ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: DEVELOPING EQUITY-CENTERED LEADERS FOR HIGH POVERTY SCHOOLS: A QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

Johnny L. Nash, Jr. Doctor of Education 2023

Dissertation directed by: Dr. Douglas Anthony, College of Education

This quantitative study delved into the knowledge and skills of equitable practices among a cohort of principals overseeing high-poverty schools and examined how this understanding influences their capacity to implement school-wide leadership practices in line with Standard 3 of the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL, 2017). PSEL Standard 3 delineates a framework for effective educational leaders to ensure equitable educational opportunities and culturally proficient practices, fostering the academic success and well-being of every student. The study aimed to assess the knowledge of high-poverty school principals within ECPS in implementing PSEL Standard 3 and the four dimensions of instructional leadership practices in their respective school.

An online anonymous questionnaire was employed to gauge the knowledge and skills of 38 principals from high-poverty elementary, middle, and high schools. Among them, 25 high-poverty principals completed the questionnaire. Despite the identification of several limitations in this quantitative study, the survey results were leveraged to identify equity-centered leadership practices and formulate professional development initiatives aimed at enhancing the understanding of PSEL Standard 3 among high-poverty principals.

DEVELOPING EQUITY CENTERED LEADERS FOR HIGH POVERTRY SCHOOLS: A QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

by

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to the cherished memory of my parents, Francene Henry Nash and Johnny L. Nash, Sr. Though physically absent, your presence and guidance remain steadfast in my heart and spirit. Your unwavering love, support, and encouragement have been the bedrock of my journey, especially in the pursuit of this doctoral degree. To my beloved wife, Yolanda Bruce Nash, your boundless love, care, and unwavering support have been my anchor throughout this educational journey. Your presence has illuminated even the darkest of days. To my daughter, Kalei Nash, your achievements in education fill me with immense pride. Your potential knows no bounds, and I am certain you will leave an indelible mark on this world. To my mother-in-law, Gloria Bruce, your daily prayers and counsel have been a source of strength and inspiration. Your unwavering faith has guided me through every trial and triumph. To my uncle, Dr. Cleveland Henry, Jr., your exemplary life and mentorship have been a guiding light for me and my family. Your wisdom and encouragement have shaped my journey in profound ways. I offer this work with gratitude and humility, acknowledging the profound impact each of you has had on my life and academic pursuits.

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List of Abbreviations

ECPS	East County Public Schools
IRB	Institutional Review Board
MCAP	Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program
NCES	National Center for Education Statistics
PSEL	Professional Standards for Educational Leaders

Section I. Introduction

Effective principal leadership is key to a school's success. According to the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research (2022), principals are primary change agents who can positively or negatively impact student achievement. Hall et al. (2016) elaborated that a school principal arguably has the most influential position in modern education. Grissom et al. (2021) stated, "Principals really matter and given not just the magnitude but the scope of principal effects, which are felt across a potentially large student body and faculty in a school, it is difficult to envision an investment with a higher ceiling on its potential return than a successful effort to improve principal leadership (p. 43)."

According to Grissom et al. (2021), effective leaders must become knowledgeable in three overlapping skills to be successful: instruction, people, and organization. Additionally, Grisson et al. elaborated that these overlapping skills and expertise manifest in four classes of behaviors and produce positive school outcomes. These behaviors fall under the following categories: 1) engaging in instructionally focused interactions with teachers 2) building a productive school climate 3) facilitating provide collaboration and professional learning communities 4) managing personnel and resources strategically. Krasnoff (2015) further explained that highly effective principals raise the achievement of a typical student in their schools by two to seven months of learning in a single school year; ineffective principal's lower achievement by the same amount (p. 2).

Yet in the United States, many principals have struggled to gain the knowledge and skill sets required to meet their schools' needs. According to Wilson (2021), principals, particularly those in high-poverty schools, have struggled because they lacked preparation and skills in communication, leadership, judgment, confidence, and time management; they have furthermore

lacked support networks. Levin et al. (2019) stated that principals in high-poverty schools have often had to meet additional challenges, such as development and implementation of vision and mission statements, maintenance of safe school environments, creation and implementation of academic and behavioral systems for students, and establishment of relationships within and without the school community. Levin & Bradley (2019) elaborated that high poverty principals leave their jobs, aside from retirement or dismissal due to inadequate preparation, poor work conditions, lack of decision-making authority, and high-stakes accountability policies. Pierce (2020) explained that in order to improve our educational systems, schools need visionary leadership with a strong equity orientation, a clear sense of purpose, and the ability to mobilize people in their communities in an aligned direction.

A particular challenge for Maryland school principals has been the need to meet the Expected Standards for Practice, criteria set by the Maryland State Department of Education (2018) and used annually to evaluate school leaders as highly effective, effective, or ineffective. The evaluations derive from the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) set by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (2019). The Council of Chief State School Officers (2016) argues that these standards are grounded in current research and leadership experience and articulate the knowledge and skills expected of educational leaders.

According to Superville, D. (2022) to increase a principal's knowledge and skills of Professional Standards for Educational Leaders or PSEL, district leaders must provide principals with professional development opportunities using case studies, vignettes, resources, equitable practices, and concrete examples of what leaders do in a variety of contexts. The American Institutes for Research (2018) further expounded that school leaders must be able to

contextualize PSEL standards and use its language with historical or cultural significance to improve the academic success of schools."

In sum, the work of high poverty principal matters. The principals serving high-poverty schools need the knowledge and skills to promote each student's academic success and the well-being of their schools.

Problem Statement

Although all school administrators face challenges, principals of high-poverty schools in the United States encounter greater challenges than those faced by principals of affluent schools. Principals of high-poverty schools must often balance a multitude of leadership practices to improve their schools' cultures (Ferlazzo, 2018). The role of principal has been increasing in complexity over a number of years; this complexity has been compounded further in schools located in communities impacted by poverty. Principals of schools impacted by poverty have faced the greatest challenges, most notably severe lack of funding and difficulties establishing safe learning environments, setting high expectations, and holding school communities accountable for meeting the needs of students (Ibarra, 2020). According to Ishimaru and Galloway (2014), principals of high-poverty schools face three unique challenges that their peers do not: (1) insufficient resources to meet the academic needs of high-poverty students, (2) inadequate preparation to meet the expected standards of practice, and (3) inadequate on-the-job supports for principals. The problem that is at the heart of this investigation is that the work of principals of high-poverty schools is more complex and demanding than principals leading affluent schools. Additionally, many high poverty principals have struggled to gain the knowledge and skill sets required to meet their schools' needs.

Insufficient Resources to Meet the Academic Needs of High Poverty Students

Amadeo (2021) characterizes poverty for a household of four as an annual income of $25,750. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2019), the official national poverty rate in 2019 was 10.5%. Jiang and Koball (2018) noted that, in 2016, of the 72,400,000 children under the age of 18 years in the United States, 41% were from low-income families. According to the Policy and Advocacy Center (2022), students living in poverty often have fewer resources at home with which to complete homework, study, or engage in activities that help equip them for success during the school day. Many impoverished families lacked access to computers, high-speed internet (three fourths of households had no access to high-speed broadband), and other materials that could aid a student outside school. Parents of these families often worked long hours or multiple jobs, meaning they were unavailable to assist their children with their schoolwork.

The funding allocation of a school in a community with many high-poverty families is impacted by the number of low-income members of the community. The U.S. Department of Education (2015) stated that 45% of high-poverty schools were not getting a fair share of state and local education funding in 2011. Lack of funding often leaves principals of high-poverty schools with limited budgets with which to address a multitude of issues, including hiring educators, updating resources for students, preparing students for postsecondary education and the workforce, and dealing with unsafe infrastructure. Furthermore, new principals in high-poverty schools face teacher shortages and turnover resulting from unsafe school environments, lack of supportive relationships, and lack of teacher autonomy (Garcia & Weiss, 2019).

Inadequate Preparation to Meet the Expected Standard of Practice

Mendels (2016) noted that many principals have been unable to address or resolve challenges in high-poverty schools because they lacked preparation needed to meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of high-poverty students. Mendels further stated that many principal-preparation programs have lacked key factors, such as (a) a targeted recruitment and selection process that employs performance-based assessments; (b) evaluation based on standards attainment rather than course completion; (c) clinical internships that last at least 300 hours; and (d) a process for continuous improvement of structures, processes, and systems. Mendels also stated that leaders of school districts have not sufficiently examined the strengths and weaknesses of programming, barriers to improvement, and research on principal induction; the author concluded that principals in high-poverty schools would continue to struggle to improve their schools without proper preparation. In sum, Mendels argued that principals of high-poverty schools have been ill-equipped to meet the needs of students.

Inadequate On-the-Job Support for Principals

According to Larsen et al. (2016), the role of the principal has been changing, as has the principal workforce. Woo and Steiner (2021) stated that the roles and responsibilities of principals have evolved and expanded over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic and that principals likely needed more support to navigate emerging pandemic-era challenges. According to Karwanto (2020), a principal must:

- Monitor whether the school follows the vision of the school;
- Be supportive and corrective when implementation of activities deviates from that required for the school's image;

- Monitor and evaluate management of the work structure of teachers and students;
- Increase the role and function of online learning supervisors to improve the quality of learning practices;
- Create a pleasant climate for educators, educational staff members, and students.

Understanding how to better prepare new leaders for the role of principal has become an urgent policy concern. However, Larsen et al. noted the limited availability of factors needed for the design of principal-preparation programs, such as accurate data collection systems to monitor program effectiveness, multiple measures with which to determine individual principal effectiveness, research on developing and retaining the most effective principals, and a continuum of development and support along principals' career pathways that work to improve all aspects of principal talent management.

Evidence Supporting the Problem

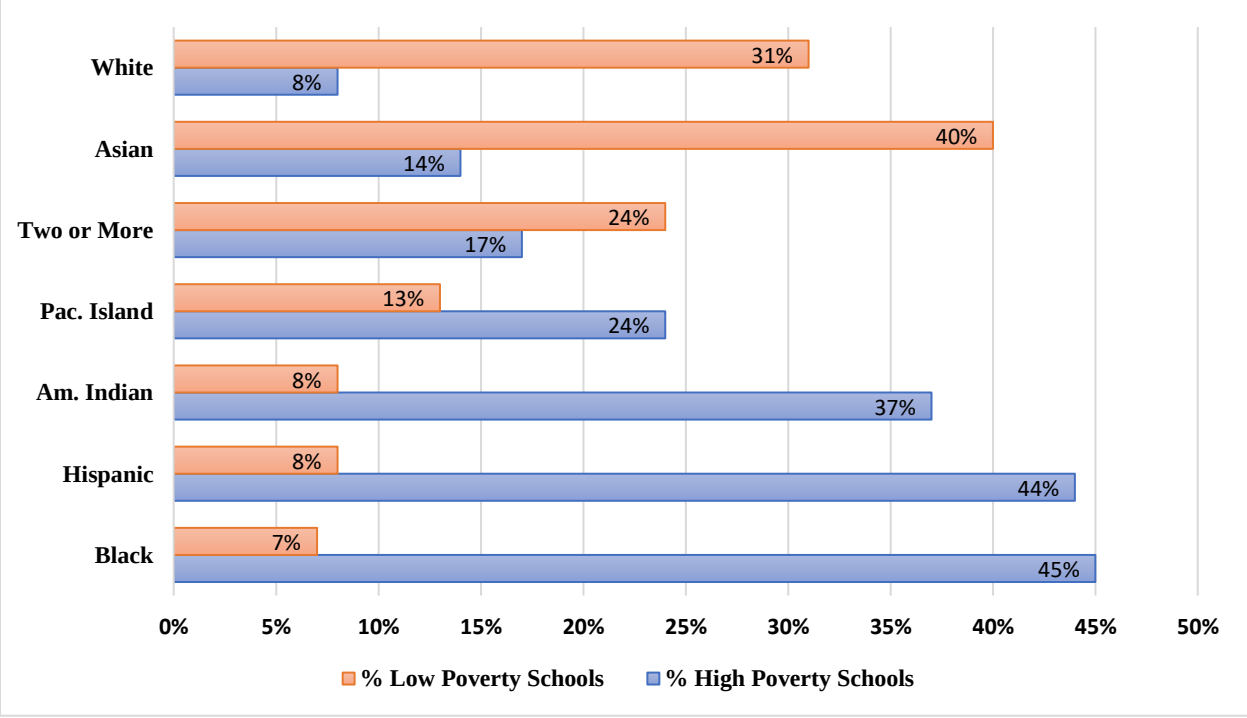
Poverty and Race. Students from communities impacted by high poverty have exhibited greater disparities in academic achievement, and most students enrolled in high-poverty schools—as measured by eligibility for the National School Lunch Program—have been Black or Latino (NCES, 2019). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2018), an average of 25% of students of color are enrolled in 75% of the schools received free and reduced-price meals. This percentage differed based on the location of the school (i.e., urban, rural, or suburban) and was also higher in elementary schools (29%) than in secondary schools (17%). Moreover, 17% of all children under the age of 18 years in 2017 lived in families who were below the national poverty level, and 40% of those children lived in households headed by a woman with no spouse.

Poverty is further confounded by race and ethnicity in U.S. schools. According to the NCES (2018), 31% of all students in 2018 attended a public school where non-White children made up at least 75% of the total enrollment. This statistic had increased 27% since 2009. The concentrations differed by race and ethnicity: 60% of Hispanic students and 59% of Black students attended schools in which their race and ethnicity accounted for at least 75% of the total enrollment. Furthermore, in the fall of 2018, 45% of all Black students attended high-poverty schools, as did 44% of Hispanic students. The NCES (2019, p. 38) also reported that the child poverty rate for Black children (31%) was higher than that for Hispanic children (26%), and the rates for both these groups were higher than those for White and Asian children (each 10%).

Figure 1 highlights the percentage of public-school students by ethnic group correlated with school poverty level.

Figure 1

National Comparison for Each Race Attending High- and Low-Poverty Schools



Note. Data from the National Center for Education Statistics (2018).

Figures 2 and 3 illustrate the 2019 average reading achievement data for specific student groups in Grades 4, 8, and 12, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (2019). In 2019, average reading achievement scores were lower than those in the previous 2017 assessment for almost all student groups in Grade 8. The reading achievement data also revealed that non-White students, students with disabilities, and English learners scored lower in 2019 than in 2017.

Figure 2

National Assessment of Educational Progress Reading Achievement Data Student Group Scores and Student Gap, 2019

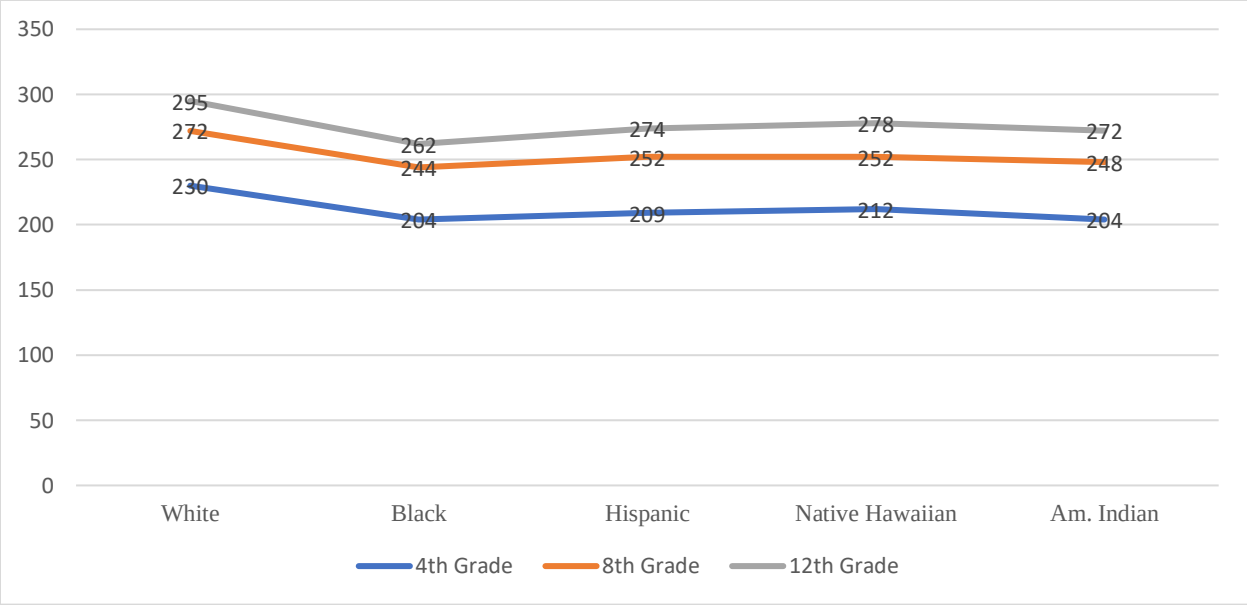
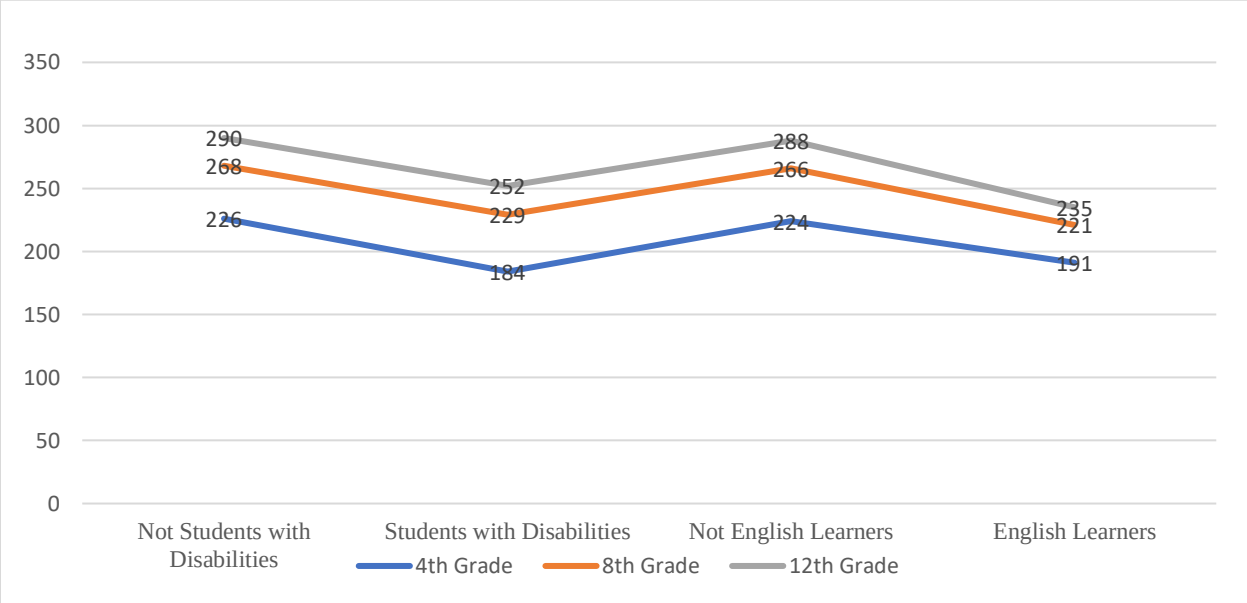


Figure 3

Comparison of the National Assessment of Educational Progress Reading Average Scores of Students With and Without Disabilities, 2019



These and other challenges indicate the need for principals of high-poverty schools to have the pedagogical knowledge required to increase the academic performance of students. Academic performance cannot improve in a vacuum; however, an effective principal who can support students in culturally responsive ways improves the likelihood that students will succeed academically, socially, and emotionally. According to the Maryland State Department of Education (2018) PSEL rubric, an effective culturally responsive school leader must collaboratively

- Establish specific and measurable goals for equity informed by data and aligned with student needs,
- Develop and implement an action plan to address the disproportionality of inequities

- Monitor progress toward achieving equity goals and informing student achievement (p. 10).

Additionally, Darling-Hammond et al. (2022) stated that effective principals must meet the needs of diverse learners through applied learning opportunities (e.g., action research, field-based projects) and reflective projects (e.g., cultural autobiographies, cross-cultural interviews, analytic journals), aspiring principals can deepen their understanding of the ways in which biases associated with race, class, language, disability, and other factors manifest in society and schools and how principals can work toward more equitable opportunities and outcomes.

Principal Turnover in High-Poverty Schools. Levin et al. (2019) stated that turnover has become a serious issue across the country. The national average tenure of a principal in a school was 4 years as of 2016–2017. This number masks considerable variation: 35% of principals were at their schools for less than 2 years, and only 11% of principals were at their schools for 10 years or more. Levin et al. elaborated that the results of most recent national studies of public-school principals indicated that, overall, 18% of principals in a given year were in different positions 1 year later. The new challenges for principals included prioritizing mental health, closing equity gaps for student groups, and implementing blended and distance learning. More pointedly, DeMatthews et al. (2021) stated that principal turnover jeopardizes school improvement, fractures school–community relationships, and erases institutional memory. The success of inclusive and culturally responsive reforms requires time, coordination, and sustained leadership efforts, so historically marginalized students are disproportionately harmed by turnover. DeMatthews et al. also stated that principals are critical to improving schools, but job-related stress and burnout can limit principal effectiveness and lead to untimely turnover. Researchers, those responsible for leadership preparation programs, and district policies have

largely ignored principal burnout, despite the growing complexity of principalship and increasing rates of turnover. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated principal burnout, increased turnover, and added to the demands of being a principal through school closures, reopenings, and social distancing protocols.

Brock and Grady (2002) discussed several reasons proposed by researchers for why principals leave high-poverty schools, with poor working conditions being one of the major causes. Excessive phone calls and meetings, difficulty gaining public support, and conflicts between individuals within a school contribute to these poor working conditions. Acquiring resources to support the academic, behavioral, and social initiatives for students requires long hours from principals of high-poverty schools outside the typical school day, which increases the stresses of the job. The second main reason principals leave high-poverty schools, according to Brock and Grady, derives from the fact that principals shoulder responsibility for making potentially difficult or contentious decisions about how to use school funds, hire personnel, and manage student discipline. The third main reason principals leave high-poverty schools is "the result of accountability pressures, teacher and administrative evaluations, district directives, and new metrics for monitoring multiple school measures of student achievement" (Brock & Grady, 2002, p. 7).

These reasons are endemic and reach across principals' work responsibilities. The state of Maryland has proposed one way to reduce the high attrition of principals of high-poverty schools: increasing their effectiveness. An effective school leader collaboratively partners with stakeholders to provide learning experiences and resources for all student groups, thereby promoting cultural responsiveness and equitable practices (Maryland State Department of Education, 2018, p. 9).

Demands of High-Stakes Accountability. High-stakes accountability has challenged the principal role since 1990. According to Leithwood et al. (2004), the demands of this accountability have increased principals' work commitments. Among the demands are (a) attention to racial and ethnic disproportionality in exclusionary discipline practices; (b) increased focus on leaders' engagement with instruction; (c) the spread of public and private school choice options; (d) the rise of student-learning common standards in most states; (e) state and district investment in educator systems that rely on multiple measures of educator performance; and (f) heightened attention to equity as a stand-alone policy and professional goal, often assessed through a focus on diverse learners, including Black, indigenous, or other non-White students. These novel demands have altered the definition of principalship and student outcomes throughout education policy and society.

According to Mitani (2018), as the roles and responsibilities of principals have grown, school leaders have experienced greater job stress, and thus the turnover rate has also increased. The national statistics reported earlier, a large number of families and students have been living below the poverty line, and about one fourth of all students enrolled in schools with 75% or more students received free and reduced-price meals in 2017. Often the principals of these high-poverty schools have received inadequate preparation to meet the academic needs of students, and they have also received insufficient funding to address the economic landscape of their schools, provide competitive wages for teachers, and reduce class sizes for struggling students. Without a solution, principals of high-poverty schools will continue to struggle to manage the increased demands of high-stakes accountability for student academic growth, reduce racial and ethnic disproportionality of disciplinary practices, and manage the social and economic challenges of their schools. Without resolution of these and other challenges mentioned above at

the national, state, and local levels, principals of high-poverty schools will continue to leave their schools, further negatively impacting students, teachers, and communities.

Carnegie Corporation of New York (2014) found that the cost to develop and hire new principals was a major expenditure for school districts. Table 1 depicts the costs to school districts of replacing principals.

Table 1

Cost of a Principal to Their School (Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2014)

	Cost ($)		
Cost item	Lower	Upper	Typical
Preparation	20,000	150,000	40,000
Hiring	5,850	20,000	76,000
Signing	0	25,000	12,500
Internship	0	85,000	0
Mentoring	11,000	15,000	12,000
Continuing education	0	8,000	4,000
Total	36,850	303,000	75,000

Scope of the Problem in Maryland. Maryland has been facing many of the same problems characterized by the national data. First, the number of people living below the poverty line has been growing in the state. According to the Maryland Alliance for the Poor (2020), the number of people living in poverty in the state increased from 385,296 in 1990 to 553,496 in 2018. Increases in poverty in Maryland counties between 1990 and 2018 ranged from 3% to 69% (see Table 2).

According to the Maryland State Department of Education (2020), from 2007 to 2019 the percentage of students receiving free and reduced-price meals increased by 27% overall, with 23 out of 24 school districts reporting an increase in students receiving free and reduced-price meals

(See table 2 below). Table 3 lists the top eight Maryland counties with the highest percentage increases of students receiving free and reduced-price meals between 2007 and 2018.

Another indication that poverty has been growing in some of Maryland's school systems is the increase in schools designated as Title 1 under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Between 2007 and 2019, the number of high-poverty schools increased by 15% (61 schools) across Maryland (Maryland State Department of Education, 2020). In 2019, 397 high-poverty schools received Title 1 support in Maryland (Maryland State Department of Education, 2020). An additional 26 high-poverty schools received Title 1 and targeted assistance funding to close achievement gaps affecting African American students, English language learners, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students.

As many high-poverty schools have continued efforts to close student achievement gaps, school districts across Maryland have been facing a shortage of principals. According to the Maryland State Department of Education (2016), there was a shortage of new principals in the pipeline in 2016–2018 because inadequate numbers of graduates were emerging from principal-preparation programs. This situation prompted retired principals to return to school districts to support struggling schools (Maryland State Department of Education, 2016).

Table 2

Poverty Rate Changes in Maryland Counties Between 1990 and 2018 (Maryland Alliance of the Poor, 2020)

			Poverty	
County	Population	1990	2018	% change
County A	71,977	11,865	10,558	–11
County B	567,696	18,391	33,045	+43

		Poverty		
County	Population	1990	2018	% change
County C	614,700	156,284	128,829	–18
County D	827,625	37,154	74,571	+50
County E	91,082	2,654	4,578	+42
County F	32,875	3,120	4,754	+34
County G	167,522	4,528	8,671	+48
County H	102,517	5,206	9,525	+45
County I	157,671	5,007	9,423	+47
County J	32,261	4,215	5,017	+16
County K	248,472	7,055	17,341	+59
County L	29,376	4,042	2,788	–31
County M	251,025	9,122	18,805	+5
County N	315,327	5,784	16,829	+66
County O	19,593	1,943	2,210	+12
County P	1,040,133	31,651	71,153	+55
County Q	906,202	41,282	78,590	+47
County R	49,355	2,235	2,691	+17
County S	111,531	5,393	9,026	+40
County T	25,737	3,165	3,996	+20
County U	37,211	2,564	3,508	+27
County V	149,811	10,574	17,902	+41
County W	102,172	8,279	14,944	+45
County X	51,564	3,783	4,742	+20

Table 3

County Comparison of Enrollment of Students Receiving Free and Reduced-Price Meals, 2007 and 2018 (Maryland Alliance of the Poor, 2020)

		Enrollment	
County	2007	2018	% increase

	Enrollment		
County	2007	2018	% increase
Maryland	284,448	384,470	27
County N	5,870	12,987	55
County Q	1,200	1,984	40
County B	16,085	26,548	39
County I	6,145	9,935	38
County T	1,307	2,118	38
County S	1,525	2,281	37
County P	35,630	54,730	35

Scope of the Problem in East County Public Schools. East County Public Schools (ECPS) is one of the 25 school systems in Maryland. In 2020, ECPS enrolled over 80,000 students in prekindergarten through 12th Grade. There are a total of 121 schools in the school system: 79 elementary schools, 19 middle schools, 12 high schools; two centers of applied technology, three charter schools, two special education centers, one alternative high school, one middle school learning center, and one center for emotionally impaired students. In 2020, 38 schools were classified as mid–high to high poverty (Food and Nutrition Service, 2020). The 121 schools in ECPS make up 12 clusters. A cluster of schools consists of a high school, two middle schools, and elementary schools that feed into the high school. Six of the 12 clusters contain schools identified as mid–high to high poverty, and 28 of the 38 such schools are in three of the 12 clusters.

