarities for each respondent group, with the principal group only differing by .04, the supervisor group differing .03, and the teacher group differing .03. The standard deviations were also similar. Evidence supports the forms are parallel to one another.

Performance standards on the VAL-ED are reported by the following levels: distinguished, proficient, basic, and below basic. These levels were created by a panel of 22 experts (10 principals, 2 policy makers, 2 researchers, 4 teachers, 4 principal supervisors) using a modified bookmark procedure. Through the bookmarking process, the panelists placed cut scores on a rating scale from 1.0 to 5.0. The panelists revised their original cut scores as they saw them as too demanding. The cuts were set to the panel's preferences (between basic and below basic is 3.29, between basic and proficient is 3.60, and between proficient and distinguished is 4.00). Results from this national trial indicate that the VAL-ED is a reliable instrument for measuring principals' learning-centered leadership behaviors, especially when compared to other instruments currently in use (Porter et al., 2010).

Further support for the use of the VAL-ED was supported by Derrington and Sanders (2011) as they sought to develop a comprehensive principal evaluation tool. They found that the Department of Education identified the VAL-ED as the most reliable tool available for evaluating principal performance. Derrington and Sanders recommend using multiple data sources provided by the principals as evidence in the evaluation process. As of 2013, there were over 615 school districts utilizing the VAL-ED in some form (Mendels & Mitgang, 2013).

Reviewing performance evaluation instruments is relevant to the current study because it provides a context in which this study is grounded, that being performance evaluation and its effect on transformational leadership. In this qualitative study, the researcher sought to learn the

process that principals have experienced when being evaluated. PERA stipulates specific components be used in the evaluation process, yet it does not limit or exclude other processes or instruments from being implemented.

### Principals' Use of Self-Reflection in Professional Practice

Rich and Jackson (2006) reviewed literature and research regarding reflective practices and processes used by supervisors of school principals. Principal reflection is often used in the evaluation process of school principals. Thus, the evaluation process and reflection as part of the process are worth investigating. Griffith and Frieden (2000) found that school supervisors can play a pivotal role in leading principals toward a deeper understanding of self, work roles, and performance. Furthermore, Hart (1990) indicates that principals can move from being novice problem solvers to expert problem solvers through reflective thinking. However, Hart notes that facilitating reflective thinking is difficult. Within a reflective conference, Griffith and Frieden recommend prompting reflection through questioning, journal writing, synthesis, brainstorming or simply asking why. Principal reflection can take place in multiple settings – most notably, either in a one-on-one setting with the principal's supervisor or in a group setting where principals meet to reflect with their colleagues. Strahan, Cooper and Ward (2001) found allowing principal reflection to occur within a group of colleagues to be an effective practice in the school improvement process. When reflection occurs in a one-on-one setting, Dalton and Hollenbeck (1996) tell us that supervisors must be viewed as credible and qualified by the principals to lead them through reflective thinking. In conclusion, reflective thinking by school principals in a group setting or with their supervisors can be an effective strategy for improving the professional practice of principals (Rich & Jackson, 2006).

There is a large body of evidence that supports reflection in professionals across all job fields. Schön (1983) found that reflective practitioners develop deeper meanings from their experiences than those who are not reflective. In addition, Kolb (1984) found that reflection not only allows practitioners to develop deeper meaning from their experiences but that reflection enhances professional practice. However, there is a growing body of evidence that supports collective reflection. Zeichner and Liston (1996) recommend collaborative reflection over individual reflection to enhance professional growth. Furthermore, when Derrington and Sharratt (2008) surveyed principals and superintendents about the evaluation process and the use of ISLLC standards, they found many principals indicated that process is more important than the standards themselves. Principals' survey comments many times indicated that self-reflection and conversations with their evaluators about professional development were most beneficial to their growth.

Janson, Parikh, Young, and Fudge (2011) used a participatory action research method to explore a collaborative reflection process involving a high school principal and a ninth-grade student. The student and principal were asked to reflect on the practices, processes, and programs that facilitated student college readiness at their high school. An iterative digital reflection (IDR) process was used in which both participants videotaped their reflections individually. From there, the videos were exchanged between the principal and student and further reflection occurred. After individual reflection, the participants met to discuss and reflect further on processes and programs relative to the college readiness culture at the high school. It was found that this collective participation was extremely valuable for not only the student but for the principal as well in furthering their understanding of the current college readiness culture

at the high school. Furthermore, the study had similar conclusions to current literature that supports the power of collaborative reflection.

In a review of literature on best practices for principal evaluation, Derrington and Sanders (2011) recommend that reflection be part of the evaluation process. Further evidence was found to support collective reflection with either a supervisor or colleagues.

Webster-Smith (2011) developed a researched-based model of self-reflection for school leaders aimed at making them more inclusive. She contends that while many organizations have made self-reflection part of their leadership models, few have defined actual self-reflection processes. Furthermore, school leaders are responsible for promoting change and transformation in our schools; however, before leaders can focus on organizational change, they must be willing to undergo personal reflection that results in personal change. Her conceptual framework for such a model is rooted in Dewey's (1933) work that asserts educators must not accept the status quo, and that without repeated questioning and self-reflection, there will be little growth in the individual. Webster-Smith's model for self-reflection includes multiple components for reflection. The components for reflection include the heart or belief system one possesses, the thoughts of an individual, the emotions of a person and the attitudes they possess, the words that a person chooses to use as a result of the aforementioned components, the actions of a person as a result of such words, the habits that one forms with little attention to as to why they have formed the habit, and the character that one possesses. In her developed model she asked five aspiring school leaders to reflect on their inclusiveness of high-needs students and their parents at their schools. The leaders were asked to reflect on each component. They were asked to note areas where their professional dispositions needed adjustment and to develop plans for the adjustment. In each of the five aspiring leaders, Webster-Smith found that their past experiences

had a profound effect on their ability to be inclusive leaders. One aspiring leader's childhood experience of being around second language citizens at his father's work impacted his ability to hold all students to high expectations; another reflected on her childhood where she was taught that those with money were shallow and lacked character and thus treated parents of wealth with disrespect and ultimately put their children at a disadvantage. Another aspiring leader used the reflective model and found that colleagues and her own experiences with special education students had shaped notions of her expectations for all students with special needs. In each instance it was found that beliefs stemmed from parents, societal factors, or false assumptions. Webster-Smith contends that a specific model for self-reflection would be beneficial to aspiring and current school leaders because transformational leadership requires reconstructions of underlying beliefs. Furthermore, self-reflection serves as a valuable strategy in no longer remaining the same (Webster-Smith, 2011).

Self-reflection is an important component to the current study. Self-reflection may occur in a reflective conference between the evaluator and principal or as the principal self-assesses against the ISLLC standards. Both of these actions are requirements of PERA. The component of self-reflection was examined in this study to determine its impact on the principals' transformational leadership abilities.

#### Inclusion of Student Achievement Data in Principal Evaluation Processes

The criteria and process for how school principals are evaluated is extremely important. One aspect that has been considered in the evaluation of school principals is the inclusion of student achievement data in the process. From 2010 to 2011, twenty-three states passed bills that included some form of legislation for current or future implementation in either teacher or

principal evaluation. One reason for such change in legislation was the opportunity to secure Race to the Top funding by states. As part of securing Race to the Top Funds, states were encouraged through the application process to include measures of student achievement in their teacher and principal evaluation processes.

Piro, Wiemers, and Shutt (2011) conducted a content analysis of policy documents from 23 states from January 2010 to July 2011 to determine the extent to which student achievement data are or will be required as part of principal and/or teacher evaluation. Comparative analysis was used to compare states. These 23 states have passed some form of legislation requiring achievement growth to be part of the process for evaluating teachers and principals in the future. In evaluating the documents, the following items were considered in the content analysis: date the bill was passed, year the bill was or will be implemented, whether an advisory group was developed to oversee evaluation process, if principal evaluation was included in the bill, percentage student achievement would count for in the overall evaluation process, and if the bill reforms tenure and hiring. Policies were found through a search of state legislative websites and by examining current literature on the topic.

It is important to note the article did not specifically describe if student achievement data would be required for use in principal evaluation for each state. However, one could assume that states that passed such bills for teachers included principals in the process as well. Piro et al. (2011) found that three states included optional uses of student achievement in the evaluation process. Four states required some measure of student achievement to be included in future evaluations; however, the percentage that student achievement will count for was not specified. One state requires student achievement to count as 35-50% of the principals' evaluation. Four

states required that student achievement count as at least 50% of the evaluation. Two states were considering bills that will require changes in the principal evaluation process as of 2011.

As more states include student achievement as part of educator evaluation, it is important to consider the following research from Baker and colleagues (2010). Baker et al. contended that using student achievement measures may be an unreliable source for measuring educator effectiveness. They argue that unless value-added data measures include controls for non-random assignment of students, then it becomes statistically unfounded to draw conclusions about teachers' effectiveness from such measures.

To improve student learning, the use of student data to improve teaching practices is of great importance (Davis, Leon, & Fultz, 2013). However, there is limited research that supports the connection between principal effectiveness and student achievement data (Baker et al., 2010). In addition, there are also a multitude of factors principals display that impact student learning that should be focused on during the evaluation process. When focusing on how leaders impact student learning, there are direct behaviors and attributes in leadership that have been shown to positively impact student learning, such as developing a school mission, monitoring curriculum and instruction, and creating a positive school culture that supports learning (Marks & Printy, 2003).

Only four studies used student achievement data to measure the value-added impact of school principals directly. Of these four studies, only one is published, as the others are works in progress (Grissom, Kalogrides, & Loeb, 2015). Coelli and Green (2012) measured the effects principals had on the student achievement of Grade 12 students from school districts in British Columbia. Specifically, their goal was to measure the net effect of principals on graduation and standardized test results. Data were used from students attending schools from 1995 to 2004.

The data included when and if the student graduated and his/her final score on the provincial English exam. Each of these districts had policies regarding the rotation of principals from school to school. The policies varied in that principals could rotate to different schools for different amounts of time; however, each district allowed for this rotation. Coelli and Green took advantage of this rotation of principals within schools over time to identify their effects on student outcomes aside of any fixed school, neighborhood, or stable peer group effects. An empirical strategy was used to estimate a simple dynamic model of the effect of school principals on student outcomes. This strategy allowed for a potentially cumulative effect of school principals on schools over time. Coelli and Green found that specific principals had greater effects on student achievement than others. This conclusion was more apparent when principals were able to have more time at a building to make their mark.

Senate Bill 7 (2011) mandates the inclusion of student achievement in the performance evaluation process. Furthermore, PERA mandates that it counts for no less than 30% of the final rating. The current study examined the effect that the inclusion of the student achievement data in the evaluation process had on principals' transformational leadership abilities.

### Research on the Supervisor-Principal Relationship

Superintendents and principals agreed that trust is a key component in establishing a working relationship that involves teaming and collaboration (Derrington & West, 2009). When the supervisor acts with care and benevolence, a trusting relationship is created. Open communication and involvement in the decision-making process are also hallmarks of establishing trusting relationships with subordinates (Derrington & West, 2009). In a study in Washington State where principals were asked what skills were necessary to be an effective

evaluator of principal performance, it was found that the highest ranking attribute was interpersonal relations (Derrington & West, 2009). The lowest ranking attribute was professional knowledge.

France and Thompson (2015) surveyed 127 district leaders to determine what research-based district leadership practices are important in strengthening principals' abilities to improve teaching and learning in schools. An online survey questionnaire was utilized in the study based on Honig, Coplan, Rainey, Lorton, and Newton's (2010) five dimensions of district leadership, which includes learning-focused partnership, assistance to the partnership, refocused organizational culture, stewardship of district leadership, and use of evidence. The participants were asked about their own perceptions of their leadership orientation and their own perceptions of their district's implementation of such practices. France and Thompson (2015) found that among the five dependent variables, the relational practice of learning-focused partnership emerged as most important for improving principals' instructional leadership. Specifically, principal partnership, which falls under the variable of learning-focused partnership, was perceived as very important by district leaders. Learning-focused partnerships refer to the personal relationships that district leaders establish with their principals, the mentoring and support they provide, and the professional development they provide. District leaders perceived that the practice of principal partnership was often, as opposed to very often, implemented in their districts.

District leaders and evaluators are in a position to help principals improve practice through coaching. While research is minimal on the coaching of principals, a body of research does exist supporting the effects of coaching on teachers' practice. However, the most important variable in improving teacher practice is the relationship the teacher has with the coach

(Anderson, Feldman, & Minstrell, 2014). In a five-year mixed-methods study, Anderson et al. sought to find out why coaching works when it does in schools. In this study, 10 coaches of science teachers and 180 teachers and administrators from 15 elementary, middle, and high schools in one school district participated. Anderson et al. found correlations in improvements in teacher practice and time spent with their coach as well as having a narrow focus on their work as being indicators of success. However, both components were dependent on the teacher and coach having a trusting relationship. The relationship between the two was imperative for improving practice in their study.

Waters and Marzano (2006) researched the impact that district administration can have on student achievement. The study stemmed from their previous research where they found the school principal can have a significant impact on student achievement (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2006). Thus, knowing that district leaders work closely with building principals, they sought to answer the following questions: What is the strength of relationship between leadership at the district level and average student academic achievement in the district? What specific district-level leadership responsibilities are related to student academic achievement? What specific leadership practices are used to fulfill these responsibilities? What is the variation in the relationship between district leadership and student achievement? Do behaviors associated with strong leadership always have a positive effect on student achievement? A meta-analysis was used as the methodology. In total, 2,714 school districts, 4,434 superintendents, and 3.4 million student achievement scores were utilized in this study. The sample for this meta-analysis included all U.S. school districts that were involved in studies from 1970 to 2005 that reported some correlation between district leadership or district leadership variables and student academic achievement. Marzano et al. (2006) found that district leadership can and does positively impact

student learning. It was found that the superintendent and district leaders can best impact student learning through collaborative relationships and continuous work with principals. The study identified specific superintendent responsibilities and practices that have the greatest impact on student learning. Of the six practices, only one did not involve relational work with school principals. In fact, having a relationship with schools and school principals while creating a defined autonomy was one of the six practices identified as having a positive impact on student learning.

Relationships among other components have been found to be critical components in the performance evaluation of school principals (Derrington & West, 2009). The Performance Evaluation Reform Act (Senate Bill 7, 2011) mandates that several components should be integrated in the evaluation process for school principals. However, little to no research exists on the effects of these components and their relationship to improving transformational leadership abilities in principals. While each component can be supported or refuted as an effective educational practice, this study focused on understanding the effects of the evaluation process on transformational leadership in its totality while also studying each component of the process to determine its effect comparable to others. Specific research questions for this study are as follows:

1. What are principals' perceptions of the evaluation process?
2. What influence does the evaluation process have on a principal's transformational leadership abilities?
3. Are there specific components of the evaluation process that have a greater influence on a principal's transformational leadership abilities than others?

4. What influence does the supervisor-principal relationship have on a principal's transformational leadership abilities?

### Understanding the Intent of the Questions

The evaluation process includes multiple components. Principals receive written feedback from their supervisors after site-based observations. Written feedback also comes in the actual summative evaluation form. Oral feedback is most likely to come in a conference between the evaluator and the principal after a site-based observation or in the summative conference in which the supervisor and principal meet to discuss the evaluation. Understanding how this feedback affects the principal's ability to promote change or be more transformational was one of the foci of this study. Evaluators are required to give principals written feedback after each site-based observation. Senate Bill 7 (2011) mandates that two site-based observations take place in the evaluation process. Understanding how these observations are integrated in the process was a prerequisite to understanding their effect on a principal's ability to promote change.

In addition to feedback and site-based observations, evaluators use the ISLLC standards as the defined standards for evaluation. While the written definitions of the standards are constant, the application of the ISLLC standards may vary in the performance evaluation process. Thus, initially knowing how the ISLLC standards are utilized is a valuable starting point before seeking to understand their effect on the principal's ability to promote change. Student assessment data are also used as a measurement of performance in the evaluation process. Senate Bill 7 (2011) mandates that a minimum of 30% of the principal's final rating includes student achievement data. Thus, there will be variability in how student achievement is

integrated into the performance evaluation process. Before seeking to determine how this integration affects the transformational leadership abilities of principals, he sought to find out how it has been integrated. While these components are all part of the total performance evaluation process, this study sought to determine what components were more, or less, effective for improving principals' transformational leadership abilities.

An additional interest in this study was to understand the influence the supervisor-principal relationship has on the principal's transformational leadership abilities. While the evaluation process is clearly defined under the guidelines of PERA, the relationship between supervisor and principal cannot be clearly defined or mandated by a policy. Thus, understanding the effect of the relationship between supervisor and principal and its effect on principals' transformational leadership ability was explored in this study. As a result of the data retrieved from the questions, this study also sought to find what principals' perceptions are of the performance evaluation process.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### Purpose of the Study

Transformational leadership theory, principal performance evaluation, and the Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA) were discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. Chapter 3 presents the methodology to determine how performance evaluation influences principals' transformational leadership abilities.

