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Quality in Education: Perspectives Regarding Baldrige-based Practices and Instructional Leadership in Middle Schools

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Perspectives Regarding Baldrige-based Practices
and Instructional Leadership in Middle Schools

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By

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This dissertation is dedicated to my dad, Stanley E. Vaughn,
who will always be with me in spirit,
for while he was on Earth, he gave me the leadership model to follow –
one of faith, honesty, integrity, and service.
I miss you, dad.

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Abstract

School systems nationwide confront declines in the number of principal applicants while facing increasing student accountability concerns. The idiosyncrasies of adolescent development and the social nature of the educational environment reflect the declines in applicants and impact student accountability. Using a three-tiered case study, the present research inquiry identified perspectives of superintendents, middle school principals, and middle school teachers regarding Baldrige-based practices in the four Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award-winning school districts in the United States. This study's data illuminated how a non-prescriptive framework such as the Baldrige National Quality Program (BNQP) combined with Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence (BECPE) assessment instrument, were utilized by the superintendents and middle school principals in the award-winning schools to address the issues of both instructional leadership and student achievement.

Perspectives from targeted superintendents, middle school (grades 6-8) principals, and middle school teachers regarding Baldrige-based practices as they relate to instructional leadership in middle level education were investigated. Research participants from Chugach School District in Anchorage, Alaska; Pearl River School District in Pearl River, New York; Community Consolidated School District 15 in Palatine, Illinois; and Jenks Public Schools in Jenks, Oklahoma discussed the adoption, implementation, and maintenance of the Baldrige National Quality Program, combined with the ongoing utilization of BECPE, in their middle schools. Respondents disclosed instructional leadership beliefs and practices utilized within their school and/or district.

Utilizing information from the three interview protocols created for superintendents, middle school principals, and middle school teachers in the targeted districts, an analysis of

themes emerged from the transcribed interviews and interview correspondences, providing

insight about the gaps in research literature pertaining to the application of Baldrige-based

practices in middle level education. These gaps substantiated the need for continued research

that examines the role of instructional leadership in creating Baldrige environments in the middle

school arena. Overall, the qualitative results of this exploratory study promoted understanding

and informed efforts to build instructional leadership in other middle level educational

institutions across the nation.

Baldrige in Education, Baldrige National Quality Program, Middle Schools,

Instructional Leadership, Emotional Intelligence, Systems Thinking

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The 2008-2009 Occupational Outlook Handbook for the U. S. Department of Labor states

that the number of principal positions in elementary and secondary schools continues to increase

and is projected to grow by 12 % from 2006 through 2016, while the number of teachers who

wish to embrace the responsibilities of administration continues to decrease. Due to sharp

increases in administrative responsibilities regarding enrollment, safety, budgets, and teacher

shortages, teachers are reluctant to take administrative positions. Many teachers indicated that

the increase in pay does not compensate for the stress of the additional responsibilities. Since

administrators are reported to work more than 40 hours per week, and are responsible for

supervising extra curricular activities that occur outside the instructional day, teachers are

hesitant to encumber themselves with administrative duties (Bureau of Labor Statistics, n. d.).

With the enactment of the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB, 2002), a sense of urgency

has perpetuated discussion about instructional leadership roles of district and school-level

administrators. Heated debates over what constitutes the most effective administrator and how

that person must exemplify the role and responsibilities of the instructional leader continue to

gain momentum in schools nationwide. With these leadership concerns, middle level education

confronts the increasing lack of motivation and disengagement of adolescents during grades 6

through 8.

To address both leadership and instructional issues relevant to middle level education,

many school districts have adopted Baldrige-based practices to specifically target instructional

leadership needs and maximize school improvement efforts. Baldrige evolved out of Edward

Deming's *Total Quality Management* (TQM) framework, developed in 1986 and designed

specifically for the business world. Educators took note of the successes realized by both business and industry, specifically increased productivity and team member satisfaction, and sought to apply the same processes to education environments, in hopes of the same results.

Using Deming's business-based premise that every quality system is composed of seven essential components: (1) aim; (2) customers; (3) suppliers; (4) input; (5) process; (6) output; and (7) quality measurement (Jenkins, 2003); the education world collaborated and constructed seven categories that target the components unique to a quality education system: (1) leadership; (2) strategic planning; (3) student, stakeholder, and market focus; (4) measurement, analysis, and knowledge management; (5) faculty and staff focus; (6) process management; and, (7) organizational performance results (American Society for Quality, 2006). It is from these components that the U. S. Congress established the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Improvement Act of 1987 – Public Law 100-107. The Baldrige National Quality Program (BNQP) used the seven categories as baseline indicators of quality educational systems, and then developed eleven core values, including; (1) visionary leadership; (2) learning-centered education; (3) organizational and personal learning; (4) valuing faculty, staff, and partners; (5) agility; (6) focus on the future; (7) managing for innovation; (8) management by fact; (9) public responsibility and citizenship; (10) focus on results and creating value; and (11) systems perspective. The core values were included within the framework's assessment instrument entitled, the Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence (BECPE).

Although the Baldrige Program clearly outlines the seven main categories and the eleven core values of educational operation, the framework itself is non-prescriptive. There is no linear hierarchy, nor is there a fixed priority of focus. The framework lends itself to interpretation by each educational leader according to the needs of the district, school, or classroom. Because the

framework for the program is non-prescriptive, there is no one right way to implement the program. Every school and school district has the option to adapt the framework to the needs of that school or district (Brynes & Baxter, 2006). In my own school district, the focus began on the implementation of the Quality tools because our system needed a way to like data sets across the parish. In other school districts, the focus may have begun on learning and implementing the seven categories because the processes for operation needed to be consistent from school to school. In still other districts, the implementation process could have begun with a focus on one of the eleven core values that needed attention.

The Baldrige National Quality Program could be implemented in any district or school, as long as the leader dedicated time and resources to making the framework a reality in day-to-day operations. In my own school district, professional development opportunities that focus on the Baldrige categories and core values has helped to bring the program to each school within the district. But with those professional development opportunities, a large monetary source dedication was necessary. For larger districts, financial support may prove to be a substantial limitation if the goal is for every educator in the district to be trained in the Baldrige Program.

For those district and school leaders that are contemplating the implementation of Baldrige in their institutions, it is important to track your improvement with this program. Each year, the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA), distributed by the United States Department of Commerce's National Institute of Standards and Technology, is presented to those educational organizations that have shown year-to-year improvement in student learning and organizational performance based on the Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence (2006; Byrne & Schaefer, 2006). To date, only four school districts in the United States have won the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award.