Among the 38 mid–high- and high-poverty schools, 28 had new principals in the last 5 years. The turnover of principals in these schools resulted mostly from resignations, transfers, and new appointments. Table 4 displays how long principals of high-poverty schools remained at their schools.

Review of existing research on the challenges of retaining well-prepared principals in high-poverty schools indicates some important consequences of not addressing this problem. Lack of a well-prepared leader leads to (a) poor academic achievement and student outcomes, (b) difficulty hiring and retaining teachers, and (c) negative impact on school culture.

Impact on Academic Achievement. According to Mendels (2012), highly effective principals ensure consistent learning experiences in every classroom and for every student. Principals set clear standards for what they expect every teacher to do, and this in turn gives students a clear sense of how they may learn in school. If the principal of a high-poverty school does not establish and model clear and attainable standards for high academic expectations, the school will not make consistent gains in student achievement.

Student achievement and education outcomes are major concerns in high-poverty schools, including those in ECPS. The district has held principals accountable for increasing student performance as measured by the Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP), a rubric assessing reading, mathematics, science, and social studies for Grades 6–8. Principals have also been accountable for increasing graduation rates, among other college and career readiness indicators. MCAP scores have become a particular concern for principals of high-poverty schools in ECPS.

Table 4

East County Public Schools Principals' Years of Experience Serving at High-Poverty Schools, 2021(East County Public Schools Data Office, 2021)

School	Principal's years of experience at their current school
Elementary School 1	10
Elementary School 2	9
Elementary School 3	8

Elementary School 4	7
Elementary School 5	7
Elementary School 6	6
Elementary School 7	6
Elementary School 8	5
Elementary School 9	5
Elementary School 10	5
Elementary School 11	4
Elementary School 12	4
Elementary School 13	4
Elementary School 14	4
Elementary School 15	4
Elementary School 16	4
Elementary School 17	3
Elementary School 18	3
Elementary School 19	3
Elementary School 20	2
Elementary School 21	1
Elementary School 22	1
Elementary School 23	1
Elementary School 24	1
Elementary School 25	1
Elementary School 26	1
Elementary School 27	1
Middle School 1	7
Middle School 2	6
Middle School 3	6
Middle School 4	3
Middle School 5	2
Middle School 6	2
Middle School 7	2
High School 1	5
High School 2	2

High School 3	2
High School 4	2

Consequences of Not Addressing the Problem

According to the most recent data available at the time of writing, the average percentage of ECPS students meeting proficiency on state reading achievement assessments were 12 percentage points in elementary schools, 9 percentage points in middle schools, and 9 percentage points among high schools respectively (MCAP, 2019). Between 2017 and 2018, ECPS schools increased their average reading achievement proficient percentage scores by 2.8 percentage points in elementary schools, 0.2 percentage points in middle schools, and 9.2 percentage points high schools, respectively. The overall average of ECPS high-poverty students who met or excelled expectations in reading progress was below the district averages for African American students, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students in schools with principals with 3–6 years of experience (MCAP, 2019). In addition, between 2017 and 2018, ECPS MCAP math achievement scores decreased by 10% across the board for elementary schools. The ECPS middle school math scores decreased by 1 percentage point, and the high school math scores increased by 4.2 percentage points. ECPS high-poverty schools' math achievement and progress scores for African American students, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students were significantly below the district average (MCAP, 2019).

ECPS school leaders have also had to account for other MCAP indicators, including student absences. MCAP authorities have calculated this measure as the percentage of students enrolled in the school for at least 10 days who have been absent 10% or more of the time. In 2019, ECPS reported that 26% of all students had had 6.5 or more absences. For comparison,

59% of students in high-poverty schools in the district had 15 or more absences (Maryland State Department of Education, 2020).

Hiring and Retaining Teachers in High-Poverty Schools. Principals have struggled to retain well-prepared teachers in high-poverty schools. According to Garcia and Weiss (2019), the challenges to filling vacancies differ between high- and low-poverty schools. Appendix B summarizes these researchers' findings by showing the percentages of schools across the nation with teacher vacancies, schools unable to fill a vacancy in at least one field, and schools finding it exceedingly difficult to fill a vacancy in at least one field.

Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017) likewise reported that teacher shortages have become particularly problematic in high-poverty schools. They noted that although holding a bachelor's degree in education and passing a teaching certification test have been common requirements for teachers, shortages have prompted administrators to change these requirements. Appendix C compares the lengths of time teachers stay at Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

Negative Impact on School Culture. The quality of a principal can positively or negatively impact school culture. Kotter (2022) argued that a school's culture often influences multiple aspects of the school: It impacts teacher–student relationships, teacher–teacher relationships, teachers' self-presentation, teachers' curriculum implementation, and teachers' willingness to change their behaviors. Kotter therefore argued that district office administrators must prepare principals to improve school culture. Epitropoulos (2019) reviewed Jackson's beliefs regarding toxic school cultures. Jackson (as cited in Epitropoulos, 2019) identified several warning signs of toxic school culture. The most relevant for this study are lack of a clear sense of purpose, emphasis of rules over people or mission, and an absence of honest dialogue. Follow. With regard to lack of a clear sense of purpose, if school administrators and teachers do not share

common goals, they work toward their own agenda, which eventually creates conflict. With regard to emphasis of rules over people or mission, teachers who focus more on rules than on serving students may feel they have little latitude to do their jobs. And with regard to absence of honest dialogue, principals who avoid difficult conversations with teachers and address issues by reassigning individuals or changing their schedules do not truly serve students. Deal and Peterson (1999) affirmed that those working at schools with negative cultures often perceive students as problems and criticize innovative ideas or suggested improvements.

School leaders who wish to retain faculty and staff members often have to use multiple resources to do so. Marks and Printy (2003) argued that school leaders must take transformational approaches to improvement of school cultures:

> Transformational leaders motivate followers by raising their consciousness about the importance of organizational goals and by inspiring them to transcend their own self-interest for the sake of the organization. In their relationship with their followers, this theory posits that transformational leaders exhibit at least one of these factors: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration. (p. 375)

They further elaborated that a school leader must implement a transformational mindset by creating a school-wide vision, collecting and disaggregating data, effectively monitoring obtainable objectives, engaging the community, developing the capacity of staff members, implementing a positive discipline plan, and engaging students.

Rimmer (2015) posited that transformational leaders must have the pedagogical knowledge and skills needed to close opportunity gaps for students, particularly English language learners, students with special needs, and other similar groups of students. School

leaders must also carefully focus on equitable leadership practices such as vision, mission and learning-focused culture, improvement of instructional practice, allocation of resources, and management of systems and processes (Rimmer, 2015). This brief overview of the impacts of good leadership suggests a need to ensure that all schools, including high-poverty ones, have highly prepared and committed principals. However, factors exist that prevent such principals from serving or staying in high-poverty schools.

The purpose of this quantitative study is to examine the knowledge of equitable practices among a group of principals of high-poverty schools that reflect their ability to implement school-wide leadership practices aligned with Standard 3 of the PSEL (2017). PSEL Standard 3 is a model for how effective educational leaders should strive to provide equitable educational opportunities and culturally proficient practices to promote each student's academic success and well-being. To assess each principal's knowledge and the skills that prohibit their implementation of PSEL Standard 3, I will use the four dimensions of instructional leadership framework (Rimmer, 2015) developed at the University of Washington's Center for Educational Leadership.

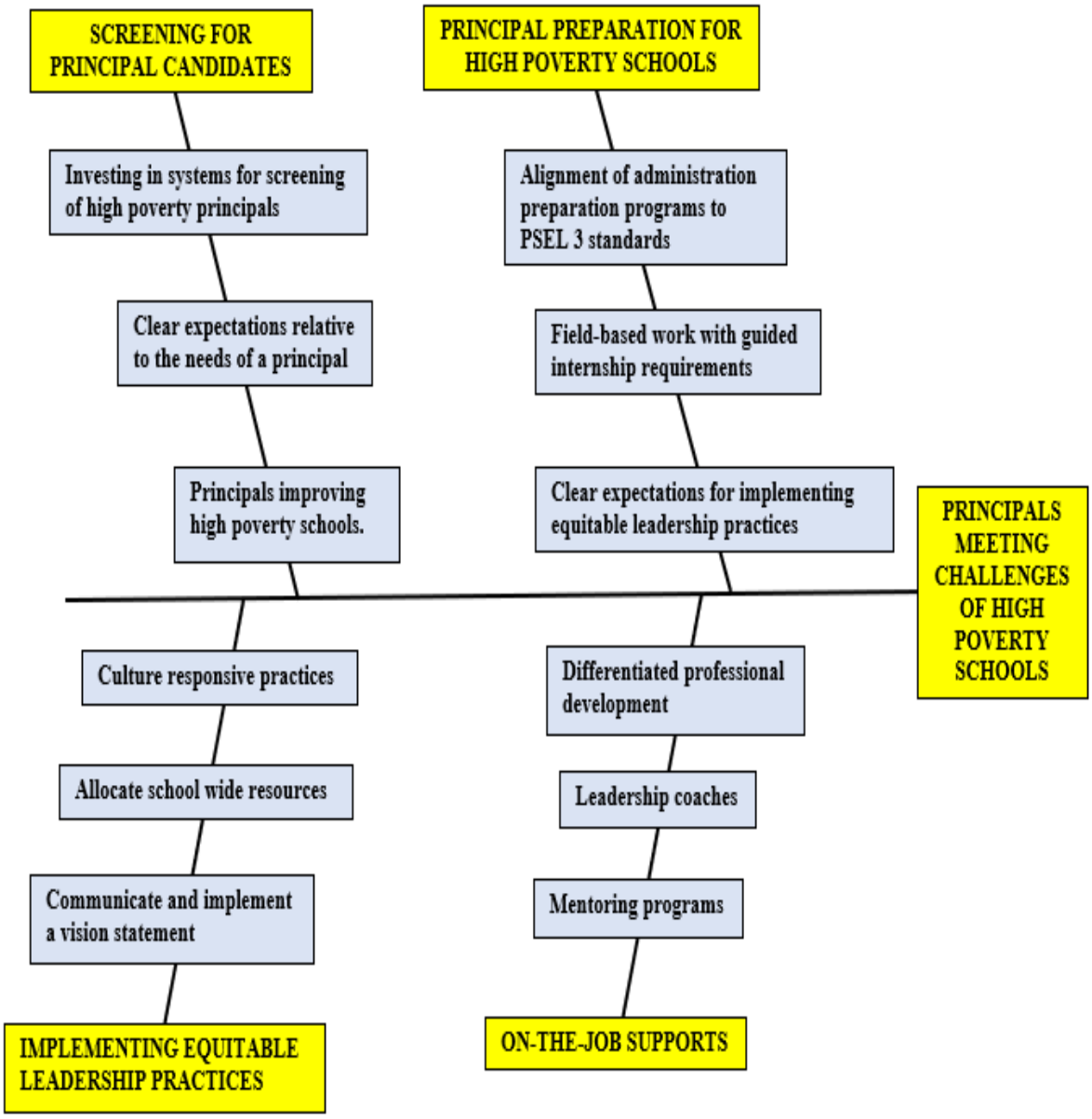
Theory of Action

Causal Systems Analysis

Based on the problem of practice of principals meeting the challenges of high poverty schools, a casual systems analysis was conducted. The causal systems analysis provided in Figure 3 offers four factors that the research believe prevent principals from effectively leading high-poverty schools: (a) inadequate preparation to direct high-poverty schools, (b) insufficient screening by districts for candidates with the potential to be principals of high-poverty schools, (c) inadequate on-the-job support, and (d) inadequate implementation of equitable leadership

practices in high-poverty schools. The sections that follow review these four causal factors. Figure 4 identifies the challenges high poverty principals face to meet the needs of high poverty schools. The sections that follow review these four causal factors.

Figure 4



Causal Factor 1: Principal Preparation for High-Poverty Schools. According to Wilson (2021), there are several reasons why principals struggle to meet the PSEL in high poverty schools. One reason is that principal training programs are often insufficiently selective or careful when reviewing applicant skills and experiences in the context of potential leadership before hiring applicants in positions of principalship. Likewise, the programs often lack training that prepares principals to lead instruction improvement instead of just managing buildings. Many aspiring principals receive no preparation to coach teachers, prepare professional development efforts, or use data to identify academic and behavioral needs of students. According to Wilson, district offices also frequently lack the resources needed to raise the quality of principal training to support new hires adequately.

Supporting Wilson's (2021) conclusions are the results of a survey conducted by Fry et al. (2005) of 61 educational leadership programs in the 16-state Southern Regional Educational Board region. The results indicated a scarcity of purposeful and practical experiences that would prepare aspiring principal interns to improve schools and student achievement. Fry et al. (2005) reported:

> Many of the university principal preparation programs failed to offer authentic leadership opportunities to the principal candidates. Specifically, they found a lack of: a) collaboration between the university and school districts that anchors internship activities in real-world problems principals face; b) explicit school-based assignments that challenge the thinking of the interns; c) a continuum of practice that progresses from observing to participating in and then to leading school-based activities related to the principal's core responsibilities; d) field placements in diverse schools; e) handbooks or materials that provide clear expectations and processes for interns; f) ongoing supervision

> by the district office and university; g) mentors to guide interns through the process; h) rigorous evaluations of intern performance of core school leader responsibilities; and i) clearly defined standards. (p. 7)

These findings are disheartening in an era when every state has an urgent need for capable principals who know how to lead change in school and classroom practices—especially in poorly performing schools. Such principals have been in great demand and short supply. Fry et al. noted that the potential pool of principals was large, but many candidates were either unwilling or unprepared to do the required work. Fry et al.(2005) concluded that individuals in principal preparation programs must observe, participate in, and lead activities that focus on improving curriculum, instruction, and student achievement.

Gill (2019) argued that states were not using their authority to influence the quality of leadership training. According to the author, over a decade earlier, only a handful of states had created partnerships with universities and other leadership programs to improve preparation: "The lack of coordination between these different actors within the school leadership system severely inhibits the ability of state leadership standards to take hold regardless of their quality" (pp. 1–8). Mendels (2016) also indicated that school district administrators did not examine the strengths and weaknesses of principal preparation programs. Mendels said that many preparation programs lacked: (a) targeted recruitment and selection processes using performance-based assessments, (b) evaluation based on standards attainment rather than course completion, (c) clinical internships lasting at least 300 hours and exposing candidates to principal work, and (d) processes for continuous improvement of structures and systems. Among Mendel's conclusions and recommendations was identification of a need for school districts to create high-quality

program models, build stronger relationships with universities, and ensure state policy makers create structures that support high-quality programs.

Causal Factor 2: District Principal Development System. Consistent with the recommendations of Mendels (2016), Beattie and O'Hare (2017) analyzed New York's process of adopting and implementing the 2015 PSEL. The Wallace Foundation funded the regents of the University of the State of New York to establish a 37-member Principal Advisory Team made up of parents, teachers, principals, superintendents, district superintendents, local school board members, representatives of civil rights organizations, and representatives of institutions of higher education. The advisory team's main brief was to review existing state principal preparation standards and programs. The panel conducted 50 stakeholder interviews and surveyed 1,684 educators. The results emphasized the need for school districts to align principal standards with principals' day-to-day responsibilities. Beattie and O'Hare confirmed the importance of school districts in implementing, monitoring, and supporting principals using state standards.

As part of a large initiative supported by the Wallace Foundation, six urban school districts containing many high-poverty schools participated in a multiyear effort to develop a sustainable principal pipeline. The school districts were among the 50 largest districts in the United States, each serving more than 80,000 students, with commitment to leadership within their minority-majority communities. Anderson and Turnbull (2019) reported that these six districts struggled to retain new principals, and leaders believed they could improve their processes of hiring novice principals, some of whom had struggled to meet the demands of instructional leadership. The PSEL formed the foundation of the district leaders' programming,

job descriptions, evaluation criteria, and coaching and mentoring practices as they sought to improve principal preparation.

The Wallace Foundation combined four interrelated components to generate a pipeline at each school district: (a) adoption of standards of practice and performance that would guide principal preparation, hiring, evaluation, and support; (b) delivery of high-quality preservice preparation to high potential candidates; (c) use of selective hiring and placement to match principal candidates with schools; and (d) alignment of on-the-job evaluation and support for novice principals with an enlarged role for principal supervisors in instructional leadership.

Gates et al. (2019) conducted research supported by the Wallace Foundation; these researchers evaluated the six school districts that had received grants from the foundation to develop their own principal pipelines. Gates et al. concluded not only that school districts should invest in principal pipelines but also that principals need leadership standards, preservice opportunities, selective hiring, and on-the-job support. The researchers also determined that the presence of properly prepared principals who remained at their schools for at least 3 years correlated with improvements in student academic performance and principal ratings.

Hammon et al. (2022), conducted research supported by the Wallace Foundation; these researchers identified what characteristics contribute to high-quality principal's programs and learning experiences. Hammon et al. (2022) identified the following key findings:

- High-quality principal preparation and professional development programs are associated with positive principal, teacher, and student outcomes, ranging from principals' feelings of preparedness and their engagement in more effective practices to stronger teacher retention and improved student achievement.

- An emerging focus on equity-oriented leadership has the potential to develop aspiring principals' knowledge and skills to meet the needs of diverse learners.
- Access to preservice and in-service learning opportunities covering important content has been increasing for principals and is now widely available. However, access to important job-based learning opportunities (e.g., internships, applied learning, and mentoring or coaching) is still lacking.
- Principals' access to high-quality learning opportunities varies across states and by school poverty level, reflecting differences in state policies.
- Policies that support high-quality principal learning programs can make a difference. In states and districts that have overhauled standards and have used them to inform preparation, clinically rich learning opportunities, and assessment, evidence suggests that the quality of principal learning has improved.

Overall, the researchers concluded that high-quality principal preparation programs must be aligned to the day-to-day operations of the school, aligned to the needs of the students, and aligned to the needs of the teachers. The researchers also suggested that all new principals require a principal supervisor who is knowledgeable of principal standards and the needs of the school.

Causal Factor 3: Implementation of Equitable Leadership Practices. As noted above, principals who lead high-poverty schools must effectively communicate their school-wide vision statements, use resources, and monitor and measure the implementation of culturally responsive practices. According to Jackson (2021), a school's vision statement is one of—if not the—most powerful tools in a principal's arsenal. Jackson also stated that a school's vision statement must

include 100% of the school's students and be aligned to every practice and policy in the school. Jackson (2021, pp. 1–5) indicated a school leader must

- Align goals, decisions, and actions to the vison and mission of the school;
- Ensure that every member of the community is clear about their role and responsibility in realizing the vision;
- Communicate clearly and consistently about specific aspects of the mission and vision, including progress toward goals.

The University of Washington (2020) stated that all equitable leaders must empower students, staff members, family members, and community members to own a vision and mission that reflects commitment to equity and the aspirations of every student. Achieving a school's vision also requires marshaling and deploying school resources. After disaggregating student data and creating and implementing strategic goals and objectives for their school, a principal must identify and leverage time for planning, provide funding to purchase instructional resources, and provide expertise needed to build the capacity of teachers.

Oakes et al. (2021) studied the ways principals of high-poverty schools implemented their school-wide visions and provided schools with additional time, resources, and capacity to support instruction that provided every student with an equal opportunity for sound basic instruction. Oakes et al. (2021, pp. 15–18) suggested the following:

1. Add "concentration of poverty" weights to state funding mechanisms (allocations, including teacher positions, and other categorical programs) to offset the additional costs associated with retaining high-quality educators in high-poverty schools.

2. Provide adequate infrastructure to support teaching and learning—that is, facilities in good repair, adequate technology (hardware, software, and bandwidth), and transportation.
3. Expand access to college readiness in high-poverty high schools—including advanced coursework and materials that are culturally and linguistically responsive (e.g., ethnic studies courses), dual enrollment, and other college-credit-earning opportunities.
4. Provide equitable access to career readiness in high-poverty high schools, including pathways that integrate career and technical education with rigorous academic courses.
5. Include indicators of growth based on multiple measures, including access to the Leandro tenets, in the state accountability system. Use those data to guide interventions and resources that increase stability and morale in high-poverty schools.

Oakes et al. further stated that if a district supported principals of high-poverty schools in the implementation of their school-wide visions, equipped them with equitable resources supportive of student needs, and built teacher capacity, high-poverty schools would improve the academic outcomes of the students they serve.

Causal Factor 4: On-the-Job Support to Principals. Principals who lead high-poverty schools require ongoing and differentiated supports tailored to specific challenges. There are two initiatives which have effectively provided these ongoing supports: mentoring and coaching. Fry et al.'s (2005) study of the Southern Regional Education Board region indicated that mentor training is essential to improving an intern's performance. This training must focus on teaching individuals to establish trust, model good behavior, question the status quo, listen to all voices,

promote good relations, provide feedback, collaborate with and delegate to others, resolve conflict, give praise, and evaluate their own and staff members' performance. As Mendels (2016) implied, school districts and principal preparation programs have been falling short with regard to provision of strong clinical experiences or mentorships for principal candidates. According to Mendels (2016),

> school districts can establish partnerships with districts, secure high-quality mentors for the candidates, and find ways around the time and financial constraints faced by the candidates themselves, many of whom need to juggle job demands with the demands of an internship. (p. 11)

More pointedly, Darling-Hammond et al. (2022) concluded from their study that school districts must prepare principals to meet the needs of students from diverse racial, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds. A variety of terms have emerged for this concept, such as "equitable leadership," "leadership for social justice," and "culturally responsive leadership." Corresponding preparation efforts may include a single course or an entire program. The results of comparative research indicate that engagement in applied learning opportunities (e.g., action research and field-based projects) and reflective projects (e.g., cultural autobiographies, cross-cultural interviews, and analytic journals) can lead to growth in aspiring principals' awareness of how to meet the needs of diverse learners.

Kelsen and Warren (2013) investigated the effects of leadership coaching on the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of urban public-school administrators in underperforming prekindergarten–12th-grade schools. Kelsen and Warren specifically examined leadership, management, student achievement growth, the ability to gain trust and understand boundaries, and the amount of time invested. Twenty-two principals and eight principal coaches participated

in the mixed methods study. The 30 participants belonged to various ethnic groups and worked at elementary, middle, or high schools. The participants completed a 276-item self-assessment tool that measured perceived changes in their leadership behaviors and the impact of leadership coaching. A second survey measured the changes, over a 2-year period, in a student's achievement score on the state assessment. The highest score a student could earn on the state assessment was 1,000. Participating school principals supervised urban schools with average state assessment scores well below 100. I asked principals to participate in three qualitative measures that consisted of 45–60-min interviews and coaching logs on 21 leadership responsibilities. The findings, shown in Appendix D, indicated that coaching and mentoring increased principal knowledge.

Conclusion. The studies discussed above and identified in the causal analysis indicate an urgent need for all colleges, universities, and school systems to create preservice principal training programs aligned to the PSEL. Furthermore, previous studies suggest that colleges and universities must create preservice principal training programs tailored to the needs of particular school systems, including high-poverty schools. And it is critical that school systems implement preservice principal training programs that include effective mentoring. Steinberg and Yang (2019) noted that if colleges, universities, and school systems do not work interdependently to align preservice principal training programs with the PSEL, the proportion of principals transferring out of high-poverty schools or leaving the profession altogether will continue to increase.

Driver Diagram

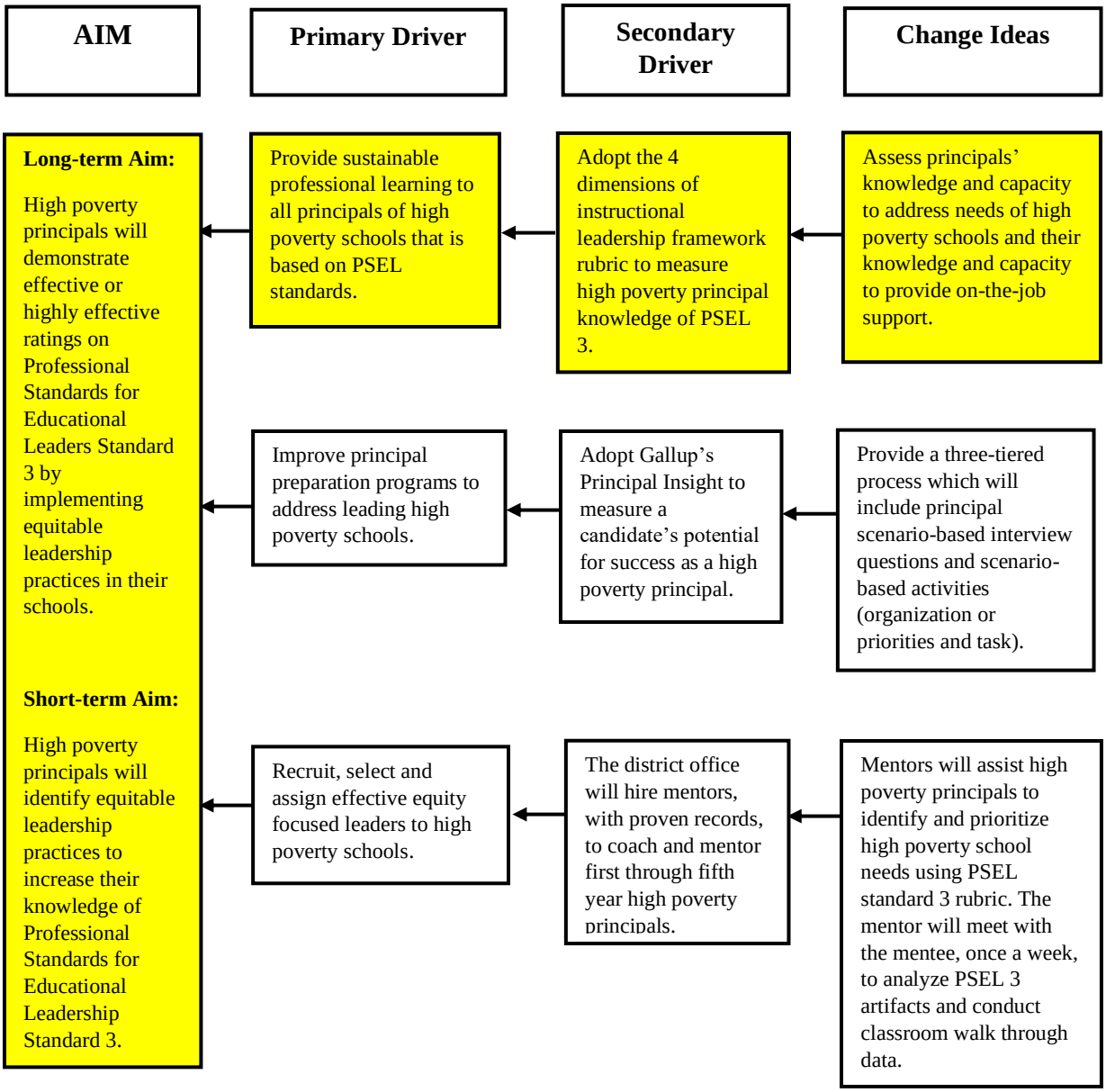
Following the causal analysis, I developed a driver diagram to illustrate how high poverty principals will demonstrate effective or highly effective on Professional Standards for Educational Leaders Standard 3 by implementing equitable practices in their schools. Three primary drivers will lead to improvement:

1. Provide sustainable professional learning to all principals of high poverty schools during years that is based on PSEL standards.
2. Increase the principals' knowledge and capacity to address the needs of high-poverty schools.
3. Improve principal preparation programs to address leadership of high-poverty schools.