Leithwood et al. (1999) extended Bass's (1985) theory of transformational leadership specific to education in that the components of intellectual stimulation, individual support, charisma, and inspirational leadership directly correlate to Bass's model. Included in Leithwood's (1994) model are further educational interpretations of transformational leadership in schools. Transformational leadership has been found to be a preferred leadership style for school leaders (Leithwood, 1994) and has also been found to be a prerequisite for fully implementing shared leadership in schools (Marks & Printy, 2003). Leithwood's theory assumes that principals are leading during a time of change and their ability to promote change is then essential in schools. In this study, research questions were formulated around the idea that promoting change is transformational in practice. Thus, a principal who has transformational leadership abilities can better promote change in his/her building. This study examined the influence that the performance evaluation process had on the principals' transformational leadership abilities.

There are several components mandated within the performance evaluation process. Senate Bill 7 (2011) mandates the use of the ISLLC standards, student achievement data, self-assessment, and site-based observations with written feedback as part of the evaluative process. This study examined the relationship of these components and their effect on the transformational leadership abilities of principals. An additional focus in this study was to examine the influence that the supervisor-principal relationship has on the transformational leadership abilities of school principals. The relationship between the supervisor and principal presents a component to the evaluation process that is not mandated in PERA. However, relationships and interpersonal relations have been found to be valued by principals as they experience the evaluation process (Derrington & Sharratt, 2008). Specifically, the following research questions were utilized in this study:

1. What are principals' perceptions of the evaluation process?
2. What influence does the evaluation process have on a principal's transformational leadership abilities?
3. Are there specific components of the evaluation process that have a greater influence on a principal's transformational leadership abilities than others?
4. What influence does the supervisor-principal relationship have on a principal's transformational leadership abilities?

### Participants

The participants in this study were public elementary and middle school principals from suburban school districts in the state of Illinois. Each of the participants had experienced favorable evaluations in the past. Three districts were selected for the study (see Table 1). In

total, there were ten principals who participated in the study. Three principals from Districts #1 and #2 and four principals from District #3 participated. All public school principals must be evaluated under the guidelines of the Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA). There is no variability in standards (ISLLC) or mandates (PERA) across grade levels. Thus, whether individuals are an elementary principal, middle school principal, or high school principal, the mandates of PERA extend to their performance evaluation remaining consistent kindergarten through Grade 12. Table 1 shows each participant's years of experience as a principal and age.

Table 1  
Participant Descriptors

Principal Code Name and Gender	Years of Experience as Principal	Age	District Code Number	Level
Leslie (Female)	3	43	1	Elementary
Kent (Male)	3	46	1	Elementary
Mark (Male)	3	36	1	Middle
Vic (Male)	9	44	2	Middle
Lynn (Female)	7	52	2	Elementary
Bill (Male)	6	46	2	Middle
Mindy (Female)	3	37	3	Elementary
Kelly (Female)	4	46	3	Elementary
Sean (Male)	11	51	3	Elementary
Ron (Male)	2	35	3	Elementary

Table 2 presents the characteristics of the district and the number of principals interviewed from each district.

Table 2

## District Characteristics

<b>District</b>	<b>Type of District</b>	<b>Student Population of District</b>	<b>Number of Principals Interviewed</b>
#1	Unit / Suburban	28,283	3
#2	Unit / Suburban	16,788	3
#3	Unit / Suburban	5,980	4

## Research Design

This was a qualitative study that was approved by the Northern Illinois University Institutional Review Board. Being a qualitative study, the researcher served as the main instrument for gathering and analyzing collected data (Tracy, 2012). A qualitative approach was chosen in the hopes of deriving deeper meaning through human interaction. As a practicing school principal and a hopeful future superintendent who will be supervising principals, I anticipated that understanding the effects of principal evaluation would inform future research and policy in this area and also be beneficial to my future career.

Questions for the study were formulated using an inductive approach in which I developed questions with the hope of generating new theory (Merriam, 2002). An inductive approach paired with grounded theory served as the foundation for the study. In grounded theory, the researcher approaches the study free of preconceived notions of what may occur (Merriam, 2002).

## Role of the Researcher

As the sole collector of data for this study, it is important that consumers of this study understand my biases, assumptions, and past experiences (Greenbank, 2003). Presently, I am an elementary school principal and have served in my current position for eight years. I have been a school principal for ten years total and was an assistant principal for two years prior to becoming a principal. As a practicing school principal, I am evaluated annually per the requirements of PERA. Serving in my current role, I can appreciate the principal position as I fully understand the challenges principals face on a daily basis. I understand the balance principals try to achieve as they work to ensure their students are learning and growing in a safe environment each day. While principals work to improve student learning, they are also managing parents and community members and trying to cultivate a positive school culture. My review of literature has further enlightened me to the role the principal plays in improving student learning.

My evaluation experiences have been positive, and I believe much of this is due to the strong relationships that I have with my supervisors. Thus, I did not come into this study with negative bias toward the evaluation process. However, I did enter this study with the belief that the performance evaluation process serves to promote principals' professional growth. Throughout this study I listened openly and sought to find themes in the data through open coding. In addition, I reflected after each interview and stayed close to the data through continual analysis of interview transcripts.

## Interviews as the Data Source

The 10 principals' interview responses served as the primary data source for the study. Questions were provided to participants prior to the interview. Each principal was interviewed for approximately 45 minutes via phone call. The phone call was recorded and then transcribed using a transcription service. A consistent series of questions was utilized in the interviews. The interviews were semi-structured, which allowed me to ask follow-up questions depending on the participant's responses. A combination of background and demographic questions, experience and behavior questions, and opinion/value questions was used in the interviews. Background /demographic questions elicited information about the interviewees such as their age, position, and years of experience (e.g., What is your position?) (Patton, 1990). Experience/behavior questions gave me a sense of what the participant had experienced (e.g., How have the ISLLC standards been utilized in your most recent evaluation?). Opinion/value questions gave me a sense of how the participants felt or valued something they experienced (e.g., Has the use of ISLLC standards influenced your ability to promote change in your building?) (Patton, 1990). Understanding what the participants had experienced in the evaluation process and by having them describe the influence the process had on their transformational leadership abilities was the major focus of this study.

In addition, I used the interview questions to identify what parts of the evaluation process had the greatest, or least, effect on a principal's ability to promote change in his/her school. Since there were multiple components to the process, I asked about each component separately. However, each question related back to the influence the specific component had on the principal's ability to promote change. For the sake of the interview, the words "promote change"

were used instead of “transformational leadership abilities.” However, “transform” and “change” were considered to be synonyms within this study.

### Interview Protocol Relating to Research Questions

The interviews began with background/demographic questions:

- What is your name?
- What is your position and where do you work?
- How many years have you been in your position?

Table 3 identifies how the interview protocol relates to each research question.

Table 3

#### Interview Protocol

Interview Question	RQ 1	RQ 2	RQ 3	RQ 4
What are your perceptions of the principal evaluation process? (Opinion / Value)	x			
Describe how you promote change in your building. (Experience / Behavior)		x	x	
Has the evaluation process in general influenced how you lead? Why, why not, how? (Opinion / Value)	x	x	x	x
Has the evaluation process influenced your ability to promote change in your building? Why, why not, how? (Opinion / Value)	x	x	x	x
Has evaluator feedback influenced your ability to promote change in your building? If yes, please describe how, and if no, please explain why not. (Opinion / Value)		x	x	
How have site-based observations been used in your most recent evaluation? (Experience / Behavior)		x	x	
Have site-based observations influenced your ability to promote change in your building? If yes, please describe how, and if no, please explain why not. (Opinion / Value)		x	x	
How have the ISLLC standards been utilized in your most recent evaluation? (Experience / Behavior)		x	x	

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Interview Question	RQ 1	RQ 2	RQ 3	RQ 4
Has the use of ISLLC standards in the evaluation process influenced your ability to promote change in your building? (Opinion / Value)		X	X	
How has self-reflection been utilized in your most recent evaluation? (Experience / Behavior)		X	X	
Has self-reflection in the evaluation process influenced your ability to promote change in your building? If yes, please describe how, and if no, please explain why not. (Opinion / Value)		X	X	
How has student achievement data been integrated into your performance evaluation? (Experience / Behavior)		X	X	
Has the integration of student achievement data in your evaluation influenced your ability to promote change in your building? If yes, please describe how, and if no, please explain why not. (Opinion / Value)		X	X	
Describe your relationship with your supervisor. (Experience / Behavior)				X
Has your relationship with your supervisor influenced your ability to promote change in your building? If yes, please describe how, and if no, please explain why not. (Opinion / Value)				X

### Data Analysis Approach

Upon the completion of the interviews, the data were transcribed and deconstructed to identify themes. Initial coding was utilized to develop themes that emerged from responses. Initial coding involves studying fragments of data such as words, lines, and incidents (Charmaz, 2014). While studying the data, the researcher labels segments of data that summarize and categorize the data (Charmaz, 2014). I followed Charmaz's process for coding, which involves staying close to the data, keeping codes simple and short, comparing data, and moving quickly through data.

I initially read every transcript to familiarize myself with the data. After reading each transcript, I stayed close to the data through the initial coding process. Eight initial codes were identified in the transcripts. To support grounded theory, the initial codes were then analyzed through focused coding. Focused coding involves analysis of codes to organize large amounts of data (Charmaz, 2014) to determine the most useful data. A constant comparative method was utilized for determining the most useful data. The constant comparative method involves analyzing data both while it is actively being collected and after it is collected. After each interview session, I made notes about themes that emerged from the participants' responses. I then read each of the transcripts prior to starting the focused coding process. The constant comparative method supports grounded theory because the researcher identifies concepts of interest and then makes decisions based on the data collected (Merriam, 2002). The collected data were not used to support an existing theory but instead to formulate new theory. Eventually four codes emerged from the initial eight codes. These four codes were then developed into overarching themes. These themes were analyzed again to determine useful data within each of the themes and multiple subthemes emerged. Table 4 provides a visual of how I arrived at the initial codes, the four themes, and the subthemes. Table 5 describes each of the initial codes, and Table 6 describes each of the subthemes.

Table 4

## Focused Codes and Descriptions

<b>Initial Codes</b>	<b>Emerging Themes</b>	<b>Sub Themes</b>
Self-Reflection	1. Influencing transformational leadership through self-reflection	1.1 Reflection Through Portfolio and Self-Assessment 1.2 Reflection on Standards and Goals 1.3 Personal Self-Reflection Aside from the Evaluation Process 1.4 Reflection on Feedback and Evaluator Input
Feedback	2. Influencing transformational leadership through evaluator feedback	2.1 Feedback Through Conversations with Evaluator 2.2 Specific Feedback Following Observations
Goals	3. Influencing transformational leadership through goals	3.1 School and District Goals 3.2 Establishing Goals with the Evaluator 3.3 Goals and Standards 3.4 Reflecting on Goals 3.5 Student Data Goals for the Purpose of PERA
Support	4. Influencing transformational leadership through supportive evaluator - principal relationships	4.1 Support through Resources 4.2 Supporting Principals' Actions
Professional Growth Logistics Collaboration	Did not emerge as dominant themes	

Table 5

## Initial Code Descriptions

<b>Initial Code</b>	<b>Description</b>
Self-Reflection	Principal mentions a process of reflection or self-assessment
Feedback	Principal mentions receiving feedback from evaluator
Goals	Principals mentions goals of any sort
Support	Principal describes being supported in relationship with evaluator
Professional	Principal describes professional relationship with supervisor
Growth	Principal describes a desire for personal or professional growth
Logistics	Principal describes a process that is logistical in nature and does not lead to promoting change
Collaborative	Principal describes a collaborative process for leading in their school

Table 6

## Subtheme Descriptions

Subthemes	Description
Reflection Through Portfolio and Self-Assessment	Reflection occurs through use of a portfolio or through self-assessment practices.
Reflection on Standards and Goals	Reflection occurs on the ISLLC standards and / or goals of the school or principal.
Personal Self-Reflection Aside from the Evaluation Process	Principal reflects on his own. Reflection is not prompted through any part of the evaluation process.
Reflection on Feedback and Evaluator Input	Principal reflects on feedback and input from evaluator.
Feedback Through Conversations with Evaluator	Feedback from evaluator occurs through dialogue between principal and evaluator.
Specific Feedback Following Observations	Specific feedback is given to principal following a site-based observation conducted by evaluator.
School and District Goals	Goals of the school and / or district are described.
Establishing Goals with the Evaluator	Goals are determined through collaboration with evaluator.
Goals and Standards	Goals are established based on the ISLLC standards.
Reflecting on Goals	Principal reflects on current goals or goal setting.
Student Data Goals for the Purpose of PERA	Goals are set specifically because of the student achievement mandate in PERA.
Support through Resources	Evaluator supports principal by providing financial or physical resources for principal's school. Supports principal by giving advice.
Supporting Principals' Actions	Evaluator supports principal's decisions and actions. Evaluator demonstrate a trust in principal.

## Validity and Reliability

I continually referred to the interview transcriptions and my notes to find meaning from participant responses to ensure validity and reliability in the coding process. I worked individually, allowing for consistency in coding (Charmaz, 2014). After initial and focused coding, I took a month-long break to refresh my mind before identifying specific subthemes.

## Summary

The Performance Evaluation Reform Act as part of Senate Bill 7 (2011) has mandated several guidelines to be incorporated as part of the performance evaluation process of school principals. This study is significant in that it will serve to better inform evaluators under the guidelines of PERA. Also, this study informs educators about the benefits or pitfalls of the specific guidelines by studying their effect on principals' transformational leadership abilities. Performance evaluation has been found to promote professional growth in principals (Portin et al., 2006). Furthermore, transformational leadership has been found to be a preferred leadership style for principals as they promote change in their schools (Leithwood, 1994). In this study, I researched the relationship between the evaluation process and transformational leadership through a qualitative method of research. Ten principals were interviewed through a semi-structured approach. The philosophical approach to this study is rooted in grounded theory.

## CHAPTER 4

### FOUR OVERARCHING THEMES

Chapter 4 describes four overarching themes that emerged from interviews conducted with 10 principals of elementary and middle schools. Eight codes emerged after the initial coding of interview transcripts. From these codes, four themes emerged as the most dominant. These overarching themes are as follows: 1) influencing transformational leadership through self-reflection, 2) influencing transformational leadership through evaluator feedback, 3) influencing transformational leadership through goals, and 4) influencing transformational leadership through supportive evaluator-principal relationships. Within these overarching themes, multiple subthemes emerged. Table 4 (in Chapter 3) provides a visual representation of the eight emergent codes and the four overarching themes and their subthemes.

The first overarching theme, influencing transformational leadership through self-reflection, describes how principals were able to promote change in their schools and in their practice by self-reflecting. This self-reflection took place through a variety of processes that included portfolio gathering, self-rating, reflecting on standards and goals, personal reflection, and reflecting on evaluator input. Overarching Theme 2, influencing transformational leadership through evaluator feedback, describes how feedback from a supervisor influenced the principals' ability to promote change in their schools. Feedback influenced change through conversations between the principal and evaluator, through specific feedback given after observations, and through feedback on school goals and mission.

The third overarching theme, influencing transformational leadership through goals, describes how the use of goals impacted a principal's ability to promote change in his or her school. Goal-setting and monitoring of goals influenced change at the school and district levels through the establishment of goals collaboratively, through reflecting on goals, and through the establishment of goals that are correlated to the ISLLC standards. Goals could be based on student data or standards. Finally, the fourth overarching theme, influencing transformational leadership through supportive evaluator-principal relationships, describes how the support from the evaluator influenced the principals' ability to promote change in schools. This support came from providing physical and financial resources and through the demonstration of trust in the principals' actions and decisions. In Chapter 5, I will discuss a theory regarding principal performance evaluation and its effects on transformational leadership that was discovered through the present data analysis.

#### Overarching Theme 1. Influencing Transformational Leadership Through Self-Reflection

The participants responded to questions regarding how self-reflection was utilized in their evaluations and how it influenced their ability to promote change within their schools. The participants characterized self-reflection as a practice that occurred both inside and outside of the evaluation process. An example of self-reflection occurring inside the evaluation process is a portfolio or a self-rating procedure that was mandated as part of the process. Self-reflection outside of the evaluation process might have been the principals self-reflecting on their own or participating in self-reflection as they conversed informally with their evaluators. Multiple themes emerged related to self-reflection, as principals connected this concept to many of the mandated components that are part of performance evaluation.

### Subtheme 1.1: Reflection Through Portfolio and Self-Assessment

PERA mandates that self-assessment be included as part of the evaluation process. Districts have flexibility in how they approach the self-assessment portion of the process. The principals who were interviewed for this study experienced self-assessment through multiple modes. They self-rated themselves, maintained portfolios as evidence of their work, and participated in self-assessment compared to the ISLLC standards. The process of self-assessment led to self-reflection with supervisors. Responses and data for how reflection occurred through portfolios and self-assessments are provided in this section.