One might wonder why only four educational entities were presented the MBNQA. Educational experts claim that a closer look at the leadership within the winning districts might provide the answer. One might even wonder how continuous school improvement and quality in education co-exist and what type of leadership is necessary to bring about school improvement. Superintendents are considered key in district-level continuous school improvement, while principals are considered key in school-level continuous school improvement (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker & Kathanek, 2004; Fullan, 2001).

Experts agree that administrators must build and foster relationships that contribute to shared instructional leadership in order to construct a quality organization (DuFour et al., 2004). Educational change expert, Michael Fullan (2001) in his book entitled, *The New Meaning of Educational Change*, indicated that the key to successful change evolves around relationships, not simply an imposition of top down reform. Fullan further advocated that schools and stakeholders within those settings need to see themselves as change agents, creating coherence, meaning, alignment, synergy, connectedness, and capacity with the organization.

Although Fullan's focus was on the stakeholders within a school setting, O'Neill and Conzemius (2002) focused on the school as an unique entity, arguing that schools showing continuous growth in student performance are entities whose cultures were permeated by: (1) a shared focus, (2) reflective practices, (3) collaboration and partnerships, and (4) ever-increasing leadership capacity. It was also their contention that when the school culture focused on student learning, reflected on student assessments, and learned as a collaborative team, leadership capacity grew. The authors stated that leaders must embrace learning at all levels and engage in activities that promote performance excellence at all levels – from the classroom to the superintendency.

One might question whether there is a formula for this type of leadership. Dennis Sparks (2004) comments on this powerful inquiry in his article, "Principal's Essential Role as a Learning Leader," stating,

> Skillful teaching in every classroom requires skillful leadership by principals … high-quality teaching in every classroom depends on principals who make the success of all students their highest priority, nurture continuous improvement in teaching, and create energizing, interdependent relationships among all members of the school community. (p. 1)

Operating from this established premise, school districts across the nation have implemented the BNQP and utilized the BECPE assessment instrument, all in an effort to align instructional needs for performance excellence with quality processes. The BNQP and BECPE assessment instrument focus on eleven core values – often called organizational best practices. They include: (1) visionary leadership; (2) learning-centered education; (3) organizational and personal learning; (4) valuing faculty, staff and partners; (5) agility; (6) focus on the future; (7) managing for innovation; (8) management by fact; (9) public responsibility and citizenship; (10) focus on results and creating value; and (11) systems perspective. These eleven organizational best practices support continual improvement within schools and districts, and are considered to be essential components of a high-performing educational system (American Society for Quality, 2006; Dufour, et al., 2004).

It is the eleven core values and the seven major categories of the Baldrige Program that form the parameters for discussions among and actions of the targeted educators at both district and school levels. As touted by the American Society of Quality (2006), effective organizations must nurture and sustain a district climate focused on whole school processes conducive to

student and faculty growth, ultimately contributing to continuous school improvement. School districts are assessed using the eleven core values, and those same values serve as the foundation on which the Malcolm Balrige National Quality Award is based.

Visionary leadership, as defined by the *Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence* (2006), is directional and strives to create student-focused, learning-oriented climates. Clear, visible values and high expectations are articulated and modeled, balancing the needs of the all the organization's stakeholders. Leaders within the organization ensure the creation of strategies, systems, and methods for achieving performance excellence and ensuring sustainability. It is the responsibility of the superintendents at the district level and principals at the middle school level to inspire and motivate educators throughout the district to engage in meaningful professional development that is utilized within the school arena for ongoing teaching and learning. It is the ultimate responsibility of the leader at both the district and school levels to reinforce ethics, values, and expectations held central by the organization's stakeholders, while continuing to build leadership, commitment, and initiative within the school and the district.

As conveyed by Reavis in a 1946 article entitled, "Responsibilities of the City Superintendent for the Direction of Instruction," the superintendent was reputed to be the intellectual leader of his staff. The superintendent was expected to clarify the general aims of education in the district, while specifically identifying the curriculum goals to be mastered. This district administrator was also expected to enlighten the public regarding how instruction was delivered and to assure parents that their students were being fully prepared for their roles in society. Although this article was published long before the term *instructional leadership* became prominent both in educational circles and in public arenas, subsequent research

regarding instructional leadership from Marland and Mosher in the 1970s; Brimm, Wolf, and Marks in the 1980s; and Parker, Johnson, Kowalski, and Leithwood in the 1990s; continues to present the roles and responsibilities of the superintendent, as well as those of the school principal. In Wolf's 1988 research presentation, "The School Superintendent in the Reform Era: Perceptions of Practitioners, Principals, and Pundits," the author cites Cuban's (1984) comment regarding the expectations and demands of the school administrator and superintendent to provide direction and leadership to improve the instructional environment, noting:

> … no school can become effective without the visible and active involvement of a principal hip-deep in the elementary school instructional program, then it also seems likely that no school board approving policies aimed at system-wide improvement can hope to achieve that condition without a superintendent who sustains a higher than usual involvement in the district's instructional program.
>
> (p. 146)

To date, two meta-analyses correlating the impact of leadership strategies on student outcomes are widely recognized. As presented for review in the December 2005 issue of the *SEDL* (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory) *Letter,* a quantitative study conducted by the researchers at the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) Center entitled, "Balanced Leadership Study," revealed a positive relationship between leadership and student achievement (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2005). Even though the effect size (average *r*) and 95% confidence intervals for principal responsibilities such as instruction and focus were identified in a quantitative executive summary, the results did not include qualitative data to support or expound on the quantitative results. Although responses were acquired from more than 650 school principals, no data were obtained from district superintendents.

The second synthesis study, as cited by Marzano and his associates in 2005, was conducted by Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom in 2004. This study's purpose was to also investigate correlations between leadership and student achievement. Although quantitative findings were similar in nature to those of McREL's study, revealing a positive correlation between leadership and student achievement, the researchers identified three basic practices consistent in the administrative respondents, including: (1) setting direction; (2) developing people; and (3) redesigning the organization to allow for the use of effective practices (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). These three practices are integral components within the Balrige National Quality Program, and can be found under the categories of leadership; faculty and staff focus, and educational and support process management.

Both McREL's study (2005) and the study conducted by Leithwood and his colleague (2004) focused on instructional leadership, but neither of the studies examined the impact of instructional leadership specifically in middle level education. As noted by LaFargue in his 2007 dissertation entitled, *The Perspectives of Male Inmates Regarding Their K-12 Educational Experiences,* "…the respondents recognized…negative teacher characteristics associated with poor teaching and interaction with students. The middle school years were the accelerating point for this process of school disenchantment" (p. 160). These two sentences embody the foundational reason for targeting middle school instructional leadership. It is important that a focus on middle level education be explored, for the impact of positive instructional leadership on the lives of adolescents while in school and in the future is critical to our society as a whole.