Drivers 2 and 3 are not within the scope of this study or my improvement strategy. Instead, I will focus on Driver 1. To determine the existing level of understanding of equitable leadership practices, I intend to survey selected principals of high-poverty schools to obtain their assessment of their knowledge of PSEL Standard 3 as measured by the four dimensions of instructional leadership framework (Rimmer, 2015). Figure 4 presents the major improvement strategy and change ideas that I plan to implement to reach my aim. Figure 5 presents my theory of improvement.

Figure 5

PSEL Standard 3 Diagram of Drivers



Note. PSEL = Professional Standards for Educational Leaders.

Figure 6

Theory of Improvement

If a principal's knowledge and capacity to addressed the needs of high poverty schools, were assessed using the four dimensions of instructional leadership framework**, and** on the job support was provided to principals**, and** equitable leadership practices were implemented into high poverty schools, **then** these principals will be rated as effective or highly effective on Professional Standards for Educational Leadership Standard 3.

Rationale for Theory of Improvement. As indicated above, existing research suggests a need for school districts to provide support to principals of high-poverty schools, including professional learning activities that increase knowledge of how to implement professional standards (Allensworth & Hart, 2018; Angus et al., 2009; Auchter & Young, 2018; Bengtson et al., 2012; Boyce et al., 2010; Brownson et al., 2002; Leithwood et al., 2004; Manna, 2015; Sabastian & Allensworth, 2012; Sparks, 2018; Weingartner, 2002; Yslas, 2016). In particular, given the characteristics and needs of the students in the majority of high-poverty schools, principals need to understand and demonstrate the effectiveness of the equitable practices described by PSEL Standard 3. Among the knowledge that principals of high-poverty schools must have been knowledge about creating and implementing (a) a vision and mission statement, (b) a learning-focused culture, (c) a shared vision of effective instruction, (d) an instructional framework that is content-standard driven, (e) a shared practice for assessing, engaging, and supporting staff members, and (f) a shared practice for allocating and managing resources (Rimmer, 2015).

It is important that all principals understand the components of each standard within the PSEL; however, it is particularly important that principals of high-poverty schools demonstrate these competencies associated with PSEL Standard 3. Horsford (2011) stated that poorly prepared educators cannot or perhaps will not meet the needs of students from underserved racial, ethnic, and cultural groups. This lack of knowledge can become a professional hurdle, and high-stakes accountability and prioritization of closing of achievement gaps further complicates this lack of knowledge in schools and districts.

A second rationale for principals to deeply understand PSEL Standard 3 is that principals often know little about the similarities and differences among the concepts of social justice leadership, culturally responsive and relevant leadership, and equitable leadership. According to Lopez (2016), social justice leadership relies heavily on engaging schools in the building of their own critical consciousness and aligning it with their practices. Culturally responsive and relevant leadership relies on supporting young people to sustain the cultural and linguistic competence of their communities while simultaneously offering them access to the dominant cultural competence. Equitable leadership relies on highlighting the persistent gap between non-White and White students. PSEL Standard 3 clarifies these distinctions and the various ways principals may help their students and school cultures.

The third reason principals need to understand PSEL Standard 3 is that the academic gap in high-poverty schools has remained a major concern in U.S. education. Budge and Parrett (2020) warned that if high-poverty schools continued to experience low expectations, inequitable funding, inequitable teacher assignments, ineffective instruction, lack of multitiered systems of support, misassigned special education students, and high rates of student suspensions and expulsions, they would neither serve their students well nor close the achievement gap.

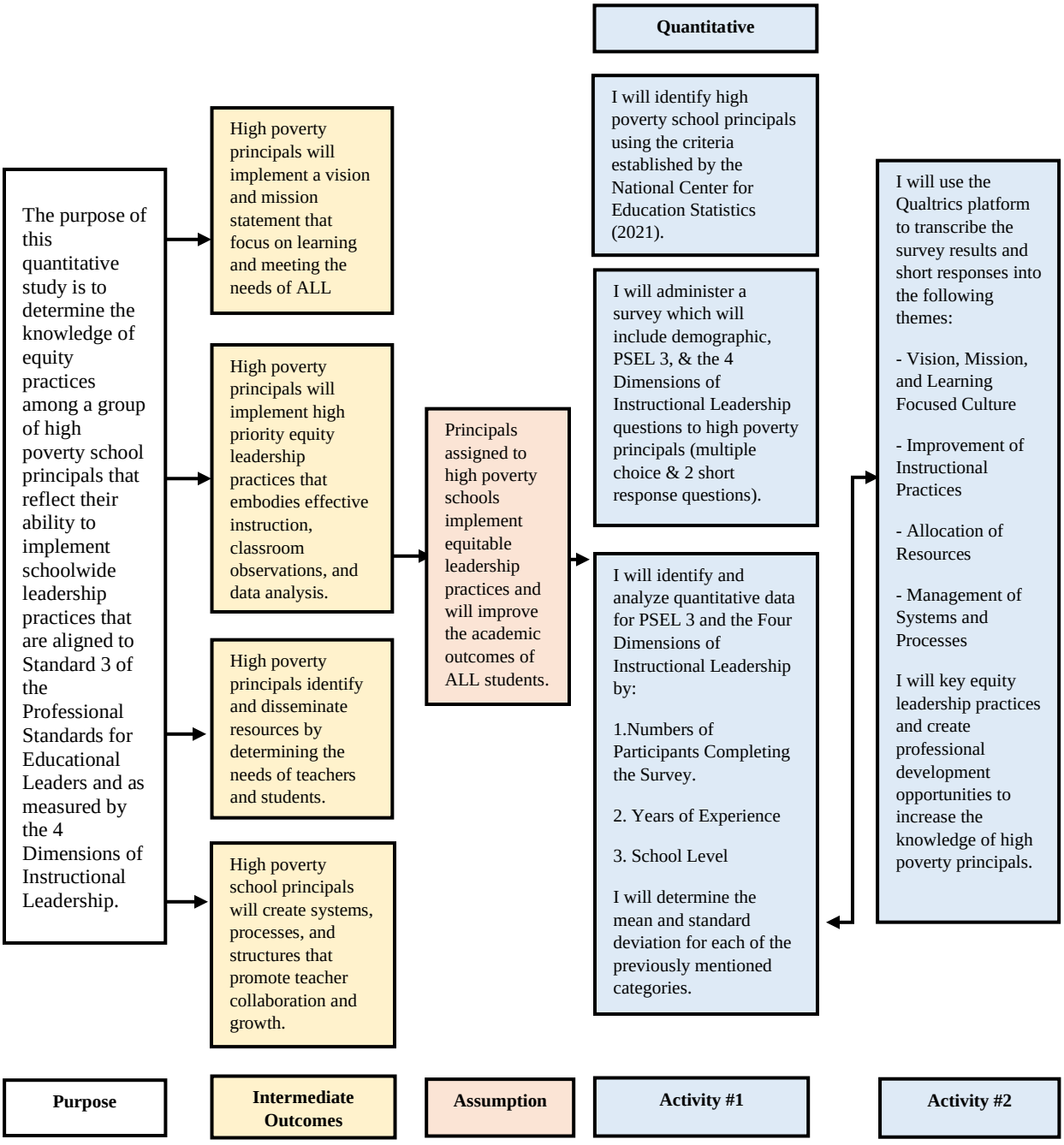
The fourth reason for principals to understand and gain competency in PSEL Standard 3 is to reduce burnout among principals of high-poverty schools. As described above, according to the NCES (2018), 11% of principals of high-poverty schools left their positions between 2016 and 2018, compared with 7% of principals of low-poverty schools. Researchers have noted the demands and challenges faced by principals of high-poverty schools.

If school district leaders remain unaware of these challenges and do not take steps to help principals of high-poverty schools mitigate the challenges, many of those principals will continue to struggle, undermine their own professional success, leave their positions, and—worst of all—negatively impact the students and teachers at the schools they wish to serve.

Change Initiative. To achieve my long-term improvement aim, my change initiative will focus on Primary Driver 1, which is to provide a sustainable professional development program for principals of high-poverty schools that increases their knowledge and capacity to achieve an effective or highly effective rating on the Maryland Department of Education's PSEL Standard 3. The change initiative will result in the identification of leadership practices used to increase a principal's knowledge of equitable leadership practices. The first step is to determine the existing level of knowledge of equitable leadership practices aligned with PSEL Standard 3 among principals of high-poverty schools in ECPS. To do this, I intend for selected principals of high-poverty schools to self-assess their knowledge of PSEL Standard 3 as measured by the four dimensions of instructional leadership framework (Rimmer, 2015). The results of the survey will allow me to identify key equitable leadership practices that benefit student academic achievement and school culture. My theory of improvement as described in Figure 7 illustrates how the proposed actions in this study will increase the knowledge and skills of high poverty principals.

Figure 7

Theory of Improvement for Principals of High-Poverty Schools



Note. PSEL = Professional Standards for Educational Leaders; MCAP = Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program; HP = high poverty; LP = low poverty.

Summary and Purpose of Investigation

Instructional leadership is a critical component of school leadership (Jenkins, 2009). For high-poverty schools to reach their full potential, principals must have a deep understanding of key equitable leadership actions and practices to improve instruction and student learning. The purpose of this quantitative study is to determine from a selected group of principals of high-poverty schools the extent of their knowledge of equitable leadership practices and their ability to implement these practices in alignment with PSEL Standard 3. Through a survey analysis, I hope to identify barriers to, challenges to, and useful strategies for increasing the academic outcomes of students and building the capacity of teachers under the care of principals of high-poverty schools.

The next section details the design of the study and highlights the barriers and challenges principals of high-poverty schools face.

Section II. Investigation

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine how a group of principals of high-poverty schools in ECPS rate their knowledge of equitable leadership practices aligned with Standard 3 of the PSEL (2017) and their ability to implement these leadership practices schoolwide. The four dimensions of instructional leadership framework (Rimmer, 2015), and aligned with PSEL Standard 3, will be used to assess the principals' knowledge of, and ability to implement, equitable leadership practices.

PSEL Standard 3 and The Four Dimensions of Instructional Leadership Frameworks

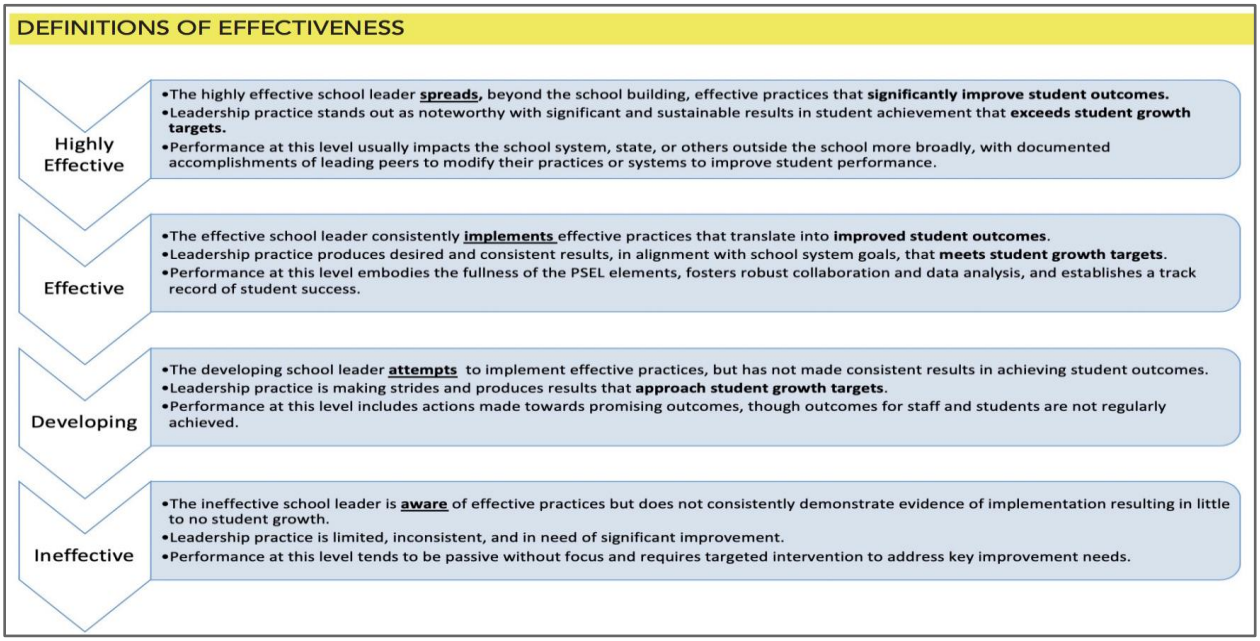
PSEL and Principal Knowledge.

As noted above, in 2017, the Maryland State Department of Education adopted the PSEL as an evaluation system for educational leaders, administrator preparation, and licensure. The Maryland State Department of Education uses the standards to evaluate principals' effectiveness as leaders. The PSEL consists of 10 standards that guide educational leadership practice and promote its outcomes. Appendix E lists the 10 PSEL standards.

PSEL Rubric. According to the Maryland State Department of Education (2018), educational leaders from across Maryland school systems met to develop a rubric that builds off the practices identified for an effective leader in the PSEL document. Additionally, 78 principal supervisors, the Maryland Association of Elementary School Principals, the Maryland Association of Secondary School Principals, and 200 educators representing teachers, principals, assistant principals, and parents provided feedback on a draft of the PSEL rubric. The Maryland State Department of Education (2018) created a rubric that provides a common language and

clarity expectations of an effective leader. According to the Maryland State Department of Education (2018), the rubric structure conveys how each standard manifests across four levels of practice: highly effective, effective, developing, and ineffective. Figure 8 defines the effectiveness of PSEL Standards.

Figure 8: PSEL 3 Definitions of Effectiveness



PSEL Standard 3. Of particular interest when considering the knowledge of principals in high-poverty schools is PSEL Standard 3 (Maryland State Department of Education, 2019, p. 12): equity and cultural responsiveness. To promote each student's academic success and well-being, effective leaders applying PSEL Standard 3:

- Ensure that each student is treated fairly, respectfully, and with an understanding of their culture and context;
- Recognize, respect, and employ each student's strengths, diversity, and culture as assets for teaching and learning;

- Ensure that each student has equitable access to effective teachers, learning opportunities, academic and social support, and other resources necessary for success;
- Develop student policies and address student misconduct in a positive, fair, and unbiased manner;
- Confront and alter institutional biases of student marginalization, deficit-based schooling, and low expectations associated with race, class, culture and language, gender and sexual orientation, and disability or special status;
- Promote the preparation of students to live productively in, and contribute to, the diverse cultural context of a global society;
- Act with cultural competence and responsiveness in their interactions, decision making, and practice; and
- Address matters of equity and cultural responsiveness in all aspects of leadership.

PSEL Standard 3 places high expectations on effective communication, active teaching methods, inclusion of culturally and linguistically diverse students, and instruction in small groups. The purpose of this standard and the other nine PSEL standards is to guide evaluation of principals and design of professional supports that help principals meet the academic needs of teachers, students, and families in high-poverty schools.

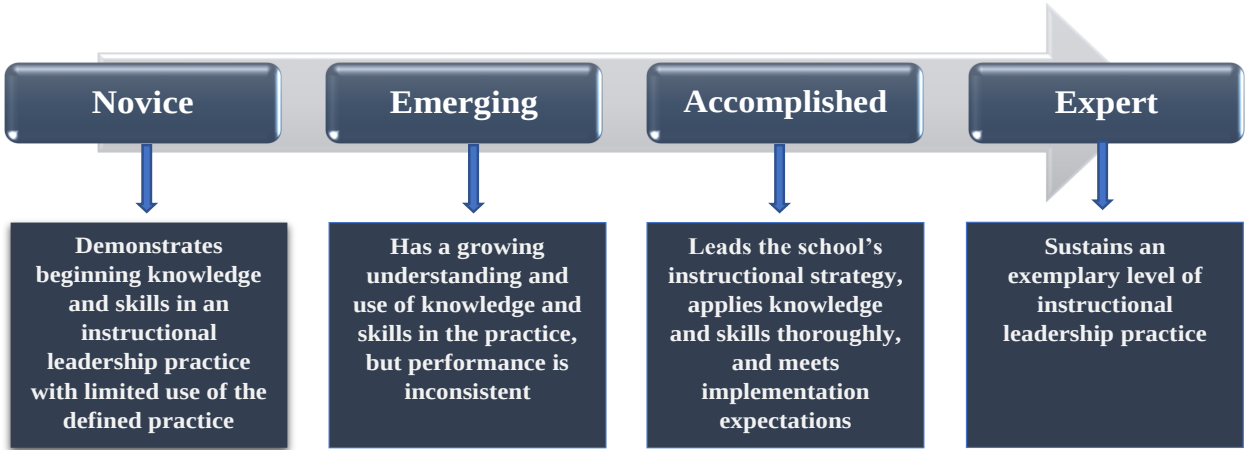
Four Dimensions of Instructional Leadership Framework. Rimmer (2015) stated that instructional leadership is a critical component of school leadership. The work of instructional leaders is to ensure that every day, in every classroom, every student has a powerful learning experience. Doing so requires instructional leaders to lead the improvement of instruction and the improvement of student learning. Rimmer elaborated five core aspects of the four dimensions of instructional leadership framework that drive school leadership:

- Learning-focused and strengths-based changes measured by improvement in instructional practice and the quality of student learning;
- A team of instructional leaders led by a principal as the leader of leaders;
- A culture of public practice and reflective practice;
- Cultural, linguistic, socioeconomic, and learning diversity of the school community;
- Grounding in the relentless pursuit of equity and the use of data as levers to eliminate achievement gaps.

Figure 9 defines the effectiveness of Four Dimensions of Instructional Leadership Framework**.**

Figure 9

Four Dimensions of Instructional Leadership Framework



The Relationship Between PSEL Standard 3 and the 4 Dimensions of Instructional Leadership Frameworks. According to the National Policy for Educational Administration (2015), PSEL Standard 3 is defined as effective educational leaders strive for equity of educational opportunity and culturally responsive practices to promote each student's academic success and well-being. In relation to PSEL Standard 3, Rimmer (2015), stated that instructional

leadership is a critical component of school leadership. Rimmer (2015) further elaborated that instructional leadership must address the cultural, linguistic, socioeconomic, and learning diversity of all students. Appendix N displays the alignment of PSEL Standard 3 and the 4 Dimensions of Instructional Leadership.

Leading with an Equity Lens. According to Leithwood et al. (2004), principals must lead with an equity lens. Leithwood et al. elaborated that principals of high-poverty schools, in particular, must have the skills needed to diagnose and assess equity within a school's culture, policies, programs, practices, and processes. Leaders of high-poverty schools must also model and set direction; shape environments in which equity and excellence are standards; develop personnel personally and professionally; and make the entirely of the organization work so that teachers and staff members can engage in effective teaching, learning, and support. Given the importance of understanding and implementing equitable leadership, it is important for leaders of school systems to assess these skills among their school leaders and develop strategies, such as professional development, to address any gaps in principals' knowledge. It is also important that leaders of school systems understand the barriers and challenges principals of high-poverty schools report facing and the strategies they find helpful in their practice. For this quantitative study, I examined how a group of principals of high-poverty schools self-assess their knowledge and skills of Standard 3 of the PSEL (2017), as measured by the four dimensions of instructional leadership framework, to highlight and understand the barriers and challenges they face.

Research Questions

The purpose of this quantitative study is to determine how a group of principals of high-poverty schools in ECPS rate their knowledge of equitable leadership practices aligned with

Standard 3 of the PSEL (2017) and their ability to implement these leadership practices schoolwide. The following research questions will be addressed:

RQ1: How do principals of high-poverty schools in ECPS assess their level of effectiveness in implementing PSEL Standard 3?

RQ2: How do principals of high-poverty schools in ECPS assess their level of competence to implement the four dimensions of instructional leadership practices in their schools?

RQ3: What challenges to implementing PSEL Standard 3 are reported by principals of high poverty schools and which strategies do they report as being useful in implementing the standard?

Design

This study used an online survey tailored to determine a principal's self-reported ability to implement PSEL Standard 3 at their high-poverty school and their level of competence with the four dimensions of instructional leadership. Dillman et al. (2014) stated that tailored design involves customizing survey procedures for each survey situation based on knowledge about the topic and sponsor of the survey, the types of people who will complete the survey, the resources available, and the time frame for reporting results. Dillman et al. (2014) elaborated that tailored design is a strategy applicable to the development of all aspects of a survey to reduce total survey error to acceptable levels and motivate all types of respondents to participate within resource and time constraints.

The study used an online anonymous questionnaire administered to 38 principals of elementary, middle, and high schools considered high poverty based on criteria established by the NCES (2021). The study was descriptive, and results of the survey were used to address the

three research questions. The survey consisted of online multiple-choice and short-response items as described below. The 38 principals of high-poverty schools were asked to indicate their level of effectiveness with implementing equitable leadership practices defined by the PSEL Standard 3 and their competence with the four dimensions of instructional leadership framework. Participants were also asked to list barriers and challenges to implementing the practices as well as strategies that aid implementation. To reduce survey error, I made efforts to be certain that the survey was aligned with the needs of principals of high-poverty schools, encouraged principals to respond to all survey questions, and reminded participants that responses to the online questionnaire will remain anonymous.

Methods/Procedures

Participants

In 2020, ECPS had over 83,000 students enrolled in prekindergarten through 12th grade. There were 121 schools in the district, of which 79 were elementary schools, 19 were middle schools, and 12 were high schools; there were also two centers for technology, three charter and contract schools, two special education centers, one alternative high school, one middle school learning center, and one center for emotionally impaired students. According to the NCES (2021), 38 out of the 121 ECPS schools were mid–high- to high- poverty schools, based on their free and reduced-price meals designation. A mid–high- or high-poverty school has 50% or more students receiving free and reduced-price meals. The ECPS system is divided into 12 clusters of schools, each supervised by a regional assistant superintendent. Six of the 12 clusters have at least one mid–high- or high-poverty school. The 38 schools considered high poverty for this study are in six clusters.

Each of the principals recruited to participate in this study led one of the 38 schools in the fall of 2020, continued to lead the school in 2021, and have spent a minimum of 1–5 years at the same high-poverty school. I selected these participation criteria because principal turnover has become a serious issue across the United States, particularly among principals of high-poverty schools. Leaders of school systems must understand the barriers or challenges principals of high-poverty schools report facing and the strategies they find helpful in their practice. If principals of high-poverty schools receive the knowledge and skills they need to improve their schools, school systems can avoid high turnover among their principals.

According to Levin et al. (2019), the national average tenure of a principal in their school was 4 years in 2016–2017. This number masks considerable variation: 35% of principals were at their schools for less than 2 years, and only 11% of principals were at their schools for 10 years or more. According to the findings of the most recent national study of public-school principals, 18% of principals in a given year were in a different position 1 year later. In high-poverty schools, the turnover rate was 21%. School systems must provide principals of high-poverty schools with the equitable practices needed to successfully improve their schools.

Recruitment of Participants

After receiving approval of the study by the University of Maryland Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the ECPS Data Accountability Office, I obtained the email addresses of all 38 principals of high-poverty schools within ECPS from the ECPS Data Office. Each principal received an email requesting their participation in an anonymous web-based survey. The email stated the purpose of the study and that it is being conducted as part of my dissertation requirements at the University of Maryland, College Park. The email also indicated that the University of Maryland IRB and the ECPS Data Accountability Office had approved the study.

The email stressed that the survey was anonymous and that the responses will be reported only as numeric averages. No information identified any principal, and each principal's school's name remained confidential. Potential participants were also informed that the survey should take no more than 12 minutes to complete. The email contained a link to the anonymous survey. If a participant agreed to respond to the survey, they clicked the link, which directed them to a page with the informed consent form. When participants clicked "I consent," they transitioned to the second page and began the survey. If a principal entered the survey but clicked "I do not consent" the survey closed (see Appendix P for the email).

Survey

The following sections discuss the survey instrument and the procedures for collecting and analyzing data. Dillman et al. (2014) stated that to increase the benefits of a survey, a researcher must do the following:

1. Specify how the survey results will be useful: Many people feel a significant benefit when contributing to something that benefits others, even if they do not believe they will personally benefit directly. Describing potential benefits may encourage individuals to respond and carefully answer the survey questions (Dillman et al., 2014, p. 28).
2. Ask interesting questions: When questions are interesting, and it can be explained in communications that the questionnaire will be interesting, people are more likely to feel they benefit from answering them. Thus, an essential part of the questionnaire design is contemplating which questions have broad appeal and which may be of limited interest (Dillman et al., 2014, p. 29).

3. Convey that others have responded: Much human behavior is normatively oriented, and an individual recognizing that they are behaving in a manner consistent with others in the groups they belong to can feel rewarded. The use by people of social networking sites, such as Facebook or X (formerly Twitter), to share status updates about what they have done and express their thoughts on behaviors suggests that this normative aspect of influencing others to try something—or avoid it—remains relevant in the information age (Dillman et al., 2014, p. 29).

The survey was designed using the Qualtrics platform. The survey entitled Equity-Centered Leadership contained three sections with a total of 33 multiple-choice questions and two open-ended questions (see Appendix M for the complete survey). The survey opened with a page containing a brief description of the purpose of the study followed by the informed consent form asking for participants' consent. Participants who consented were then sent to a page asking for their current level of school (elementary, middle, high) and years of experience as an administrator. Then the first section of the survey opened. This section contained a description of the PSEL Standard 3, equity and cultural responsiveness, followed by seven questions (Questions 3-9) based on the sub standards of PSEL Standard 3. Participants were asked to rate themselves as ineffective, developing, effective, or highly effective on each substandard as shown in Figure 6. Ratings were Highly Effective=3 Points; Effective= 2 points; Developing=1 points and Ineffective=0 points.)

The second section of the survey contained 24 items (Questions 10-33) based on the University of Washington's four dimensions of instructional leadership framework (Rimmer, 2015). As noted above and in Section I, the framework has four dimensions and 10 subdimensions. Principals were asked to rate their competency as novice=0 points; emerging=1

point; accomplished=2 points or expert = 3 points. I created the 4-point rubric by aligning the dimensions and sub-dimensions with the PSEL 3.0 Levels of Effectiveness (see Appendix P for descriptions of the four ratings).

The last two questions of the second section of the survey were open-ended and asked respondents to reflect on their current leadership practices. The first open-ended question required principals to describe barriers and challenges they believe prevent principals from implementing equitable leadership practices. The second open-ended question asked principals to describe strategies that have helped them implement PSEL Standard 3.