Two principals, Bill and Vic, described the benefits of portfolio keeping and self-reflection. Vic pointed out that maintaining a portfolio kept his school improvement efforts on track. The process of maintaining a portfolio is identified under reflection because the principals were continually looking at their portfolios to monitor their work and thus this practice was reflective. Vic described portfolio gathering by stating, “I think the value I get from the evaluation, honestly, I’d never say this, is the portfolio you keep to kind of provide data to support your school improvement efforts.” The portfolio-gathering process was time consuming, so Vic initially said that he was hesitant to admit the value in the process. However, Bill expanded further on the benefits of using the portfolio, explaining that the portfolio leads him to reflection and that further reflection allowed for growth.

I’m probably not as good at reflecting on those six standards on a frequent basis. Certainly, as I’m getting ready, stuff in January for that portfolio on things like that, then certainly, I’m really doing a lot of reflecting there. So I think perhaps, if I’d been thinking about it more frequently throughout the year that might be a better opportunity for some growth. (Bill)

In these statements, Vic and Bill both expressed that the portfolio part of the evaluation process helped them reflect more than they would otherwise or more than they did on a day-to-day basis.

Three principals – Mindy, Kent, and Mark – described the process of rating themselves and reflecting. Mindy explained the process of self-assessment that occurred in the evaluation process and related this process to the need for more frequent meetings to reflect on self-assessment.

What we basically did was we filled out the entire rubric, where we saw ourselves, first. So we had to measure ourselves, and then write quick, little bullet points or a narrative of that specific domain. So that's why, for me, it's not helping me grow. If that's something that I could focus on every four weeks or every six weeks as a reminder, then I think then that would be able to change my leadership. And so I truly believe more follow up needs to be happening, more of - I don't know - like a journaling every four weeks, like, "Where are you at in the process of this?" And I don't know if that's something personal that I should just start doing or if that's something that should come from above so that everybody else is doing it and being consistent. That's where I will say no, they haven't. (Mindy)

Mindy said that the principals engage in the self-assessment process only one time per year; however, she would prefer to engage in it much more often. She believed that frequent self-assessment is necessary to grow and improve in her leadership.

Kent describes the process of assessing himself as part of the evaluation process. He said he values the process but believes that he needs to improve on documenting his work throughout the entire year.

And I put a lot of thought and time into that. One thing that I need to do better, and this came up as a result of the evaluation process, is all of a sudden it's time for the post, the summative, and here I am trying to reflect on the whole year. I can help myself if I do documentation as we go. And I do that anyway, but it's a matter of actually writing things down. And I think much like we do with the teachers, it's important for us as principals to communicate with our supervisors because, again, it's only two formals and one informal. And that informal is such a snapshot. (Kent)

Kent also believed that documenting his successes and his school's work is valuable because it exemplifies the totality of his work throughout the school year.

Last, Mark described self-rating and assessing himself as a process that can have leverage for growth in specific areas.

I think I'm pretty honest in my self-evaluation. I think with my new evaluator, I think I'm very specific in the areas that I need to grow, and I think I'm actually probably harder on myself than my supervisor is with an evaluation. So I do think it has some amount of leverage if it's used appropriately, and I think it's dependent completely on that person that is doing that evaluation and what their expectations are. (Mark)

Mark believed he is honest in his self-evaluation but suggested that the evaluator can influence this depending on his/her expectations. He contended that the self-reflection has more leverage or value if the reflector is honest. These three principals found that self-reflection in some capacity influenced their ability to promote change.

In the following quotation, Leslie describes how rating oneself does not influence his/her ability to promote change because, if the individual is honest, it can impact the overall rating. She referenced that the self-assessment includes "rating yourself, which makes up a percentage of your final rating as a principal."

The actual self-reflection process that is part of the evaluation tool I would say no, it has not helped me promote change in the building because it's kind of you're damned if you do. If you really try to utilize that tool, you're going to hurt yourself on your overall evaluation. So I would say the way it is now, no, it has not helped me promote change. I think just the tool itself and the scoring piece probably was what I would describe as not helpful in promoting change. (Leslie)

In sum, the process of self-assessment, or self-rating, prompted self-reflection in three principals. Portfolio gathering prompted self-reflection for two of the principals who participated in the study. Self-assessment led the principals to self-reflection; however, the value

of the self-reflection varied based on the principal and his/her experience. Some principals reflected more deeply independently, and some reflected more than others with their supervisor.

### Subtheme 1.2 Reflection on Standards and Goals

PERA mandates the use of ISSLC standards to be utilized in the evaluation process of principals. Part of the self-assessment process includes rating oneself on each of the six standards. The principals expressed that they reflected on these standards both verbally and non-verbally. In addition, reflection took part as principals developed and conversed about their goals. Their responses provide insight into how reflection took place in relation to the ISLLC standards and goals the principals had set.

Bill explains how self-reflection is good for him in relation to his goals on the ISLLC standards. He finds value in seeing the goals or standards that he may have not achieved and then self-reflecting on that.

I think, to me, it's more valuable to me when I see what I don't hit. So for example, looking at those, "This is my goal this year. Did not go as well as I thought." That's a reason why the self-reflection is good for me. (Bill)

Lynn saw the use of ISLLC standards as a reflective tool that could help her be a change agent for her school. She identified the standards as guides for success and used them to align her school's work to better promote change.

Sometimes just making connections and trying to synchronize our work as a school. So if I would say what has influenced my ability to promote change with the evaluation process, it's the way that I think we're integrating it into the work that we do at the school and really being reflective on my role as a change agent then. (Lynn)

Lynn referred to the standards and integrated the practices described in the ISLLC standards into her daily practice. She believed that this helped her better promote change.

Bob, Lynn, and Bill found self-reflection on the ISLLC standards to be valuable as they worked to promote change in their schools. Self-reflection even prompted changes in managerial processes at Lynn's school. Lynn explained how she reflects inside and outside of the evaluation process to promote growth.

Are we doing the right work because we are a high-achieving school? Are our kids continuing to grow at an appropriate rate?" So that reflective piece helps too, I think. And to continually look at where you are throughout the year. I do that with my staff, so it's not just the principal evaluation, but also looking to kind of support the staff as we're doing their evaluations and looking at student growth. (Lynn)

Ron described how reflection and action planning are used in the evaluation. He mentioned that self-rating occurred but described in detail how self-reflection focused on growth was utilized. He used the terms "self-reflection" and "self-assessment" interchangeably and attributed this self-reflection to the strength of evaluative process established within his district.

So in our evaluation tool, we're required to, obviously, rate ourselves on all of them, but then we're encouraged to really hone in on four or five that we see as an area where we could grow as a leader and then develop action items related to that, things that we're going to specifically do to address the standard to improve in those areas. And so that's based on a self-reflection, a self-assessment, and then also a discussion with the evaluator, in my case a superintendent, on is he agreeing that yeah, that's an area he'd like to see me grow, or does he see a greater need. (Ron)

I will say that's a strength of Y---- and my district is that it all starts with a self-reflection, I think we called it self-assessment, but we'll use that interchangeably. You really get to assess on those standards where your greatest strengths are and where your weaknesses or areas of growth are. And what's great about our district is it's-- my evaluator said, "It's your perception, it's where you think you need to grow," and he frankly, through discussion, agreed with me that those are the areas we need to grow in. (Ron)

Ron articulated that the change process starts with self-reflection on the ISSLC standards. He complimented his district and supervisor for the evaluation procedures that have been established, noting that he and his supervisor collaborate to determine areas of growth through discussion and reflection.

Sean described how reflection on school goals pertaining to student achievement could affect his goal setting process.

But on reflecting on things, maybe you might-- example comes to mind. You might change your goals. If you have a mid-report that shows a lot of progress, you might up your goals, or on the contrary, if you are not making progress, or maybe you're too aggressive in your goal to start with, you could back off your goal from January to May. So that part of reflection on how things are going is probably the main example I can think of for how it affects my evaluation. (Sean)

Sean adjusted goals based on reflection and discussion with his supervisor.

Kelly initially described how the standards guide goals related to standards: "So we use the rubric - really, for all practical purposes, I would say it's a rubric - to describe our goals. So we'll set the goal and we'll use the rubric of those standards to describe how we have reached those goals." She then further explained the use of standards and how reflecting on the ISLLC standards gave rationale to their efforts in their school. She described an understanding of the standards and why they are used and communicated that they are based on research and intertwined with effective practices for principals.

I would say yes, it has. And I think for me, what it has done is provided sort of an explanation for why we do it. In so many ways, leadership can be just innate to us as school principals. We make most of our decision making and move through our school day just doing things because we feel like it's the right thing to do and we know that it's the right thing to do. And I think those standards can help give some merit or give some rationale to, "Well, why are we doing this?" Because those are research-based standards. And they're connected to effective schools research and effective leadership research. (Kelly)

She clarified how self-reflection on ISLLC standards changed her belief and actions. She explained that this framework and the self-reflection carried over into her school improvement work with her staff and, thus, enabled the change process.

Well in our evaluation process, we meet multiple times throughout the year, probably three or four times throughout the year. And each of those times there is certainly a

reflective component that is required for you to actually fill out, right, on an evaluation form. And so that's one way the self-reflection process has been used. And then also related to those standards [inaudible] as we go into our summative evaluation meeting, we look at the rubric of standards and reflect on, what have we done? What have our actions been related to those standards? And that's part of our evaluation conference meeting. (Kelly)

Kelly also articulated that reflection on the standards has influenced her ability to promote change in her school.

I would say so because what led me, as a principal, as a leader, to take that angle of looking at components of success and our reflective work as a staff, what led me to do that was really an outcome of the evaluation process with my evaluator talking about--reflecting with my school improvement team and having a deliberate framework for reflecting. And that really carried over into my works and really with the whole school. So I think that belief and those actions associated with it definitely came out of the self-reflection process of the evaluation. (Kelly)

Kelly practiced reflection with her evaluator and school improvement team and believed the standards serve as a valuable framework to assist her in promoting change in her school.

Mark pointed to how reflection on standards has influenced his leadership and goal setting for the future. He acknowledged that he wants to continually improve and sees the standards as a framework for reflection. He questioned himself by asking, "Did I really do a good job addressing this need for our school?" He believed that the standards have influenced his leadership and goal-setting processes in his building.

Because I think I'm pretty reflective and I always want to become better and look at the work that I do and improve on that, so it gives me ability to look back and look at those standards and say, "Did I really do a good job addressing this need for our school?" So I think sitting down and looking at that absolutely has influenced how I lead my building and how I arrange my goals for the upcoming year. (Mark)

The ISLLC standards provided a framework for the performance evaluation of these school principals. Several principals utilized standards that prompted self-reflection, which led to the promotion of change in their schools that may have not otherwise occurred. Self-reflection

prompted from the ISLLC standards influenced each principal in a different way, yet they each described value in the process.

### Subtheme 1.3 Reflection on Feedback and Evaluator Input

Three principals expressed that they reflected on the feedback their supervisors provided to them during the evaluation process. This reflection took place on their own and during meetings with their supervisors. These reflections are described by participants in this section.

Bill described how reflecting on feedback from staff through the use of the Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership influenced his leadership. The VAL-ED is a survey-based tool staff complete about the performance and actions of the principal. The principal then receives feedback from the survey. Bill described how this feedback led him to identify areas for growth in his ability to monitor goals.

I think so because I think it's helped me as far as looking at, here are some of the areas I've struggled with a little bit. Actually, I'll even connect that back to something I was talking about, that Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership piece. What I've seen happen in a couple of years is the part, maybe as the staff is giving feedback as it's translated through results. It looks like the part where maybe I had the most area to grow is the monitoring piece. So then, that maybe will translate into some specific-- okay, so what I may have done is that maybe I've set something up, but really not given it significant attention to keep checking in with staff on it, then looking at it, and looking for the evidence that we're seeing the growth in those areas. (Bill)

The reflective tool led Bill to pay more attention to how he was monitoring goals in his school.

Lynn described that reflecting on her own narrative and reflecting while receiving feedback was more valuable than receiving the staff input from the VAL-ED measure. She appreciated the personalization of her narrative portfolio. She then further explained the value of self-reflection when working with her supervisor and others.

Yes, because I think people's perceptions of the job is valuable information. Any time you get any feedback, I think you can find value in it. I do feel like that self-reflective piece, by doing the narrative portfolio, was more valuable to me than the VAL-ED survey. I just felt like it was more personalized and it provided me a tool to kind of look at the real work that we were doing, and also writing that narrative.

So some people are reflective on their own and I do do that, but I feel like the reflective process for me is really valuable when I am collaborating and communicating with stakeholders and trying to get their feedback and looking at things from fresh new perspectives. (Lynn)

Below, Lynn further identified how the evaluator prompted her to reflect. She said that while written feedback is mandatory in the process, she finds that dialogue provides more value when reflecting on her actions.

So it doesn't always have to be that written feedback. I think sometimes just those conversations that you have throughout the year and that feedback as you're working through your goals you're working through certain problems definitely helps you reflect on your actions and evaluate the outcome with a different light. (Lynn)

Lynn also explained how feedback and reflection work cohesively to guide the change process in which she found she needed to be more visible in the community. This change process came about through feedback, reflection, and dialogue.

Yes, I think anytime someone gives you feedback, it helps you be reflective on your own practice. When I think about promoting change in my own building, who you are as a leader and what your focus is is definitely going to be reflected in the change that you're seeking or the work type you do in your building. And so, for example, I think just communication with your stakeholders. This was an area where I felt as a leader that I was really communicating a lot through newsletters, trying to be out there to meet the public. But we came across something last year where I think, need be more visible, would have stopped some of the conversations with our community. (Lynn)

In both statements Lynn described how feedback and reflection led her to promote change in her school.

Kelly, like Lynn, agreed that evaluator feedback led her to reflection. She described how she self-reflects about the successes in her building. She said that she not only did this in the evaluation process, but she also led her staff through self-reflection about the success in her building. This activity, prompted by self-reflection, led her to promote change at her school.

So, for me, I think that evaluator feedback has provided me an opportunity, really, to be reflective as well. And when you're formally self-reflecting with your evaluator, it causes you really to do that more automatically in your day-to-day work. And so one thing I did this year that was interesting is rather than looking at everything with a critical eye about what didn't work, I started to look at the factors of success. So I would look at incidents, situations that had a successful outcome. And I would start to reflect about, well, what was it that made that successful? And we actually did that activity as a whole staff to be more reflective about what are the components of success? And so yes, I would say that self-reflection did influence my ability to promote that change. (Kelly)

Each of the principals received feedback that led to self-reflection. This feedback was received verbally from the principals' evaluators as well as in written form from the teachers through the use of the VAL-ED survey instrument. However, conversation and feedback from supervisors was found to have a greater influence.

#### Subtheme 1.4 Personal Self-Reflection Outside of the Evaluation Process

Five of the principals described that they self-reflect on their own outside of the evaluation process. These responses came when they were asked how self-reflection has influenced their ability to promote change in their buildings.

Vic acknowledged that he self-reflects outside of the evaluation process so he can continue to improve. He described himself as someone who never settles and believed that the evaluation process does not allow one to settle because of the process.

I think self-reflection naturally does that anyways. You're always looking to improve. You can never really settle, and I think this evaluation process doesn't allow you to settle. You're always looking for new goals and new ways to improve your achievement for

your students, improve your instructional practices for your staff. So I think in that way it's helped. (Vic)

In addition to never settling, Vic described himself as someone who is always seeking to improve the instructional practices of his staff. He connected this drive for improvement to being someone who is naturally self-reflective.

Mindy met frequently with her assistant principal and described how self-reflection has led her to promote change in her assistant principal as they collaborate in promoting more success in their building.

As I looked at the big picture-- I always tell her, "Look at the big picture. Think big picture." And I said, "How can we change the schedule to promote more success?" And so that was part of my self-reflection, like "What can I do different at the school to promote that change in little steps?" And so one of those was the schedule change, looking at the students. (Mindy)

She said she started with a reflective question to her assistant principal and this then led to the change of their school schedule.

Sean described how his own self-reflection leads to his work in the school improvement process.

I would say yes. I mean, again, you're reflecting all the time on how you can get better at things. Whether you're reflecting informally, driving home, or if you're reflecting formally. Again, as you're reflecting, you're coming up with your prioritized list of things to do with your areas of need, whether it be subgroups of students or sub-content areas. And then, in turn, we'll kind of fan that out, and we'll have reflection time, or what we call brainstorming time with our school improvement team. I might try to steer them into what I have reflected on in the past, and then we as a group might reflect on that area, and brainstorm change opportunities. (Sean)

He explained that he continually reflects and then comes up with priorities to act on with his school improvement team. He further described how he then attempts to sway his team to support ideas for change and improvement.