A web-adapted publication entitled, *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century: Educating Adolescents in the 21st Century,* and authored by the Center for Collaborative Education (2000) established a set of guidelines for middle level reform. Eight

recommendations for middle level education included: (1) create small learning communities that contain mutually respectful relationships and are fundamental for intellectual development and personal growth; (2) teach a core academic program; (3) ensure academic success for all students; (4) empower teachers and administrators to make key decisions regarding middle level education; (5) employ expert teachers; (6) improve academic achievement through health and fitness programs; (7) re-engage families in the education of their students; and, (8) make solid connections with community members. Although these recommendations were originally made public record in 1989 and updated in 2000, middle level education still struggles with many of the recommendations today. Since neither meta-analyses focused specifically on middle schools, and because the need for reform still exists in middle level education, this study has chosen to focus attention on middle level education.

Since the findings of the two meta-analyses indicated a positive correlation between leadership and student achievement, and because the recommendations from the *Turning Points* (2000) report have not been fully met in all middle schools nationwide, the investigation of the impact of Baldrige-based practices on middle level instructional leadership and student achievement was substantiated. Instructional leadership responsibilities and school improvement actions form the basis on which this research investigation was constructed. The perspectives of superintendents, middle school principals, and middle school teachers conveyed best practices and current applications of Baldrige in their Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award-winning schools, enlightening implementation and maintenance of the Baldrige National Quality Program in other middle schools across the nation.

Statement of the Problem

Leadership in education must embrace deep and lasting reform. Fullan (2001) suggested that leaders must mobilize others to solve problems that have never yet been successfully addressed. Although collective mobilization is needed, individual commitment to the processes and outcomes is necessary from all participants at all functioning levels – from the student to the superintendent. Kouzes and Posner (2007) warned that leadership is everyone's business. One might wonder how that belief could be realized in a middle school setting. The Schools to Watch (2004) website proposed that high-performing middle schools possess common norms and institutional structures that support and sustain movement toward their goal of excellence. This contention supported the findings of Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom's (2004) meta-analysis and the same type of study conducted by McREL (Waters et al., 2005).

The problem that exists in middle schools is a rapidly declining number of leaders at all levels – from the students in the classroom to the district administrators who monitor the academic progress within middle level institutions – causes great concern to communities nationwide. Much attention has been devoted to improving elementary education, with the idea of catching the deficiencies early in order to ward off the possibilities of academic failure. Using EBSCO host provided by the University of New Orleans (UNO) library and assistance provided by a UNO librarian, database searches for proven Baldrige applications devoted to middle level educational success produced no results. Search cues such as, "Baldrige," "middle school," "middle school reform initiatives," "quality," and "middle level education," resulted in no database results. However, research studies concerning the application of Baldrige-based practices and instruments were revealed in several elementary settings. It became obvious that

research focusing on Baldrige-based practices targeting middle school settings was not available and that this gap in literature must be addressed.

The nature of middle school settings is dependent on the wide range of maturation levels and the idiosyncrasies that characterize the adolescents contained within the middle school environment. In 2003, the National Middle School Association (NMSA) developed a list of key components that formed the middle school concept. Containing both social and academic aspects of middle grade development, the characteristics of the middle school learning environment included: (1) educators who were prepared to work with young adolescents; (2) courageous, collaborative leadership; (3) a shared vision that guided decision-making; (4) high expectations for all participants in the learning community; (5) active learning for both students and teachers; (6) an assigned adult advocate for every student; and (7) school-initiated family and community partnerships (Dufour et al., 2004). These characteristics are often not in alignment with the underlying eleven core values identified by the Baldrige National Quality Program (BNQP). This mismatch causes obstacles for school improvement efforts and for ultimate student achievement success. Through courageous, collaborative leadership, with a shared vision for school improvement, and sustained by an active partnership between the school and the families it supports, the school and ultimately the students can meet the highest levels of academic achievement.

To transform middle schools into cultures of continuous improvement, educators must revise the values and beliefs that sanctify the business of education, rethinking and reshaping leadership practices to meet the learning needs of young adolescents. Zmuda, Kuklis, and Kline (2004) argued that systems thinking is the door to continuous improvement. Understanding that every school is a complex, dynamic system with a specific purpose and that every staff member

must participate in the examination of school-based beliefs and practices, systems thinking is the fundamental premise on which the Baldrige-based practices were developed. As such, this research study was specifically designed to investigate instructional leadership as a whole, with insight into both emotional leadership theory (focusing on the leader) and systems thinking theory (focusing on the organization in which the leader operates), as it impacted by the framework of Baldrige. Research can provide insight regarding the fabric of middle level education woven with the Baldrige National Quality Program and the Baldrige Educational Criteria for Performance Excellence (BECPE).

Leadership is needed to ensure quality learning outcomes for alls students. This will require the efforts of all educators. Presently, this educational leadership is scarce. At the middle level educational leadership is not only scarce, but rapidly diminishing. Baldrige-based practices foster and empower leadership at all levels. Since there is no empirical work on Baldrige on the middle level, this study will investigate the implementation and maintenance of Baldrige at the middle level, obtaining perspectives of Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award superintendents, middle school principals, and middle school teachers.

Purpose of the Study

Since academic failure is not a viable option for any child, it was necessary to research educational frameworks that have produced academic and leadership growth in educational settings. The Baldrige National Quality Program (BNQP), based on the systems thinking concept, combined with the Baldrige Educational Criteria for Performance Excellence (BECPE) assessment instrument produced four award-winning school districts since the inception of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA) in 2000. These school districts embraced the six principles outlined in Blankstein's (2004) book, *Failure is NOT an Option*, including

(1) the establishment of a common school mission and vision, with shared values and goals; (2) ensure achievement for all students, with established intervention systems; (3) focus on teaching and learning through collaborative teaming; (4) use data to guide decision making and continuous school improvement; (5) actively involve family and community in school functions and processes; and (6) build sustainable leadership capacity. Literature revealed that the intent of Baldrige-based practices was to address the six principles outlined by Blankstein. The perspectives of the targeted district superintendents, the middle school principals, and the middle school teachers will provide insight on how these award-winning cadres of leaders meet the challenges within their districts.