Procedures for Completing the Pilot Survey

Having developed the survey, I contacted the ECPS Division of Professional Growth and Development Office to identify a group of assistant principals who were participating in the ECPS Preparing New Principal Program to pilot test the survey and provide feedback. The ECPS Division of Professional Growth and Development Office provided me with the names of 14 assistant principals. I emailed each assistant principal stating the purpose of my study and that I would like them to test my survey. I included a link to PSEL Standard 3, a link to the 4 dimensions of instructional leadership, and a link to my pilot survey. The email contained the following directions, "Please read and respond to the following questions in the pilot survey. The survey will consist of 34 multiple choice questions and 2 short response questions. The survey will take approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete. While completing the survey, look for mistakes within the format and take notes of everything you observe. Also, please monitor the length of time required to complete the pilot survey." The assistant principals were asked to respond to the following questions:

1. How long did it take to complete the survey?

2. Do you think the survey was well designed?
3. Did you have any challenges navigating the survey application?
4. Were there clear instructions for completing the survey?
5. Were all the questions relevant to the research topic?
6. Did you find any of the questions offensive or degrading?
7. Were any particular questions confusing or lacking in clarity?
8. Do you have recommendations or suggestions not previously mentioned?

The assistant principals had one week to take the survey and provide feedback on its strengths and weaknesses. A total of seven individuals replied to my request and provided their comments. Overall, all seven individuals stated that the survey was well designed, the directions were clearly stated, and they did not have any challenges navigating the survey application.

Procedures for Distributing the Survey

After receiving approval from the IRBs of the University of Maryland and ECPS, I emailed the ECPS Data Office and requested the file containing names and contact information for principals of schools with 50% or more FARM students. The file contained the name of the school, name of the principal, the percent of students receiving reduced priced meals, the student percent of students receiving free meals, and the overall percentage of students receiving free and reduced meals. A total of 38 principals of high-poverty schools were identified.

On day 1 after receiving the file, I emailed the 38 principals of high-poverty schools an invitation to participate in the study. (See Appendix N for copy of the initial email.) The potential participants were informed that the purpose of my study is to identify equitable leadership practices to increase the knowledge of principals of high-poverty schools regarding PSEL Standard 3, and their self-assessment of competency as measured by the four dimensions

of instructional leadership framework. The initial email also included the dates for survey distribution and the time frame for completion of the survey. The email included a link to the Qualtrics survey which opened on the page with the consent form. The email contained my email address and telephone number, and principals were told to contact me for questions and if they wanted a copy of the results of the study. On day 4, I sent a reminder email to each of the 38 principals with a link to the survey (see Appendix L). On days 10, 18, and 26, I sent three separate emails with a link to the survey reminding participants of the purpose of the study and requesting their participation as well as reminding them of the last day to complete the survey (see Appendix O). The survey remained open for 26 days.

Data Analysis

The Qualtrics online platform was used for analyzing the survey. The platform automates data analysis and provides descriptive statistics such as frequencies, means, median, and mode and standard deviations. I analyzed and presented the survey responses by research question. For research questions 1 and 2, I created tables presenting frequencies, mean, and standard deviation for each survey item. For research question 1, there were 7 survey items (questions 3-9) indicating the principals' ratings of their level of effectiveness of PSEL Standard 3 by years of experience and by school levels. Additionally, for research question 2, there were 24 items (questions 10-33), which indicated principals' ratings of their level of competency on the four dimensions of instructional leadership. The 24 item responses were collapsed into the four dimensions of leadership in order to improve interpretation and usefulness of the findings. The four dimensions and corresponding items are: Vision, mission, and learning–focused culture: Questions 10–14; Improvement of instructional practice: Questions 15–21; Allocation of

Resources: Questions 22–27; and Management of systems and processes: Questions 28–33. Results are presented as mean rating across the specified items.

The dimensions correspond to what the University of Washington Center of Educational Leadership (2015) states that high poverty principals must be able to do:

1. Measure improvement of instructional practice and the quality of students learning.
2. Serve as "leader of leaders."
3. Address cultural, linguistic, socioeconomic, and learning diversity of the school community.
4. Use data as levers to eliminate the achievement gap.

Finally, I used a two-way ANOVA of ratings by years of experience and school level to determine if there were significant differences in ratings by level of school or years' experience. Research question 3 was addressed by analyzing the responses to the two open-ended questions by examining themes and comparing them to the quantitative data.

Human Subject Protection

The study was approved by the University of Maryland Institutional Review Board and the ECPS Office of Research. The procedures and Informed Consent Forms noted that the study posed no more than minimal risk to a participant as the survey was anonymous and neither participants nor their schools would be identified. Participants were also informed that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without consequence. The following section presents the results of the survey and conclusions and recommendations.

Section III. Results, Conclusions, and Recommendations

In this quantitative study, I examined how a group of high-poverty principals in ECPS rated their understanding of equitable leadership practices aligned with Standard 3 of PSEL (2017). I analyzed the principals' capacity to implement these leadership practices at the school-wide level. I used the instructional leadership framework's four dimensions (Rimmer, 2015), as outlined in Section I and aligned with PSEL Standard 3, I assessed the principals' knowledge of implementing equitable leadership practices. The research findings are presented in Section III. The study was guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: How do principals of high-poverty schools in ECPS assess their level of effectiveness in implementing PSEL Standard 3?

RQ2: How do principals of high-poverty schools in ECPS assess their level of competence to implement the four dimensions of instructional leadership practices in their schools?

RQ3: What challenges to implementing PSEL Standard 3 are reported by principals of high poverty schools and which strategies do they report as being useful in implementing the standard?

In this section, I present the results, conclusions, and provide recommendations for ECPS equity-focused leadership practices for high-poverty principals. In addition to outlining recommendations, I adapted the School Reform Initiative Protocols and Resources to develop a cognitive road map that high poverty principals and their schools can use to earn effective or highly effective ratings on PSEL Standard 3.

Response Rates and Survey Results

A total of 38 principals were identified and invited to participate in the survey, and 33 (87%) consented to participate. Of the consenting principals, 25 completed the survey, representing a 66% return rate. Among those who completed the survey, nearly two thirds were elementary-level principals while middle and secondary-level principals were evenly distributed. Finally, 92% of the respondents had between 0–10 years of experience with almost equal distribution between 0–5 and 5–10 years. Table 5 below presents the numbers and percentages of principals participating in the survey based on their school level and years of experience.

Table 5

Survey Participation Rates by School Level and Years of Experience

Participation	Total number	Percentage of total
Total number of high poverty principals	38	100%
Consented to participate in the survey	33	87%
Completed the survey	25	66%
Did not complete the survey	8	21%
Did not respond to the survey	5	13%
School Level of Respondents		Percentage of total N=25
Elementary	16	64%
Middle	5	20%
High	4	16%
Years of experience		Percentage of total N=25
Less than 5	12	48%
More than 5	13	52%

Response to Research Question 1

Tables 6 & 7 present the survey results addressing RQ1: How do principals of high-poverty schools in ECPS assess their effectiveness in implementing PSEL Standard 3? This standard aims to ensure that effective leaders strive for equity of educational opportunity and culturally responsive practices to promote each student's academic success and well-being. PSEL Standard 3 is divided into eight sub-standards. The principal's responses for PSEL Standard 3 were calculated by averaging the rate of effectiveness and the standard deviation, categorized by years of experience. The survey asked principals serving high-poverty schools to rate their level of effectiveness on a four-point scale for the following seven items (Highly Effective=3 (2.4 or higher); Effective=2 (Greater than or equal to 1.7 and less than 2.4); Developing=1 (Less than 1.7) ; Ineffective=0. Figure 10 is a listing of PSEL 3 substandard survey questions (Questions 3–9).

Figure 10

PSEL Standard 3 Substandards

Survey Question #	PSEL 3 Substandard
Question #3	Assess your ability to ensure that each student is treated fairly, respectfully, and with an understanding of their culture and context.
Question #4	Assess your ability to recognize, respect, and employ each student's strengths, diversity, and culture as assets for teaching and learning.
Question #5	Assess your ability to ensure that each student has equitable access to effective teachers, learning opportunities, academic and social support, and other resources necessary for success.
Question #6	Assess your ability to develop student policies and address student misconduct in a positive, fair, and unbiased manner.

Question #7	Assess your ability to confront and alter institutional biases of student marginalization, deficit-based schooling, and low expectations associated with race, class, culture and language, gender and sexual orientation, and disability or special status.
Question #8	To assess your ability to promote the preparation of students to live productively in and contribute to the diverse cultural contexts of a global society.
Question #9	To assess your ability to act with cultural competence and responsiveness in their interactions, decision making, and practice.

The Results Level of Effectiveness PSEL Standard 3 Substandards by Years of Experience

For PSEL 3 substandard questions 3-9, the average mean for all principals by years of experience was 2.54, indicating a highly effective rating. Specifically, the average mean for principals with less than 5 years of experience is 2.58, highly effective, on PSEL Standard 3. Among principals with less than 5 years of experience, the lowest rated question for principals was question number 3. Question #3 required principals to assess their ability to ensure that each student is treated fairly, respectfully, and with an understanding of their culture and context. Conversely, the highest rated question for principals with less than 5 years of experience was question number 9. Question #9 required principals to assess their ability to assess their ability to act with cultural competence and responsiveness in their interactions, decision making, and practice.

The average mean for principals with more than 5 years of principal experience was 2.51, effective, on PSEL Standard 3. For principals with more than 5 years of experience, the lowest-rated question was question number 5. Question #5 mandated principals to assess their ability to ensure that each student has equitable access to effective teachers, learning opportunities, academic and social support, and other resources necessary for success. The highest-rated

question for principals with more than 5 years of principal experience was question number 9, emphasizing the assessment of their ability to act with cultural competence and responsiveness in their interactions, decision-making, and practice.

The average standard deviation for all school levels was 0.68. Concerning substandards, the average standard deviation for principals with less than five years of experience was 0.65, while the average standard deviation for principals with more than five years of experience was 0.71. Table 6 displays the overall and item analysis results for the effectiveness of PSEL 3 substandard by years of experience.

Table 6

The Overall Ratings of Effectiveness on PSEL 3 by Years of Experience

Sub–Standard	Years of Experience	*N*	Mean	Std. Deviation
(3) Assess your ability to ensure that each student is treated fairly, respectfully, and with an understanding of each student's culture and context.	>5	12	2.00	0.64
	5 <	13	2.08	0.74
		T= 25	AM= 2.04	ASD= .69
(4) Assess your ability to recognize, respect, and employee each student's strengths, diversity, and culture as assets for teaching and learning.	>5	12	2.92	0.51
	5 <	13	2.73	0.60
		T=25	AM=2.83	ASD= .56
(5) Assess your ability to ensure that each student has equitable access to effective teachers, learning opportunities, academic and social support, and other resources necessary for success.	>5	12	2.17	0.82
	5 <	13	2.00	0.39
		T= 25	AM= 2.09	ASD= .61

Sub–Standard	Years of Experience	*N*	Mean	Std. Deviation
(6) Assess your ability to develop student policies and address student misconduct in a positive, fair, and unbiased manner.	>5	12	2.33	0.60
	5 <	11	2.23	0.78
		T= 25	AM= 2.28	ASD= .69
(7) Assess your ability to confront and alter institutional biases and student marginalization, deficit–based schooling, and low expectations associated with race, class, culture and language, gender and sexual orientation, and disability or special status.	>5	12	2.75	0.73
	5 <	11	2.77	0.87
		T= 25	AM= 2.76	ASD= .80
(8) Assess your ability to promote the preparation of students to live productively and contribute to the diverse cultural contexts of a global society.	>5	12	2.83	0.72
	5 <	11	2.83	0.39
		T= 25	AM= 2.83	ASD= .56
(9) Assess your ability to act with cultural competence and responsiveness in their interactions, decision making, and practice.	>5	12	3.00	0.76
	5 <	11	2.92	0.85
		T= 25	AM= 2.96	ASD= .81

Note: >5 = Less than five years of experience, 5< = More than five years of experience, N= Total number of participants, AM= Average Mean, and ASD= Average Standard Deviation

The Results Level of Effectiveness PSEL Standard 3 Substandards by School Level

Upon averaging the level of effectiveness for each substandard across school levels, the resulting mean score was 2.51, indicating a highly effective rating on PSEL Standard 3. Breaking down the data further, the average mean for elementary principals was 2.52, highly effective, while middle school principals and high school principals both recorded an average mean of 2.52 and 2.5, respectively, all falling within the highly effective range on PSEL Standard 3.

The lowest-rated question across all school levels was question number 3, emphasizing principals' assessment of their ability to ensure that each student is treated fairly, respectfully, and with an understanding of their culture and context. On the other hand, the highest-rated question across all school levels was question number 9. This question required principals to assess their ability to act with cultural competence and responsiveness in their interactions, decision-making, and practice.

Table 7 displays the overall and item analysis results for the effectiveness of PSEL 3 substandards by school level.

Table 7

The Overall Ratings of Effectiveness on PSEL 3 by Years School Level

Substandard	School level	*N*	Mean	Std. deviation
(3) Assess your ability to ensure that each student is treated fairly, respectfully, and with an understanding of their culture and context.	Elementary	16	2.13	.08
	Middle	5	1.80	.45
	High	4	2.0	.00
		T= 25	AM= 1.98	ASD= .18
(4) Assess your ability to recognize, respect, and employee each student's strengths, diversity, and culture as assets for teaching and learning.	Elementary	16	2.41	0.62
	Middle	5	2.80	0.84
	High	4	3.00	0.00
		T= 25	AM= 2.74	ASD= .49
(5) Assess your ability to ensure that each student has equitable access to effective teachers, learning opportunities, academic	Elementary	16	2.06	0.68
	Middle	5	2.20	0.84

Substandard	School level	*N*	Mean	Std. deviation
and social support, and other resources necessary for success.	High	4	2.00	0.00
		T= 25	AM= 2.08	ASD= .51
(6) Assess your ability to develop student policies and address student misconduct in a positive, fair, and unbiased manner.	Elementary	16	2.31	0.70
	Middle	5	2.6	0.55
	High	4	2.75	0.50
		T= 25	AM= 2.55	ASD= .58
(7) Assess your ability to confront and alter institutional biases and student marginalization, deficit-based schooling, and low expectations associated with race, class, culture and language, gender and sexual orientation, and disability or special status.	Elementary	16	2.81	0.83
	Middle	5	2.8	0.84
	High	4	2.5	0.58
		T= 25	AM= 2.76	ASD= .75
(8) Assess your ability to promote the preparation of students to live productively and contribute to the diverse cultural contexts of a global society.	Elementary	16	2.93	0.59
	Middle	5	2.8	0.45
	High	4	2.5	0.58
		T= 25	AM= 2.83	ASD= .54
(9) Assess your ability to act with cultural competence and responsiveness in their interactions, decision making, and practice.	Elementary	16	3.0	0.82
	Middle	5	3.0	1.0
	High	4	2.75	0.50
		T= 25	AM= 2.96	ASD= .77

Note: Elementary= Kindergarten through 5th grades, Middle= 6th grade through 8th grades, High= 9th through 12th grades, N= Total number of participants, AM= Average Mean, and ASD= Average Standard Deviation

During my evaluation of the vision, mission, and learning culture dimension, the average mean for all principals was 2.29, was highly effective. The average standard deviation for all principals was 0.51, providing insight into the consistency of responses within this dimension.

Interestingly, when comparing the self-assessments of principals based on years of experience versus school levels, a notable trend emerged. Principals, on average, rated themselves higher when considering their years of experience rather than the specific school level they oversaw. Furthermore, no significant differences were identified between principals with less than five years of experience and those with more than five years of experience in this dimension.

This indicates a consistent perception of effectiveness among all principals, regardless of varying levels of experience. Such findings contribute to the understanding that, within the scope of the vision, mission, and learning culture dimensions, years of experience may play a more influential role in shaping principals' self-perceptions than the specific school level they administer.

Response to Research Question 2

To address RQ2—How do principals of high-poverty schools in ECPS assess their level of competency to implement the four dimensions of instructional leadership practices in their schools?—I utilized responses to survey questions 10–33. High-poverty principals were specifically tasked with evaluating their knowledge across 24 questions that encompass the four dimensions of instructional leadership.

These high-poverty principals engaged in self-assessment using a four-point scale aligned with the instructional leadership rubric: Highly Effective=3 (2.4 or higher); Effective=2 (Greater

than or equal to 1.7 and less than 2.4); Developing=1 (Less than 1.7) ; Ineffective=0. Figure 10 is a listing of PSEL 3 substandard survey questions (Questions 3–9). The gathered data was then subjected to analysis, and the results are presented in Tables 8, 9, 10, & 11, detailing the standard deviations by dimension and school level.

In addition to the broader set of questions (10–33), a subset focusing on vision, mission, and learning (questions 10-14) specifically probed the principals' self-assessment of the dimensions. Using the same four-point scale aligned with the instructional leadership rubric, these questions provided insights into how high-poverty principals rated their competence in the context of these foundational dimensions. Figure 11 is a listing of PSEL 3 substandard survey questions (Questions 10–14).

Figure 11

The Four Dimensions of Instructional Leadership (Vision, Mission, and Learning-Focused Culture Survey Questions)

Survey Question #	Four Dimensions of Instructional Leadership As a school leader, how do you perceive your current practice…
Question #10	To engage staff, students, and the school community in developing a vision and mission.
Question #11	To interact among students, staff, and families reflecting what is valued by the school community.
Question #12	To establish measurable goals aligned to the vision and mission of academic success for every student.
Question #13	To engage with stakeholders to foster culturally responsive learning that ensures individual student's learning needs are met.
Question #14	To create and maintain a results-focused learning environment based on clearly established data-driven goals.

The Results Level of Effectiveness for Vision, Mission, and Learning-Focused Culture Dimension by Years of Experience (Questions 10-14)

As outlined in Section 2, an intentional effort was made to enhance the interpretability and applicability of the findings by categorizing questions and responses into four distinct dimensions. These dimensions include: Questions 10–14; Improvement of instructional practice: Questions 15–21; Allocation of Resources: Questions 22–27; and Management of systems and processes: Questions 28–33. Tables 8 through 11 meticulously present the average ratings, offering insights into the principals' perspectives based on school level, years of experience, and the variability captured by standard deviation. This segmented analysis not only facilitates a more granular understanding of the survey responses but also allows for targeted interventions and improvements in specific dimensions. Table 8 list the overall ratings of effectiveness for Vision, Mission, and Learning-Focused Culture Dimension by Years of Experience.

Table 8

The Overall Ratings of Effectiveness for Vision, Mission, and Learning-Focused Culture Dimension by Years of Experience

Sub–Dimension	Years of Experience	*N*	Mean	Std. Deviation
(10) To engage staff, students, and the school community in developing a vision and mission.	>5	12	2.00	0.58
	5 <	13	2.08	0.36
		T= 25	AM= 2.04	AST= .47

Sub–Dimension	Years of Experience	*N*	Mean	Std. Deviation
(11) To interact among students, staff, and families reflecting what is valued by the school community.	>5	12	2.92	0.49
	5 <	13	2.98	0.42
		T= 25	AM= 2.95	AST= .46
(12) To establish measurable goals aligned to the vision and mission of academic success for every student.	>5	12	2.17	0.76
	5 <	13	2.00	0.62
		T= 25	AM= 2.09	ASD= .69
(13) To engage with stakeholders to foster culturally responsive learning that ensures individual student's learning needs are met.	>5	12	2.33	0.43
	5 <	11	2.23	0.66
		T= 25	AM= 2.28	ASD= .53
(14) To create and maintain a results-focused learning environment based on clearly established data-driven goals.	>5	12	2.75	0.43
	5 <	11	2.77	0.66
		T= 25	AM= 2.76	ASD= .55

Note: >5 = *Less than five years of experience,* 5 < = More than five years of experience, *N= Total number of participants, AM= Average Mean, and ASD= Average Standard Deviation*

Within the dimension of vision, mission, and learning-focused culture building, the average mean for all principals, categorized by years of experience, was 2.64, highly effective. The average mean for principals with less than 5 years of experience is 2.56, highly effective, on the vision dimension. Delving into the specifics, principals with less than 5 years of experience exhibited an average mean of 2.56, indicating effectiveness, particularly on the vision dimension. Notably, the lowest-rated question for this subdimension was question number 10, wherein principals were tasked with engaging staff, students, and the school community in the

development of a vision and mission. Conversely, the highest-rated question for principals with less than 5 years of experience was question number 11, emphasizing interactions among students, staff, and families that reflect the values of the school community.

Contrastingly, principals with more than 5 years of principal experience achieved an average mean of 2.54 (highly effective), denoting effectiveness within the vision, mission, and learning-focused dimension. For this subdimension, the lowest-rated question was question number 12, requiring principals to establish measurable goals aligned with the vision and mission for academic success. In contrast, question number 11, emphasizing interactions reflecting the values of the school community, emerged as the highest-rated question.

Analyzing the standard deviations reveals a consistent pattern, with the average standard deviation for principals' years of experience standing at 0.54. Breaking down further, the average standard deviation for principals with less than five years and those with more than five years was identical at 0.54. It's noteworthy that the average mean for principals with five or fewer years of experience was higher than their counterparts with five or more years of experience. Additionally, the average standard deviation for principals with five or more years of experience approached the mean more closely than for principals with five or less years of experience. Table 8 presents a detailed item analysis, offering insights into the effectiveness of PSEL 3 substandards based on years of experience.

Within the vision, mission, and learning-focused culture building dimension, the average mean for all principals, categorized by school levels, was 1.94, indicative of an effective rating. Delving into the sub-dimensions concerning the improvement of instructional practice, elementary principals yielded an average mean of 1.99, signifying an effective rating , while middle school principals recorded an average mean of 1.88 and high school principals 1.95, both

indicating an effective rating. The lowest-rated question across all school levels was question number 12, necessitating principals to establish measurable goals aligned with the vision and mission for academic success for every student. Conversely, question number 11, focusing on interactions among students, staff, and families reflecting the values of the school community, emerged as the highest-rated question.

Interestingly, middle school principals rated themselves the lowest within the vision and mission dimension. Table 9 clarifies the item analysis results, providing a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of the four dimensions of instructional leadership substandard across school levels.

Table 9

The Overall Ratings of Effectiveness for Vision, Mission, and Learning-Focused Culture Dimension by Years School Level

Sub-Dimension	School level	*N*	Mean	Std. deviation
(10) To engage staff, students, and the school community in developing a vision and mission.	Elementary	16	2.06	.56
	Middle	5	2.20	.40
	High	4	2.00	.00
		T= 25	AM= 2.09	ASD= .32
(11) To interact among students, staff, and families reflecting what is valued by the school community.	Elementary	16	2.13	0.48
	Middle	5	2.20	0.40
	High	4	2.25	0.43
		T= 25	AM= 2.19	ASD= .44

Sub-Dimension	School level	*N*	Mean	Std. deviation
(12) To establish measurable goals aligned to the vision and mission of academic success for every student.	Elementary	16	2.19	0.73
	Middle	5	1.60	0.49
	High	4	1.75	0.43
		T= 25	AM= 1.85	ASD= .55
(13) To engage with stakeholders to foster culturally responsive learning that ensures individual student's learning needs are met.	Elementary	16	1.69	0.58
	Middle	5	1.20	0.40
	High	4	1.75	0.43
		T= 25	AM= 1.55	ASD= .66
(14) To create and maintain a results-focused learning environment based on clearly established data-driven goals.	Elementary	16	1.88	0.60
	Middle	5	2.20	0.40
	High	4	2.00	0.71
		T= 25	AM= 2.03	ASD= .57

Note: Elementary= Kindergarten through 5th grades, Middle= 6th grade through 8th grades, High= 9th through 12th grades, N= Total number of participants, AM= Average Mean, and ASD= Average Standard Deviation

The average standard deviation for all school levels stood at 0.47. Breaking down further, the average standard deviation for elementary principals was 0.59, for middle school principals 0.42, and for high school principals 0.40. Although the average standard deviation among high school principals was relatively closer to the mean than elementary and middle school principals, the average standard deviation among elementary school principals was further away from the mean compared to the other principal groups.

In sum, the overall average mean for the vision, mission, and learning culture dimension for all principals was 2.29, denoting highly effectiveness. The average standard deviation for all principals was 0.51. Principals exhibited a higher self-rating based on years of experience as opposed to school levels. Notably, there were no significant differences between principals with less than five years of experience or more than five years of experience.

The Results Level of Effectiveness of Improvement of Instructional Practices by Years of Experience

In the context of the instructional practice improvement dimension, the aggregated average mean for all principals, by years of experience, was 1.97, indicating an effective rating. Principals with less than 5 years of experience demonstrated an average mean of 1.88, signaling an effective rating within the vision dimension. Notably, the lowest-rated question for this subgroup was question number 16, necessitating principals to ensure that content standards drive instruction. On the hand, the highest-rated question for principals with less than 5 years of experience was question number 17, emphasizing the use of an instructional framework to observe and analyze teaching practices. Figure 12 is a listing of PSEL 3 substandard survey questions (Questions 15–21).

Figure 12

The Four Dimensions of Instructional Leadership (Improvement of Instructional Practice Dimension Survey Questions)

Survey Question #	**Four Dimensions of Instructional Leadership**
	As a school leader, how do you perceive your current practice…
Question #15:	To use an instructional framework to establish a common language and shared vision of instruction.

	To ensure content standards drive instruction.
Question #16:	To use an instructional framework to observe and analyze teaching practices.
Question #17:	To use classroom observation data to determine next steps for instructional leadership practice.
Question #18:	To support teacher growth using ongoing feedback, professional development, coaching, and professional learning communities.
Question #19:	To engage with teachers and instructional staff to analyze classroom observation data within cycles of inquiry to determine and implement next steps for improving instructional leadership practice.
Question #20:	To provide a variety of supports that are connected to instructional practice data that address adult learning and development.
Question #21:	

Contrastingly, principals with more than 5 years of principal experience exhibited an average mean of 2.05, denoting effectiveness within the instructional practice improvement dimension. Question number 21 emerged as the lowest-rated question for this subdimension, mandating principals to provide various supports connected to instructional practice data that address adult learning and development. In contrast, question number 18 emerged as the highest-rated question, requiring principals to use classroom observation data to determine next steps for instructional leadership practice. Table 10 meticulously presents the item analysis results, shedding light on the effectiveness of the improvement of PSEL 3 based on years of experience.

Table 10

The Overall Ratings of Effectiveness for Improvement of Instructional Practices by Years of Experience

Sub–Dimension	Years of Experience	*N*	Mean	Std. Deviation

Sub–Dimension	Years of Experience	*N*	Mean	Std. Deviation
(15) To use an instructional framework to establish a common language and shared vision of instruction.	>5	12	1.83	0.69
	5 <	13	2.15	0.77
		T= 25	AM= 1.99	AST= .73
(16) To ensure content standards drive instruction.	>5	12	1.67	0.75
	5 <	13	2.08	0.62
		T= 25	AM= 1.88	AST= .69
(17) To use an instructional framework to observe and analyze teaching practices.	>5	12	2.08	0.49
	5 <	13	2.15	0.53
		T= 25	AM= 2.12	ASD= .69
(18) To use classroom observation data to determine next steps for instructional leadership practice.	>5	12	2.33	0.49
	5 <	13	2.23	0.53
		T= 25	AM= 2.28	ASD= .51
(19) To support teacher growth using ongoing feedback, professional development, coaching, and professional learning communities.	>5	12	2.00	0.58
	5 <	13	2.00	0.68
		T= 25	AM= 2.00	ASD= .63
(20) To engage with teachers and instructional staff to analyze classroom observation data within cycles of inquiry to determine and implement next steps for improving instructional leadership practice.	>5	12	1.83	0.47
	5 <	13	1.92	0.73
		T= 25	AM= 1.88	ASD= .60

Sub–Dimension	Years of Experience	*N*	Mean	Std. Deviation
(21) To provide a variety of supports that are connected to instructional practice data that address adult learning and development.	>5	12	1.83	0.55
	5 <	13	1.77	0.49
		T= 25	AM= 1.80	ASD= .52

Note: >5 = *Less than five years of experience,* 5 < = More than five years of experience, *N= Total number of participants, AM= Average Mean, and ASD= Average Standard Deviation*

The average standard deviation for principals' years of experience stood at 0.61. Breaking down further, the average standard deviation for principals with less than five years was 0.60, while for those with more than five years, it was 0.63. Notably, the average mean for principals with five or fewer years of experience was lower than the average for principals with five or more years of experience. Additionally, the average standard deviation for principals with five or fewer years of experience was closer to the mean than for principals with more than five years of experience.