Kent, who described himself as someone who naturally self-reflects articulated that the evaluation process has influenced him to be more reflective. He believed that self-reflection daily is important and credited the evaluation process for this.

I don't know, Chris, how much it has changed me as a leader in terms of my skill set and what I bring to the people I serve. But it has influenced me to be reflective. And that's why I think it's important to consistently and daily self-reflect. (Kent)

Kent also discussed how self-reflection is part of his process to improve his building and his students. He described thinking about his leadership, his service to his school community, and pondering how he can improve.

Yeah. I mean, the self-reflection part of the evaluation process is one thing and like I said, I did it at the very end. But on a daily basis, you know how it is, Chris. We are constantly reflecting about how things are going. And what do I need to do better? What do I need to do more? But there comes a point where you got to close your door and think about you, and think about your leadership, and your service to your students, and staff, and parents. And think about how things are going and just gauge what can I do better, and how can I help the teachers help the kids? I think it's twofold. It's a consistent daily reflection that we do as leaders. And then there's the self-reflection component of the evaluation process that I believe is 10%. And we can use that to either celebrate or reflect and improve. (Kent)

Self-reflection was practiced by these principals outside of the evaluation process. While there was not a specific question asked about self-reflection outside of the evaluation process, these principals described how this practice has led them to promoting change and to better self-assessment. They also described how the evaluation process influenced them to reflect outside of the formal process.

## Theme 2. Influencing Transformational Leadership Through Evaluator Feedback

Evaluator feedback emerged as a dominant theme as the principals were asked about how feedback influenced their ability to promote change within their buildings. Multiple principals

connected the concept of feedback to components mandated in the evaluation process, such as site-based observations, summative conferences, and self-reflection. In this section, the principals describe how feedback has influenced their work.

### Subtheme 2.1 Feedback Through Conversations with Evaluator

Conversations with the evaluator occurred formally in the evaluation process. These conversations took place after site-based observations and during goal-setting, mid-year, and summative conferences. Each of these formats provided participants with opportunities to receive feedback from their evaluators. Six principals in total discussed how feedback has influenced them in the evaluation process.

Vic explained that site-based observations are not as meaningful as feedback on his progress toward goals in the school improvement plan. He contended that conversations focused on the ISLLC standards and his school improvement plan were valuable.

The other areas as far as-- I don't get a lot out of the actual observation. So if my supervisor observes me running a meeting or giving a presentation, that kind of thing, I don't see that as a super helpful piece. But the discussions I have with my supervisor going through what standards am I hitting, what tasks are falling under those standards, and how those relate to our school improvement plan, and then the portfolio evidence piece that you keep has been helpful. (Vic)

Vic articulated how discussions with his supervisor are valuable, especially when they are focused on the standards and his school improvement plan.

Mark, like Vic, believed the feedback he received during conversations with his evaluator was meaningful, specifically conversations about student discipline.

Yeah, evaluator feedback has. I would not say that. I would say the most influential part is that conversation with your supervisor about areas of improvement or changes that they would like to see. A lot of times, those conversations are not things that are documented in your evaluations, so I've had excellent evaluations my whole time as a

principal. However, the most meaningful feedback has come from discipline conversations with my - not discipline for me, but student discipline conversations - with my supervisor. So the same way you redirect teachers and you give them constant feedback that has more leverage than I believe the overall evaluation process does. (Mark)

He also explained in general that conversations about improvement his supervisor would like to see are helpful. Mark minimized the effectiveness of the summative rating but described the value in continual feedback.

Yeah. So if you look at your final summative rating, the rating is what it is, the indicators are what they are, but I think it's that conversation, the feedback throughout the school year that really has-- it's more of a motivator for me versus what my final summative evaluation is. (Mark)

Mark placed a high value on conversations about improvement and change in his building. On the contrary, he attributed less value to the summative rating in the evaluation.

Much like Vic and Mark, Leslie shared that feedback from her evaluator has value. She explained that she accepts ideas from her supervisor and attempts to make changes when they are suggested. However, she wished the feedback was more frequent.

Yeah. I think so. I mean, I respect her opinion. So I think that when she shares an opinion with me, again there are limited opportunities for that. But when she does share an opinion or an observation or a thought or a suggestion or an idea, I'm receptive to it. And I take it into account and definitely try to make changes based on that feedback. (Leslie)

Ron and Kent were also receptive to their supervisors' feedback. Ron explained that when his supervisors tell him they want to see a change, he acts on the feedback.

So the suggestions for improvement that he had, I implemented them. It's a call to action when your superintendent says, "Hey, I'd like to see this." So I certainly implemented change based on his feedback, but it wasn't transformative change, I guess would be the right way to look at that. (Ron)

Kent also paid close attention to the specific feedback he receives from his supervisor.

And her feedback was very helpful and very honest. And that's why I pay attention to the details of the feedback of my supervisor. Just to help me gauge how things are going in the pulse of our school and again, whether or not we need to stop doing something or if things are going well, don't fix it, don't change a thing. And then sometimes, things are great but the delivery or implementation isn't, and we have to tweak that. (Kent)

Ron and Kent both believe that this feedback has led them to promote change in their schools.

Mindy desired feedback from her supervisor and wanted to know if she was “headed in the wrong direction.” She also wanted her supervisor to fully understand her vision for the school but sought specific feedback from her supervisor on her actions.

I think it's very important. I want him to know and understand what my vision is at for the school. I want to make sure that my vision coincides with what the district is, also. And if I'm headed in the wrong direction, I want him to tell me, "Mindy, you need to slow down a little bit." And I want to make sure that I have a supervisor that's not going to be afraid to tell me that. (Mindy)

Each of the six principals was able to receive feedback from their evaluators due to mandates that exist in PERA. This verbal feedback was a result of structured conferences that were part of the performance evaluation process. The principals described value in the conversations with and feedback from their supervisors. Many alluded to how the feedback led them to better promote change in their schools. This feedback may have not otherwise been received or acted on if the evaluation process did not exist.

### Subtheme 2.2 Specific Feedback Following Observations

The principals identified that feedback that was specific, as opposed to general, had greater influence on their ability to promote change. The feedback from supervisor to principal continued to occur within the structured settings of the evaluation process. A question about specific feedback was not asked, yet eight principals explained that specific feedback is valuable

in influencing their work. Principal responses regarding specific feedback are found within this section.

Vic described that feedback after the required site-based observations originally did not lead him to promote change in his building.

No, I don't think so. I would have given those presentations with or without them there, and I probably would have done all the same. It's nice to get feedback but it—not at the fault of supervisor—just wasn't super useful. (Vic)

However, he later described how the conversation after the site-based observation was the event that led to her providing valuable feedback. While the original intent of the supervisor's visit was to be the site-based observation, the meeting after it allowed for feedback on an area of weakness and a discussion that was helpful for him.

Her giving me that kind of feedback has been helpful and we talked through it. Not that it's a leadership standard so much. But we talked through areas that I think I'm weak in and it just promotes kind of honest communication about that. And I think in that way kind of leads to a less threatening observation, because it does lead to a conversation and less about my supervisor telling me, "Hey, I think you're weak here." So I think in that way it's been very helpful. (Vic)

Vic articulated that honest communication is very helpful when he receives feedback. This honesty has led to less threatening observations and has allowed him to identify areas for growth.

Bill explained that feedback from site-based observations is valuable when he seeks input on events or tasks that are of value. He articulated that he has the choice of selecting what his supervisor observes for his site-based visit.

I think when – I can make the opportunity or take the chance to pick and choose what they come and see. So if I have chosen an event that I think is really-- kind of align to all of those things, that's a good opportunity to get some good feedback. So let's say, for instance, if I invite my evaluator to come watch a leadership team meeting or things like that, that will give me some good feedback. The downside of that is I can certainly throw out a softball there, what's something that I know will be well received by the staff or parents? And I'll invite them and that way, I would not get feedback. So I've tried to

maybe invite staff to things that I feel is important and try to invite my evaluators to say-- to events I think that are important to me and what I'm doing with my leadership. So I thought that was a good example for me to get that feedback I felt was necessary. So it was important. (Bill)

Bill could allow the supervisor to see something that he is already very secure in; however, he chose to have her observe him on more challenging tasks. In doing this, he received valid feedback and utilized the feedback to change his work.

In a follow-up question to Bill's original comments, he was asked if this feedback influenced his ability to promote change. He explained the value of the feedback in his response.

Yeah. Yes, because I was able then to take that feedback from the evaluator and to kind of refine that presentation, which I ended up delivering about six times around parent conferences. So if we're thinking about that standards-based reporting kind of being a component of a bigger piece of some other things as far as the multi-tiered system of support and making our students more self-directed, those are some important changes that I want to see take place. So certainly, the feedback I received about what information emphasized, how to respond to some of those challenging questions and things like that was very important. (Bill)

Bill described how the feedback led him to refining a parent presentation about standards-based report cards. In addition, Bill received feedback on how to best answer parent questions regarding the report card.

While Lynn has found specific feedback to be effective in helping her to promote change, she did not find feedback from site-based observations as valuable because it was not aimed at improving her practice.

As far as feedback from those site-based observations, I'm not sure it has always affected positively my ability to promote change in my building and I'm going to share maybe why. One of our site-based evaluations or observations is always about the staff that we have and talking about building capacity as a larger district. It's with HR. It's with my supervisor. It could be someone from Services or support services. And I think the purpose on a larger scale is to grow leadership within. (Lynn)

In Lynn's district, one of their site-based observations is a meeting with her supervisor and the Human Resource Department. They have a discussion about the talent in her building. She did not see this as an effective observation or as an effective way to receive feedback.

Ron found that feedback from site-based observations led him to put change into motion. His supervisor observed his faculty meeting and provided feedback that there could have been more positive recognition of staff. The supervisor also suggested administering a climate survey. Both of these suggestions were acted on by Ron.

And so within the faculty meeting that he observed, he just pointed out a couple other ways that I could continue to recognize teachers and their contributions to the building. And so I implemented those. One of his suggestions was to administer a survey, again back to that formative piece, to administer a survey to measure am I growing in the area of climate. So that's an example of something I put into motion based on his feedback.  
(Ron)

When asked if this influenced his ability to promote change, Ron explained the following: "I would say yes. So just similar to the evaluation process, when you're receiving feedback, you're implementing change." Ron took the feedback from his supervisor and implemented the changes that were suggested. He believed that this feedback influenced his ability to promote change.

Kelly described how the feedback after the site-based observation was valuable because it was specific. She explained that feedback that is unique to her based on her specific skills is valuable.

So as I'm listening to my evaluator giving me feedback and I'm involved in those professional evaluation conferences with an evaluator, they're giving very specific feedback that's unique to me. And so it might be related to a specific skill, maybe an organizational skill, how I'm organizing for staff meetings, and causing me to be reflective and be more diligent about those components of leadership so that change is more systematic. And you can point to certain things that are really impacting that change. And again, I think that provided for a really good springboard for a conversation between my evaluator and I, to give me that critical feedback about my feedback for the teacher and how that was based in research. (Kelly)

She noted that both site-based observations led her to promote change in her building. She was observed giving feedback to teachers and at a staff meeting.

I think that, and you know, when I'm reflecting on those two situations that I just described, they definitely have led to a more purposeful organization, referring back to the staff meetings. I think that that site-based observation led me to be more specific and purposeful about meeting agendas and about meeting activities. And that led to change in the way that the staff was receiving that information and then implementing that information. (Kelly)

On reflecting on her practice, she articulated that the feedback led to a change in how her staff received information from her.

When asked if site-based observations influenced their ability to promote change in their buildings, Mark and Leslie did not describe as much value. Mark had not received feedback that was specific and of value. He said he does value feedback, but it has been lacking in his observation. He believed that feedback from site-based observations are only isolated occurrences and that they do not encompass that totality of his role as a principal. Both believed feedback has influenced their ability to promote change; however, in these instances it did not.

I don't really-- to me, I don't think that that's, I don't know, an accurate reflection of the work that a principal does, it's one single snapshot. And I think if you look at some of the things that we're evaluated on, so it could be my presentation to my incoming fifth-grade students, which is one small component of all of the work that I do. So I don't-- to me, I typically do well on those, but I don't think that's something that is driving my change in any sort of way. I wouldn't say no. I don't think that has really impacted my change just because I haven't had feedback from that. That is something that is that I have needed to change or address. (Mark)

Leslie communicated that the lack of timeliness of the feedback lessened the value of the feedback.

I would say again in a general sense, I think the problem is that it's probably not-- a lot like teachers, the feedback isn't always going to be as timely. So again, if you're getting feedback, you're either getting it at the summit of peace, so it's very general, focus maybe on the following year, and focus on the following year goals. So again, it might

influence my big picture thinking, but I would say the feedback is fairly infrequent. And again, probably a lot of the things teachers would say about principal feedback. Pretty infrequent and not always super timely, so I would say it's a very general-- probably has a very general influence, but I wouldn't say that it's a significant influence (Leslie).

Leslie believed that although feedback could have an influence on her “big picture thinking,” the lack of timely feedback and its infrequency provided little value.

Mindy explained she received feedback on an area that she would have never been aware of while evaluating a teacher in her building. She appreciated this input and described this feedback as good and specific.

I think this year, I've received more feedback on specific things. So for example, one of the observations made was on a post-observation meeting. And though the observation went really well, and the feedback given was really good - and there was areas that I didn't even know or contemplated myself but another set of eyes saw - but then there was still an area to grow in. And I really appreciated that because it's not always going to be good. (Mindy)

Mindy also noted that his specific feedback led her to promoting change. She took the feedback and immediately implemented change in how she evaluated teachers.

Yes, they have. Yes. I would say 50% of them, yes. Especially the last one that I just had, was the post meeting, I was able to take back what I learned from my own evaluation to use it for my own teacher's evaluation. (Mindy)

Mindy acknowledged that specific and timely feedback influenced her ability to promote change. After being observed in an evaluation conference with a teacher, her supervisor identified areas for growth. Her supervisor communicated these areas to her, and she then used these suggestions in the future.

In total, eight principals described how specific feedback influenced their work. The principals gave examples of how their supervisor led them to implementing immediate and long term change in their schools. The principals demonstrated an openness and desire to receive

input from their supervisors and noted that the more honest and specific the feedback, the more valuable it was in helping the principals implement change in their schools.

### Theme 3. Influencing Transformational Leadership Through Goals

Goals emerged as a dominant theme throughout all of my interviews with the 10 principals. The interview protocol did not specifically ask questions about goals; however, this theme was clearly evident in many of the components mandated as part of the evaluation process. Goal setting, monitoring goals, and action planning to meet goals naturally take place in the evaluation process. All participants were evaluated by a member of their district's administrative team, either a superintendent or assistant superintendent. Thus, school and district goals emerged as a subtheme that influenced transformational leadership. In addition, goal setting and reflection on goals took place in conversations and meeting with evaluators. Goals were also established as a result of the PERA requirement of including student achievement data in the evaluation process. The participants described goals and their use in the evaluation process in the following section.

#### Subtheme 3.1 School and District Goals

The participants referred to school and district goals in their responses to many of the interview questions. Goals were established based on a variety of factors, including both mandated and non-mandated processes. PERA mandates that student achievement data be included as part of the evaluation process. The participants referred to student achievement goals in this section. In addition, the participants described school goals based on their school improvement work as well as how district goals influenced school goals. Eight principals

described school or district goals as having an influence on their work. The participants' responses connected to school and district goals are found in this section.

Vic discussed how change is initiated at the district level and then flows down to the building level. He described how aligning school and professional goals has helped in achieving his school's vision and mission.

Well, initially, I mean, change is kind of thrust on us with one of the district's goals/initiatives are, that becomes what our plan is so that change is already there. I think the only way is that it shows a relationship between additional initiatives, are school improvement goals and my personal goals. And all teachers need to have their own personal goals when they're on cycle, anyways. And I think as long as I can show a correlation among all the goals and how they can all work together to adhere to the district mission and vision, I think in that way it's helped. (Vic)

He explained how focusing goals around specific student groups has influenced change in his building.

In every way. We've a real strong focus now on gap closure for subgroups, and we need to pick two gap closure goals. So it's really been all encompassing as far as how we use student achievement data and evaluation. And, of course, those goals become my goals in my evaluation. (Vic)

He articulated further how student achievement integration has increased the urgency to promote change and noted that he sees these data as a way to determine if change has occurred in student learning. His school has shown growth in achievement, but he is awaiting further data to confirm the growth that has been made.

Okay. It ramps up the urgency, that's for sure. But it's a little too soon to tell. I'm only starting my third year, so I hate to say one year to the next. We've shown some good growth from my first year, second year with our local performance series, but I don't have two years of park data under my belt yet. We haven't gotten those results back yet. So it's really hard to say whether that change has been positive yet. But it has helped with the message to staff. (Vic)

Vic also believed that integrating student achievement goals in the evaluation process has assisted him in his communication with staff regarding school improvement initiatives.