The purpose of this case study was to investigate the perspectives of middle level teachers, middle level principals, and district superintendents regarding Baldrige-based practices, specifically the Baldrige National Quality Program and the use of the Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence assessment instrument, from implementation through maintenance. The impact of Baldrige-based practices on instructional leadership in middle level education formed the parameters for this research investigation, and remained at the forefront of this three-tiered case study. Each of the targeted Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award-winning superintendents will reveal his leadership style and their role in district-wide efforts. In addition to the data collected from the targeted superintendents, a minimum of two middle school principals and four middle school teachers from each award-winning district provided insight concerning their supervisor's leadership style and role in school-based Baldrige implementation and maintenance. Perceptions regarding Baldrige-based practices as they impacted instructional leadership capacity within the middle school arena will also be obtained. Finally, the identification of key themes among the three functioning levels of Malcolm Baldrige

National Quality Award participants illuminated the interrelationships and interactions that support and/or inhibit successful implementation and maintenance of Baldrige-based practices, as well as different perspectives about the leadership styles and roles and exhibited within the school or district.

Research Questions

This investigation explored the following over-arching question: How has the adoption of Baldrige-based practices permeated instructional leadership beliefs and actions in middle level education? Four sub-questions were also utilized: (1) What specific changes in instructional leadership have been realized in your middle school since the implementation of Baldrige-based practices? (2) What instructional leadership ideals and beliefs were communicated during the different phases of Baldrige implementation and maintenance? (3) How have you been involved in the design and implementation of Baldrige-based practices in your middle school? (4) How is the effectiveness of Baldrige-based practices and their subsequent impact on instructional leadership within your middle school monitored? Since data were collected from three tiers of operation – the district superintendent, middle school principals, and middle school teachers – the answers to the questions formed a comprehensive picture as to the impact of Baldrige-based practices within each school and district setting.

Each superintendent and targeted principal encountered these four questions during individual interviews, while the targeted teachers within the district encountered the same four questions during a focus group interview or through email correspondence.

In addition to the four questions listed above, the four superintendents were asked four more questions that reflected their personal beliefs and actions regarding instructional leadership, including: (1) What was your ultimate vision for your district and how did you build

commitment to the mission? (2) Which instructional leadership style/styles do you feel you utilize most? (3) What were the biggest obstacles faced at the district level in the implementation and maintenance of Baldrige-based practices? (4) What elements do you believe had the most impact on middle level education?

Each principal and teacher respondent was asked supporting questions specifically targeting the interactions and relationships that exist among the respondents, including, but not limited to the following: (1) How would you describe the instructional leadership style(s) utilized by your leader? (2) What role/roles did your leader assume during implementation of Baldrige-based practices? (3) What role/roles did your leader assume during the maintenance of Baldrige-based practices? (4) Was input collected from you during implementation and maintenance, and if so, how was your input utilized? (5) What strategies did your leader employ during difficult times to keep people motivated? (6) What strategies did your leader use to strengthen connections between stakeholders at the school or district levels? (7) How has the usage of Baldrige-based practices impacted instructional leadership and stakeholder relationships in the middle school environment?

Overview of the Methodology

This research study utilized qualitative methodological techniques to obtain insights from the three tiers of Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award-winning participants. Through personal phone interviews with the superintendents, middle school principals, and three of the middle school teachers, and through email correspondences with the remaining 13 teacher respondents, phenomenological perspectives provided a well-rounded view of the impact of the Baldrige National Quality Program, the Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence

assessment instrument, and the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award on middle level education and instructional leadership.

Qualitative methodology was selected for this research study because it sought to understand human behavior, to gain rich descriptions of interrelationships between the educators within the school or district, and to obtain information through inquiry-based protocols. To ensure that all respondents were posed the same questions during interviews, a separate interview protocol was created and field-tested prior to the start of the research. For those teachers who chose to participate via email correspondences, the same protocol questions were posed, and follow-up emails clarified any unclear questions.

Qualitative methodology appears simple in its explanation, but the complexities of data collection (meeting scheduled interview times, lengthy conversations with the respondents, the time to transcribe all of the audio taped sessions, etc.) and data analysis (coding the mound of transcriptions as well as the email correspondences, moving from the printed version to the electronic version of the transcriptions, and the time to read, analyze, and code every transcription or printed response, etc.) were evident throughout the research process. Although the complexities of qualitative methodology might prove overwhelming to some, this research study examined phenomena which could not have been investigated quantitatively.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, it was necessary to define key terms utilized within the narrative and within the scope of the research. Each definition served as the basis from which the common themes and relationships were categorized. The four key vocabulary terms included:

1. *Instruction* - defined as the strategies and techniques employed within the schools and classrooms to teach or facilitate learning of the targeted curriculum content.

2. *Instructional leadership* - defined as the process by which a person influences others to accomplish both teaching and learning objectives while remaining focused on continuous improvement of both teaching and learning within a targeted curriculum area.

3. *Continuous school improvement* - defined as the ongoing processes and methods that result in collaboration among school or district stakeholders, ultimately resulting in increased student performance and academic excellence.

4. *Learning-centered education* – defined as the cumulative environment within the school or district that focuses on the promotion of learning by the participants within the environment.

5. *Stakeholder* – defined as a person or group of persons who possess a vested interest in the school, such as a teacher, students, a parent or guardian, local businesses within the school community, or a local partner in education who supports the school with either human or financial resources.

Utilizing the previously mentioned definitions to define the parameters of this research study will assist reviewers and future researchers in their applications of the research results to other explorations.

Organization of the Document

This dissertation is divided into five chapters of information. Chapter One is an overview of the study, defining the problem, purpose and theoretical base for the investigation. Chapter Two contains the literary resources that supported the inquiry and provided guidance during the exploration and collection of research data. The two concepts of instructional leadership and Baldrige-based practices are thoroughly reviewed within this chapter. Chapter Three includes a

descriptive outline of the methodology utilized during the research processes. Chapter Four

contains the findings from the research. In that section, you will find summaries of the

interviews, emerging themes and sub-themes, and personal reflections of the researcher. The last

chapter, Chapter Five, includes a discussion of the findings according to the themes and sub-

themes discovered, as well as a summary of the study, limitations of the study, and implications

from the research. Recommendations for theory development and suggestions for future

research conclude the contents of Chapter Five. References, the appendices, and my vita can be

found in the final pages of the dissertation.

CHAPTER TWO

Background and Literature Review

Introduction

A lack of significant progress in reform efforts and increased criticism of education provided the catalyst for school research. It was crucial that the characteristics of quality schools be identified so that leaders and organizations could continuously improve. Although much of the research pointed to the characteristics of leaders and their roles and responsibilities as change agents in their educational settings (Dufour, et al., 2004; Fullan, 2001; and Senge, 1990) no empirical studies were discovered that collected or analyzed insights from three-tiers of educators, including superintendents, principals, and teachers, regarding ongoing improvement to instructional leadership facilitated by Baldrige-based practices.