The Results Level of Effectiveness of Improvement of Instructional Practices by School Levels

Within the dimension of instructional practice improvement, the aggregated average mean for all principals, categorized by school levels, was 1.95, indicating an effective rating. Specifically, elementary principals exhibited an average mean of 1.99, signifying an effective rating within the instructional practice dimension. Middle school principals recorded an average mean of 1.97, while high school principals registered a slightly lower average mean of 1.89, both

indicative of an effective stage within the instructional practice dimension. Interestingly, high school principals rated themselves the lowest within the improvement of instructional practice dimension.

Delving into the sub-dimensions, question number 21 emerged as the lowest-rated across all school levels. This question mandated principals to provide a diverse range of supports connected to instructional practice data that address adult learning and development. Conversely, question number 17 surfaced as the highest-rated question, emphasizing the use of an instructional framework to observe and analyze teaching practices. Table 11 presents a comprehensive item analysis, elucidating the effectiveness of the improvement of instructional practice dimension across school levels.

The average standard deviation for all school levels stood at 0.51. Breaking down further, the average standard deviation for elementary principals was 0.68, for middle school principals 0.47, and for high school principals 0.48. Although the average among high school principals was lower than the mean for elementary and middle school principals, the average standard deviation among middle school principals was further away from the mean in comparison to the other principal groups.

In summary, these findings shed light on the differences in self-assessment among principals across school levels within the instructional practice improvement dimension. The varying standard deviations emphasize the degree of variability in perceptions among elementary, middle, and high school principals. Table 11 offers a detailed item analysis, providing valuable insights into the effectiveness of the instructional practice improvement dimension based on school levels.

Table 11

The Overall Ratings of Effectiveness for Improvement of Instructional Practices by School Levels

Substandard	School level	*N*	Mean	Std. deviation
(15) To use an instructional framework to establish a common language and shared vision of instruction.	Elementary	16	2.06	.75
	Middle	5	2.00	.63
	High	4	1.75	.83
		T= 25	AM= 1.94	ASD= .74
(16) To ensure content standards drive instruction.	Elementary	16	1.94	0.66
	Middle	5	2.00	0.63
	High	4	1.50	0.87
		T= 25	AM= 1.81	ASD= .72
(17) To use an instructional framework to observe and analyze teaching practices.	Elementary	16	2.06	0.56
	Middle	5	2.00	0.00
	High	4	2.50	0.50
		T= 25	AM= 2.19	ASD= .35
(18) To use classroom observation data to determine next steps for instructional leadership practice.	Elementary	16	2.19	0.63
	Middle	5	2.20	0.75
	High	4	1.75	0.43
		T= 25	AM= 2.05	ASD= .60
(19) To support teacher growth using ongoing feedback, professional	Elementary	16	2.00	0.71

Substandard	School level	*N*	Mean	Std. deviation
development, coaching, and professional learning communities.	Middle	5	2.20	0.40
	High	4	1.75	0.43
		T= 25	AM= 1.98	ASD= .51
(20) To engage with teachers and instructional staff to analyze classroom observation data within cycles of inquiry to determine and implement next steps for improving instructional leadership practice.	Elementary	16	1.88	0.78
	Middle	5	1.80	0.40
	High	4	2.00	0.43
		T= 25	AM= 1.89	ASD= .63
(21) To provide a variety of supports that are connected to instructional practice data that address adult learning and development.	Elementary	16	1.81	0.73
	Middle	5	1.60	0.49
	High	4	2.00	0.00
		T= 25	AM= 1.80	ASD= .41

Note: Elementary= Kindergarten through 5th grades, Middle= 6th grade through 8th grades, High= 9th through 12th grades, N= Total number of participants, AM= Average Mean, and ASD= Average Standard Deviation

Overall, the average mean for the improvement of instructional practices dimension for all principals was 1.96, effective. The average standard deviation for all principals was .59. The principals rated themselves higher for years of experience versus school levels. There were no significant difference between principals with less than five years of experience or school levels.

The Results Level of Effectiveness for Allocating Resources by Years of Experience

In assessing the allocation of resources dimension, an average mean of 1.91, indicating an effective rating, was observed among all principals, considering years of experience as a differentiating factor. Principals with less than 5 years of experience exhibited a lower average mean of 1.72, also falling within the effective rating within the allocation of resources dimension. Notably, questions number 23 and 24 emerged as the lowest-rated for principals with less than 5 years of experience. These questions emphasized the engagement of key stakeholders to identify and leverage existing resources for the benefit of all students equitably. Conversely, the highest-rated question for this group was question number 26, which focused on working with the leadership team to assess the effectiveness of instructional programs using disaggregated data from student outcomes. Figure 13 is a listing of PSEL 3 substandard survey questions (Questions 22–27).

Figure 13

The Four Dimensions of Instructional Leadership (Allocation of Resources Dimension Survey Questions)

Survey Question #	Four Dimensions of Instructional Leadership
	As a school leader, how do you perceive your current practice…
Question #22:	To involve key stakeholders in determining resource needs based upon disaggregated student learning and teacher practice data aligned to address academic, learning diversity needs.
Question #23:	To engage key stakeholders to identify and leverage existing resources, including time, money, technology, space, materials, expertise and partnerships, to benefit all student equitably.

Question #24:	To engage stakeholders to adjust schedules, budget, staffing patterns and collaborative planning time, to provide the maximum benefit to ALL students.
Question #25:	To proactively seek additional resources to support strategic priorities to improve teacher practice and student learning.
Question #26:	To work with the leadership team to assess the effectiveness of instructional programs and use disaggregated data from student outcomes.
Question #27:	To work with the leadership team to assess disaggregated data to make decisions on adjustment, refinement, or continuation of instructional programs and resources.

Contrastingly, principals with more than 5 years of experience demonstrated an average mean of 2.23, signaling highly effective rating in the allocation of resources dimension. Question number 23 remained the lowest rated for this group, emphasizing the engagement of key stakeholders to identify and leverage existing resources for equitable student benefit. The highest-rated question for principals with more than 5 years of experience was question number 24, which highlighted the engagement of stakeholders to adjust schedules, budget, staffing patterns, and collaborative planning time for the maximum benefit of all students.

Analyzing the average standard deviation for principals' years of experience, it stood at 0.66. Delving into subdimensions, the average standard deviation for principals with less than five years was 0.71, while for principals with more than five years, it was 0.61. Notably, the average mean for principals with five or fewer years of experience was lower than that for principals with five or more years of experience. Moreover, the average standard deviation for principals with five or more years of experience was closer to the mean compared to principals with five or fewer years of experience.

Table 12 presents a detailed item analysis, providing insights into the effectiveness of the resource allocation dimension based on years of experience. These findings underscore the significance of experience in influencing principals' perceived effectiveness in resource allocation practices.

Table 12

The Overall Ratings of Effectiveness for Allocating Resources by Years of Experience

Sub–Standard	Years of Experience	*N*	Mean	Std. Deviation
(22) To involve key stakeholders in determining resource needs based upon disaggregated student learning and teacher practice data aligned to address academic, learning diversity needs.	>5	12	1.75	0.72
	5 <	13	2.92	0.62
		T= 25	AM= 1.56	AST= .67
(23) To engage key stakeholders to identify and leverage existing resources, including time, money, technology, space, materials, expertise and partnerships, to benefit all student equitably.	>5	12	1.42	0.49
	5 <	13	1.77	0.70
		T= 25	AM= 1.60	AST= .60
(24) To engage stakeholders to adjust schedules, budget, staffing patterns and collaborative planning time, to provide the maximum benefit to ALL students.	>5	12	1.42	0.76
	5 <	13	2.23	0.42
		T= 25	AM= 1.83	ASD= .59
(25) To proactively seek additional resources to support strategic priorities to improve teacher practice and student learning.	>5	12	1.83	0.55
	5 <	13	2.15	0.53
		T= 25	AM= 1.99	ASD= .54

Sub–Standard	Years of Experience	*N*	Mean	Std. Deviation
(26) To work with the leadership team to assess the effectiveness of instructional programs and use disaggregated data from student outcomes.	>5	12	2.00	0.58
	5 <	13	2.15	0.77
		T= 25	AM= 2.08	ASD= .68
(27) To work with the leadership team to assess disaggregated data to make decisions on adjustment, refinement, or continuation of instructional programs and resources.	>5	12	1.92	0.86
	5 <	13	2.38	0.49
		T= 25	AM= 2.15	ASD= .68

Note: >5 = *Less than five years of experience,* 5 < = More than five years of experience, *N= Total number of participants, AM= Average Mean, and ASD= Average Standard Deviation*

The Results Level of Effectiveness for Allocating Resources by School Levels

Within the allocation of resources dimension, the overall average mean for all principals across school levels was 1.88, reflecting an effective rating. A closer examination of this dimension across school levels reveals nuanced perspectives. Elementary school principals exhibited an average mean of 1.97, signaling an effective rating in the allocation of resources dimension. Middle school principals demonstrated a slightly lower average mean of 1.87 in the same dimension. High school principals, on the other hand, reported the lowest average mean of 1.79, positioning them in the effective stage and indicating a perceived lesser effectiveness in resource allocation practices. Notably, question number 23 was consistently identified as the

lowest-rated across all school levels. This question emphasized the engagement of key stakeholders to identify and leverage existing resources for equitable benefits to all students.

The highest-rated question across all school levels was question number 27. This question underscored the importance of working with the leadership team to assess disaggregated data for informed decision-making on the adjustment, refinement, or continuation of instructional programs and resources. Intriguingly, high school principals rated themselves the lowest in the allocation of resources dimension.

An examination of the average standard deviation across school levels revealed a value of 0.52. Delving into specific dimensions, elementary principals exhibited a higher standard deviation of 0.73, indicating greater variability in their perceptions of resource allocation. Middle school principals showed a standard deviation of 0.51, and high school principals demonstrated the lowest standard deviation of 0.34. While high school principals reported a lower average mean than elementary and middle school principals, their standard deviation was the smallest, suggesting a more consistent perspective among this group. Conversely, elementary school principals exhibited a higher standard deviation, indicating greater variability in their perceptions of the effectiveness of resource allocation practices.

Table 13 provides a comprehensive display of both overall and item-specific analyses, shedding light on the effectiveness of the allocation of resource dimension across school levels.

Table 13

The Overall Rating of Effectiveness by Allocating Resources by School Level

Substandard	School level	*N*	Mean	Std. deviation

Substandard	School level	*N*	Mean	Std. deviation
(22) To involve key stakeholders in determining resource needs based upon disaggregated student learning and teacher practice data aligned to address academic, learning diversity needs.	Elementary	16	1.88	.78
	Middle	5	1.60	.49
	High	4	2.00	.00
		T= 25	AM= 1.83	ASD= .42
(23) To engage key stakeholders to identify and leverage existing resources, including time, money, technology, space, materials, expertise and partnerships, to benefit all student equitably.	Elementary	16	1.63	0.70
	Middle	5	1.60	0.49
	High	4	1.50	0.50
		T= 25	AM= 1.58	ASD= .56
(24) To engage stakeholders to adjust schedules, budget, staffing patterns and collaborative planning time, to provide the maximum benefit to ALL students.	Elementary	16	1.94	0.66
	Middle	5	2.00	0.63
	High	4	1.25	0.83
		T= 25	AM= 1.73	ASD= .71
(25) To proactively seek additional resources to support strategic priorities to improve teacher practice and student learning.	Elementary	16	2.06	0.56
	Middle	5	1.80	0.40
	High	4	2.00	0.71
		T= 25	AM= 1.95	ASD= .56

Substandard	School level	*N*	Mean	Std. deviation
(26) To work with the leadership team to assess the effectiveness of instructional programs and use disaggregated data from student outcomes.	Elementary	16	2.13	0.78
	Middle	5	2.00	0.63
	High	4	2.00	0.00
		T= 25	AM= 2.04	ASD= .47
(27) To work with the leadership team to assess disaggregated data to make decisions on adjustment, refinement, or continuation of instructional programs and resources.	Elementary	16	2.19	0.88
	Middle	5	2.20	0.40
	High	4	2.13	0.00
		T= 25	AM= 1.89	ASD= .43

Note: Elementary= Kindergarten through 5th grades, Middle= 6th grade through 8th grades, High= 9th through 12th grades, N= Total number of participants, AM= Average Mean, and ASD= Average Standard Deviation

In summary, these findings suggest that experience plays a significant role in principals' perceived effectiveness in resource allocation practices, with more experience principals generally rated themselves higher in this dimension in compared to their less experienced counterparts.

The Results Level of Effectiveness for Management of Systems and Processes Dimension by Years of Experience

Within the management of systems and processes dimension, the aggregated average mean for all principals across years of experience was 1.83, indicating an effective rating. A closer examination of this dimension among principals with less than 5 years of experience

revealed a slightly lower average mean of 1.74, suggesting a continued effective rating in their perceived effectiveness in managing systems and processes. Notably, questions number 28 and 29 emerged as the lowest-rated among principals with less than 5 years of experience. Question #28 emphasized the involvement of key stakeholders in determining resource needs based on disaggregated student learning and teacher practice data, aligning with academic and learning diversity needs. Question #29 underscored the engagement of stakeholders in identifying and leveraging existing resources for equitable benefits to all students. Conversely, the highest-rated question for this group was question number 31, focusing on principals proactively seeking additional resources to support strategic priorities aimed at improving teacher practice and student learning.

Principals with more than 5 years of experience reported a slightly higher average mean of 1.92 in the management of systems and processes dimension, also aligning with an effective rating. Similar to their less experienced counterparts, these principals identified question number 28 as the lowest-rated. This question reiterated the need to involve key stakeholders in determining resource needs based on disaggregated student learning and teacher practice data. In contrast, questions number 30 and 32 emerged as the highest-rated among principals with more than 5 years of experience. Question #30 emphasized engaging stakeholders to adjust schedules, budget, staffing patterns, and collaborative planning time to maximize benefits for all students, while Question #32 focused on implementing a collaborative process to identify differentiated types of professional development.

The average standard deviation for all principals across years of experience was 0.52, suggesting a moderate degree of variability in perceptions of the effectiveness of systems and processes management. Table 13 provides a detailed item analysis, offering insights into the

nuanced perspectives on the management of systems and processes dimension based on principals' years of experience.

The average mean for principals with more than 5 years of principal experience was 1.92, developing, on the management of systems and processes dimension. The lowest rated question for principals with more than 5 years of principal experience was question number 28. Question #28 required principals to involve key stakeholders in determining resource needs based upon disaggregated student learning and teacher practice data aligned to address academic, learning diversity needs. The highest rated question for principals with more than 5 years of principal experience was question numbers 30 and 32. Question #31 required principals to proactively seek additional resources to support strategic priorities to improve teacher practice and student learning. Question #32 required principals to implement a collaborative process to identify differentiated types of professional development. Figure 14 display the survey questions for management of systems and processes by dimension.

Figure 14

The Four Dimensions of Instructional Leadership- Management of Systems and Processes Dimension by Survey (Questions 28-33)

Survey Question #	**Four Dimensions of Instructional Leadership**
	As a school leader, how do you perceive your current practice…
Question #28:	To act as a steward of public funds to improve the teaching and learning experience so that all students can achieve at optimum levels.
Question #29:	To triangulate multiple sources of data to establish short-term and long-term strategic priorities for recruiting and selecting high-quality staff.
Question #30:	To continually refine staff's individual and collective strengths, interests, and needs of the school.

Question #31:	To model and facilitate effective collaboration that is reflected in teachers' work and the school's collaborative structures and processes.
Question #32:	To implement a collaborative process to identify differentiated types of professional development.
Question #33:	To provide opportunities for teachers to take ownership for ensuring their own continuous professional growth by reflecting on their instructional practice data.

Table 14

The Overall Ratings of Effectiveness for Management of Systems and Processes by Years of Experience

Sub–Standard	Years of Experience	*N*	Mean	Std. Deviation
(28) To involve key stakeholders in determining resource needs based upon disaggregated student learning and teacher practice data aligned to address academic, learning diversity needs.	>5	12	1.42	0.86
	5 <	13	1.62	0.62
		T= 25	AM= 1.52	AST= .74
(29) To engage key stakeholders to identify and leverage existing resources, including time, money, technology, space, materials, expertise and partnerships, to benefit all student equitably.	>5	12	1.42	0.95
	5 <	13	1.85	0.53
		T= 25	AM= 1.64	AST= .74
(30) To engage stakeholders to adjust schedules, budget, staffing patterns and collaborative planning time, to provide the maximum benefit to ALL students.	>5	12	1.92	0.64
	5 <	13	2.15	0.53
		T= 25	AM= 2.04	ASD= .59

Sub–Standard	Years of Experience	*N*	Mean	Std. Deviation
(31) To proactively seek additional resources to support strategic priorities to improve teacher practice and student learning.	>5	12	2.08	0.49
	5 <	13	2.08	0.62
		T= 25	AM= 2.08	ASD= .56
(32) To work with the leadership team to assess the effectiveness of instructional programs and use disaggregated data from student outcomes.	>5	12	1.83	0.69
	5 <	13	2.15	0.66
		T= 25	AM= 1.99	ASD= .68
(33) To work with the leadership team to assess disaggregated data to make decisions on adjustment, refinement, or continuation of instructional programs and resources.	>5	12	1.75	0.60
	5 <	13	1.69	0.72
		T= 25	AM= 1.72	ASD= .66

Note: >5 = *Less than five years of experience,* 5 < = More than five years of experience, *N= Total number of participants, AM= Average Mean, and ASD= Average Standard Deviation*

The Results Level of Effectiveness for Managing of Systems and Processes by School Levels

In the realm of the management of systems and processes dimension, the average mean for all principals across school levels was 1.85, signaling an effective rating. Further exploration into this dimension across different school levels unveiled nuanced perceptions. Among elementary principals, the average mean stood at 1.81, indicating a effective trajectory in their

perceived effectiveness in managing systems and processes. Middle school principals reported a slightly higher average mean of 1.90 in this dimension, reflecting a similar effective rating but with a slight increase in perception. High school principals exhibited an average mean of 1.83, aligning with the effective rating in their evaluation of systems and processes management. Intriguingly, question number 28 emerged as the lowest rated across all school levels. This question underscored the importance of involving key stakeholders in determining resource needs based on disaggregated student learning and teacher practice data, specifically aligned to address academic and learning diversity needs. Conversely, question number 30 attained the highest rating across all school levels. Question #30 emphasized principals engaging stakeholders to adjust schedules, budgets, staffing patterns, and collaborative planning time to maximize benefits for all students.

Elementary principals reported the lowest average mean in the management of systems and processes dimension, underscoring a perceived area for growth in their leadership capacity. The average standard deviation for all school levels was 0.48, indicating a moderate level of variability in perceptions of the effectiveness of systems and processes management. A deeper dive into the standard deviation across dimensions for each school level revealed interesting patterns. Notably, elementary principals exhibited a higher standard deviation of 0.73, suggesting a more diverse range of opinions regarding the effectiveness of systems and processes management, with perspectives further dispersed from the mean compared to middle and high school principals. Table 14 presents a comprehensive item analysis, offering a detailed examination of the effectiveness of the management of systems and processes dimension by school level.

Table 15

The Overall Ratings of Effectiveness for Management of Systems and Processes by School Level

Substandard	School level	*N*	Mean	Std. deviation
(28) To involve key stakeholders in determining resource needs based upon disaggregated student learning and teacher practice data aligned to address academic, learning diversity needs.	Elementary	16	1.56	.79
	Middle	5	1.40	.49
	High	4	1.50	.87
		T= 25	AM= 1.49	ASD= .72
(29) To engage key stakeholders to identify and leverage existing resources, including time, money, technology, space, materials, expertise and partnerships, to benefit all student equitably.	Elementary	16	1.50	0.94
	Middle	5	2.00	0.00
	High	4	1.75	0.43
		T= 25	AM= 1.75	ASD= .56
(30) To engage stakeholders to adjust schedules, budget, staffing patterns and collaborative planning time, to provide the maximum benefit to ALL students.	Elementary	16	2.00	0.71
	Middle	5	2.20	0.40
	High	4	1.25	0.00
		T= 25	AM= 2.07	ASD= .37
(31) To proactively seek additional resources to support strategic priorities to improve teacher practice and student learning.	Elementary	16	2.13	0.36
	Middle	5	2.00	0.00
	High	4	2.00	0.71
		T= 25	AM= 2.04	ASD= .36

Substandard	School level	*N*	Mean	Std. deviation
(32) To work with the leadership team to assess the effectiveness of instructional programs and use disaggregated data from student outcomes.	Elementary	16	2.00	0.79
	Middle	5	2.20	0.40
	High	4	1.75	0.43
		T= 25	AM= 1.98	ASD= .54
(33) To work with the leadership team to assess disaggregated data to make decisions on adjustment, refinement, or continuation of instructional programs and resources.	Elementary	16	1.69	0.77
	Middle	5	1.60	0.49
	High	4	2.00	0.00
		T= 25	AM= 1.76	ASD= .42

Note: Elementary= Kindergarten through 5th grades, Middle= 6th grade through 8th grades, High= 9th through 12th grades, N= Total number of participants, AM= Average Mean, and ASD= Average Standard Deviation

Overall, the average mean for the management of systems and processes dimension for all principals was 1.80, effective rating. The average standard deviation for all principals was .57. These findings suggest that while principals generally perceive themselves to be in a effective stage in managing systems and processes, there are nuanced differences based on years of experience and school levels, with more experienced principals and middle school principals generally rating themselves slightly higher in this dimension. There were no significant difference between principals with less than five years of experience or more than five years of experience.

Response to Research Question 3

Research question 3 was answered by examining the two open-response questions. **RQ3** stated: What challenges to implementing PSEL Standard 3 are reported by principals of high poverty schools and which strategies do they report as useful in implementing the standard? The purpose of the last two questions was to provide principals with the opportunity to elaborate on their survey responses to PSEL Standard 3 and the four dimensions of instructional leadership. The questions were:

Question 34: In your experience(s) serving as a high poverty principal, what barriers or challenges prevent you from implementing equity leadership practices in your school?

Question 35: In your experience(s) serving as a high poverty principal, what do you report as useful strategies to better understand and implement PSEL standard 3?

In response to question number 34 regarding barriers faced by principals in implementing equity leadership practices, there were no significant themes identified by principal responses. However, the following are responses from high poverty principals with 0- 5 years of experience, 5 or more years of experience, and all school levels:

0 to 5 Years of Experience:

a. "Losing the AAA grant funds was a blow to a school that serves a high-poverty community since our PTA has little ability to offer financial support to the school for programs. As a result, we're just making do when we know we could have a bigger impact with better resources."

b. "Top-down policies allow for little flexibility and prevent us from customizing education for our students."

c. “More resources to address homelessness, mental health, and food scarcity. We must address the previously mentioned concerns before addressing the academic needs of students. I do not have the resources to meet the needs of all students.”

d. “It is difficult to implement alternative approaches when the system is built around a static curriculum and uniform expectations of schools despite wide-ranging socio-economic and school readiness factors.”

e. “The biggest barrier in the past two years has been the shortage of staff to support student social and emotional needs which impact student behaviors and take time away from focusing on instructional practices.”

5 or More Years of Experience:

a. “Place more emphasis on home to school/ partnerships.”

b. “In my experience, challenges and barriers include working with a wide continuum of educators in terms of effectiveness, with year over year change and decreasing teacher candidates resulting in hiring of teachers who need time to grow professionally. Professional growth opportunities linked to equity leadership practices need to implement with intentionality, and opportunities to do this with individual teachers and groups of teachers can be somewhat limited by the overall complexity of a large Title I school with special education programs.”

c. “The barriers include the significant amount of school-based employees such as teaching assistants, temporary support assistants, which do not have the same time within their workday to intentionally provide professional development linked to the needed learning centered upon implementing equitable teaching practices. The overall volume of employees within our school is over 90, making it extremely complicated

to reach each employee at their level to build their overall capacity and support their growth as the school year progresses."

d. "We need more support on how to examine data regarding student opportunity gaps and disparities and how funding is allocated to schools to meet the needs of all students. We receive a lot of data. How do we prioritize our data and make informed decisions at our schools? Teacher bias are also negatively impacting academic, behavioral, and social needs for students."

Elementary School Principals

a. More resources to address homelessness, mental health, and food scarcity. We must address the previously mentioned concerns before we address the needs of students."

b. "We need more support on how to examine data regarding student opportunity gaps and disparities and how funding is allocated to schools to meet the needs of all students. We receive a lot of data. How do we prioritize our data and make informed decisions at our schools? Teacher bias are also negatively impacting academic, behavioral, and social needs for students."

c. "Place more emphasis on home to school/ partnerships."

d. "Top-down policies allow for little flexibility and prevent us from customizing education for our students."

e. "The biggest barrier in the past two years has been the shortage of staff to support student social and emotional needs which impact student behaviors and take time away from focusing on instructional practices."

Middle School Principals

a. "Losing the AAA grant funds was a blow to a school that serves a high-poverty community since our PTA has little ability to offer financial support to the school for programs. As a result, we're just making do when we know we could have a bigger impact with better resources."
b. "Staff turnover."

High School Principals

a. "There's lack of time to truly perform the work that is required to meet the needs of our students."

In response to question number 35 regarding useful strategies to better understand and implement PSEL Standard 3, there were no significant themes identified by the principals participating in my study. The following are responses of high poverty principals with 0- 5 years of experience principals, 5 or more years of experience, and all school levels:

0 to 5 Years of Experience

a. "The principal must cultivate trust among all stakeholders by leveraging the expertise of teacher leaders and working with community partners to support schools.
b. "Providing principals with professional development on disaggregating data to create SMART goals, using resources to work toward school improvement goals, holding staff accountable for using equitable practices, implementing culturally responsive teaching, differentiated professional development, teacher observations and feedback, and collaboration among stakeholders."

5 or More Years of Experience

a. “During the summer months, district office personnel working with the school’s leadership team to unpack PSEL Standard 3.”
b. “During district meetings, providing principals with time to review research to support student needs.”
c. “Principal’s participating in home visits and actively participating in social and emotional lessons.”

Elementary School Principals

a. “Engaging faculty, staff, and students in restorative practices, community building circles, and culturally responsive practices.”
b. “The district office engaging faculty and staff in purposeful equity professional developments.”
c. “During the summer months, district office personnel working with the school’s leadership team to unpack PSEL Standard 3.”

Middle School Principals

a. “Staying current with readings and focused on equity best practices. Having equity best practice conversations with the faculty and staff.”
b. “Meeting regularly with the administrative team to determine their needs.”

High School Principals

a. “Principal’s participating in home visits and actively participating in social and emotional lessons.”