However, he was cautious to admit if the student data achievement integration was the main reason for change.

Bill described that his district uses the same student achievement goals for both teacher and principal evaluation. His district does this so principals and teachers are aligned in their goals and initiatives. He believed that this alignment has influenced his ability to promote change in his building. In particular, he has seen his school close the achievement gap with specific subgroups of students.

I think the fact that I share my results with the staff, it really helps kind of align what we're working on. So, "Here's our district goals. Here are our school improvement goals. Here are my own professional goals," and just to kind of show that there's that alignment, and that helps to enforce why we may be putting our efforts into a particular initiative.

So for example, a couple of years ago, looking at my goals when kids were not meeting expectations in math, two of kind of the subgoals then-- one was looking at our African-American students. One was looking at our Hispanic students. Good, or bad, or indifferent, those actually-- students comprise a small number of students out of my total population. So we may have had only 15 African American students total in the entire building and maybe 40 Hispanic students. (Bill)

In the above statements, Bill articulated that the inclusion of student achievement has improved student learning through data analysis and the alignment of goals.

Kelly, like Bill and Vic, explained how the district goals influence school goals and the benefits from this process. The goals of her district connect to her school goals. She believed that this alignment benefits both the school and district because their efforts are concentrated.

So the goals of the greater organization of the school district have really trickled down through that professional relationship between my evaluator and I. And so what the district is focusing on more broadly has become a focus of our school as well. So it's all connected, and I think it helps to contribute to the overall goal, achieving the overall

goals for the district. And it's also been mutually beneficial. So not only are we working then as a school organization to contribute to what the district is trying to achieve, we've also benefitted from that because we have a focus of information, we have a focus of materials. (Kelly)

Lynn described how she and her evaluator converse about school goals as they relate to student achievement and growth. She explained how those goals translate into promoting change in her building. Specifically, Lynn's school has seen academic growth from English Learner students at her building. She attributed this success to the goal-setting process in the evaluation process.

We also talked about what our goals were for student growth, so really looking at where those gaps are. If you are showing some gaps-- maybe if you're fortunate like [inaudible], or looking more at the individual student level, rather than huge subgroups that might have some concern. And that piece is really valuable to me because regardless of where our concerns are on that low end, I want to see that my kids are growing and continuing to grow at an appropriate rate.

And so being able to look at that data and then really going after it to promote change and to fill people's bucket with professional learning so that they have the tools in their toolkit to meet the needs of those EL students and then just really kind of keeping the focus on them really made a huge difference and that's not a concern anymore for us as far as our recently exited EL students making or sustaining that growth, so absolutely. (Lynn)

Mindy described how she communicates the goals set in her evaluation with her staff. She said she is transparent with her staff because she wants them to be working toward achieving the same goals. She referred to specific teams and how their collaborative work can be focused on student achievement.

That one, I would say yes, for sure, because I'm very transparent with my staff. Once my goals are set in place, I actually do share them with my staff. I share them with the grade levels that would be affected and say, "We're going to be here to work together." I want to make sure that those PLCs are occurring not only correctly and accurately, but are focused on student achievement and are focused on the needs of the students. (Mindy)

Sean described how his school goals and grade-level goals determine the goals set for the student achievement portion of the evaluation process. His school closely monitors its data-based goals.

We'll determine our grade level and building level, our growth goals as well as our benchmark goals. Our goals are usually around growth and about benchmark and rigor. So we'll do that, and then based on that, we follow your process. They progress monitor our goals on how we do on those. (Sean)

Kent also explained the close alignment of goals in his district. He shared that the superintendent's goals are his goals. This correlation in goals motivates him to align his school improvement goals as well.

And I think it's important that everything is aligned from our district mission statement to our school improvement goals to my principal goals. And then also linking the teacher evaluation process into all that.

Well, I mean the reality is my goals are what the superintendent's goals are. And the goals of my teachers, again have to connect with my goals. And that's why I'm making a point to sync our school improvement goals with my own personal and professional goals. (Kent)

Mark described the alignment of school, district, and board goals. He explained how he evaluates and establishes goals with his leadership team in his building. He, like the other principals, alluded to how these goals influence his school improvement plan.

Each year I sit down with my assistant principals and I set goals for the following year. This also includes setting goals with my building leadership team. So we always look to kind of assess areas of strength and weakness each year and then within our school improvement plan we have specific goals that we put in there that are measurable that we try to tackle the following year. I would say that any of the goals that I'm setting for my school, that are very individual to H--- Middle School, also relate very closely to our board goals and any goals that we have from upper administration. (Mark)

Eight principals in total described how goals influence change in their practices. Many of them credited the alignment of goals from district to school as valuable in helping them to

promote change in their schools. Goals cover a broad range of work in the evaluation process. School and district goals can be specific student achievement goals, district goals related to initiatives, or school improvement goals related to practice or other areas of achievement.

### Subtheme 3.2 Establishing Goals with the Evaluator

Goals are established with the evaluator through structures mandated in the performance evaluation process. These structures include goal-setting meetings and conferences following site-based observations. Goals are based on both student achievement data and professional work of the principals. Professional goals are not mandated as part of PERA but can be included in the evaluation process. Five principals describe the goal-setting process in this section.

Bill explained how he arrives at both personal and professional goals with his evaluator. He alluded to the input he receives from a survey-based tool called VAL-ED. This survey provides him with input from his staff. He processed this information with his supervisor and then established goals.

Through this past year, we've also used a second tool called the VAL-ED, which was an anonymous survey the staff did on me. I think it was Vanderbilt Assessment of Learning. So looking at the results of that, I would process that with my evaluators while sharing with the staff and talk about some personal or professional goals to work on. (Bill)

Lynn also described how she collaboratively sets goals with her evaluator. She noted that the principals write a narrative based on the ISLLC standards.

I kind of feel like we, through just that setting of goals and really looking at the narrative portfolio and where to go next, obviously, it's going to have an effect on what you do. I'm trying to really be specific, but I'm having a hard time finding a specific example. (Lynn)

Lynn believed that the goal-setting process had an influence on her actions and the steps she takes to promote change.

Ron and his evaluator brainstormed ways to meet his school goals this year. His evaluator recommended a focus on formative assessment.

I think the answer for me is yes, and in theory, that's the way it should be in the sense that your evaluator is coming to observe you in action, talking through your goals with you. I think the answer for me is yes, and in theory, that's the way it should be in the sense that your evaluator is coming to observe you in action, talking through your goals with you. To give you a specific example, this year I targeted a very specific subgroup of students who have historically underperformed in my building, and I came up with a way to put those kids on the teacher's radar. We brainstormed action items, and then through the evaluation process, the one thing that - and my evaluator was right-- the one thing that I was missing was a formative assessment. (Ron)

In addition, his supervisor recommended he focus on improving the school climate, which Ron described.

I would say yes in the areas that we have mutually agreed on our goals. So in other words, in our evaluation process, we set goals for ourselves that are in alignment to the Illinois leadership standards that are in alignment to student growth goals that we set. He suggested ways of-- so one of my goal areas, a specific example, one of my goal areas this year was to improve the climate of my building. The school climate was low on my five essentials survey from two years ago, so this year one of my goals was focused on climate. (Ron)

Ron took both of these recommendations sincerely and set goals in these areas. Ron believed that this process influenced his ability to promote change in his building.

Sean said he establishes four to five SMART goals annually with his superintendent, who serves as his evaluator, and he and his supervisor meet often to monitor progress on these goals.

Like many of the other principals, the goals in his personal evaluation are directly tied to the goals in his school improvement plan.

One of the good things I do think we do is we have three yearly visits. And by that, I mean the superintendent, curriculum director will come by. They'll come by in August. They'll come by in January. They'll come by in May where we revisit our goals. Talk about how we're doing. Our school improvement team participates in it. So it does keep it as a priority item, and it promotes change in your leadership as you're looking at that year

to year. Keeps you focused on that throughout the year as you're going through your other responsibilities as a principal. (Sean)

Sean also noted that the purpose of the superintendent's site-based visits are to observe his work in relation to his goals: "He'll come after our pre-goal meeting and look at a specific sort of activity, I guess, I'm doing towards the work on my goal."

Mark also believed that goal setting in the evaluation process has influenced his ability to promote change. He said he knows he has demonstrated evidence of improvement and is diligent in providing this evidence to his supervisor.

I think it has because if I have specific goals that are set up there that my supervisor really wants to see, I have to be able to demonstrate that, and you have to have solid, excuse me, solid evidence that supports that change. So if I know that is one area that we need to grow in as a school, I have to have multiple ways to demonstrate that we've made progress towards that goal. (Mark)

Five principals described how setting goals with their evaluator influenced their work. They explained that the goals are established through a collaborative process between the principal and evaluator. These goals may have not otherwise been established if it were not for the mandates of PERA. The goals they described are professional and based on the ISLLC standards or student achievement data.

### Subtheme 3.3. Goals and Standards

While PERA does not mandate that principals' goals be based on ISLLC standards, it does mandate the use of the ISLLC standards as a framework for the performance evaluation process. The standards describe actions and characteristics of educational leadership, thus these goals are not specifically tied to student achievement data. In this section, seven principals describe how they set goals based on these standards.

Bill explained how setting goals based on of the ISLLC standards influenced his ability to promote change in his building. He contended that the standards remind him why it is important to communicate with parents and staff about school improvement changes.

I think so. I think often, what I look at too when you think about change is looking at that first one about leading and maintaining a vision, and then the last one about engaging with the parent community, and that's a goal. So between those pieces there, that's the piece always I think that is important to me. Because a lot of times, it makes crystal clear sense to us why we're trying to promote a change here among the staff, but it's also important let our parents know why we're doing some things as well. (Bill)

The ISLLC standards of leading and maintaining a vision and engaging a parent community served as focus areas for him. He formulated goals around these areas as the ISLLC standards led him to this focus.

Lynn further explained how standards and goal setting are intertwined in her evaluation process. She said she sets goals based on the standards but collects a portfolio that demonstrates evidence of success on all six of the standards. She had set goals based on different standards in various years depending on areas in which she felt she needed to grow.

So even though our goals for the year might be focused on just one or two of those standards, or maybe three of those standards, you really kind of collect a portfolio of all the things that we are doing to show evidence of where we're at with those different standards. (Lynn)

Well, like I said before, we set our goals based on the standards. Sometimes we use all of the standards. I've never used all of the standards just at my goals. I usually am focusing in on like one or two. Last year, I worked on improving teaching and learning, and building and maintaining collaborative relationships, and then really looking at those indicators and kind of honing in on some areas where I felt like I needed to work. (Lynn)

Lynn explained that she set goals based on a variety of standards. Specifically, she set goals based on the standards in teaching and learning and collaborative relationships.

Mindy set a goal to build trust with her school community in her first year. She explained how the standards led her to set this goal and how the data showed success.

Well, I will say, one of my goals my first year for my evaluation process was for me to build some type of trust factor with the community and with the families here. So I really, really hit hard on that goal, and was very successful with that at the end through surveys, through meetings, through face-to-face, through opening their communication via social media. And we saw the data, and so I feel that part of my evaluation process was successful. (Mindy)

Mindy used surveys, meetings, and face-to-face communication to gauge success in promoting change in the area of trust with the community. She was successful in promoting change based on data that she received.

Ron explained that setting goals based on the standards is a “call to action.” His district uses SMART goal planning, meaning that goals must be specific, measurable, attainable, reasonable, and time bound.

So in other words, in our evaluation process, we set goals for ourselves that are in alignment to the Illinois leadership standards. When you set a goal based on a standard, in our district, we use the SMART goals, so you're writing a SMART goal to match the standard, and that's a call to action. (Ron)

Ron articulated that setting goals matched to standards was a call to action, and thus, he had to take action to meet his goals.

Sean explained that he implements several action plans to reach his goals (which are based on the ISLLC standards). He referred to the standards and goals often through a visual board in his office. He discussed his progress on these goals following his site-based observations with his supervisor.

Again, just by keeping myself diligent and having timelines throughout the year. Just like a student, I need to show progress monitoring my goal. So I might have like five or six action steps for a goal that I choose to have on my evaluation, and what action steps might take place in August. What action step might take place in October? So as the site-

based visits come about, we talk about my progress on the action goals. And then, that, in turn, helps elicit positive change, again, through some use of—and the ones I pick usually complement the goals that we have in place on my bulletin board on my left, I have our five goals. Actually, I have a column called Goals and a column called Standards. And then, like I said, as the standards are within the goals, I check them off as I go. So I'd say almost daily, but for sure, weekly. I'm looking at those standards. (Sean)

He said his goals are aligned with the ISLLC standards and he keeps a visual to remind him of what he should be doing to meet his targets. The discussion about goal progress takes place during his site-based observations.

Mark described his process for setting goals using the ISLLC standards. He and his evaluator identified what standards were being addressed during his site-based evaluation.

While he was not required to set goals based on all six standards, he chose to set goals based on all of them. His goals correlated to the ISLLC standards and had to be measurable.

And so when I set goals all of my goals are tied in with that as well. So within those six standards, they all apply to things that we're doing here at H--- Middle School. So that gives my evaluator kind of a heads up on what my goals are this year and how they tie into my professional practice standards. And when we do evaluations we identify what standards are being addressed during that site evaluation. (Mark)

But all of my goals are tied specifically to those six standards. We're only required to have some of them in there, but I really do set a goal for each of those standards. I think it is pretty specific as to what you're looking for but I think you have to truly demonstrate your ability to meet those standards. It can't be something about, "Well, living a mission vision focused on results," and I can't throw something in there that's not measurable. (Mark)

Mark also discussed how student achievement goals influenced his ability to promote change. He confirmed this by saying yes when asked, "So is it fair to say that establishing a goal and then following through on the goal is the process that is influencing your ability to promote change?"

It has just because I have that area of focus, and I have to be able to put everything in throughout the year to hopefully demonstrate growth for those kids. (Mark)

Leslie explained how her goals were school goals. She did not believe the goals necessarily changed her abilities, but she did believe there has been an influence on her leadership. She attributed this influence on her leadership to the prioritization that takes place when she set goals.

I do write goals that we are accountable for. And those goals are derived from previous years looking at the rubric. Looking at maybe some areas of weakness or deficiency. And I have caught myself saying to ILT, "My goals are your goals." So I do know that that goal process has forced me to put some of those priorities in place. So I do think that it has impacted. (Leslie)

I don't know if it's changed my ability-- I guess if you really look at the word ability to promote change, I don't know that the evaluation process has really-- I think you're still kind of on your own with your skills. So it might influence-- the goal might influence how you lead or might influence what you do or what you focus on or prioritizing. (Leslie)

Leslie did not believe that her ability to promote change has necessarily been impacted, but she did believe that goal setting influenced her actions and leadership.

Seven principals described how they set goals based on the ISLLC standards. They admitted that this process may have not occurred if it were not for the evaluation process. The use of ISLLC standards are mandated as part of the evaluation process. Setting goals in relation to the standards was a common practice among the principals who participated in this study. Many of the principals explained that setting goals influenced their ability to promote change in their buildings.

### Subtheme 3.4 Reflecting on Goals

The principals described how self-reflection has led to goal setting and how they have self-reflected on their already-established goals in the evaluation process. The principals' responses relating to reflection on goals are found in this section. Three principals connected goals and reflection.

Bill and Ron tied self-reflection to the goal-setting process during evaluation. Ron contended that rating himself on standards leads him to setting goals in areas that he identifies for growth.

As far as self-reflection, first of all, we have to kind of share what our professional goals were, and then taking them to the process of if we did or did not hit those goals. So that will then translate into a goal for me, what I'll work on. (Bill)

When asked if self-reflection influenced his ability to promote change, Bill described self-reflection as the driver for the change process.

Yes. Similar to my previous answers because that self-reflection is driving my goal setting since we use that SMART goal format, the area that I rate myself as needing to grow are the areas that I'm also writing goals for, which then are also the areas I'm writing action items for. And that's what drives the change process. (Bill)

Ron also believed that self-reflection leads to goal setting and identifying areas for growth and learning. "And so that goes back to that goal setting and that self-reflection piece of how do I grow a culture of learning" (Ron). Bill and Ron described how self-reflection and goal setting are closely aligned. They both articulated that these practices influenced the change process in their schools.

Kent explained that goal setting and reviewing his goals influenced the promotion of change. He said he has changed his goals each year and his goals in year one as a principal are much different than they are in year number four.

And I think it's okay to review and revise your school goals and your own goals, depending on how things are going And as young a principal yet, entering year number four, as I said earlier, my goals have changed So I do believe that setting the goals, and then putting an action plan in place, and then getting evaluated based on whether or not I'm achieving the goals and reviewing the action plan, maybe I need to do something a little different. But yeah, I think so. (Kent)

In total, three principals described how they were led to set goals through self-reflection and/or how they self-reflected on their goals. They contended this self-reflection and goal setting were prompted through the evaluation process.