Independent research regarding the Baldrige National Quality Program (BNQP), Baldrige's Education Criteria for Performance Excellence (BECPE), and their relationships to education was located in two published reports. The first report was written by Barth, Burk, Serfass, Harms, Houlihan, Anderson, et al. (2000) and was entitled, *Strategies for Meeting High Standards: Quality Management and the Baldrige Criteria in Education – Lessons from the States.* The second was Walpole and Noeth's (2002) ACT Policy Report, entitled *The Promise of Baldrige for K-12 Education.*

In addition to the two reports, two research studies were located. The first study was Karathanos & Karathanos' (2005) research study entitled, "Applying the Balanced Scorecard to Education," published in the *Journal of Education for Business.* The second was Ziegler's (2005) study entitled, "It Opens Your Eyes: Transforming Management of Adult Education

Programs Using the Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence," was published in the *Adult Basic Education Journal*.

Although both the reports and studies examined the implementation and assessment of Baldrige-based practices, only one report specifically addressed k-12 education. None of the reports or studies investigated Baldrige-based practices at the middle school level nor did the data reveal superintendents', principals', or teachers' perspectives about the adoption, implementation, and maintenance of Baldrige National Quality Programs and Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence or their impact on instructional leadership.

Due to the lack of empirical research that targeted perspectives from middle level educators concerning the Baldrige National Quality Program's and the Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence assessment instrument's impact on instructional leadership, this research study was initiated. In order to acquire insight about both the Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence assessment instrument and the Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence's non-prescriptive framework, a theoretical framework was developed that specifically addressed instructional leadership (focusing on the impact of Baldrige), emotional intelligence leadership (focusing on the leadership exhibited by the leader in the district, school, or classroom), and systems thinking theory (focusing on the interrelationships among the stakeholders in the districts).

To begin the literature review, the Baldrige National Quality Program framework, the Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence assessment instrument, and the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award need to be illuminated. Specific connections among the three components of the researcher-coined "Baldrige Package" were made so that the reader could better understand the underlying assumptions and practices contained within the package.

Although the leader is central to this study and understanding historical insights about leadership is critical to gaining a well-rounded view of the person who assumes a leadership role, the interactions with those educators in supervisee positions are also important to the overall scope of this study. To validate that assumption, the final paragraphs disclose information and rationales for the application of postmodern leadership theories-theories that are defined as process-centered, collective, context-bound, non-hierarchical, and focused on collaborative empowerment (Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-McGavin, 2006). The theoretical frameworks that most accurately elucidate the investigative foundation of this proposed research study were instructional leadership theory (as it examines the role of the leader and the role of those in lower-tier positions in moving the organization toward academic excellence, i.e. the leader's visionary leadership repertoire), emotional intelligence leadership theory (as it examines the emotional intelligence of the leader as he communicates with those persons he supervises), and systems thinking theory (as it examines the interrelationships of key components within the educational institutions). Although instructional leadership theory could have been investigated in isolation, I felt it was necessary to determine how emotional intelligence theory and systems thinking theory supported and informed instructional leadership actions and visionary leadership characteristics, so consequently, both theories were added to this investigative study.

The Baldrige Package

A historical review of literature would not be complete if it did not include background information about the three major components of the Baldrige Package, including the Baldrige National Quality Program (BNQP) framework, the Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence (BECPE) assessment instrument, and the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA). Each of the following paragraphs discloses noted facts about the historical aspects

of each component, affording the reviewer insight into the development and implementation of each module in educational settings.

Baldrige-based practices and the systems approach for educational organizations had its earliest findings in the work of Dr. W. Edwards Deming. In 1950, after careful articulation of a statistical control approach to manufacturing, Deming convinced Japanese executives to adopt his management approach. Deming's methods went unnoticed in the United States until an NBC documentary on June 24, 1980, entitled *If Japan Can ... Why Can't We?* aired. From that point forward, Deming's total quality control processes, renamed Total Quality Management (TQM) by the United States Government Accounting Office in 1991, were adopted by major American corporations, all in the hopes to improve the quality of the manufactured product and productivity of American workers (Al-Khalaf, 1994).

It is Deming's TQM framework that underpinned the BECPE assessment instrument and the BNQP's non-prescriptive, interconnected-processes framework. The Baldrige-based components sometimes referred to as Quality in Education, alluded to the outcomes that were inherent in Deming's TQM movement. The Baldrige approach to education, which includes both the assessment instrument and the systems framework focuses on seven over-arching categories, including: (1) leadership [how upper management leads the organization, and how the organization leads within the community]; (2) strategic planning [how the organization establishes and plans to implement strategic directions]; (3) customer and market focus [how the organization builds and maintains strong, lasting relationships with its customers]; (4) measurement, analysis, and knowledge management [how the organization uses data to support key processes and manage performance]; (5) human resource focus [how the organization empowers and involves its workforce]; (6) process management [how the

organization designs, manages and improves key processes]; and, (7) organizational results [how the organization performs in terms of customer satisfaction, finances, human resources, supplier and partner performance, operations, governance and social responsibility, and how the organization compares to its competitors] (ASQ, 2006). Within the categories are eleven core values that are considered organizational best practices, supporting continual school improvement. The eleven core values include: (1) visionary leadership; (2) learning-centered education; (3) organizational and personal learning; (4) valuing faculty, staff, and partners; (5) agility; (6) focus on the future; (7) managing for innovation; (8) management by fact; (9) public responsibility and citizenship; (10) focus on results and creating value; and, (11) systems perspective (ASQ, 2006). Although the categories and core values are organized for easy understanding, the overlap of processes inside the educational setting is a reality (Neuroth, Plastrik, & Cleveland, 1992). For this research study, the core values informed the parameters of investigation, with special devotion given to how the core values were evidenced in instructional leadership at the district and middle school levels in the four targeted award-winning districts.

The Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award was established by Congress in 1987 and named after the well-known quality management proponent and former U. S. Secretary of Commerce, Malcolm Baldrige. Although the Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence assessment instrument and the Baldrige National Quality Program framework are presented first in this review, these quality-based instruments were given their names after the establishment of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. The prestigious award originally honored manufacturers and small businesses that met and/or exceeded the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence. In 1999, specific education and health care categories were

added to the award application, with the BECPE assessment instrument specifically developed to address the seven categories and eleven core values in an educational setting. The U. S. Commerce Department's National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) manage the Baldrige National Quality Award processes and applications, in close conjunction with the private sector. The American Society for Quality (ASQ), a professional non-profit association, assists NIST with the application review process, publicity of the award winners, and information transfer (NIST, 2003).