Summary of Findings

The comprehensive evaluation of PSEL Standard 3 implementation among the cohort of 25 high poverty principals yielded a commendable average rating of 2.10, denoting an

"Effective" performance level. This collective positive self-assessment signifies a shared confidence among principals in their ability to uphold equitable leadership practices aligned with PSEL Standard 3. To gauge these ratings, the average standard deviation among the 25 high poverty principals was calculated at 0.57, indicating a moderate level of variability. This diversity in perceptions highlights nuanced perspectives on the effectiveness of PSEL Standard 3 implementation.

Upon scrutinizing specific substandards and subdimensions, the self-assessment data reveals that, on average, principals rated themselves the lowest in effectiveness on various substandards and dimensions. It is essential to note that, even though these ratings are comparatively lower, they still fall within the "Effective" range on the 0 to 3.0 scale, presenting an overall positive evaluation.

Regrettably, the provided content lacks specific details regarding the substandards or dimensions where principals perceived themselves as less effective. To address this gap, a thorough examination of the item analysis results is crucial. This detailed analysis aims to pinpoint specific areas within the allocation of resource dimension that may require attention and uncover any potential disparities in perceived effectiveness.

In conclusion, the achieved overall average rating reflects a collective acknowledgment among high poverty principals of their proficiency in implementing PSEL Standard 3. However, an exploration of item analysis results is essential for understanding and identifying particular dimensions requiring refinement and potential avenues for targeted support for high poverty principals. This detailed insight empowers educational leaders to tailor improvement strategies aligned with the identified areas of growth, fostering continuous enhancement in equitable leadership practices. Table 16 lists the lowest ratings by substandard and dimension.

Table 16

The Lowest Ratings by Substandard and Dimension

Survey Questions	Substandard/ Dimension	Rating
Question #28: To act as a steward of public funds to improve the teaching and learning experience so that all students can achieve at optimum levels.	Management of Systems and Processes (all school levels)	1.49
Question #28: To act as a steward of public funds to improve the teaching and learning experience so that all students can achieve at optimum levels.	Management of Systems and Processes (all experiences)	1.52
Question 13: To engage with stakeholders to foster culturally responsive learning that ensures individual student's learning needs are met.	Vision, Mission, and Learning Focused Culture (all school levels)	1.55
Question #23: To engage key stakeholders to identify and leverage existing resources, including time, money, technology, space, materials, expertise and partnerships, to benefit all student equitably.	Allocation of Resources (all school levels)	1.58
Question #23: To engage key stakeholders to identify and leverage existing resources, including time, money, technology, space, materials, expertise and partnerships, to benefit all student equitably.	Allocation of Resources (all experiences)	1.60
Question #21: To provide a variety of supports that are connected to instructional practice data that address adult learning and development.	Improvement of Instructional Practice (all experiences) (all school levels)	1.80
Question #3: To assess your ability to ensure that each student is treated fairly, respectfully, and with an understanding of each student's culture and context.	Principal's with less than five years of experience Middle School Principals	2.00
Question #5: To assess your ability to ensure that each student has equitable access to effective teachers, learning	Principal's with less than five years of	2.00

opportunities, academic and social support, and other resources necessary for success.	experience	
Question #10: To engage staff, students, and the school community in developing a vision and mission.	Vision, Mission, and Learning Focused Culture (all experiences)	2.04

In evaluating the effectiveness across all principals, the lowest ratings were attributed to the management of systems and processes, specifically pertaining to acting as stewards of public funds to enhance the teaching and learning experience, ensuring optimal achievement for all students. Moreover, high poverty principals are tasked with the responsibility of identifying internal and external stakeholders to recognize and leverage existing resources comprehensively, encompassing time, finances, technology, space, materials, expertise, and partnerships, with an emphasis on equitable benefits for all students. Additionally, these principals play a pivotal role in engaging stakeholders to cultivate culturally responsive learning environments that cater to the individualized learning needs of each student. It's noteworthy that none of the principals, regardless of school level or years of experience, rated themselves as ineffective.

Qualitative insights gleaned from the data underscore the district office's role in enhancing infrastructures of high poverty schools. This involves assisting high poverty principals in formulating transparent decision-making processes and procedures for instructional programming, along with ensuring an equitable distribution of resources across schools. The qualitative data also emphasizes the imperative to bolster support for teachers through targeted professional development initiatives coupled with ongoing feedback mechanisms to facilitate continuous professional growth. High-poverty principals are urged to establish explicit expectations for the implementation of PSEL 3 standards and provide requisite academic and

social resources, fostering an environment conducive to the overall success of the entire school community.

Study Limitations

Although the East Coast Public School (ECPS) system encompasses 121 schools, only 27 out of the 38 high-poverty school principals provided consent to participate in the survey. From this group, only 25 high-poverty principals ultimately completed the survey. Notably, ten elementary principals and one middle school principal opted not to partake in the study despite initial invitations and three reminder emails. Despite the relatively small sample size, it's crucial to underscore that the participating principals represented all high-poverty school levels.

A significant limitation of this study stems from the impact of COVID-19 on high-poverty schools. The quantitative and qualitative data gathered for this study, involving high-poverty principals and their schools, spans from the 2017–2018 school year to the 2020–2021 school year. The surge in COVID-19 cases towards the end of 2021 brought about severe staff shortages, high rates of absenteeism, quarantines, and periodic school closures. Lewis et al. (2022) highlighted the persistent challenge of achieving academic normalcy for many students, educators, and parents. While the participants did not explicitly mention the negative impact of COVID on high-poverty schools, particularly in terms of widening achievement gaps and providing wrap-around services for families, it's crucial to note that the survey was conducted during a challenging period for these schools. According to Guerra et al. (2021), principals during this time prioritized the care, safety, and well-being of students, teachers, and communities over accountability measures and academic outcomes.

Cheatham et al. (2022) have indicated that in response to the crisis posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, new education leaders must go beyond stabilizing their organizations and

communities; they must forge a path toward a better future. Students and educators are grappling with ongoing mental health challenges, increased rates of violence and misbehavior, and concerns regarding the loss of instructional time.

Another inherent limitation of the study design is the inability to delve deeply into the research questions. While the survey used provided a valuable baseline, qualitative research, as highlighted by Airasian et al. (2014), aims to comprehend the reasons behind observed phenomena, focusing on individual and person-to-person interactions. Qualitative research involves making tentative decisions based on the analysis of data patterns, relations, and common themes. The limited responses to the open-ended questions hindered an in-depth analysis that could have been achieved through in-person qualitative interviews, providing a more profound understanding of the participants' responses.

Finally, a crucial unexplored aspect is the failure to conduct interviews with teachers to identify classroom inequities. Such interviews could furnish high-poverty principals with valuable data to make informed decisions on addressing academic and social inequities within their schools.

Impact on School District and Recommendations

After reviewing the findings, it is necessary to refer to the proposed theory of action in Section 1 that stated if a principal's knowledge and capacity to address the needs of high poverty schools, were assessed using the four dimensions of instructional leadership framework, and on the job support was provided to principals, and equitable leadership practices were implemented into high poverty schools, then these principals will be rated as highly effective on Professional Standards for Educational Leadership Standard 3. After reviewing the survey results, high poverty principals rated their overall knowledge of PSEL Standard 3 as "effective." However,

the findings also indicated the need for high poverty principals to increase their knowledge and skills of the following leadership practices created by the University of Washington (2020):

1. To engage key stakeholders to identify and leverage existing resources, including time, money, technology, space, materials, expertise and partnerships, to benefit all student equitably.
2. To engage with stakeholders to foster culturally responsive learning that ensures individual student's learning needs are met.
3. To assess your ability to ensure that each student is treated fairly, respectfully, and with an understanding of each student's culture and context.
4. To provide a variety of supports that are connected to instructional practice data that address adult learning and development.
5. To engage staff, students, and the school community in developing a vision and mission.

I will recommend equitable leadership practices to improve the previously mentioned academic challenges of high poverty schools. The equitable leadership practices identified will increase a high poverty principals' knowledge of PSEL Standard 3. The equitable leadership practices and recommendations will increase a high poverty principals' knowledge of PSEL Standard 3:

Recommendation: #1:

To engage key stakeholders to identify and leverage existing resources, including time, money, technology, space, materials, expertise and partnerships, to benefit all student equitably. School leaders, particularly principals serving high poverty schools must develop

strong, trusting relationships with their external partners. Epstein (2011) stated, “Many educators, families, and students are unaware of the resources in their communities. A principal needs to be proactive in developing relationships with stakeholders throughout the community.” Epstein (2011) further elaborated, “One of the ways principals can prepare to learn more about the community is to create a community profile. This involves identifying resources within the neighborhood. Specifically, it would include the area around the school, home neighborhoods, and other locations where students, families, and teachers spend time and give or receive services. This list should include state and federal legislators, health and social care agencies, law enforcement, cultural and fraternal groups, museums, zoos, chambers of commerce, higher education institutions, libraries, the media, business and industry, shops, youth organizations, places for childcare, places of worship, and other locations where students and families visit work, give or obtain services, learn, or play.” Figure 15 display activities and steps to creating a Google Partnership Program Website to increase community partnerships.

Figure 15

Creating a Google Partnership Program Website

Activities	Steps
Creation of a Google Partnership Program Website:	Develop a dedicated website for the school's partnership program, featuring the school's vision, mission, and partnership goals in scholarly language. Include a registration form for potential partners and a secure link for submitting monetary donations. Create a section listing partnering organizations along with their contributions and collaborations.
Community and Partner Engagement:	Extend invitations to partners and community leaders to visit the school. Provide guests with a comprehensive trifold document

	highlighting the school's accomplishments, student and teacher demographics, school facilities, and any other relevant information. Conduct guided tours of the school to showcase its facilities and educational environment.
Monthly Partnership Meetings:	Establish a regular schedule for monthly partnership meetings. Define the purpose of these meetings as strengthening relationships, accessing mentorship and resources, and enhancing teaching and learning experiences. During meetings, principals will lead discussions on academic and social barriers hindering the achievement of the school's vision and mission goals. Encourage student involvement in collaborative discussions with partners to address school-wide challenges. Implement Perry's (2022) diplomatic approach by engaging students as active participants in defining and solving problem.
Create a Metrics to Progress Monitor Goals Established During the Monthly Partnership Meetings:	Develop a set of metrics that outline specific goals for the partnership program. Clearly define steps for measuring progress towards these goals. Regularly review and assess these metrics during the monthly partnership meetings.
Communication of Results Regularly with School Community:	Share the outcomes of monthly partnership meetings with key stakeholders, including the school community, district office, and partnering organizations. Disseminate information through formal reports and updates on the school's partnership website. Emphasize the impact of the partnership program on student learning, academic achievements, and community engagement. By incorporating scholarly language and strategic approaches, these steps aim to establish a robust and effective partnership program for the school, fostering collaboration with external organizations and promoting continuous improvement in education.

Recommendation #2:

Engage staff, students, and the school community in developing a vision and mission.

According to Farmer & Gabriel (2009) stated, "A vision statement is a collective expression of the school's aspirations. A vision is concise and easy to recall." Stoltzfus (2022) stated, "The role of principal is about how a leader collaboratively creates a vision aligned to its practices, processes, and programs to meet the needs of students. This includes articulating, communicating, and leading the collaborative implementation and ongoing revision of the school's vision to its practices, policies, and resources (e.g., human capital, time, budgetary, and facilities)."

To develop an instructional vision for a school, the principal will collect preliminary survey data for the school community. During the month of January, the principal will send a survey to the school community (teachers, staff, parents, and students) which will consists of the following questions from Due East Educational Equity Collaborative (2024):

- What are persistent and predictable areas of inequity in our school? Why are these inequities so persistent?
- Who are the people experiencing the most inequity in our schools? What do we need to do as a school community to expand equity?
- If our school were *more equitable,* what would it look like? What actions would you take as an educational community?
- What commitments would you make? What would it feel like to be a community member?
- What words reflect your school's equity values?
- Once you have an equity vision, how will you use it as a tool to advance equity?

- How will you make sure it's not just words, but a living and active vision?
- Who needs to give input on your equity vision? Who needs to be thoroughly familiar with the equity vision? How will you gather this input and familiarize necessary stakeholders?

During the months of February and March, the high poverty principal will convene an Equity Vision Committee consisting of a diverse group of content experts, community members, parents, and students. The stakeholders will be invited to engage in a series of three bi-weekly meetings aimed at deliberating on the creation of the school's updated vision statement. The following Figure 16 outlines a sample agenda of the process for crafting the school's vision statement is a sample agenda for creating principal's vision statement:

Figure 16

Sample Agenda for Creating the School's Vision Statement

Content	Process	Facilitator	Timeframe
February First Meeting			
Opening Remarks	Welcome & Introduction Purpose for Meeting	Principal	5 Minutes
Review of Current Situation	Data analysis: School community survey results, Academic performance, student demographics, and staff demographics Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis	Principal	40 Minutes
Vision Statement	Definition and importance of a	Assistant Principal	20 Minutes

Basics	vision statement Examples of effective vision statements from other educational institutions		
Closing Remarks		Principal	5 Minutes
February Second Meeting			
Review of Prior Meeting Minutes		Principal	15 Minutes
Brainstorming Session	Encourage participants to share their thoughts on the school's future Focus on core values, aspiration, and desired outcomes		20 Minutes
Prioritization Exercise	Identify common themes and values from the brainstorming session Discuss and prioritize key elements for inclusion in the vision statement		30 Minutes
March Third Meeting			
Review of Prior Meeting Minutes			10 Minutes
Crafting the Vision Statement	Collaborative writing session Form small groups to draft sections of the vision statement Rotate groups to ensure diverse perspectives are considered		30 Minutes
Review and Feedback	Share the drafted vision statement with the larger group		20 Minutes

	Collect feedback and suggestions for improvement Revise the vision statement based on input		
Alignment with Stakeholder Input	Discuss how the vision aligns with the expectations of various stakeholders (parents, teachers, students, and community) Ensure the inclusivity and representation of diverse perspectives		15 Minutes
Closing Remarks		Principal	5 Minutes
March Fourth Meeting			
Review of Prior Meeting Minutes		Principal	15 Minutes
Finalization and Adoption	Review the revised vision statement Seek consensus and finalize the principal's vision statement Vision reflection questions Discuss the process for official adoption and dissemination		45 Minutes
Action Plan for Implementation	Develop a plan for communicating the vision statement to the school community Establish strategies for integrating the vision into daily practices Assign responsibilities for		20 Minutes

	ongoing review and updates	
Closing Remarks	Express gratitude for participants' contributions Emphasize the importance of collective commitment to the vision Provide next steps and timelines for implementation	10 Minutes

According to the insights of Gabriel and Farmer (2009), the involvement of the school community during this process is deemed crucial for enhancing the quality and effective implementation of the vision statement. During the month of April, the Equity Vision Committee will undertake the finalization of the vision statement. The high-poverty principal is schedule will schedule meetings with the faculty, staff, students, and community members to unveil the new vision statement. What will the new vision expect of me?

i. How will our work change as a result?

ii. Do we believe in this new vision?

iii. Do we believe in the school's ability to achieve this vision?

Following the community meetings, the Equity Vision Committee will meticulously review the feedback received and proceed to enhance and update the newly crafted Equity Vision Statement. The principal will share the updated vision statement on social media sites and through messaging systems (Connect Ed). Moving into May, the principal will play a pivotal role in appointing leads for sub-committees, each tasked with formulating measurable goals aligned with the vision statement. These sub-committees are scheduled to convene every month.

Recommendation #3:

Engage stakeholders to foster culturally responsive learning that ensures individual student's learning needs are met. The quantitative findings underscore the imperative to bolster teacher community through targeted professional development accompanied by continuous feedback for ongoing professional advancement. High-poverty school leaders should establish explicit expectations for implementing PSEL 3 standards, delivering necessary academic and social resources, and providing support to guarantee the success of the entire school community. High poverty principals must offer a range of supports aligned with instructional practice data to address adult learning and development. External stakeholders, encompassing community members, parents, local organizations, and businesses, assume a pivotal role in fostering culturally responsive learning and meeting individual student needs.

High Poverty Principals Engaging Teachers in Culturally Responsive Learning. There are several leadership practices through which high poverty principals can provide teachers with professional development opportunities foster culturally responsive learning that ensures individual student learning needs are met:

a. Get to Know Your Students: Principals make sure that teachers have time during the school day to learn about their students' backgrounds, experiences, and interests. This helps teachers understand where their students are c principals make sure that teachers have time during the school day to learn about their students' backgrounds, experiences, and interests. This helps teachers understand where their students come from and adapt their teaching to fit each student's needs. By doing this, teachers can make lessons more interesting and relevant for their students, making them feel like they belong and helping

them do better in school coming from and adapt their teaching to fit each student's needs. By doing this, teachers can make lessons more interesting and relevant for their students, making them feel like they belong and helping them do better in school. According to Deady (2020), teachers should set aside time to talk with each student individually, showing a genuine interest in their thoughts and well-being. Creating a classroom that respects and embraces all cultures is about making sure every student feels comfortable and ready to learn.

b. Differentiate Instruction: In schools where many students come from families with little money, principals need to help teachers adjust their teaching methods to fit the needs of all students, including those with different learning styles, abilities, and cultural backgrounds. Principals can give teachers the tools, training, and support they need to create lessons that work for everyone. This means making sure that every student has access to interesting and effective learning activities, no matter their learning style or background. By doing this, principals help create a classroom where every student feels valued and capable of doing well. According to Guido (2019), students respond differently to various types of content, so teachers can set up different learning stations to accommodate different learning styles. Johnes (2023) also suggested several strategies for effective teaching, including learning stations, tiered assignments, interest-based learning, using technology, peer teaching, and formative assessments. These strategies help ensure that every student can learn in a way that works best for them.

c. Promote Inclusive Classroom Discussions: In simple terms, in schools where many students come from families with little money, principals need to make sure that teachers create a classroom where everyone feels safe and respected. Teachers, with support from

principals, can encourage students to share their thoughts and learn about different cultures. This helps students feel like they belong and understand each other better. By helping teachers create this kind of environment, principals make sure that all students feel valued and supported. Villegas and Lucas (2002) discuss how important it is for teachers to make classrooms inclusive, where students feel respected for their background

d. *Collaborate with Families and Communities:* Principals in schools with many students from low-income families need to make sure that families and community members are involved in the students' learning. They do this by inviting them to share their experiences and knowledge about their culture with the classroom. This helps students feel like they belong and strengthens their sense of identity. By working together with families and the community, principals create a supportive environment where students feel valued and encouraged to do well in both their academics and social life. This collaboration helps build stronger connections between students, families, and the community, making the school a better place for everyone. Mapp and Kuttner (2013) research provides a framework for schools to build effective partnerships with families and communities, which helps support student learning and success.

e. *Address Stereotypes and Bias:* Principals in high-poverty schools need to make sure that the things students learn and talk about in class don't reinforce unfair ideas about different groups of people. They encourage students to think for themselves and question things they see in the media or hear from others that might not be right. Tatum (2017) book, "Why are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?" helps teachers understand how students develop their ideas about race and gives them useful tips for

talking about race and stereotypes in class. This helps create a more understanding and fairer classroom where everyone feels respected.

Through active engagement with teachers, high poverty principals can establish a collaborative and culturally responsive learning environment that caters to the individual needs of every student. The key lies in building robust partnerships that prioritize diversity, inclusion, and the well-being of each learner.

High Poverty Principals Engaging External Stakeholders in Culturally Responsive Learning

There are several leadership practices through which high poverty principals can engage external stakeholders and teachers to foster culturally responsive learning that ensures individual student learning needs are met:

a. *Professional Development:* It's crucial for principals in schools with many low-income families to arrange training sessions that focus on understanding different cultures. This is important because students come from diverse backgrounds, and teachers need to know how to connect with them. By offering training opportunities for teachers to learn about cultural responsiveness, principals help educators better understand and engage with their students' cultural backgrounds. This creates a more inclusive and fair learning environment where all students can succeed. Young and LaFrance's (2015)book, "Engaging Families in Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: Supporting Learning in High Poverty Urban Schools," talks about ways to involve families in culturally relevant teaching to help students in urban schools with high poverty levels. It highlights the significance of partnerships between schools and external groups in this process.

b. *Mentorship Programs:* In schools where many students come from families with little money, principals need to set up programs that connect students with adults from different backgrounds. These adults can be mentors who share their own cultural backgrounds with the students. Rhodes (2005) talks about how mentoring works and gives ideas for connecting young people, especially those from poor families, with adults who care about them. This book gives practical advice for creating mentorship programs that fit the needs of students in schools with lots of poverty.

c. Advocacy for Inclusion: In schools where many students come from families with little money, principals need to speak up and support policies that make sure everyone feels included. This means working with the district office to make sure that things like cultural understanding are part of the rules and plans for the whole district. By doing this, principals make sure that all students, no matter where they come from, feel like they belong and are treated fairly. This helps create a school where everyone feels welcome and supported in their learning journey. Hopkins & Friedman (2018) discussed the promise of district-wide diversity and inclusion plans in addressing systemic barriers to educational equity and advocate for collaborative efforts between school leaders and district personnel to implement inclusive policies and practices.

Recommendation #4:

Assess your ability to ensure that each student is treated fairly, respectfully, and with an understanding of each student's culture and context. Principals can assess their ability to ensure fair and respectful treatment of each student, considering their

cultural and contextual background, through various means. The following are leadership practices for self-assessment:

a. *Self-Reflection:* In schools where many students come from families with low incomes, principals must regularly think about their own biases and assumptions. They need to understand how these biases might affect the decisions they make and how they interact with students. This self-reflection is important for principals to recognize and address any biases they might have that could impact how they lead and support students. By being aware of their biases and being open to challenging them, principals can create a more fair and inclusive school environment where every student feels valued. This ongoing process of self-reflection shows that principals are committed to creating a school where all students, regardless of their background, can succeed academically and emotionally. By taking this proactive approach to addressing personal biases, principals not only improve their leadership skills but also help build a school culture that values fairness, equality, and inclusivity. Ultimately, by embracing self-reflection as a fundamental part of their leadership style, principals play a vital role in creating a supportive learning environment where every student can thrive and reach their full potential.

b. *Feedback Mechanisms:* In schools where many students come from families with low incomes, principals are actively asking for feedback from students, parents, and staff. They do this through surveys or meetings where people can share their thoughts and concerns about the school. This process helps create an environment where everyone feels comfortable speaking up without worrying

about getting in trouble. By listening to different perspectives, principals show that they care about creating a school where everyone feels included and supported. They use this feedback to make decisions and improve things like how the school teaches and how students are treated. By working together with the school community, principals make sure that every student's needs are considered and that the school is fair and welcoming to all. This approach not only builds trust and openness within the school but also helps make sure that education keeps getting better for all students, no matter their background or circumstances.

c. *Observations and Walkthroughs:* Principals play a pivotal role in conducting regular classroom observations and walkthroughs, focusing intently on the interactions between teachers and students. This proactive approach is aimed at uncovering evidence of cultural responsiveness and equitable treatment within the classroom dynamics. Principals monitor teacher-student interactions to assess the culturally responsive strategies into instructional practices, therefore creating an environment that embraces diversity and inclusivity. Moreover, these observations serve as opportunities for principals to identify areas for improvement and provide personalized support and feedback to teachers. By prioritizing equitable and culturally responsive practices through consistent classroom observations, high poverty principals contribute to nurturing a learning environment where every student feels valued, respected, and supported in their academic pursuits. This proactive stance underscores the principal's commitment to promoting a culture of inclusivity and equity within the school community,

ultimately facilitating an environment conducive to the academic and personal growth of all students.

d. *Data Analysis.* In schools where many students come from families with limited income, it's important for principals to carefully look at information about how students are doing academically and behaviorally. They should pay attention to whether there are any differences in how students from different backgrounds are performing or behaving. They should also see if there are any trends in how well students from different cultures are doing in their classes. By doing so, principals can figure out if there are any unfairness or biases in how students are disciplined or in how well they do in school based on their cultural backgrounds. Then, principals can take steps to fix these issues and make sure that all students are treated fairly and have an equal chance to succeed in school. This helps create a supportive and fair learning environment where every student can do well, no matter where they come from.

e. *Professional Learning Communities:* In schools with high poverty rates, it's crucial for principals to establish or participate in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). These PLCs are groups where teachers collaborate to develop better teaching methods, especially for students from diverse cultural backgrounds. Participating in these groups shows that principals are committed to improving their teaching skills. In PLCs, teachers share their experiences and insights, helping each other understand and instruct students from various cultures effectively. Principals play a key role in leading these groups, providing guidance and resources to ensure teachers can implement culturally responsive teaching

strategies. By fostering collaboration through PLCs, principals and teachers create a more inclusive and equitable learning environment where all students feel valued and supported. This approach helps students succeed academically and socially, regardless of their background.

f. *Equity Audits.* In the context of high-poverty educational environments, it is crucial for principals to conduct equity audits to scrutinize policies, practices, and outcomes for potential biases. This proactive approach entails examining various aspects of the school's operation to identify any areas that may require adjustments to ensure fairness and cultural responsiveness. Equity audits involve a systematic review of policies, practices, and outcomes through a lens that considers factors such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and other dimensions of diversity. By conducting equity audits, high poverty principals can gain insights into areas where disparities may exist and take targeted actions to address them, ultimately fostering a more equitable and inclusive learning environment for all students.

g. *Student Voice.* In high-poverty educational settings, it is imperative for principals to create opportunities for students to voice their experiences, concerns, and suggestions regarding fairness and cultural understanding. One effective strategy is to establish student advisory groups or forums that facilitate open dialogue. These platforms provide students with a structured space to express their perspectives and engage in meaningful discussions about issues related to equity and cultural sensitivity within the school community. By actively soliciting student input and involving them in decision-making processes, principals

demonstrate a commitment to fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment where students feel valued and empowered. Additionally, student advisory groups or forums promote student agency and leadership skills, further enriching the educational experience and promoting positive school climate and culture.

Recommendation #5:

To provide a variety of supports that are connected to instructional practice data that address adult learning and development. Principals play a crucial role in supporting adult learning and development among teachers in high-poverty educational settings. Here are some strategies they can employ:

a. *Data Informed Professional Development.* Principals should analyze instructional practice data to identify areas where teachers may need additional support or training. They can then customize professional development workshops, seminars, or coaching sessions to address specific needs identified through data analysis.
b. Differentiated Support: Recognizing that teachers have varying levels of experience and expertise, principals can offer differentiated support tailored to individual teacher needs. This may include targeted coaching, mentoring, or access to resources like instructional materials or technology tools aligned with instructional practice data.
c. Collaborative Learning Communities: Principals can establish collaborative learning communities among teachers, where they can share best practices, reflect

on instructional practice data together, and engage in peer-to-peer learning. These communities provide opportunities for ongoing professional growth and development in a supportive environment.

d. Actionable Feedback: Principals should provide actionable feedback to teachers based on their analysis of instructional practice data. This feedback should be specific, timely, and focused on areas for improvement identified through data analysis, helping teachers refine their instructional practices and enhance student learning outcomes.

e. *Continuous Improvement, Monitoring, and Adjustment:* Principals should continuously monitor the effectiveness of the supports provided and adjust them as needed based on ongoing analysis of instructional practice data. This iterative process ensures that support efforts remain responsive to teachers' evolving needs and contribute to continuous improvement in instructional practice.

By implementing the previously mentioned leadership practices, principals can effectively provide support that are connected to adult learning and development among teachers in high poverty schools. Regularly revisiting and adjusting strategies based on feedback and evolving knowledge is essential for sustained improvement.