### Subtheme 3.5 Student Data Goals for the Purpose of PERA

PERA as part of Senate Bill 7 (2011) mandates the inclusion of student achievement data in the evaluation process. The principals' responses that connect to goal setting for this purpose are found in this section. Seven principals described student data goals and their use in the evaluation process.

Bill and Leslie found limited value in student data goal setting for the singular purpose of the evaluation. Bill explained that setting student achievement goals for the purpose of achieving a rating does not have an influence on his ability to promote change in his building. His district has allowed a large window for achieving their student achievement goals.

I'll be honest. I think what we reached as a decision here is really kind of neutral. I think that the way things are set up, we've got such a large window for meeting expectations for growth, that I would not see a realistic shift in either direction. (Bill)

Similarly, Leslie did not believe that the process influences her ability to promote change in her school. She said she does not monitor her goals closely and explained that achieving the student learning goals in her evaluation are a "by-product" of school improvement efforts.

I would say no. I would say that it's not something-- it's more of an ooh did I make it at the end kind of thing. It's not something that I'm using as a guidepost that I'm looking at,

that I'm-- I think it's a by-product of our efforts, of our goals, and of our improvement plan, and of our work, but I wouldn't say that, that those numbers, those assessments have helped to promote change. (Leslie)

Lynn described the process for setting student achievement goals based on student data.

She explained that she and her supervisor discuss achievement gaps in her building and then identify goals. She said she has found this to be valuable because she wants her students to grow and learn at appropriate rates.

We also talked about what our goals were for student growth, so really looking at where those gaps are. If you are showing some gaps-- maybe if you're fortunate like [inaudible], or looking more at the individual student level, rather than huge subgroups that might have some concern. And that piece is really valuable to me because regardless of where our concerns are on that low end, I want to see that my kids are growing and continuing to grow at an appropriate rate. (Lynn)

Mindy contended that logistics can get in the way of achieving goals. She believed that goal setting based on student achievement is a quality process but that the paperwork can be overwhelming. However, Mindy explained that setting goals based on student achievement has caused her to look at subgroups of students. She has set student achievement goals to narrow the learning gap for special education students and her students with limited English proficiency. She added that the integration of student achievement goals has influenced her ability to promote change in her building.

I would say the paperwork part of it is pretty long. There's really good content, and I feel there's good things that they're looking for. I just think that sometimes the paperwork process just becomes too much, and that ends up becoming the focus point instead of the doing of whatever our goal is. And so my goal, because they were blue, is to maintain that or, within that cluster of kids, still show growth even though it's really difficult with MAP and when those kids are already outperforming, it's hard for them to show that growth and that assessment. So that, I would say, would be the student achievement part. (Mindy)

When asked if the inclusion of student achievement data influenced her ability to promote change, she felt that it did because of the transparency the process provided.

That one, I would say yes, for sure, because I'm very transparent with my staff. Once my goals are set in place, I actually do share them with my staff. I share them with the grade levels that would be affected and say, "We're going to be here to work together." I want to make sure that those PLCs are occurring not only correctly and accurately, but are focused on student achievement and are focused on the needs of the students. So I would say yes. (Mindy)

Mindy said that she communicates her goals to her staff and motivates them to work together in teams to meet their student learning goals. She articulated that focusing goals on student data and specific groups of students has influenced the change process in her school.

Ron, Kent, and Mark each explained how student achievement goals are integrated into their evaluations. Ron said there is goal alignment between ISLLC standards and student achievement goals.

We set goals for ourselves that are in alignment to the Illinois leadership standards that are in alignment to student growth goals that we set. (Ron)

Kent explained that he sets three student learning goals in his building to be in compliance with PERA.

For student growth goals, we select three areas of student growth that will be our focus for the entire year, and then we use the local data. (Kent)

Mark stated that measurable goals influence his ability to promote change. Student achievement goals are measurable in the data they provide.

The principal evaluation process I do think does impact or force principals, myself as well, to make change as long as we have very solid goals that were established and that are measurable at the end of the year. (Mark)

Each of the three principals described that setting measurable and specific student achievement goals influenced their ability to promote change. Mark contended the process “forces” principals to make change.

PERA mandates the inclusion of student achievement data in the performance evaluation process. Seven principals described how this integration was connected to goal setting. The principals described varied influences of this process. Some found there was an influence on their ability to promote change in their schools while others found no change. The principals who found a positive influence described goal-setting processes that were specific. They also explained that the process allowed them to openly communicate student learning goals with their staff and that this open communication was a positive influencer.

#### Theme 4. Influencing Transformational Leadership Through Supportive Relationships

The principals communicated that having a supportive relationship with their evaluators influenced their ability to promote change in their schools. This support was identified as providing resources both physical and financial in nature. In addition, the principals identified support coming from their evaluators through the demonstration of trust in their decision making. Support was also found by being a resource that provided advice when needed.

##### Subtheme 4.1 Support Through Resources

The principals described how their supervisors have provided resources for them to be successful in their roles. Responses from principals stemmed from being asked about how their relationship with their evaluator influenced their ability to promote change in their building. They contended that resources can come in the form of physical materials, professional

development, and/or verbal advice. Seven principals described supportive relationships through resources. The participant responses connected to this subtheme are found in this section.

Vic initially described how his supervisor has been there to help him achieve his goals. He then explained how his evaluator assists him with resources and asks him what he needs to achieve his goals.

I think the feedback, not so much but-- and I guess this is dependent on district. My supervisor has been very supportive of helping me achieve the goals within my evaluation. So I think in that way, yes, it's been helpful. But the actual feedback, not so much. More of her being there as a resource, the district being there as a resource to help me see my goals through. (Vic)

And extremely supportive. Seriously, just zero issues, without anything negative to say about either supervisor. They've always been there. And the question always is, "What do you need from us?" has always been kind of the last question they ask after a meeting going over goals, or initiatives, or student achievement data and this kind of thing. It's just been very much a collaborative relationship. (Vic)

Vic believes his relationship with his supervisor has influenced his ability to promote change in his school by serving as a resource.

I think so as a resource, as I mentioned earlier. I think they've both been there as a tremendous resource and have listened and taken my suggestions to district to get Washington what it needs.

My ability to change, they have some impact but I think change would come regardless. But they do improve the effectiveness of the change I think. (Vic)

Vic described a supportive relationship with his supervisor that involves the acquisition of resources for his school. In addition, he explained that his supervisors have partnered with him to help him achieve his goals.

Bill also described how his evaluator's awareness of his building initiatives and her willingness to provide resources have assisted him in a positive fashion. His supervisor was

previously his colleague as a principal, so she came into her role with familiarity of his work. He explained that she has suggested resources for him to enhance his work.

You know what? I think it has in a positive way. I think we've always-- we have been good collaborators and colleagues, and we've known what was taking place in each other's building historically. So coming into this year now as kind of my supervisor, she was aware of the things I was already working on. And so, at times, if we talked about things, she would understand my thinking, why I was working on certain things. She knew maybe a couple things I tried in the past, and also we would [inaudible] kind of like, "Hey, I know you're already working on this. Here's something you might want to look at as a resource," or things like that. (Bill)

Bill's supervisor demonstrated an awareness of his school goals and suggested resources for him.

Sean explained how support comes in the way of financially supporting professional development opportunities for his staff members. He described how a supportive relationship allowed him to efficiently promote change in his role. Sean said this occurred by eliminating barriers so he can get things accomplished.

So they may be supportive of sending people to different places or financially. So that would help promote change. If we're talking about trying to get professional development for fairly large groups of people, would be a grade level or a team of teachers. That would be one instance. They're pretty good about supporting me, whether it be financially, or resource-wise, and that sort of thing. (Sean)

Again, when we have-- in the times we have a positive relationship, I think that can have a positive impact on me effecting change in our building just by cutting through the red tape, not having to do a lot of behind the channel's work to get things done, whereas the other effect it can have, if you have to cut through a lot of red tape, there's a lot of micro-managing going on by your supervisors, then it prohibits your ability to promote change. It hinders it and have a negative effect on it. Both those things have occurred in my experience. (Sean)

Sean's supervisor listened to him when he advocated for his school and then provided resources such as staffing or educational materials. In addition, his supervisor did not make him go through a lot of steps to accomplish what he needed to do to meet his goals. In doing this, Sean felt his supervisor was supporting him.

Kelly described how her supervisor supports her through professionalism and resources.

She described him as knowledgeable and respected his professionalism. She viewed his feedback as meaningful.

But with the focus on really what the school needs not just because it would be nice to have, but with a focus on what the school needs. And so it's been a very professional, knowledgeable relationship. He brings resources and professional practice to the conversation, and was able to really give meaningful feedback about. (Kelly)

Kelly further described how support comes when her school goals align with district goals. She explained how resources may be allocated to support curriculum adoption and instructional practices. She articulated that this support was easy to gain from the district when the priorities are aligned.

When we are initiating new things here at B---- School that are connected to those greater district goals, then we're more likely to get support for those initiatives because of that personal relationship that we have with my supervisor. He understands that these are things that we're doing to really help achieve the greater goals of the district. So I think that that has-- specifically if I'm going to be specific about something, we might look at a materials adoption. So if we had new math resource that we were adopting at the district level. And we can fold that into our curriculum improvements by focusing our school improvement goals on the eight mathematical practices and how they are used in the instruction. How we plan for instruction based on those eight mathematical practices, and how those new materials resource play into that. And so if we focus our staff development on those things, then that will be something that is supported from the central office, from the supervisor, because that's a priority for the whole district. (Kelly)

Kelly found her relationship with her supervisor to be professional and supportive. She respected his input as she described him as knowledgeable and believed that he understands what her school needs.

Kent described how support comes in the form of advice and conversation when he asks questions. He and his supervisor do not always agree, but he said he appreciates the advice and knows that she respects his leadership.

Well, I'm not afraid to ask questions. So I'll pick up the phone and pick her brain about, "Hey, this is the situation. What do you think?" And we'll kind of process through together and sometimes we're in agreement. Sometimes we're in disagreement. Sometimes we land in the middle. I think she listens to me, and respects my leadership, and my passion, and student-centeredness, and just overall loyalty to M----- School.  
(Kent)

Kent described an open and honest relationship in which he is not afraid to ask questions. He said he is confident that his supervisor understands his loyalty and that she respects his leadership, and because of this they have a mutually supportive and respectful relationship.

Mark elaborated on how support comes informally in his relationship with his supervisor. He described his relationship as “very great” and “extremely professional.” Mark openly sought advice from his supervisor outside of the evaluation process.

All of the conversations that I would say promote change in my leadership type are not, once again, that are reflected in my evaluation or self-assessment, there are conversations that I have with my supervisor, either requesting advice on something or looking for a change. (Mark)

I have a very great relationship with my supervisor. He's extremely professional at all times. I don't think that we cross the boundary of being friends but he is a great person to talk to, to bounce ideas off of. (Mark)

Mark said his supervisor has promoted change in his leadership by having open conversations with him, and he considers his supervisor a great person to converse with.

Leslie does not have as close a relationship with her supervisor. She said her relationship is professional and respectful but noted that more attention is paid to schools in her district that are more in need.

I think if it were-- I think that if it were-- I think if the relationship were a little more like – how do I want to say it? Like if there were closer contact, if there was more – if she had more of a knowledge base of what's happening here, I think it could help to promote more change. So, I would say if the relationship were such that she was able to be here more frequently or be available more frequently or consult more frequently, I think that would influence my ability to promote change. (Leslie)

Leslie believed that if her supervisor were more aware and involved in her daily work, she could have an influence on Leslie's ability to promote change.

Each of these seven principals described supportive relationships with their supervisors. This support came mostly within the confines of the evaluation process. Support was given through resources in the form of physical materials, professional development, and verbal advice. In the supportive relationships, the principals were comfortable seeking advice and advocating for their schools. They also described their supervisors as having a clear understanding of their schools' needs. They described how this supportive relationship has influenced their work.

#### Subtheme 4.2 Supporting Principals' Actions

The principals also described support coming from their evaluators through trust in their decisions and actions. These responses came when asked how their relationship with their supervisor influenced their ability to promote change in their building. Seven principals described the support they have had from the supervisor regarding their decisions and actions. Participant responses connected to this subtheme are found in this section.

Lynn described how she can rely on her evaluator's support when needed. She felt she can contact him anytime.

But I feel like I could pick up the phone and get his support when I needed to. I just think that knowing that at any time I could pick up the phone and get his support if needed or find out what I need to do or get in touch with the right person, I think that that in itself is supportive and gives me that piece of that real professional relationship in dealing that it's a win-win for me if I can support him and he can support me. (Lynn)  
Lynn said she is comfortable in contacting her supervisor at any time and feels that her relationship with her supervisor is positive for her.

Mindy described how her supervisor listens and supports what is best for children in her building: “He's really good at listening to the ideas but at the same time, someone who's going to support me for what's best for kids, especially in a school that is just so diverse” (Mindy). Her supervisor understands her school but offers support by listening and supporting her decisions.

Ron and Sean described how support comes from their superintendents as they agreed that their relationships have influenced their ability to promote change. Ron’s superintendent has supported personnel decisions that he has made, allowing him to shift staff within his building. Ron believed that this trust has been pivotal in allowing him to promote change in his school climate.

I would say yes. Like I said, being that we do have a trusting, positive relationship, I have come to him with staff concerns. In other words, our building historically has had climate issues. It's not something I created, it-- I inherited it. And I view it as my mission to bring that change to this building. And I have been supported in that with my superintendent. He has helped me in some cases shuffle staff, in other cases move staff on to other opportunities. He has supported my decisions in hiring. So that relationship really is important because if he didn't trust me in that, he would say, "Actually, this is the direction we're going to go." And it's through his support that some of that has been possible. In other words, if he wouldn't allow me to make the moves that I've made, I'd still be spinning my wheels. (Ron)

Sean described how support comes in the form of the evaluator having confidence in him. He explained how positive energy can be transferred onto his staff when he feels trust from his supervisor and noted that when there is more micro-managing and less trust, the influences can be negative.

Well, I think on a secondary level, the more support you have from your supervisor, and the more-- the less micro-managing they do and the more support they give you, the more confidence they have in you to do your job. I think that in turn promotes a positive energy with the person which in turn can lead to a more positive approach, more sustainable energy level as you're trying to affect change with your staff. If you have a lot of the opposite, if you have a lot of top-down demands put on you, things that you're going to do without having an input in there, or not having ownership in that, then I think that can

have a negative impact on how you affect change with your leadership teams and your school in general. (Sean)

Both Ron and Sean articulated that when their supervisors support their decisions and actions, they can better promote change in their building. Sean explained that this trust promotes a positive energy in him as he promotes change.

Kelly noted that a personal relationship is important so her supervisor can provide her with valuable feedback.

And so I think that that personal relationship-- your evaluator has to know you, has to really be able to understand your place in your school and your place in your school community so that they can give you that meaningful feedback. (Kelly)

In addition to the personal relationship, Kelly articulated the importance of “your supervisor understanding your school, your school community, and your role as the principal.” She felt this understanding was the key to being able to give relevant feedback.

Kent described how his evaluator listened to him and supported his recommendation to bring a preschool program to his school.

I'll give you a specific example. The district preschool is just busting at the seams. There was no more room at the inn. So I said, "Hey, if we have an open classroom, I'd love to take a pre-K class here. And get a program going with kids who live within the McCarty boundary so that we get them for seven years instead of six and get to them early." Next year, we're going to have a preschool program at our school. (Kent)

He then articulated how his evaluator makes him better through a mutual trust established through listening to and learning from one another: “And I think we have a solid relationship. I listen to her. I learn from her. And she lets me do my thing. But she'll also challenge me. And I think we have a relationship which a principal and assistant superintendent should have. She makes me better.” Kent articulated that he learns from his supervisor by listening to her.

However, she challenges him while also allowing him the freedom to do the necessary work that he needs to do to run his school.

Mark described how and why his evaluator supports him in his school. He said he trusts his supervisor and is comfortable sharing his ideas and thoughts with him. He acknowledged that this has had an impact on promoting change in his school.

I think that it has, simply just because I do trust his judgement, and I do definitely trust the advice that he's given me in certain areas that I've looked to change, and some things that I've wanted to do at my school. So I would say that having that comfortable relationship where you can share your thoughts and your feelings about something, I think it has a bigger impact in changing how I do business versus if I did not have that relationship with my supervisor. (Mark)

Mark then explained the importance of the relationship with his supervisor for promoting change.

I think it's extremely important. I look at my teachers, if I have good relationships with my teachers and they trust me, they're going to work for me, so I think as Assistant Superintendent, if he's able to establish that social capital, people are going to be more willing to work for that person versus promoting change through evaluation.

Mark compared the importance of the principal/supervisor relationship to that of the teacher/principal relationship. He believed that both are extremely important in getting followers to work for you. He articulated that trust is key in having a quality relationship.