To date, only four school districts have won the prestigious educational award, including Chugach School District in Anchorage, Alaska and Pearl River School District in Pearl River, New York in 2001; Community Consolidated School District 15 in Palatine, Illinois in 2003; and, Jenks Public Schools in Jenks, Oklahoma in 2005 (ASQ, 2006). Contained within the process of application and auditing that is implemented prior to the winning of the award; these four school districts were judged by an independent board of examiners, composed of primarily private-sector experts in quality and business. The panel of experts utilized specific criteria matched to the seven categories and eleven core values contained within both the BNQP framework and the BECPE assessment instrument. During the auditing process, supervisory leaders at all levels within the school district are interviewed, and classroom teachers are interviewed and observed. The information collected is analyzed by the team of evaluators, and it is determined whether the school district has overwhelming demonstrated Quality in Education practices are part of the common fabric within the district and school.

Instructional Leadership Theory

In 1987, Andrews, Soder, and Jacoby conceptualized instructional leadership theory, explaining that instructional leaders communicate the priority of attaining academic gains and

are visible forces within the classroom or school building (SEDL, 1991). Research indicates the leader does have an impact on the organization (English, 1996), so it is critical that the leader be examined in the context of the organization in which the leader works. Combining the results from Margaret Wheatley's (1999) non-traditional, interdependent notion of leadership within the organization with Hallinger and Leithwood's tenets of instructional leadership, consisting of defining the school mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting the school climate (Leithwood & Duke, 1998) establishes an interconnection between the leader and the institution in which he works.

One prominent theorist, Warren Bennis (2003) identified four characteristics that defined leadership for the 21st century in his book, *On Becoming A Leader*, including (1) engaging others through a shared vision, (2) possessing a clear voice that articulates a sense of purpose, a sense of self, and self-confidence, (3) operating from a strong moral code that believes in a higher good, and (4) adapting to the relentless pressure to change.

Although Bennis' characteristics speak about instructional leadership, I chose to utilize Hallinger and Leithwood's three tenets of instructional leadership theory, which include: (1) defining the mission; (2) managing the instructional program; and, (3) promoting the school climate, to form the parameters for my research because they were specifically referenced within the seven categories and eleven core values of the Baldrige National Quality Program framework.

Instructional Leadership

Senge, Cambron-McCabe, Lucas, Smith, Dutton, and Kleiner (2000) define instructional leadership in relationship to how a leader functions. When speaking of the superintendent, Senge and his colleagues argue, "As an executive leader of the school system, you are capable of

setting an example of highly effective behavior, and enabling the creation of a learning school system" (p. 14). When referring to the role of the principal, Senge and his colleagues (2000) explain, "These are the instructional leaders for teachers-the people who set a tone for learning within the school…you become…not just a supervisor of teachers, but a 'lead teacher and lead learner,' and steward of the learning process as a whole" (p. 15). Opposed to a managerial leader who manages the daily operations of the school, an instructional leader possesses specific leadership qualities and beliefs, and serves as a catalyst for practices that transform schools into institutions of academic and performance excellence.

Each school and educational organization is dynamic, complex, and comprised of feelings, beliefs, expectations, and values. It is a common assumption that all educational settings are conducive to student learning, and that learning-centered education takes place at all levels within the educational setting. As instructional leader of the school or district, one of the most important tasks principals or superintendents encounter is the development of high-quality performance classrooms, where student learning is top priority. The creation of these classroom cultures is built on established norms and practices that lead to continuous improvement, mutual respect, collaboration, and accountability. Dennis Sparks, Executive Director of the National Staff Development Council, commented about the instructional leader's understanding of this reform process in his November 2004 article entitled, "Principals Possess a Vision of Quality Professional Learning," by stating,

> Successful principals possess richly detailed visions of the type of student learning and
> teaching they desire in their schools. They can see in their mind's eye and describe in
> detail to others the nature of teaching and the quality of student thought and work it
> produces. They can see, hear, and feel the kind of learning experiences and interactions

that provide meaningful and sustaining bonds between members of the school community (p. 1).

Current literature concerning school leadership highlights the position of the school administrator as the most crucial in the school system (DuFour et al., 2004; Hall, 2005; Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; McEwan, 2003; Portin, 2004; Sparks, 2003, 2004, & 2005; Trimble, 2003; White-Hood, 2004). As noted by several educational experts, increases in student achievement are a direct byproduct of quality leadership and effective instructional programs, practices, and school operations (Chrisman, 2005; Marzano et al., 2005), all of which fall under the auspices of the school administrator. The quality of the instructional leader's guidance and direction impacts whether or not the school continually improves, and whether student achievement continues to increase. Although most of the literature addresses the school principal, it stands to reason that the same applications could be applied to the superintendent of the school district.

Characteristics of an effective instructional leader appear to cover the gamut, but the components of (1) a clear focus on student achievement, (2) understanding of and commitment to improving personal relationships with all school stakeholders, and (3) a proclivity for shared decision making and shared leadership, i.e. professional learning communities, are repeated throughout the literature (Fullan, Bertani, & Quinn, 2004; Hall, 2005; Hargreaves & Fink, 2004; Portin, 2004; Shields, 2004; Swain, 2005; Thompson, 2004; White-Hood, 2004). Since leadership for student learning is at the forefront of accountability, connecting to and encompassing all additional roles the principal might assume, principals of the 21st Century are encouraged to examine three areas of their job description – instructional leadership, community leadership, and visionary leadership (Hall, 2005; Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000;

Institute for Educational Leadership, 2006). Characteristics of each area overlap and are entwined with characteristics of another area, but principals do need to give attention to all three areas if increased student achievement is the targeted goal. The same could be said of the district superintendent.

Prior to any leadership action, an effective educational administrator diagnoses the problems the school or district faces, analyzes available resources, understands the commitment levels of the parents, teachers, and community members, and unveils the school or district's academic strengths and weaknesses (Hancock & Lamendola, 2005; Portin, 2004). Once the data are collected, many experts believe that the administrator, in collaboration with representatives from each of the school stakeholder groups–principals, teachers, students, parents, district educational support personnel, business partners, and community members–must create a collective vision that is rooted in improving student performance (Cuban, 2004: Hargreaves & Fink, 2004; Portin, 2004; Swain, 2005; Thompson, 2004; White-Hood, 2003 & 2004) and focuses on the general well-being and success of each individual (Shields, 2004). But creation of the vision alone will not improve student performance. For a leader to be an effective catalyst for improvement, the leader must focus on what's truly important: behaving those values. "You have to walk the talk"(Harvey & Ventura, 1997, p. 8).