District Office Support

The district office should establish a Professional Growth and Development Work Group comprising representatives from various offices, including professional development, equity, school performance, student support services, accountability, student data, community school-based programs, budget, as well as high poverty principals, high poverty school teachers, and

community members. This collaborative effort aims to scrutinize the findings of this study and utilize the four dimensions of instructional of leadership to create professional development activities to increase a high poverty principal's knowledge of equity-centered leadership and practices. Following the comprehensive examination of data and analysis within the work group, the work group should consider engaging high principals in a "root cause" analysis conversation to determine why schools are having difficulties with establishing a vision for improving instructional practices and allocating resources, identifying sufficient resources to address students' needs with wide differences of socioeconomic and school readiness factors, identifying challenges and supports for teachers, and dismantling the system's static standard curriculum and uniform expectations.

Upon a thorough examination of the survey data incorporated in this study, the Professional Growth and Development Office at East County Public Schools may utilize the ensuing logic model, devised by Shakman and Rodriguez (2015), for formulating a professional development plan. Figures 17 through 22 furnish a compendium of professional development opportunities tailored for principals overseeing high-poverty schools. It is imperative that the professional development endeavors are job-embedded, attuned to the PSEL standards, aligned with the four dimensions of instructional leadership, and oriented towards specific goals. Furthermore, ongoing training, coaching, and collaborative efforts by district personnel are essential components to be provided throughout the academic year. To culminate the process, the district office will administer pre and post assessments to high-poverty principals, assessing their comprehension and proficiency in PSEL Standard 3 as a result of the professional development initiatives.

Figure 17

Confronting and Altering Institutional Biases (Reflect on Self and Context)

PSEL Standard 3	Four dimensions and subdimensions	Resource(s) (personnel/ support)	Article(s) & research	Professional development	Expected outcome(s)
Confront and alter institutional biases of student marginalization, deficit-based schooling, and low expectations associated with race, class, culture, language, gender and sexual orientation, and disability or special status.	Vision and Mission: Align stakeholders' decisions and actions to the vision and mission of the school and demonstrate a growth mindset.	Regional Assistant Superintendent Executive Principal Trusted Colleague	Acton, C. (2022). Are you aware of your biases? Harvard Business Review. El-Mekki, S. (2023). Every School Has Bias. Here's What Principals Can Do About It. Education Week. https://www.edweek.org/leadership Barr, R. & Gibson, E. (2017). Building a Culture of Hope: Exploring Implicit Biases Against Poverty. *National Youth-At-Risk Journal*, *2*(2). Bloss, J.(2017). What Principals Need to Know About Equity and Unconscious Bias. *National Association of Elementary School Principals*, *40*(8).	Responding to Bias at School. (2017). https://www.gse.harvard.edu/ Pieper, J. (2004). School Reform Initiative Protocol. Barriers or Bridges: A Matter of Perspective and Attitude. The purpose of this activity is to help a group focus on the importance of perspective and attitude. It also serves as a reminder to principals of the need to build relationships if we are going to create meaningful change. Peterson-Veatch, R. (2006). School Reform Initiative Protocol. Affinity Mapping.	The high poverty principal will self-examine whether their implicit biases support or hinder school improvement initiatives and instructional practices. The high poverty principal will examine their biases using the National Association of Elementary School Principals Implicit Racial Bias Test. naesp.org/resource/implicit-racial-bias-test-improves-your-practice/

	Boudreau, E. (2020). Measuring Implicit Bias in Schools. Harvard Graduate School of Education. Low, R. (2021). Understanding Implicit Bias and Overcoming it in Our Schools. https://home.edweb.net/	McDonald, J. et al. (2007). The Power of Protocols. The Jigsaw Protocol. The purpose of this activity is for participants to review different material or readings in advance. They first meet an "expert" group to become familiar with their specific resource and then meet in a "teaching" group to share their resource with other students. Hole, S. & McEntee, G. (1999). Reflection is at the Heart of Practice. *56*(8).

Figure 18

Confronting and Altering Institutional Biases (Understanding the Organizational and Community Context & Gathering Data)

PSEL Standard 3	Four dimensions and subdimensions	Resource(s) (personnel/ support)	Articles & research	Professional development	Expected outcome(s)
Address matters of equity and cultural responsiveness in all aspects of leadership. This entails recognizing, respecting, and employing each student's strengths, diversity, and culture as assets for teaching and learning.	Marshaling resources involves identifying and leveraging the resources of time, money, technology, space, materials, expertise, and partnerships innovatively and equitably for maximum benefit to all students. Thus, creative and proactive access to additional resources that support strategic priorities is important.	Regional Assistant Superintendent Director of School Performance Equity office Administrative Team Leadership Team Budget Office Specialist or Representatives	Budge, K.& Parrett, W. (2020). Turning High Poverty Schools into High-Performing Schools. *The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.* LaHayne, S. (2021). Resources for Promoting Social and Emotional Learning at Home. *Edutopia.* Lynch, M. (2018). Allocating Resources to Improve Student Learning. *The Edvocate.*	*Carousel Brainstorm.* Participants will be divided into groups. Participants will circulate around a room and respond to open ended questions. *Jigsaw.* Participants will be required to review different materials in advance. They will meet in an "expert" group to become familiar with their specific resource and then meet in a "teaching" group to share their resource with other participants. *Connections:* Connections are a way for people to build a bridge from where they are or have been (mentally, physically, etc.) to where they will be going and what they will be doing. (Thomas-Grove, 2017). It is a time for individuals to reflect	The high poverty principal will engage in protocols to analyze data, understand the student population he or she will serve, and identify resources to support the academic and social needs of students.

	Southern Regional Education Board. (2010). Optimize the use of Resources to improve student learning-the three essentials: Improving Schools Requires District Vision, District and State Support, and Principal Leadership.	within the context of a group — upon a thought, a story, an insight, a question, or a feeling within them into the session, and then connect it to the work they are about to do. Most people engage in Connections at the beginning of a meeting, class, or gathering.
	Fullan,M. (2020). Leading in a Culture of Change. Jossey-Bass A Wiley Brand	*Equity Stances Activity:* Participants engage in an activity to examine the tough questions that arise when educators act to address equity in student learning but are often obscured by vague language about equity (Newlin, 2021).
		Equity Perspectives: Creating Space for Making Meaning on Equity Issues (2021). A set of perspectives or assumptions that have important implications for schools and communities. These perspectives provide the opportunity to dialogue and build shared meaning on the beliefs, values, and assumptions that are generally not discussed in schools

		or other public spaces.
		Interrupting Inequities (2021).The purpose is to gain a deeper awareness of hurtful heterosexist and homophobic aspects among the students and staff in school. The focus is to address racist, sexist or classist remarks and practices as needed. It is also used to effectively interrupt inequitable behaviors that are biased and unfair to members of the school community. Teacher Development Group. (2002). The participants will examine data or other artifacts using four phases: predict, make a visual, observe, and infer. data_driven_dialogue.pdf (schoolreforminitiative.org)

Figure 19

Confronting and Altering Institutional Biases (Creating an Equity Team and Critical Conversations)

PSEL Standard 3	Four dimensions and subdimensions	Resource(s) (personnel/support)	Article(s) & research	Professional development	Expected outcome(s)
Confront and alter institutional biases of student marginalization, deficit-based schooling, and low expectations associated with race, class, culture, language, gender and sexual orientation, and disability or special status.	Vision and Mission: Align stakeholders' decisions and actions to the vision and mission of the school and demonstrate a growth mindset.	Regional Assistant Superintendent or Executive Principal Director of School Performance Equity Office Representative(s) Parent Teacher and Student Association Representative(s) Faculty Advisory Council Representative(s)	Leadership Team Protocol (2013). Education Northwest Oregon Leadership Network. https://greatlakesequity.org/ Radd, S., Generett, G., Gooden, M., & Theoharis, G. (2021). The Five Practices for Equity-Focused School Leadership. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. http://files.ascd.org/pdfs/ Bocala, C., & Parker Boudett, K.(2022). Looking at data through	Burke, A.(2022). Building Equity Team. https://www.collaborative.org/ Activities to Use with Provocative Prompts. https://schoolreforminitiative.org/ Equity Perspectives: Creating Space for Making Meaning on Equity Issues. https://www.nsrfharmony.org/ Dichter, A., McDonald, E., McDonald, J., & Mohr, N. (2007). The Power of Protocols. An Educator's Guide to Better Practice. The Teachers College Press. Stuff and Vision Protocol. The purpose of this protocol is to assist team-teaching groups or	The high poverty principal will create a team of district office, parents, students, and teachers to analyze data, participate in critical conversations regarding school inequities within a school.

	an equity lens. *The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development*	other collegial planning groups to plan lessons that take the best advantage of the stuff they each bring to their teaching, while honoring and honing the vision to which they feel collectively committed.
	Fullan, M.(2020). Leading in a Culture of Change. Jossey-Bass A Wiley Brand	Dichter, A., McDonald, E., McDonald, J., & Mohr, N. (2007). The Power of Protocols. An Educator's Guide to Better Practice. As a problem-solving tool, the Tuning Protocol aims to ensure that educators receive direct and respectful feedback on the problems they present, as well as the opportunity to reflect on the feedback. It also aims to help all participants "tune up" their values through contact with others' diverse and candid views. It forces presenters to frame a particular problem from the hundreds they might select, and to collect and present evidence that bears on the problem. It orients their colleagues to examine both the problem and the evidence from both warm and cool perspectives.
	France, P. (2022). Reclaiming Personalized Learning. A Pedagogy for Restoring Equity and Humanity in Our Classrooms. Corwin Press, Inc.	
	Perry, G. & Richardson, J. (2022). Equity Warriors, Creating Schools that Students Deserve. Corwin Press, Inc.	

Figure 20

Funding and Curriculum Compliance are Difficult to Change (Creating an Equity Policy)

PSEL Standard 3	Four dimensions and sub-dimensions	Resource(s) (personnel/ support)	Article(s) & research	Professional development	Expected outcome(s)
Confront and alter institutional biases of student marginalization, deficit-based schooling, and low expectations associated with race, class, culture, language, gender and sexual orientation, and disability or special status.	Vision and Mission: Align stakeholders' decisions and actions to the vision and mission of the school and demonstrate a growth mindset.	School Board Committee (Policy Adoption Process) Superintendent	Carter et al.(2019). *Policy Leadership: A Theory-Based Model.* Journal of Leadership Education. Vol.18, Issue 3. Fullan, M.(2020). Leading in a Culture of Change. Jossey-Bass A Wiley Brand Perry, G. & Richardson, J. (2022). Equity Warriors, Creating Schools that Students Deserve. Corwin Press, Inc.	The school board committee will create a district wide policy for inequitable practices representing all schools. Carter et al. (2019) created a theory-based model which identified five primary steps which district leaders may take to address or take action to resolve a school policy issue, specifically for institutional biases: A problem is identified and the agenda setting process is initiated. The leader identifies a problem and establishes a purpose for the agenda. After the agenda is created, courses of action are proposed. Leaders create goal(s), options, and clarification for expected action steps and outcomes for the goal. Policy adoption includes selecting an option. Leaders gather, disseminate, and summarize relevant information	The policy is presented by the school board committee and Superintendent for recommendations and adoption of the new policy.

		prior to the adoption of the goal(s) or policy.
		Policy implementation addresses how the policies will be fulfilled. Leaders implement three primary steps: First, the means to implement the process is identified, second, assistance locating the necessary resources to implement the change is performed, and third, the plan of action with external stakeholders is communicated.
		The policy is evaluated to focus on whether the policy has been achieving the stated goals. Leaders identify evaluation criteria, create a tool for collecting information regarding the newly formed policy. Finally, the policies are implemented and adopted.
		Dichter, A., McDonald, E., McDonald, J., & Mohr, N. (2007). The Power of Protocols. An Educator's Guide to Better Practice. The Teachers College Press. Panel Protocol. To make sure a group of educators gets to interact meaningfully with some outsiders whose expertise it needs, instead of being bored by "talking heads." At the

		same time, the protocol's additional purpose is to help the experts think about the frame their expertise so that it best meets the needs of the people they are trying to help.
		Dichter, A., McDonald, E., McDonald, J., & Mohr, N. (2007). The Power of Protocols. An Educator's Guide to Better Practice. As a problem-solving tool, the Tuning Protocol aims to ensure that educators receive direct and respectful feedback on the problems they present, as well as the opportunity to reflect on the feedback. It also aims to help all participants "tune up" their values through contact with others' diverse and candid views. It forces presenters to frame a particular problem from the hundreds they might select, and to collect and present evidence that bears on the problem. It orients their colleagues to examine both the problem and the evidence from both warm and cool perspectives.

Figure 21

Efforts to Retain Teachers (Professional Growth, Structures & Supports, Building Trust, and Transparency)

PSEL Standard 3	Four dimensions and subdimensions	Resource(s) (personnel/ support)	Articles & research	Professional development	Expected outcome(s)
Act with cultural competence and responsiveness in their interactions, decision making, and practice. Address matters of equity and cultural responsiveness in all aspects of leadership. Promote the preparation of students to live productively in and contribute to the diverse cultural contexts of a global society.	Improvement of Instructional Practice and Support for Teacher Growth using ongoing feedback, professional development, coaching, and professional learning communities. Evidence from student learning should be utilized to plan and implement individual and whole-staff professional development.	Regional Assistant Superintendent School Performance Office Equity office Leadership Team Lead Teachers	Bocala, C., & Parker Boudett, K. (2022). Looking at data through an equity lens. *The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development* Christensen, V., & Groskin, C. (2021). The Top Five Instructional Coaching Practices to Carry Forward. Darling-Hammond, L. (2022). Breaking the Legacy of Teacher Shortages. *The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development*, 8(2). Darling-Hammond, L. (2023). *Policymakers Should Ring in The New Year with Action to End Teacher Shortages*. *Forbes.*	*Facilitator Protocol:* Fears and Hopes (2021).In addition to helping people learn things about each other, the deeper purpose, is for the group to establish a norm of taking ownership of every individual's expectations and concerns openly and begin its addressal together. *First classroom visits (2021).*The purpose of first visits is to enhance a teachers understanding of our own practice. These visits are not an evaluation process. Before beginning	To equip high poverty principals with strategies to retain teachers in high poverty schools, an American University (2022) article indicated the following strategies to improve teacher turnover: *Mentorship*: Teachers who are assigned mentors in their first year are more likely to return in their second year. Mentorship programs pair new teachers with experienced ones, providing them access to advice on navigating the daily challenges of the

		classroom visits, it is important to think about a question about teaching and learning.	profession.
	Gill, J. (2019). Lean on Me. *The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development*, *76*(6).		*Teaching conditions*: Working conditions in schools are affected by access to technology and supplies, as well as basic amenities such as air conditioning. School districts can consider increasing their budgets for these expenses to improve overall satisfaction among their teachers.
	Larson, R., Galloway, M., Lenssen, J., & Carr, C.(2015*).Leadership for Equity Assessment & Development (LEAD).*	Boogren, T. (2020). 180 Days of Self-Care for Busy Educators. Solution Tree Press.	
	Learning Policy Institute (2017). The Role of Principals in Addressing Teacher Shortages.		
	Mid-Atlantic Equity. (2021). Equity Audit.		
	Moore Johnson, S. (2022). The Power of Inclusive Leadership. *The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. 80*(2).		*School climate:* Teachers experiencing burnout feel overburdened. When schools strive to build a culture of positivity and supportive teamwork, these feelings of isolation—and the tension and conflict can dissipate.
	Younghans, M. (2018).The Steps to Creating a Positive School Culture. *The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.*		

Donley, J., Detrich, R., States, J., & Keyworth, R. (2019). *Teacher retention strategies.* Wing Institute. https://www.researchgate.net/

Christensen, V., & Groskin, C. (2021). The Top Five Instructional Coaching Practices to Carry Forward.

Anderson, K. (2010). Data Teams, Success Stories. The Leadership and Learning Center.

France, P. (2022). Reclaiming Personalized Learning. A Pedagogy for Restoring Equity and Humanity in Our Classrooms. Corwin Press, Inc.

Perry, G. & Richardson, J. (2022). Equity Warriors, Creating Schools that Students Deserve. Corwin Press, Inc.

Figure 22

Efforts to Increase Teacher Capacity of Equitable Practices (Shared Vision of Effective Instruction, Observation, and Data Analysis)

PSEL Standard 3	Four dimensions and subdimensions	Resource(s) (personnel/ support)	Articles & research	Professional development	Expected outcome(s)
Act with cultural competence and responsiveness in their interactions, decision making, and practice. Address matters of equity and cultural responsiveness in all aspects of leadership. Promote the preparation of students to live productively in and contribute to the diverse cultural contexts of a global society.	Improvement of Instructional Practice and Support for Teacher Growth using ongoing feedback, professional development, coaching, and professional learning communities. Use an instructional framework to establish a common language and shared vision of effective instruction. Ensure that content standards drive instruction.	Regional Assistant Superintendent School Performance office Equity office Leadership Team Lead Teachers	Cheatham, J., Thomas, R., & Parrott-Sheffer, A. (2022). Entry Planning for Equity-Focused Leaders. Johnson, J., Leibowitz, S., & Perret, K. (2017). The Coach Approach to School Leadership, Leading Teachers to Higher Levels of Effectiveness. *The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.* Bocala, C., & Parker Boudett, K.(2022). Looking at data through an equity lens. *The*	*Facilitator Protocol:* Fears and Hopes (2021).In addition to helping people learn things about each other, the deeper purpose, is for the group to establish a norm of taking ownership of every individual's expectations and concerns openly and begin its addressal together. *Data-Driven Dialogue.* High poverty principals and teachers will examine data, predict, make a visual, observe, and infer regarding the data. *Looking at Student Work.* High poverty principals will examine student work or projects to determine growth or interventions for students.	The high poverty principal will implement professional learning community structures and provide ongoing supports for teacher professional growth. The high poverty principal and resource supports will provide ongoing feedback to teachers while in the classroom setting.

Use an instructional framework to observe and analyze teaching practice.	*Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.*	*Learning from observations of our classrooms (Gabriel, 2021).* This is a peer observation protocol based on a classroom visit and provides learnings for the observer and the observed.
Support teacher growth using ongoing feedback, professional development, coaching, and professional learning communities.	Christensen, V., & Groskin, C.(2021). The Top Five Instructional Coaching Practices to Carry Forward.	*Professional learning communities survey (Bryk et al., 2017).* This survey aids one to analyze and assess the extent to which each of the major factors associated with professional learning community — critical elements, human resources, and structural conditions is currently present at one's school.
	Miller, A. (2020). Creating Effective Professional Learning Communities. Edutopia.	
	Dufour, R., Dufour, R., Eaker, R., & Many, T. (2010). Learning by Doing, A Handbook for Professional Learning Communities at Work. Solution Tree.	Baeder, J.(2018). Now We're Talking! 21 Days to High-Performance Instructional Leadership. Solution Tree Press.
	Marzano, R. et al. (2013). Coaching Classroom Instruction. Marzano Research Laboratory.	*Tuning Protocol.* The tuning protocol aims to ensure that educators receive direct and respectful feedback on the problems they present, as well as

	France, P. (2022). Reclaiming Personalized Learning. A Pedagogy for Restoring Equity and Humanity in Our Classrooms. Corwin Press, Inc. Perry, G. & Richardson, J. (2022). Equity Warriors, Creating Schools that Students Deserve. Corwin Press, Inc.	the opportunity to reflect on the feedback. It also aims to help all participants "tune up" their values through contact with others' diverse and candid views. It forces presenters to frame a particular problem from the hundreds they might select, and to collect and present evidence that bears on the problem. It orients their colleagues to examine both the problem and the evidence from both warm and cool perspectives. The School Visit Protocol. The purpose is to visit another school's site and allow another high poverty principal to provide you with feedback regarding their observations.

Summary

In this quantitative study, I proposed to determine how a group of principals of high-poverty schools in ECPS rated their knowledge of equitable leadership practices aligned with PSEL Standard 3 (2017) and their ability to implement these leadership practices schoolwide. Further, I evaluated a variety of skill sets to increase the capacity of principals serving high poverty schools. I identified key leverage leadership practices and professional development opportunities for principals based on a survey aligned to PSEL Standard 3 measured by the University of Washington's four dimensions of instructional leadership rubric. I intended to determine if equity-focused leadership professional development based on the four dimensions of instructional leadership framework is provided to principals of high-poverty schools.

According to the University of Washington's four dimensions of instructional leadership rubric (2015), effective high-poverty principals must embody several key characteristics. They should prioritize learning-focused instructional leadership, continually seeking ways to improve instructional practices within their schools. Additionally, they should serve as leaders of leaders, empowering other educators to excel in their roles. Furthermore, they should foster a culture of public and reflective practice, encouraging open dialogue and self-assessment among staff members. Lastly, they should address the cultural, linguistic, socioeconomic, and learning diversity present within the school community, ensuring that all students' needs are met.

The results from the quantitative survey verified that school districts must continue to implement leadership practices and provide professional development opportunities that require a laser focus on equipping high poverty principals with the knowledge and skills to support their school community. As indicated in the University of Washington's four dimensions of instructional leadership rubric (2015), high poverty principals must become instructional leaders

who are learning-focused and exhibit improvement in instructional practice, serve as leaders of leaders, set up a culture of public and reflective practice, and address the cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic and learning diversity of the school community. High-poverty principals who effectively implement these factors are likely to earn effective or highly effective ratings on PSEL Rubric Standard 3, Equity, and Cultural Responsiveness, indicating their success in promoting an inclusive and supportive learning environment within their schools.

Appendix A

Definitions of School Poverty Levels

Term	% of students eligible for free and reduced-price meals
Low poverty	≤25.0
Mid–low poverty	25.1–50.0
Mid–high poverty	50.1–75.0
High poverty	≥75.1

Note. These definitions are those of the National Center for Education Statistics economic status categories. High-poverty and low-poverty schools are typically Title 1 schools. A principal in a high-poverty school must balance a multitude of leadership practices to improve the school's culture.

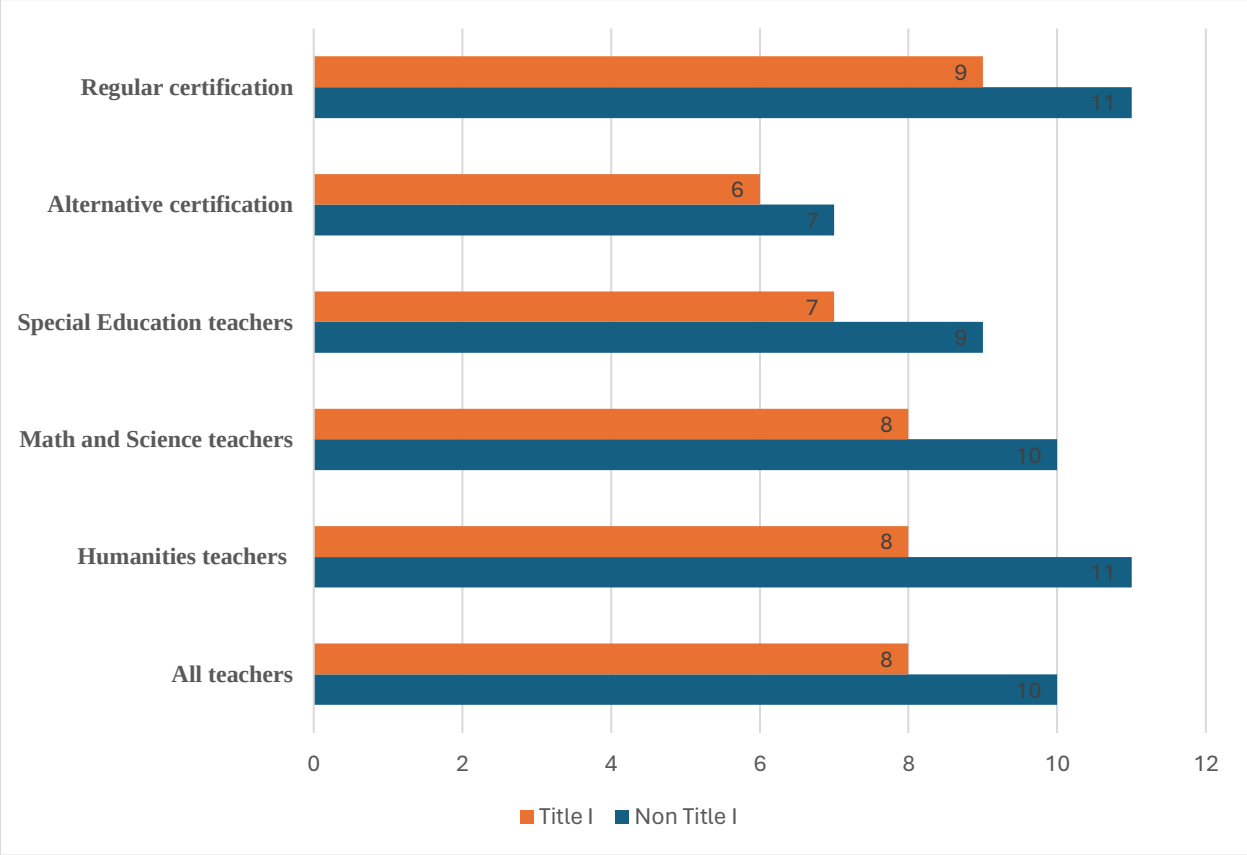
Appendix B

Challenges Filling Vacancies in Low- and High-Poverty Schools

	%				
Category	Total	Low poverty	High poverty	Gap (high − low)	Ratio (high / low)
Schools reporting teacher vacancies	79.8	81.1	78.9	−2.2	1.0
Schools reporting vacancies and unable to fill a vacancy in at least one field	9.4	7.2	10.5	3.4	1.5
Schools reporting vacancies that found it “very difficult” to fill a vacancy in at least one field	36.2	34.3	36.8	2.4	1.1

Appendix C

Years at Current School for Teachers at Title 1 and Non-Title 1 Schools



Note. Taken from Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond's (2017) analysis of National Center for Education Statistics Schools and Staffing Survey data.

Appendix D

Before and After Coaching in Nine Leadership Responsibilities

	M	
Leadership responsibility	Before coaching	After coaching
Input	3.30	3.83
Affirmation	3.44	3.96
Relationship	3.53	3.87
Visibility	3.87	4.20
Situational awareness	3.45	3.93
Communication	3.65	4.06
Optimizer	3.90	4.24
Ideals/beliefs	3.75	4.20
Culture	3.12	4.95

Appendix E

PSEL, 2015

Standard	Label	Definition
1	Mission, vision, and core values	The principal works collaboratively to develop a mission and vision for their school that supports the success of all students (PSEL, 2015, p. 3).
2	Ethics and professional norms	The principal possesses an ethical mindset to identify, interpret, and manage the ethical dilemmas in leadership by embodying the values of justice and care, equality and equity, and community in service of each student (PSEL, 2015, p. 9).
3	Equity and cultural responsiveness	The principal recognizes each student's strengths, diversity, and culture, and ensures they have equitable access to effective teachers, learning opportunities, academic and social support, and other resources necessary for success. (PSEL, 2015, p. 9).
4	Curriculum, instruction, and assessment	The principal promotes instructional practices that are consistent with knowledge of learning and development, effective pedagogy, and the needs of each student. Principals ensure that instruction is intellectually challenging and authentic to student experiences (PSEL, 2015, p. 11).
5	Community of care and support for students	The principal promotes inclusive social environments that foster acceptance, care, and sense of value belonging in adult-student and student-peer relationships (PSEL, 2015, p. 13).
6	Professional capacity of school personnel	The principal can work to recruit, hire, support, develop, and retain effective and caring teachers and staff. The principal can provide multiple sources of high-quality, meaningful professional learning and development opportunities, and participate alongside their staff. The principal is also able to identify strategies to motivate their staff and encourage, recognize, and facilitate leadership opportunities for teachers and staff who effectively educate students (PSEL, 2015, p. 14).
7	Professional community for teachers and staff	The principal establishes workplace conditions for teachers and professional staff conducive to effective professional development, practice, and support of student learning. Key factors of success for this standard include establishing a sense of collective responsibility and mutual accountability for the success of each student, and for the school. (PSEL,

Standard	Label	Definition
		2015, p. 16).
8	Meaningful engagement of families and community	The principal partners with families to support student learning and understand and employ the community's cultural, social, intellectual, and political resources to promote each student's success. (PSEL, 2015, p. 17).
9	Operations and management	The principal will seek, acquire, and manage fiscal, physical, human, and other resources to promote student success and be ethical and accountable stewards of these resources by employing responsible and effective budgeting and accounting practices (PSEL, 2015, p. 18).
10	School improvement	The principal emphasizes the "why" and "how" of improvement and change; staff should be motivated and empowered to own improvement initiatives and share responsibility and accountability for their success. The principal will provide learning opportunities for teachers and staff to equip them to participate in strategic processes of improvement, and to take part in implementing effective programs and practices for students (PSEL, 2015, p. 19).