Seven principals described how support comes in the form of trust in their actions. Many detailed how this support has assisted them in promoting change in their schools. They acknowledged that this support came through listening, advocating, and trusting decisions and actions of the principal. The principals articulated the importance of the relationships they have with their supervisors and gave examples of how trust and mutual respect influenced their ability to promote change.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

#### PERA: Four Themes and Transformational Leadership

As the supervisors and principals carried out their evaluation processes in alignment with the mandates of PERA, the themes of self-reflection, feedback, goals, and relationships emerged. Each of the participants in my study described how self-reflection, feedback, goals, and relationships influenced their ability to promote change in their buildings. This chapter discusses how the mandates of PERA within the evaluation process led these principals to be more self-reflective, receive feedback, and set goals. In addition, this chapter discusses how these practices led these participants to promote change in their schools. It also discusses how the relationship between the principal and supervisor influenced the change process. Finally, the connections between PERA, the four themes, and transformational leadership are described. Table 7 illustrates the connection among PERA, the themes, and transformational leadership.

Table 7

## PERA Leads to Themes and Transformational Leadership

PERA Component	Theme	
-Student Achievement Integration	Self-Reflection	Theme Leads to: Transformational Leadership / Promoting Change in Schools
-ISLLC Standards -Site-Based Observation		
-Site-Based Observation -ISLLC Standards	Feedback	
-Student Achievement Integration	Goals	
-ISLLC Standards		
Supportive Relationships lead to Transformational Leadership / Promoting Change in Schools		

Review of PERA

Recall from Chapter 2, the Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA) was signed into law in 2011. The act stipulates guidelines for the performance evaluation of school principals in Illinois. Specifically, student achievement data must be included as part of the principal's evaluation. In addition, site-based observations during which the principal is observed by his/her supervisor must take place and must include feedback to the principal. ISLLC standards are utilized as descriptors for principal practice. Furthermore, self-assessment by the principals is mandated as part of the evaluation process. While PERA mandates such guidelines, individual school districts have flexibility in the manner in which they implement these guidelines in the principal performance evaluation process.

## PERA Leads to Self-Reflection

### Self-Assessment Leads to Self-Reflection

PERA as part of Senate Bill 7 (2011) stipulates that self-assessment by the principal should take place and be used as one input in determining a principal's performance rating. In all three districts in which I interviewed principals, principals rated themselves on a rubric that aligned to the ISLLC standards. This self-rating was then utilized as a data point that contributed to a final score or rating on the performance evaluation. The participants in my study described the actual self-rating process as logistical in nature. Leslie explained how the rating portion does not influence her ability to promote change.

The actual self-reflection process that is part of the evaluation tool I would say no, it has not helped me promote change in the building because it's kind of you're damned if you do. If you really try to utilize that tool, you're going to hurt yourself on your overall evaluation. So I would say the way it is now, no, it has not helped me promote change. I think just the tool itself and the scoring piece probably was what I would describe as not helpful in promoting change. (Leslie)

The study participants found value in the self-reflection that took place as a result of the self-assessment process. This self-reflection naturally took place because the participants were forced to evaluate themselves based on the standards for principal practice (ISLLC standards). However, as the principals conferenced with their supervisors, they discussed their self-assessment, which led to further reflection. Ultimately, this further reflection led participants to identify areas of professional growth for themselves. These results are similar to Rich and Jackson's (2006), who found that reflective thinking by principals with their supervisors can be effective in promoting professional growth. In my study, Ron described this process and how self-reflection led him to identify areas for professional growth.

I will say that's a strength of Y---- and my district is that it all starts with a self-reflection, I think we called it self-assessment, but we'll use that interchangeably. You really get to assess on those standards where your greatest strengths are and where your weaknesses or areas of growth are. And what's great about our district is it's-- my evaluator said, "It's your perception, it's where you think you need to grow," and he frankly, through discussion, agreed with me that those are the areas we need to grow in. (Ron)

Self-assessment led the participants to self-reflection, which then led to the identification of focus areas for professional growth. Once the participants identified areas for professional growth, they then set goals and worked to achieve these goals for the betterment of their schools. This process led to promoting change in their schools. PERA led the principals to self-reflection. Principals assessed themselves using the ISLLC standards as a framework. The ISLLC standards and their influence on self-reflection are discussed in the following section.

#### ISLLC Standards Lead to Self-Reflection

Another finding in my study is that use of the ISLLC standards promoted self-reflection. Recall that ISLLC standards are used as the framework for the performance evaluation process. Part of the self-assessment involves a principal rating himself or herself in each standard. The standards also describe effective practices for principals. Thus, the standards can be used for more than just the self-assessment portion mandated by PERA. Among the participants in this study, the standards were used as the participants took part in reflective conferences with their supervisors. The participants gathered portfolio data to demonstrate evidence of success on each standard. The use of the standards in the self-assessment process prompted participants to be self-reflective. Mark described how the standards provide him a framework for reflection.

Because I think I'm pretty reflective and I always want to become better and look at the work that I do and improve on that, so it gives me ability to look back and look at those standards and say, "Did I really do a good job addressing this need for our school?" So I

think sitting down and looking at that absolutely has influenced how I lead my building and how I arrange my goals for the upcoming year. (Mark)

The participants described multiple ways in which the use of the ISLLC standards led them to self-reflection. They developed portfolios as evidence to support their effective work on each standard and then discussed their portfolios with their supervisors. Others set goals based on the standards and then reflected on the process of achieving their goals. In addition, the participants discussed the standards with their supervisors on an ongoing basis because of their presence in the evaluation framework. They also described this self-reflection on the standards as a gateway to promoting change in their building.

While it is clear that the standards led these principals to self-reflection, the participants described more value in the discussions and reflection than in the standards themselves. This is similar to Derrington and Sharratt's 2008 study that found many principals indicated the totality of the evaluation process is more important than the standards themselves. Principals in the current study communicated that conversations with their supervisors about their professional growth promoted self-reflection and were most valuable. The participants in my study self-reflected in many instances. However, in addition to self-reflection based on the ISLLC standards and self-assessment, the participants were led to self-reflection after being observed by their supervisors. This process is discussed further in the following section.

#### Site-Based Observations Lead to Self-Reflection

The results of my study also indicate that site-based observations led to self-reflection. The participants reflected on their actions while being observed by their supervisors and discussing plans for improvement. Recall that Senate Bill 7 (2011) stipulates that a minimum of

two site-based observations take place as part of the performance evaluation process. In addition, the observer must provide written feedback to the principal following the observation. The participants in my study reported site-based observations focused around a variety of activities. In many situations, these observations led to discussions between the supervisor and principal, which ultimately led to self-reflection. This process appears to be circular, as my participants reported that self-reflection and thought were also put into what they wanted their supervisors to observe prior to the observation actually taking place. Bill described his thought process for selecting what he wanted his supervisor to see and how that decision influenced his ability to promote change in the future.

I think when-- I can make the opportunity or take the chance to pick and choose what they come and see. So if I have chosen an event that I think is really-- kind of align to all of those things, that's a good opportunity to get some good feedback... So I've tried to maybe invite staff to things that I feel is important and try to invite my evaluators to say-- to events I think that are important to me and what I'm doing with my leadership. So I thought that was a good example for me to get that feedback I felt was necessary. So it was important. (Bill)

Bill demonstrated his comfort in selecting an observation area in which he strongly desired feedback. This exemplifies a relationship with his supervisor in which practices such as feedback and reflection are accepted as part of the professional growth and evaluative process. Similarly, Hart (1990) found that self-reflection is challenging to derive from a principal in a reflective conference. Furthermore, Griffith and Frieden (2000) recommend prompting reflection through a variety of strategies and modes such as questioning and journaling. The site-based observations along with the ISLLC standards and self-assessment served as tools or modes to help lead principals to self-reflection. These modes also led the participants to accept feedback from their supervisors. This is discussed further in the following section.

## PERA Leads to Feedback

### Site-Based Observations Lead to Feedback

PERA as part of Senate Bill 7 (2011) mandates that site-based observations occur a minimum of two times per year. Written feedback must be given to the principal following each site-based observation. In addition to this written feedback, the participants in my study received verbal feedback from their supervisors. Many times this verbal feedback took place in the form of a conference following the observation. Verbal feedback is not a mandate of PERA; however, all 10 participants received verbal feedback following their observations. Some participants found very little value in the feedback following observations while others found value in the specificity of feedback. The participants who received open communication that was specific described a greater influence on the change process. Specific feedback provided by the supervisor is an example of open communication. The more specific and frequent the feedback, the more it led to influencing the participants' ability to promote change. Kelly described how she received specific feedback from her supervisor on improving the feedback she was giving her teachers.

I think when you have somebody who is observing you in your work and can give you that feedback, it can really cause you to influence your ability to hone in on specific components of your leadership to improve.... And again, I think that provided for a really good springboard for a conversation between my evaluator and I, to give me that critical feedback about my feedback for the teacher and how that was based in research. (Kelly)

Conversely, Mark described how feedback that was vague or not focused on his overall practice provided little value.

I don't really-- to me, I don't think that that's, I don't know, an accurate reflection of the work that a principal does, it's one single snapshot...I don't think that's something that is

driving my change in any sort of way. I wouldn't say no. I don't think that has really impacted my change just because I haven't had feedback from that. That is something that is that I have needed to change or address. (Mark)

Site-based observations allowed the participants to receive feedback from their supervisors. This specificity varied based on who the supervisor was and the practice he/she observed. Ultimately, the participants valued feedback following site-based observation differently. Conversely, the ISLLC standards provide a framework that is uniform, and thus feedback on performance when the ISLLC standards were utilized was valued more consistently by participants. This is discussed in greater detail in the following section.

#### ISLLC Standards Lead to Feedback

Senate Bill 7 (2011) mandates the use of the ISLLC standards in the performance evaluation process. The standards are used as the rubric from which the principals self-assess and the evaluator rates the principal. The standards are descriptors for success. Naturally, the participants received feedback from their supervisor regarding their performance based on the standards as the descriptor. This feedback was in written form in their final evaluations. However, this feedback also came in verbal form during conferences between participant and supervisor. Much like the feedback received after site-based observations, the participants found feedback that was specific to be valuable in influencing their ability to promote change. Vic described how discussions focused on the standards were helpful in leading him to promoting change in his school.

But the discussions I have with my supervisor going through what standards am I hitting, what tasks are falling under those standards, and how those relate to our school improvement plan, and then the portfolio evidence piece that you keep has been helpful. (Vic)

The ISLLC standards include practices such as collaborative leadership, communication of vision, school culture, and efficient school systems. These standards align with transformational leadership theory in education (Leithwood, 1994). Marks and Printy's (2003) research further supports the transformative nature of the standards, as they found principals must demonstrate vision, consensus building, and inspiration before they can share in matters of collaborative leadership. The value in receiving specific feedback aligned to the ISLLC standards is evident in both the participants' responses and the research backing the standards. This feedback on the standards also led participants to set goals based on the ISLLC standards. The connection among PERA, the ISLLC standards, and goals is discussed further in the following section.

#### PERA Leads to Goals

#### ISLCC Standards Lead to Goals

In addition to setting goals for student achievement, the participants involved in my study also used the ILSCC standards to set professional growth goals. Goal setting based on the ISLLC standards is not mandated as part of PERA; however, the use of the standards is a mandate. Hence, their use led participants to consult them as they set goals for themselves. These goals were not as measureable as student achievement data, but often they were based on practice, with evidence coming in the form of reflection or portfolio gathering. The goals typically were areas of growth the participant or the participant and supervisor had developed collaboratively. Mark described how his goals were tied to the standards.

But all of my goals are tied specifically to those six standards. We're only required to have some of them in there, but I really do set a goal for each of those standards. I think it

is pretty specific as to what you're looking for but I think you have to truly demonstrate your ability to meet those standards. It can't be something about, "Well, living a mission vision focused on results," and I can't throw something in there that's not measurable. (Mark)

In addition to establishing goals based on professional practice standards, the participants also set goals based on student achievement. This goal-setting process that involved student data is discussed in the following section.

### Student Achievement Data Integration Leads to Goals

Senate Bill 7 (2011) mandates the inclusion of student achievement in the performance evaluation of principals. In compliance with PERA, all 10 participants experienced the inclusion of student achievement in their performance evaluation. This inclusion occurred through goal-setting targets for achievement on standardized test forms. The participants described varying levels of influence surrounding student achievement inclusion in their evaluation. Bill contended that setting student achievement goals for the purpose of achieving a rating did not have an influence on his ability to promote change in his building.

I'll be honest. I think what we reached as a decision here is really kind of neutral. I think that the way things are set up, we've got such a large window for meeting expectations for growth, that I would not see a realistic shift in either direction. (Bill)

Conversely, Mindy believed that the integration of student achievement in goal setting influenced her ability to promote change in her building.

That one, I would say yes, for sure, because I'm very transparent with my staff. Once my goals are set in place, I actually do share them with my staff. I share them with the grade levels that would be affected and say, "We're going to be here to work together." I want to make sure that those PLCs are occurring not only correctly and accurately, but are focused on student achievement and are focused on the needs of the students. So I would say yes. (Mindy)

The mandate of student achievement inclusion forced the principals to establish goals based on student learning. The participants described varying levels of influence on change in relation to student achievement goals set for the purpose of PERA. How these goals led to promoting change is discussed further in the Transformational Leadership section of this chapter.

### Transformational Leadership in Education Review

Leithwood's (1994) model of transformational leadership in the context of education allows the building of school culture through gaining commitment from followers, establishing school objectives, and influencing followers to change behavior for the sake of the school as an entire organization. Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) identified several actions that transformational educational leaders take as they promote change in their schools. These actions include building school vision and goals, providing intellectual stimulation, offering individualized support, symbolizing professional practices and values, demonstrating high performance expectations, and developing structures to foster participation in school decisions. Leithwood (1994) found that transformational leadership has an effect on four outcomes: restructuring initiatives, teacher-perceived student outcomes, student participation, and student achievement.

Marks and Printy (2003) offered further support for transformational leadership in our schools, finding it essential before a principal can effectively implement shared leadership. They found a principal must demonstrate vision, consensus building, and inspiration before he/she can share in matters of collaborative leadership in curriculum and instruction. Their study also posited that when transformational leadership was combined with shared instructional leadership, there was a significant positive impact on student achievement and effective teacher practices.

In my study, the participants described practices that led them to promote change in their buildings. These practices emerged as themes within my study: self-reflection, feedback, goals, and supportive relationships. Each of these practices is an outcome of the evaluation process. How these themes led participants to improved transformational leadership is discussed in the following sections.

### Themes Lead to Transformational Leadership

#### Self-Reflection Leads to Promoting Change

In my study, it is clear that the participants were led to self-reflection through the evaluation process. The participants communicated in many instances that this self-reflection led them to better promote change in their schools. Within my study the term “promote change” was used interchangeably with “transformation.” Kelly gives an example of how self-reflection led her to promoting change.

So I would look at incidents, situations that had a successful outcome. And I would start to reflect about, well, what was it that made that successful? And we actually did that activity as a whole staff to be more reflective about what are the components of success? And so yes, I would say that self-reflection did influence my ability to promote that change. (Kelly)

What the participants were reflective about led them to be more transformational as well. Self-reflection on the ISLLC standards led many participants to better promote change in their buildings. This makes logical sense from two perspectives. First, embedded in the ISLLC standards are practices that align with the educational model of transformational leadership. Examples of these practices include providing vision, establishing goals and collaborative leadership, providing quality professional development, and holding others to high expectations.

Second, Rich and Jackson (2006) tell us that self-reflection can be a powerful tool for promoting professional growth in principals. Thus, being led to self-reflection regarding the ISLLC standards should have led to improved transformational leadership.

The participants also communicated self-reflection on school goals, professional development, school improvement processes, their own communication practices, and their decision making. Each of these components is embedded in the ISLLC standards. The participants' self-reflection came naturally on many of these components because they were at the core of the principals' responsibilities. However, these components could have been reflected on because of the framework provided in the evaluation process. This framework being the aforementioned mandates in PERA. Lynn described how the ISLLC standards allowed her to make connections to school improvement and act as a change agent.

Sometimes just making connections and trying to synchronize our work as a school. So if I would say what has influenced my ability to promote change with the evaluation process, it's the way that I think we're integrating it into the work that we do at the school and really being reflective on my role as a change agent then. (Lynn)

Interwoven with the theme of self-reflection is feedback. Just as self-reflection led to the promotion of change in the participants' schools, so did feedback from their supervisors. Feedback often led the participants to greater self-reflection. Feedback and its connection to promoting change in schools are discussed further in the following section.

### Feedback Leads to Promoting Change

The participants received feedback from their supervisors within the performance evaluation process. This feedback was described as being verbal, and the participants described that when feedback was specific, it led them to promote change in their buildings. The

participants described that feedback from their supervisors focused on criteria such as school improvement, vision, professional development, school culture, and impacting change was most impactful to their transformational leadership abilities, as described by Leslie and Ron.