To ensure the school philosophy lives beyond the administrator's tenure, the administrator should create an educational family. White-Hood outlines this paradigm shift in her October 2003 article in *Middle Ground* entitled, "Rediscovering the Heart: Forming Relationships that Thrive." White-Hood proposed that a principal should put in motion five authentic relations, including: (1) creating and recreating a school vision that focuses on the school goals, is aligned with the dreams of the stakeholders, and mobilizes people to take action;

(2) designing a plan that creates and supports a learning community that is visionary, goal-oriented, and data-driven; (3) sharing teamwork expectations, accomplishments, and struggles; (4) motivating and inspiring team members as you would family members; and, (5) removing obstacles that prevent team members from meeting with success and secure resources that will support team initiatives. In simpler terms, one published principal explained that the administrator must be a positive role model and active participant in the school environment, exhibiting high visibility and sincere inspiration for both teachers and students (Hould, 2005). An administrator must be a master at building school community, all the while fostering innovation, a sense of belonging, high morale, commitment, collaboration, and value (Graseck, 2005; Schmoker, 2005; White-Hood, 2003). Opportunities for leadership, growth and enrichment will come from this community of educational family members, as stated by California State University Professor and author of *Building Leadership Capacity in Schools,* Linda Lambert (1998), when she argued,

> Leadership is about learning together, and constructing meaning and knowledge collectively and collaboratively. It involves opportunities to surface and mediate perceptions, values, beliefs, information, and assumptions through continuing conversations; to inquire about and generate ideas together; to seek to reflect upon and make sense of work in the light of shared beliefs and new information; and to create actions that grow out of these new understandings. Such is the core of leadership. Leadership is about learning together (p. 17).

School administrators have the prime responsibility of establishing learning environments that engage students on an intellectual, social, and emotional level (Hargreaves & Fink, 2004). To accomplish this monumental task, effective instructional leaders engage the teachers in

meaningful collaborative opportunities that focus on the analyzation of student work and test data; the alignment of curriculum across grade levels; lesson planning and development; incorporation of research-based instructional strategies; utilization of appropriate assessment methods; and, ongoing communication with students and parents about how students learn and perform (Hancock & Lamendola, 2005). According to one published teacher, "Smart principals recognize that the true power to reform a school lies within their best teachers, and they will give them the freedom and support to effect change" (Berg, 2005, p.18).

Effective leaders promote a philosophy of continual improvement and advancement (Connors, 2000) focused on improving teaching and learning (Cuban, 2004) as measured against specific standards (Trimble, 2003). Effective principals demonstrate an authentic quest for knowledge and are relentless about learning (Angelis, 2004; Littky & Grabelle, 2004). School administrators create time to connect with teachers-listening, comforting, supporting, inspiring, and encouraging them to believe that their raison d'etre is to support students. Effective leaders also develop relationships with parents and community members-a colloquy marked by genuine trust in the dialogue about education (Chrisman, 2005; Graseck, 2005).

The recipient of the 2003 American Association of School Administrators (AASA) Superintendent of the Year Award, Dr. Kenneth Dragseth, eloquently defined the role and responsibilities of today's educational leaders by saying,

> Your obligation is to ensure that the students in your district have the best
> opportunity for success. Your total focus should be on building ways to make that
> happen, whether it is staff training and support, financial management, curriculum and
> instruction review, or building a learning community. You must be a catalyst for
> improvements in your district – you do not have to do it alone (Shorr, 2003, p. 20).

Effective conversations with teachers focus on student achievement data and its relationship to curriculum, instruction, and assessment. High-quality student work is celebrated and displayed in the school building, constantly communicating the value of student success. Frequent classroom visits are conducted to celebrate learning and support teachers in improving their practice (Alvey & Robbins, 2005). Utilizing the premise established by extensive research conducted by esteemed educational expert, Robert Marzano, the power of effective leadership can be observed by comparing the percentage of students expected to pass a test in an effective school (upwards of 72%) versus the marginal 28% passage rates in an ineffective school (Marzano et al., 2005).

Instructional leaders understand that leading a school on its journey of improvement is filled with many challenges. Although the principal is a single individual, administrators must remember the words of the wise elf, Lady Galadriel, in the movie *The Fellowship of the Ring*, assuring hobbit Frodo Baggins that "…even the smallest person can change the course of the future" (Berg, 2005, p. 18).

Emotional Intelligence Leadership Theory

Although instructional leadership formed the parameters for this research study, one must not overlook Bensimon, Neumann, and Birnbaum's argument that research is needed that focuses on the nexus existing between (1) the role of the leader and his/her interactions within the organization and (2) the role of the organization in forming the parameters of the leader's behavior (Kezar, et al., 2006). Using that argument, it is necessary it expand the theoretical framework to include emotional intelligence leadership theory. Emotional intelligence leadership theory addresses the relationships that exist between the leader and those persons within the organization. It is those relationships that inform the instructional leadership practices

of the leader, and for that reason, it was an additional research avenue that was explored within this research study.

From that secondary standpoint, it was imperative that the research work of Goleman and his colleagues (2002), unveiling the neuroscientific links between organizational success and failure and the six fluid emotional leadership styles, i.e. visionary, coaching, affiliative, democratic, pace-setting, and commanding was included within this particular research study. Goleman and his colleagues described each of the emotional leadership styles in relation to how the leader interacted with those he supervised, including: (1) visionary leaders inspired people through long-term goals that won the support of the group members; (2) coaching leaders helped group members to assume responsibility for tasks that led to organizational success; (3) affiliative leaders created a warm, people-focused work environment that met the emotional needs of the members; (4) democratic leaders obtained input and commitment from the group members in an effort to promote ownership of the goals and successes of the organization; (5) pacesetting leaders established high goals and monitored progress toward the goals; and (6) commanding leaders issued instructions and expected the job to be completed. Identification and understanding of these leadership styles could provide insight into administrative methods that could potentially cultivate leadership at all levels of educational operations, as well as articulating the essential components contained within the Baldrige-based practices and instruments.