Note. PSEL = Professional Standards for Educational Leaders.

Appendix F

Free and Reduced-Price Meals in ECPS, 2016–2020

	%				
High-poverty school	2016–2017	2017–2018	2018–2019	2019–2020	Change 2016–2020
Elementary School 1	81	79	79	87	+6
Elementary School 2	76	77	81	84	+8
Elementary School 3	58	59	60	70	+12
Elementary School 4	71	73	76	87	+16
Elementary School 5	72	72	76	82	+10
Elementary School 6	64	54	62	70	+6
Elementary School 7	90	88	92	92	+4
Elementary School 8	58	59	62	69	+11
Elementary School 9	60	58	64	70	+10
Elementary School 10	48	49	55	61	+13
Elementary School 11	81	75	80	80	–1
Elementary School 12	76	75	75	80	+4
Elementary School 13	59	55	52	62	–7
Elementary School 14	43	42	49	55	+12
Elementary School 15	46	52	44	54	+8
Elementary School 16	53	50	49	60	+7
Elementary School 17	81	72	82	83	+1
Elementary School 18	59	55	63	68	+9
Elementary School 19	69	69	70	74	+5
Elementary School 20	50	50	54	54	+4
Elementary School 21	62	69	80	82	+20
Elementary School 22	47	43	52	59	+12
Elementary School 23	87	89	88	96	+9
Elementary School 24	72	65	69	72	0
Elementary School 25	55	54	55	65	+10
Elementary School 26	53	51	51	55	+2
Elementary School 27	81	80	80	85	+4

	%				
High-poverty school	2016–2017	2017–2018	2018–2019	2019–2020	Change 2016–2020
Elementary School 28	61	56	48	53	–8
Middle School 1	52	52	50	61	+9
Middle School 2	54	54	53	61	+7
Middle School 3	45	44	45	54	+9
Middle School 4	53	52	55	63	+10
Middle School 5	52	59	62	74	+12
Middle School 6	56	59	63	71	+15
Middle School 7	42	43	48	52	+10
High School 1	45	45	45	57	+12
High School 2	46	43	42	54	+6
High School 3	45	42	42	52	+7
High School 4	40	38	42	53	+11

Note. Taken from Food and Nutrition Service (2020). ECPS = East County Public Schools.

Appendix G

Attributes of a School Leader With an Equity Mindset

Attribute	Description
Instructional leadership	Academic achievement: helps teachers be stronger; conducts classroom observation; encourages teacher creativity or innovation, professional development, and learning; holds learner conversations with teachers; and maintains a quality of instruction.
Organizational culture and climate leadership	Positive difference: supports safe schools, community connections, respect, equity, atmosphere, high expectations, inclusivity, trust, and caring.
Transformative leadership	Flexibility: encourages choice, change, trust, autonomy in all individuals; implements progressive change; sets new goals; challenges and make things different; moves.
Collaborative leadership	Collaborating with struggling teachers, community, and companies; foments a shared vision with stakeholder input; hears voices of stakeholders and shares best practices for the greater good.
Advocacy for educational equity	Focuses on all student needs, helping families and children; has students' best interest in mind; culturally responsive; and ensures access to quality for all.
Student success and achievement	Makes a difference; ensures access to quality for all, rigor, and student engagement; and motivates learners.
Evidence-based decision making	Analytical processes: data-driven, identifies needs, and implements data aptly.

Appendix H

The Southern Regional Education Board's 11 Steps to Turn Schools Around

1. Work with a cross-section of community and school leaders to create a strategic vision for graduating students who are prepared for a range of postsecondary options.
2. Focus on policies and support services that will enhance each school's ability to achieve its own strategic vision and plan within the context of the district's vision.
3. Develop tools and processes that principals and teachers can use to ensure that instruction for all groups of students is aligned with college-and career-readiness standards.
4. Invest in high-quality professional development for the district staff, school principals, and teachers.
5. Invest in high-quality professional development for the district staff, school principals, and teachers.
6. Lead schools to analyze a variety of data—beyond test scores—and discover the root causes behind student failure or dropping out of school.
7. Give school principals real authority in the areas of staff selection, school scheduling, instructional programs, and use of and redirection of new and existing resources.
8. Consider working with an external school improvement provider to develop a strategic vision that can move the district forward.
9. Develop a succession plan for school principals.
10. Engage parents and the larger community in ongoing dialogue about the changes needed to prepare more students for success in high school, college, careers, and citizenship. (Southern Regional Education Board, YYYY, pp. 11–44)

Appendix I

PSEL Standard 3: Equity and Cultural Responsiveness

Aspect	Effective school leader	Highly effective school leader
1	Reaches the "developing" level and . . . implements and expects equity and cultural responsiveness to initiatives.	Reaches and maintains the "effective" level and
2	Collaboratively establishes specific and measurable goals for equity that are informed by data and are in alignment with student needs. Collaboratively develops and implements an action plan to address the disproportionality of inequities.	Informs school system, state, or professional organizations on matters related to equity and/or cultural responsiveness.
3	Partners with stakeholders to provide learning experiences and resources for all student groups that promote cultural responsiveness and equitable practices. Aligns and allocates resources to foster equitable student learning environments (This includes but is not limited to access to high-quality instructional materials, effective educators, rigorous courses, and extracurricular experiences.) Holds self and staff accountable for engaging in equitable and culturally responsive practices. Aligns and coordinates student services to address student needs and promote student academic success and wellbeing. Involves stakeholders in the development or revision of school policies that promote equitable and culturally responsive practices. Involves stakeholders in the development or revision of school policies that promote equitable and culturally responsive practices.	Serves as a coach or mentor for other school leaders to support the implementation of equitable leadership practices.

Note. Taken from the Maryland State Department of Education (2015).

Appendix J

ESSA Academic Achievement and Progress of Mid–High- to High-Poverty Schools

			ESSA academic achievement [a]	ESSA academic progress [b]				
School	Years as principal	Poverty [c]	2017–2018	2018–2019	Growth	2017–2018	2018–2019	Growth
Elementary School 1	1	Mid–high	9.3	9.5	0.2	8.0	20.5	12.5
Elementary School 2	4	High	9.2	8.9	−0.3	12.0	14.8	2.8
Elementary School 3	5	Mid–high	7.9	7.4	−0.5	12.0	14.3	2.3
Elementary School 4	10	High	6.3	5.7	−0.6	14.0	18.3	4.3
Elementary School 5	3	Mid–high	7.8	8.0	0.2	17.8	18.1	0.3
Elementary School 6	3	High	7.7	8.4	0.7	11.6	18.7	7.1
Elementary School 7	6	High	5.9	5.8	−0.1	12.0	17.6	5.6
Elementary School 8	4	High	7.9	8.0	0.1	9.0	15.3	6.3
Elementary School 9	2	Mid–high	11.6	13.7	2.1	13.6	13.1	−0.5
Elementary School 10	9	High	9.0	10.0	1.0	9.0	24.7	15.7

			ESSA academic achievement [a]	ESSA academic progress [b]				
School	Years as principal	Poverty [c]	2017–2018	2018–2019	Growth	2017–2018	2018–2019	Growth
Elementary School 11	7	Mid–high	7.5	7.9	0.4	13.4	17.4	4.0
Elementary School 12	8	Mid–high	8.4	8.9	0.5	14.0	21.4	7.4
Elementary School 13	7	High	8.7	7.5	−1.2	7.5	12.4	4.9
Elementary School 14	5	Mid–high	8.7	9.0	0.3	10.5	14.8	4.3
Elementary School 15	2	Mid–high	8.9	8.4	−0.5	14.4	14.9	0.5
Elementary School 16	4	Mid–high	7.9	8.2	0.3	12.5	20.1	7.6
Elementary School 17	2	Mid–high	8.2	7.4	−0.8	13.8	12.2	−1.6
Elementary School 18	3	High	7.3	6.5	−0.8	10.5	16.2	5.7
Elementary School 19	3	Mid–high	9.0	8.5	−0.5	11.1	15.6	4.5
Elementary School 20	6	Mid–high	9.6	9.8	0.2	14.6	18.8	4.2
Elementary School 21	5	Mid–high	7.8	7.9	0.1	8.0	15.1	7.1
Elementary	2	Mid–	7.0	6.7	−0.3	13.3	13.0	−0.3

			ESSA academic achievement [a]	ESSA academic progress [b]				
School	Years as principal	Poverty [c]	2017–2018	2018–2019	Growth	2017–2018	2018–2019	Growth
School 22		high						
Elementary School 23	5	Mid–high	13.4	16.0	2.6	13.0	13.4	0.4
Elementary School 24	1	Mid–high	8.0	8.6	0.6	9.5	18.3	8.8
Elementary School 25	1	High	7.3	5.7	−1.6	12.5	9.3.0	−3.2
Elementary School 26	1	Mid–high	8.2	8.2	0.0	15.5	22.4	6.9
Middle School 1	6	Mid–high	8.4	8.2	−0.2	13.4	12.8	−0.6
Middle School 2	6	Mid–high	7.4	9.2	1.8	7.5	18.8	11.3
Middle School 3	4	High	6.7	6.7	0.0	10.0	15.7	5.7
Middle School 4	2	Mid–high	11.1	10.8	−0.3	12.0	17.3	5.3
Middle School 5	2	Mid–high	14.1	16.4	2.3	13.0	13.1	0.1
Middle School 6	2	Mid–high	12.9	14.9	2.0	13.2	12.9	−0.3
Middle School 7	4	Mid–high	11.6	9.8	−1.8	12.5	18.6	6.1

			ESSA academic achievement [a]	ESSA academic progress [b]				
School	Years as principal	Poverty [c]	2017–2018	2018–2019	Growth	2017–2018	2018–2019	Growth
High School 1	1	High	6.1	6.6	0.5	12.5	22.0	9.5
High School 2	1	High	8.0	7.6	−0.4	8.5	15.5	7.0
High School 3	7	High	7.8	8.4	0.6	11.0	17.8	6.8
High School 4	4	High	10.0	10.4	0.4	11.0	20.7	9.7

Note. ESSA = Every Student Succeeds Act.

[a] Out of 20 points for elementary and middle schools; out of 30 points for high schools. [b] Out of 25 points for elementary and middle schools; out of 15 points for high schools (graduation rate). [c] Mid–high-poverty schools have 50.1%–75.0% free and reduced-price lunch rates, and high-poverty schools have ≥75.1% free and reduced-price lunch rates.

Appendix K

Invitation Email to Participants to Conduct Research

Date

To:

From:

Re:

Dear Principal:

I am writing to ask if you would be willing to participate in a study to support my doctoral dissertation at the University of Maryland, College Park. The purpose of my research study is to determine how a group of principals of high-poverty schools rate their knowledge of equitable leadership practices aligned with Standard 3 of the PSEL (2017) and their ability to implement these leadership practices schoolwide. The four dimensions of instructional leadership framework will be used to assess the principals' knowledge of, and ability to implement, equitable leadership practices.

If you are willing to participate in this study, we will communicate via email or telephone to identify a date and time. At the end of the study, I will also share the trending results with you after receiving approval from the University of Maryland, College Park. Thank you for considering my request to participate in this study. I look forward to your response. If you have any questions, you may contact me at jnash0310@gmail.com or (407) 538-4560.

Thank you,

John Nash
University of Maryland, College Park Doctoral Candidate

Appendix L

Reminder Email to Participants

Date

To:

From:

Re:

Dear Principal:

You should have received an email requesting your participation in my dissertation study on Equitable Practices for High Poverty Schools. However, I have not received a response from you. The purpose of my research study is to determine how a group of principals of high-poverty schools rate their knowledge of equitable leadership practices aligned with Standard 3 of the PSEL (2017) and their ability to implement these leadership practices schoolwide. The four dimensions of instructional leadership framework will be used to assess the principals' knowledge of, and ability to implement, equitable leadership practices.

If you are willing to participate in this study, we will communicate via email or telephone to identify a date and time. At the end of the study, I will also share the trending results with you after receiving approval from the University of Maryland, College Park. Thank you for considering my request to participate in this study. I look forward to your response. If you have any questions, you may contact me at jnash0310@gmail.com or (407) 538-4560.

Thank you,

John Nash
University of Maryland, College Park Doctoral Candidate

Appendix M

EQUITY LEADERSHIP PARTICIPATION SURVEY CONSENT FORM

Thank you for your interest in this research study. The purpose of this study is to determine how a group of high poverty school principals rate their knowledge of Standard 3 of the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders. This dissertation study, "Developing Equity Centered Leaders for High Poverty Schools" will use the four dimensions of instructional leadership framework (2015) to assess the principals' knowledge and ability to implement equitable leadership practices schoolwide.

You will be asked to select your school level as well as your years of experience at your current school. Please be honest with your responses. Your responses are anonymous and will be kept completely confidential. The survey will take no more than 15 minutes to complete. By clicking on the button, "I consent," you agree that your participation in the study is voluntary. If you wish to not participate in the study, click on the button, "I do not consent." You may choose to terminate your participation at any time for any reason.

If you have questions regarding the survey, you may contact the researcher of this study, John Nash, at jnash0310@gmail.com.

- ○ I consent, begin the survey.
- ○ I do not consent. I do not wish to participate in the study.

Demographic Information

What is your current school level?

- ○ Elementary (K-5)
- ○ Middle (6-8)
- ○ High (9-12)

How many years of administrative experience at your current school?

- ○ 0 to 5 years
- ○ 5 to 10 years

- 11-15 years

Professional Standards for Educational Leaders

Directions: Please self-assess and rate your knowledge and practice of PSEL Standard 3 by selecting (4) highly effective, (3) Effective, (2) Developing or (1) Ineffective for each of the following:

Key:

1. Highly Effective: The highly effective school leader spreads, beyond the school building, effective practices that significantly improve student outcomes. Leadership practice stands out as noteworthy with significant and sustainable results in student achievement that exceeds student growth targets. Performance at this level usually impacts the school system, state, or others outside the school more broadly, with documented accomplishments of leading peers to modify their practices or systems to improve student performance.

2. Effective: The effective school leader consistently implements effective practices that translate into improved student outcomes. Leadership practice produces desired and consistent results, in alignment with school system goals, that meets student growth targets. Performance at this level embodies the fullness of the PSEL elements, fosters robust collaboration and data analysis, and establishes a track record of student success.

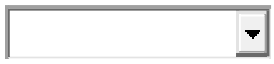
3. Developing: The developing school leader attempts to implement effective practices but has not made consistent results in achieving student outcomes. Leadership practice is making strides and produces results that approach student growth targets. Performance at this level includes actions made towards promising outcomes, though outcomes for staff and students are not regularly achieved.

4. Ineffective: The ineffective school leader is aware of effective practices but does not consistently demonstrate evidence of implementation resulting in little to no student growth. Leadership practice is limited, inconsistent, and in need of significant improvement. Performance at this level tends to be passive without focus and requires targeted intervention to address key improvement needs.

Questions 3–9

As a school leader, how do you perceive your current practice...

To assess your ability to ensure that each student is treated fairly, respectfully, and with an understanding of each student's culture and context.

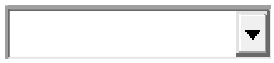


To assess your ability to recognize, respect, and employ each student's strengths, diversity, and culture as assets for teaching and learning.

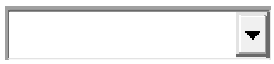
To assess you ensure that each student has equitable access to effective teachers, learning opportunities, academic and social support, and other resources necessary for success.

To assess your ability to develop student policies and address student misconduct in a positive, fair, and unbiased manner.

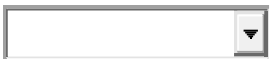
To assess your ability to confront and alter institutional biases of student marginalization, deficit-based schooling, and low expectations associated with race, class, culture and language, gender and sexual orientation, and disability or special status.



To assess your ability to promote the preparation of students to live productively in and contribute to the diverse cultural contexts of a global society.



To assess your ability to act with cultural competence and responsiveness in their interactions, decision making, and practice.



The Four Dimensions of Instructional Leadership
"Instructional Leadership Framework 2.0"

Among school-related factors, school leadership is second only to teaching in its potential influence on student learning. Instructional leadership is a critical component of school leadership. The work of instructional leaders is to ensure that every day, in every classroom, every student has a powerful learning experience. Doing so requires that instructional leaders lead for the improvement of instruction and the improvement of student learning.

Directions: Please self-assess and rate your knowledge and practice of the four dimensions of instructional leadership by selecting (4) Expert/Highly Effective, (3) Accomplished/Effective, (2) Emerging/Developing (1) Novice/Ineffective for each of the following:

Key:

1. Expert/ Highly Effective: Sustains an exemplary level of instructional leadership practice.
2. Accomplished/ Effective: Leads the school's instructional strategy, applies knowledge and skills thoroughly and meets implementation expectations.
3. Emerging/ Developing: Has a growing understanding and use of knowledge and skills in the practice, but performance is inconsistent.
4. Novice/ Ineffective: Demonstrates beginning knowledge and skills in the instructional leadership practice with limited use of the defined practice.

Questions 10–14: Vision, Mission, and Learning-Focused Culture

As a school leader, how do you perceive your current practice…

To engage staff, students, and the school community in developing a vision and mission.

To interact among students, staff, and families reflecting what is valued by the school community.

To establish measurable goals aligned to the vision and mission of academic success for every student.

To engage with stakeholders to foster culturally responsive learning that ensures individual student's learning needs are met.

To create and maintain a results-focused learning environment based on clearly established data-driven goals.

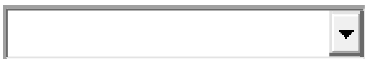
Questions 15–21: Improvement of Instructional Practice

To use an instructional framework to establish a common language and shared vision of instruction.

To ensure content standards drive instruction.

To use an instructional framework to observe and analyze teaching practices.

To use classroom observation data to determine next steps for instructional leadership practice.



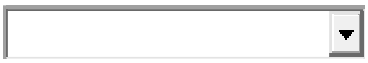
To support teacher growth using ongoing feedback, professional development, coaching, and professional learning communities.

To engage with teachers and instructional staff to analyze classroom observation data within cycles of inquiry to determine and implement next steps for improving instructional leadership practice.

To provide a variety of supports that are connected to instructional practice data that address adult learning and development.

Questions: 22–27: Allocation of Resources

To involve key stakeholders in determining resource needs based upon disaggregated student learning and teacher practice data aligned to address academic, learning diversity needs.



To engage key stakeholders to identify and leverage existing resources, including time, money, technology, space, materials, expertise and partnerships, to benefit all student equitably.

To engage stakeholders to adjust schedules, budget, staffing patterns and collaborative planning time, to provide the maximum benefit to ALL students.

To proactively seek additional resources to support strategic priorities to improve teacher practice and student learning.

To work with the leadership team to assess the effectiveness of instructional programs and use disaggregated data from student outcomes.

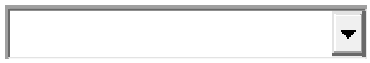
To work with the leadership team to assess disaggregated data to make decisions on adjustment, refinement, or continuation of instructional programs and resources.

Questions 28–33: Management of Systems and Processes

To act as a steward of public funds to improve the teaching and learning experience so that all students can achieve at optimum levels.

To triangulate multiple sources of data to establish short-term and long-term strategic priorities for recruiting and selecting high-quality staff.

To continually refine staff's individual and collective strengths, interests, and needs of the school.



To model and facilitate effective collaboration that is reflected in teachers' work and the school's collaborative structures and processes.

To implement a collaborative process to identify differentiated types of professional development.

To provide opportunities for teachers to take ownership for ensuring their own continuous professional growth by reflecting on their instructional practice data.

Directions: Please read the following short answer questions and provide a brief response.

In your experience(s) serving as a high poverty principal, what barriers or challenges prevent you from implementing equity leadership practices into your school?

In your experience(s) serving as a high poverty principal, what do you report as useful strategies to better understand and implement PSEL standard 3?

Appendix N

Alignment of PSEL Standard 3 and the Four Dimensions of Instructional Leadership Framework

PSEL Standard 3 [a]	Four dimensions of instructional leadership [b]
Ensure that each student is treated fairly, respectfully, and with an understanding of each student's culture and context.	Dimension 1: Vision, mission, and learning-focused culture (Subdimension 1: Vision and mission) • Engage staff, students, and the school community in developing a vision and mission that provides a clear direction for academic success for every student. • Align stakeholders' decisions and actions to the vision and mission of the school and demonstrate a growth mindset.
Recognize, respect, and employ each student's strengths, diversity, and culture as assets for teaching and learning.	Dimension 1: Vision, mission, and learning-focused culture (Subdimension 2: Learning-focused culture) • Establish measurable goals aligned to the vision and mission of academic success for every student. • Engage with stakeholders to foster culturally responsive learning that ensures individual students' learning needs are met. • Create and maintain a results-focused learning environment based on clearly established data-driven goals that underscore high expectations for every student and adult.
Ensure that each student has equitable access to effective teachers, learning opportunities, academic and social support and other resources necessary for success.	Dimension 2: Improvement of instructional practice (Subdimension 1: Shared vision of effective instruction) • Use an instructional framework to establish a common language and shared vision of effective instruction. • Ensure that content standards drive instruction. Dimension 3: Allocation of resources (Subdimension 2: Deploying resources) • Articulate clear decision-making processes and procedures for instructional programming and the equitable allocation of resources. • Plan for and align resources to support the implementation of instructional initiatives. • Use a continuous cycle of analysis with leadership teams to examine assess and refine the effectiveness of programs and equitable use of resources.

PSEL Standard 3 [a]	Four dimensions of instructional leadership [b]
Develop student policies and address student misconduct in a positive, fair, and unbiased manner.	Dimension 3: Allocation of resources (Subdimension 1: Marshaling resources) • Use data of student learning and teacher practice, aligned with school's vision and mission, to determine needs. • Identify and leverage the resources of time, money, technology, space, materials, expertise, and partnerships innovatively and equitably for maximum benefit to ALL students. • Creatively and proactively access additional resources that support strategic priorities.
Confront and alter institutional biases of student marginalization, deficit-based schooling, and low expectations associated with race, class, culture, language, gender and sexual orientation, and disability or special status.	Dimension 1: Vision, mission, and learning-focused culture (Subdimension 2: Learning-focused culture) • Establish measurable goals aligned to the vision and mission of academic success for every student. • Engage with stakeholders to foster culturally responsive learning that ensures individual students' learning needs are met. • Create and maintain a results-focused learning environment based on clearly established data-driven goals that underscore high expectations for every student and adult. Dimension 4: Management of systems and processes (Subdimension 2: Professional growth) • Create and maintain supportive working environments with time and space for collaboration. • Identify and provide multiple types of professional development based on identified needs.
Promote the preparation of students to live productively in and contribute to the diverse cultural contexts of a global society.	Dimension 1: Vision, mission, and learning-focused culture (Subdimension 1: Vision and mission) • Engage staff, students, and the school community in developing a vision and mission that provides a clear direction for academic success for every student. • Align stakeholders' decisions and actions to the vision and mission of the school and demonstrate a growth mindset. Dimension 3: Allocation of resources (Subdimension 2: Deploying resources) • Articulate clear decision-making processes and procedures for instructional programming and the equitable allocation of resources. • Plan for and align resources to support the implementation of instructional initiatives. • Use a continuous cycle of analysis with leadership teams to examine assess and refine the effectiveness of programs and equitable use of resources.
Act with cultural competence	Dimension 4: Management of systems and processes (Subdimension 2: Professional growth)

PSEL Standard 3 [a]	Four dimensions of instructional leadership [b]
and responsiveness in their interactions, decision making, and practice.	• Create and maintain supportive working environments with time and space for collaboration. • Identify and provide multiple types of professional development based on identified needs. Dimension 2: Improvement of instructional practice (Subdimension 1: Shared vision of effective instruction) • Use an instructional framework to establish a common language and shared vision of effective instruction. • Ensure that content standards drive instruction. Subdimension 2: • Use an instructional framework to observe and analyze teaching practice. • Use instructional practice data to engage staff in the assessment and improvement of teacher and leader practice. • Use classroom observation data to determine next steps for instructional leadership practice. Subdimension 3: • Support teacher growth using ongoing feedback professional development, coaching and professional learning communities. • Use evidence of student learning to plan and implement individual and whole-staff professional development.
Address matters of equity and cultural responsiveness in all aspects of leadership.	Dimension 2: Improvement of instructional practice (Subdimension 1: Shared vision of effective instruction) • Use an instructional framework to establish a common language and shared vision of effective instruction. • Ensure that content standards drive instruction. Subdimension 2: • Use an instructional framework to observe and analyze teaching practice. • Use instructional practice data to engage staff in the assessment and improvement of teacher and leader practice. • Use classroom observation data to determine next steps for instructional leadership practice. Subdimension 3: • Support teacher growth using ongoing feedback professional development, coaching and professional learning communities.

PSEL Standard 3 [a]	Four dimensions of instructional leadership [b]
	• Use evidence of student learning to plan and implement individual and whole-staff professional development.

Note. PSEL = Professional Standards of Educational Leaders.

[a] Equity and cultural responsiveness—Expectations for effective leaders. [b] Effective leaders.

Appendix O

Higher and Lower Performing Groups in High-Poverty Schools

		No. principals		
School type	*Mdn* % MCAP academic progress growth, 2018–2019	Higher performing (≥*Mdn*)	Lower performing (<*Mdn*)	Total
Elementary	6.5 [a]	12	15	27
Middle	0.9 [b]	3	4	7
High	0.1 [c]	2	2	4

Note. MCAP = Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program.

[a] The highest score an elementary school could earn for academic progress was 35 percentage points. During the 2018–2019 school year, the highest and lowest growth scores for MCAP's academic progress for high-poverty elementary schools were 15.7 and 9.3 percentage points, respectively. [b] The highest score a middle school could earn for academic progress was 31.5 percentage points. During the 2018–2019 school year, the highest and lowest growth scores for MCAP's academic progress for high-poverty middle schools were 18.8 and 9.3 percentage points, respectively. [c] The highest score a high school could earn for academic progress was 15 percentage points. During the 2018–2019 school year, the highest and lowest growth scores for MCAP's academic progress for high-poverty high schools were 13.4 and 12.9 percentage points, respectively.

Appendix P

PSEL Standard 3 Rubric for Effective Leaders

PSEL standard 3 rubric	Four dimensions of instructional leadership rubric
Highly Effective (3 points)	Expert (3 points)
Effective (2 points)	Accomplished (2 points)
Developing (1 point)	Emerging (1 point)
Ineffective (0 points)	Novice (0 points)

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