But when she does share an opinion or an observation or a thought or a suggestion or an idea, I'm receptive to it. And I take it into account and definitely try to make changes based on that feedback. (Leslie)

So the suggestions for improvement that he had, I implemented them. It's a call to action when your superintendent says, "Hey, I'd like to see this." So I certainly implemented change based on his feedback, but it wasn't transformative change, I guess would be the right way to look at that. (Ron)

Feedback that led the participants to promoting change was not only specific but was also focused on components that align with Leithwood's (1994) model of transformational leadership. The feedback was sometimes derived from conversations focused on the ISLLC standards; other times the feedback came after site-based observations or during summative rating conferences. Nevertheless, the framework of the evaluation system led participants to promote change in their schools. As discussed previously, feedback is intertwined with self-reflection in this study because the feedback led the participants to reflection. In addition, feedback is also interwoven with the theme of goals. The participants received feedback on their processes for accomplishing school and professional goals, and at times, the feedback led the participants to setting goals. The theme of goals and how it led participants to promoting change are discussed in the following section.

### Goals Lead to Promoting Change

The theme of goals emerged in all of the participants' responses within my study. The principals alluded to school goals, professional goals, student learning goals, and personal goals.

The theme of goals aligns with the educational model of transformational leadership in that Leithwood's (1994) model of transformational leadership includes building school goals and developing structures and processes for achieving these goals. This in a sense is the change process in action in our schools. Leithwood et al. (1999) tells us that successful transformational leaders also expect individuals and groups to set goals and assure that the goals align to the school's mission. Transformational leaders support their staff and are a reference when needed to assist in the goal setting process. They establish a process in which individuals and teams can set and review goals.

Within my study there were no specific questions about goals included in the interview protocol; however, all participants alluded to goals as an influencer in their ability to promote change. The inclusion of student achievement data into the performance evaluation process naturally led participants to set goals based on student learning. The influence of these student achievement goals as mandated by PERA in Senate Bill 7 (2011) was described as having an effect on promoting change in many instances. Lynn described how data analysis and professional development were used to help her school achieve goals for students.

And so being able to look at that data and then really going after it to promote change and to fill people's bucket with professional learning so that they have the tools in their toolkit to meet the needs of those EL students and then just really kind of keeping the focus on them really made a huge difference and that's not a concern anymore for us as far as our recently exited EL students making or sustaining that growth, so absolutely. (Lynn)

The participants described how their goals as part of the evaluation process aligned with their school goals. The school goals often were school improvement goals. The participants spoke of how they communicated this alignment with staff and how these discussions led to change in their buildings. Bill communicated this alignment.

I think the fact that I share my results with the staff, it really helps kind of align what we're working on. So, "Here's our district goals. Here are our school improvement goals. Here are my own professional goals," and just to kind of show that there's that alignment, and that helps to enforce why we may be putting our efforts into a particular initiative. (Bill)

The participants also established goals based on the ISLLC standards. These goals were focused on professional practice and were measured through collected evidence rather than student data. The participants also communicated that the setting of these goals promoted self-reflection in the evaluation process. Self-reflection promotes professional growth (Rich & Jackson, 2006), and the ISLLC standards are embedded within transformational leadership actions. This combination matched with goal setting enhanced the change process for the principals. Ron and Kent described this enhancement.

Yes. Similar to my previous answers because that self-reflection is driving my goal setting since we use that SMART goal format, the area that I rate myself as needing to grow are the areas that I'm also writing goals for, which then are also the areas I'm writing action items for. And that's what drives the change process (Ron)

And I think it's okay to review and revise your school goals and your own goals, depending on how things are going. And as young a principal yet, entering year number four, as I said earlier, my goals have changed. So I do believe that setting the goals, and then putting an action plan in place, and then getting evaluated based on whether or not I'm achieving the goals and reviewing the action plan, maybe I need to do something a little different. But yeah, I think so. (Kent)

Ultimately, the goals, whether they were based on student achievement or professional practice, led the principals to promote change in their buildings. Goals, much like feedback and self-reflection, influenced the participants' ability to promote change in their schools. Supportive relationships also emerged as an influencer on the participants' transformational leadership abilities. Relationships and how they enhanced the participants' ability to promote change are discussed in the following section.

### Relationships Enhanced the Principals' Ability to Promote Change

The participants communicated the importance of their relationships with their supervisors. More specifically, they described how their relationships with their supervisors influenced their ability to promote change in their buildings. All 10 participants were supervised by members of their district's administrative leadership team. These supervisors included superintendents or assistant superintendents. It appears that my findings are similar to the work of Marzano et al. (2006), who found that superintendents and district leaders can best impact student learning through collaborative relationships and continuous work with principals. This type of collaborative and relational work was described by principals in my study. For example, my participants described the support they received from their supervisors, which typically came in the form of resources and trust. My participants indicated that their supervisors listened to them and provided advice, financial resources, and human resources. Furthermore, the participants described comfort in reflecting with their supervisor and how their supervisor knew them and worked collaboratively with them in accomplishing school goals. Vic contended, "My supervisor has been very supportive of helping me achieve the goals within my evaluation. So I think in that way, yes, it's been helpful...More of her being there as a resource, the district being there as a resource to help me see my goals through."

The positive supervisor-principal relationship was a constant in this study as the participants communicated that through supportive relationships they were able to promote change in their buildings. Another consideration for the future is if the supervisor-principal relationship would inhibit other factors that could lead to transformational leadership. If there was no mutual trust between the supervisors and principals in this study, one could question

whether the self-reflection that took place would have occurred or have been as influential in leading to promoted change.

In this study Leslie, did not have a supportive relationship with her supervisor. She attributed this to the fact that her supervisor was more focused on the at-risk schools within her district. While her relationship was professional, there was no element of consistent support described. This principal did not describe a connection between the evaluation process and transformational leadership. This finding serves as additional evidence for the need of a supportive evaluator-principal relationship.

The components of PERA led these principals to practices such as self-reflection, goal setting, and accepting feedback. The practices influenced the participants' ability to promote change in their schools. However, as the participants described these practices, they also described how their supervisors trusted them, gave honest feedback, and collaborated with them, as Kent said,

Well, I'm not afraid to ask questions. So I'll pick up the phone and pick her brain about, "Hey, this is the situation. What do you think?" And we'll kind of process through together and sometimes we're in agreement. Sometimes we're in disagreement. Sometimes we land in the middle. I think she listens to me, and respects my leadership, and my passion, and student-centeredness, and just overall loyalty to M----- School. And I think we have a solid relationship. I listen to her. I learn from her. And she lets me do my thing. But she'll also challenge me. And I think we have a relationship which a principal and assistant superintendent should have. She makes me better. (Kent)

While my study does not provide data to support that the absence of a supportive relationship negatively influences transformational leadership, I do believe that this is an important consideration for educational leaders. The data in my study support the notion that a positive relationship between principal and supervisor influences transformational leadership.

The framework of my study paired with research on the principal-supervisor relationship warrants examination for the opposite effect.

### Connecting PERA and Transformational Leadership Summary

The Performance Evaluation Reform Act of 2011 mandates self-assessment, site-based observations, student achievement inclusion, and the use of the ISLLC standards in the evaluation process for school principals. These mandates are then implemented by school districts across the state. In this study, each of the three school districts implemented these mandates with fidelity. Each of the 10 principals participated in self-assessment, site-based observations, student-achievement inclusion, and ISLLC standard integration. Through their participation in this process, the practices of self-reflection, accepting feedback, and goal setting took place within their performance evaluations. In addition, they received support from their supervisors throughout this process. The participants described the influence of these practices and supportive relationships on their ability to promote change in their building. The participants concurred that these practices emerged because of the mandates of PERA in the evaluation process. Without these mandates such practices may have never taken place.

### Research Questions Answered

The following provides a synthesis of the findings for each question.

#### 1. What are principals' perceptions of the evaluation process?

The principals communicated that components of the evaluation process led them to promote change in their buildings. In general, their perceptions were positive, with limited negativity being communicated when describing the process.

2. What influence does the evaluation process have on a principal's transformational leadership abilities?

The evaluation process can have an influence on the principals' transformational leadership abilities.

3. Are there specific components of the evaluation process that have a greater influence on a principal's transformational leadership abilities than others?

The components of self-assessment, site-based observations, student-achievement integration, and ISLLC standards all led the principals to promote change in their buildings. Their influence varied based on the principal and his/her experience.

4. What influence does the supervisor/principal relationship have on a principal's transformational leadership abilities?

The supervisor/principal relationship influenced the principals' ability to promote change in their buildings.

### Final Theory

The current research found that the PERA framework can have an influence on transformational leadership. Additionally, a supportive relationship between the principal and supervisor influences the principal's transformational leadership ability.

## Recommendations for School and District Leadership

### Approach Evaluation with a Focus on Professional Growth

PERA as part of Senate Bill 7 (2011) mandates several practices and processes that are to be adhered to by school leaders. Complying with such mandates can turn the focus of the performance evaluation process into mere compliance instead of a source for professional growth. Portin et al. (2006) found that the performance evaluation process can serve to promote the professional growth of principals, and since the ISLLC standards are embedded with practices that are transformational in nature, the more growth a principal makes, the more transformational one can be in the role of promoting change in one's school. Shifting the approach and mindset of both the evaluator and the principal to a focus on growth and learning can lead to greater outcomes. This focus on learning and growing instead of compliance and appearing competent for the sake of ratings or impressing a supervisor is essential for a maximized evaluation process. This shift in mindset aligns with Dweck's (2006) work in the area of growth mindset. When someone shifts his/her mindset from the concern of looking smart to learning and growing, he/she is shifting to a growth mindset. Furthermore, a growth mindset is supported by brain research showing that our skills and abilities improve when we take on challenges and put forth effort (Dweck, 2006). The focus on learning and growing may be just as important for the supervisor as it is the principal. The supervisor must believe the principal can grow and improve. The supervisor and principal must be willing to self-reflect, provide and accept feedback, try new strategies, and persevere through challenges as they work toward goals. Acting on feedback, the principal must be willing to implement new strategies and seek further feedback on his/her change processes.

The evaluation process should not exist as just another checklist for the principal and supervisor to simply get through. While it can serve as a means for the principal to display the excellent work taking place in his school, it can serve as much more when there is a common focus on professional growth. However, this shift in mindset can only be made possible in combination with the establishment of a supportive relationship between the principal and supervisor. Supportive relationships and their influence on the principal are discussed in the following section.

### Supportive Relationships Are Essential

The supervisor should see his/her role as a support to the principal. The supervisor's role is to promote professional growth in the principal and to provide the necessary resources for the principal to achieve professional and school goals. This support should first be demonstrated through care and understanding of the principal's current school and professional reality. This means supervisors must know and/or seek to learn the strengths of the principal and school. Conversely, they must also be aware of the challenges and issues the principal and school face. They must familiarize themselves with areas of growth needed for the principal. It is only with this knowledge that they will then be able to effectively allocate resources and provide sound feedback to the principal.

Working with a focus on professional learning and growth as the foundation of the evaluation process, the supervisor should establish open lines of communication and willingly listen and learn from the principal. The principals should see their role as the same: to willingly listen and learn from their supervisors with a focus on growth and improvement for the school and themselves. With a deep understanding of the principal's current professional and school

reality, the supervisor can then differentiate feedback and support to assist the principal in the achievement of school goals. This can then lead to eliminating obstacles that can get in the way of the school change process. This knowledge can inform the supervisor as to when to trust in the decisions of the principal, thereby allowing principals to confidently promote change in their schools.

Both supportive relationships and a focus on professional growth in the evaluation process can enhance a principal's ability to promote change in his/her school. While these components can exist independently, one without the other, when both are present the influence on the principal's professional growth is maximized.

#### New Model for Principal Supervisors

While Senate Bill 7 (2011) provides guidelines and mandates for principal performance evaluation, I propose a model of deeper practices and mindsets for supervisors that can lead to improvement for principals and schools. This model can exist within the confines of PERA and actually serves to enhance the outcomes of self-reflection, feedback, and goal achievement. These outcomes can lead to school improvement and change. The evaluation approaches of professional growth and supportive relationships are described in detail in Table 8. Both approaches are prerequisite to an effective evaluation process and can serve as an enhancement to the practices mandated by PERA.

Table 8

Supervisor Model for Principal Performance Evaluation

<b>Evaluation Approach</b>	<b>Supervisor Descriptor</b>	<b>Enhanced Outcome</b>
Supportive Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Supervisor demonstrates care about the professional growth of principal.</li> <li>-Supervisor approaches evaluation process as an advocate for principal focusing on providing resources to assist principal in achieving goals.</li> <li>-Supervisor is a listener and establishes open communication lines with principal.</li> <li>-Supervisor is familiar with strengths and growth areas for principal and school.</li> <li>-Supervisor eliminates obstacles that can inhibit principal’s professional growth and goal achievement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Principal receives educational resources needed to achieve school goals.</li> <li>-Principal receives the human resources needed to achieve school goals.</li> <li>-Principal seeks advice from supervisor and finds solutions to school challenges.</li> <li>-Principal is confident in initiating and implementing school change.</li> <li>-Principal promotes change in school and improves professional practice.</li> </ul>
Focus on Learning and Professional Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Supervisor approaches evaluation process with a focus on principal’s professional growth.</li> <li>-Supervisor believes that principal can grow and improve through self-reflection, accepting feedback, and putting effort towards achieving goals.</li> <li>-Supervisor communicates belief in principal’s ability to grow and demonstrates a commitment to their professional growth.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Principal openly self-reflects about professional practice and identifies areas for growth.</li> <li>-Principal’s self-reflection leads to action plans for school change.</li> <li>-Principal promotes change in school acting on specific feedback given by supervisor.</li> <li>-Principal sets goals and works diligently to achieve them for the school.</li> </ul>

## Limitations and Future Research

Limitations in this study include the number of questions that could be asked in detail when considering the influence of the performance evaluation process. Future research could focus more in detail on any of the various dimensions of the process. A starting point for this research could be giving deeper consideration to examining components of growth mindset and supportive relationships as a framework for evaluation. The proposed model for supervisors could serve as a starting point for further research. Within this future research, the influence of the final performance rating could also be examined. Presently, Senate Bill 7 (2011) mandates that a four-tiered rating system be utilized that includes unsatisfactory, needs improvement, proficient, and excellent. With consideration to shifting the focus to growth and learning, this could be relevant information for educational leaders. This study did not examine ratings and their influence; however, their ineffectiveness were mentioned by participants.

Other limitations to this study include a specific focus on transformational leadership as opposed to leadership in general. While the term “transformational leadership” was used interchangeably with the term “promoting change” in this study, future studies could consider instructional leadership, service leadership, or situational leadership as theoretical constructs. However, newer research on instructional leadership supports the notion that the principal should act as an organizational manager, providing professional support and development for their teachers (Hornig & Loeb, 2010). This newer notion of instructional leadership actually aligns to Leithwood’s (1994) model in the area of professional development and school improvement systems. Thus, transformational leadership was used in this study because of its interchangeability with promoting change and because of the literature supporting it as an

effective form of leadership for promoting change in schools. Future considerations may also include more specific studies on the correlation between the performance evaluation process of principals and student achievement.

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APPENDIX A  
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

## Introduction

Age, Years of Experience, Position

When was your last evaluation?

What are your perceptions of the principal evaluation process?

Describe how you promote change in your building?

Has the evaluation process in general influenced how you lead? Why, why not, how?

How has the evaluation process influenced your ability to promote change in your building?

Has evaluator feedback influenced your ability to promote change in your building?

If yes, please describe how, and if no, please explain why not?

How have site-based observations been used in your most recent evaluation?

Have site-based observations affected your ability to promote change in your building?

If yes, please describe how, and if no, please explain why not?

*(Follow-up: How important are site-based observations to affecting your ability to promote change in your building?)*

How have the ISLLC standards been utilized in your most recent evaluation?

Has the use of ISLLC standards in the evaluation process influenced your ability to promote change in your building? If yes, please describe how, and if no, please explain why not?

*(Follow-up: How important is the use of ISLLC standards to affecting your ability to promote change in your building?)*

How has self-reflection been utilized in your most recent evaluation?

Has self-reflection in the evaluation process influenced your ability to promote change in your building? If yes, please describe how, and if no, please explain why not?

*(Follow-up: How important is self-reflection to affecting your ability to promote change in your building?)*

How has student achievement data been integrated into your performance evaluation?

Has the integration of student achievement data in your evaluation influenced your ability to promote change in your building? If yes, please describe how, and if no, please explain why not?

*(Follow-up: How important is the integration of student achievement data to affecting your ability to promote change in your building?)*

Describe your relationship with your supervisor?

*(Follow-up: Does your supervisor take an interest in you personally?)*

*(Follow-up: How important is this relationship in affecting your ability to promote change in your building?)*

Has your relationship with your supervisor influenced your ability to promote change in your building? If yes, please describe how, and if no, please explain why not?