Systems Thinking Theory

Systems, or sometimes called systems thinking, theory encompasses the organization that surrounds the leader, and is the second part of the nexus referenced by Bensimon, Neumann, and Birnbaum's research concerning the reciprocal interactions between the leader and the

organization (Kezar, et al., 2006). The founder of systems theory, Russell Ackoff, explained the theory through the role of the leader, saying, "Systems leadership requires an ability to bring the will of followers into agreement with that of the leader so they follow him or her voluntarily, with enthusiasm and dedication" (Lussier & Achua, 2004, p. 158). Researchers and authors often associated with systems thinking theory are Peter Senge and his colleagues (2000), contributors to *A Fifth Discipline* series of books.   These esteemed authors and researchers argued that systems theory focused on developing an awareness of complexity and interdependencies, and they further alleged that change and leverage within an organization were inevitable. Within the book, *Schools That Learn* (2000), Senge and his colleagues further explicated that feedback loops within the organization demonstrated cause-and-effect relationships. In these circular systems, Senge and his colleagues argued that it is never one factor causing another, but it is two or more factors continually influencing each other. The interrelationships between multiple factors formed another avenue of research for this study, informing how the operations of the educational institution impacted the actions of the instructional leader.

In this research study, three major theories were investigated, with instructional leadership theory forming the outer parameter of exploration, and with both emotional intelligence leadership theory and systems thinking theory informing the over-arching theory of instructional leadership. As divulged earlier in this paper, the conceptual diagram (see Figure 1) looks at three common themes that were directly impacted by the theories, including instructional leadership, the Baldrige Program, and stakeholder participation. Although these three themes were selected by me prior to the actual research process, I utilized Hallinger and Leithwood's three tenets to create themes that would address each tenet.

Theoretical Framework

The first definition of *theory* in the 4th edition of the *American Heritage Dictionary* found online identified theory as "a set of statements or principles devised to explain a group of facts or phenomena, especially one that has been repeatedly tested or is widely accepted and can be used to make predictions about natural phenomena." With this definition in mind, I chose to utilize instructional leadership theory, emotional intelligence leadership theory, and systems thinking theory when examining the impact of the Baldrige National Quality Program (BNQP) and the Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence (BECPE) assessment instrument on middle schools in the four Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award-winning school districts. Qualitative data was collected, and then analyzed according to the theories, and is reported in the last two chapters of this dissertation document.

Although Andrews and Soder conceptualized instructional leadership theory in 1987, it was Hallinger and Murphy (1985) that defined instructional leadership theory based on the examination of instructional leadership behaviors of ten elementary school principals. After synthesizing questionnaire and school-based data, Hallinger and Murphy created a framework of instructional management that contained three dimensions including (1) define the mission, (2) manage the instructional program, and (3) promote school climate.

Thirteen years later, Hallinger and Leithwood (1998) restructured the tenets of instructional leadership indicators, but kept the same three dimensions of instructional leadership in tact. It is Hallinger and Leithwood's dimensions that hold significance within the Baldrige National Quality Program, woven inside the seven categories (leadership; strategic planning; student, stakeholder, and market focus; measurement, analysis, and knowledge management; faculty and staff focus; process management; and, organizational performance results) and

among the eleven core values (visionary leadership; learning-centered education; organizational and personal learning; valuing faculty, staff, and partners; agility; focus on the future; managing for innovation; management by fact; public responsibility and citizenship; focus on results and creating value; and systems perspective).

Although instructional leadership remained at the center core of this research study, interrelationships among the three tiers of educators–superintendent, middle school principal, and middle school teachers–were also investigated, revealing real-world application of the six emotional intelligence leadership styles. As reported in *Primal Leadership* (2002), Goleman and his colleagues argued that leaders who see the most positive results practice more than one style of emotional leadership, and often the practice is a seamless combination of two or more styles of leadership within the same situation. Unlike other leadership models, Goleman and his colleagues developed a model that demonstrated an understanding of an emotional foundation that has causal links to reoccurring, predictable outcomes. Investigating the impact of the leadership styles allowed Goleman and his colleagues to see how each style affected organizational climate, and ultimately student and stakeholder performance. Goleman and his colleagues (2002) identified the following emotional intelligence leadership styles, including visionary, coaching, affiliative, democratic, pacesetting, and commanding.

The last theory utilized within this research study is systems thinking theory. The founder of systems theory, Russell Ackoff, explained the theory by looking at the leadership within the theory tenets, saying, "Systems leadership requires an ability to bring the will of followers into agreement with that of the leader so they follow him or her voluntarily, with enthusiasm and dedication" (Lussier & Achua, 2004, p. 158). Peter Senge and his colleagues (2000) explained that systems theory was based on a body of theory that focused on developing

an awareness of complexity, interdependencies, change, and leverage within an organization or system. Within the book, *Schools That Learn* (2000), Senge and his colleagues further explicated that the building blocks of systems thinking are created and recreated through feedback loops that demonstrate cause-and-effect relationships. In these circular systems, Senge and his colleagues argued that it is never one factor causing another, but it is two or more factors continually influencing each other.

This research study utilized three theories, instructional leadership theory, emotional intelligences leadership theory, and systems thinking theory, to construct the theoretical framework. From the three theories, I synthesized that three major themes would emerge, including instructional leadership (focusing on the emotional intelligence of the leader), the Baldrige Program (focusing on the instructional leadership theory components), and stakeholder participation (focusing on the systems thinking theory). In the case of this research study, the relationships between three themes, and corresponding sub-themes, were explored.

Conceptual Diagram

The conceptual diagram (Figure 1) visually depicts the dynamic and non-linear configuration of this research study. Although three cogs work together as one operational gear at each operational level (district, school, or classroom), it is the theory rods that ensure continuous turning of the gears, supporting ongoing alignment of efforts and results among and within the three groups of gears. Although four different school districts were represented in this study, the same three tiers of educators represented each district, including the middle school teachers at the classroom level, the middle school principals at the school level, and the superintendents at the district level. All three gear levels operated within a single system called, the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award-winning district.

In this research study, four school districts were identified as participants, including the Chugach School District from Anchorage, Alaska; Pearl River School District, in Pearl River, New York; Community Consolidated School District (CCSD) 15, in Palatine, Illinois; and, Jenks Public Schools, in Jenks, Oklahoma. Figure 1 is a simplistic conceptual diagram of the operations within each district with three major themes shown, including instructional leadership, the Baldrige Program, and stakeholder participation. The first two themes were chosen because they were the focus of the investigation, and the third theme of stakeholder participation was selected because the investigation was to include how stakeholders, such as teachers and students, interacted with Baldrige-based practices within the schools in the targeted districts. Later, in Chapter 5, a revised depiction of Figure 1 will represent the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data collection and analysis processes reported in Chapter 4.

Figure 1
Conceptual Diagram of One Operational Level within a Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award-winning District

Gear A = Instructional Leadership

Gear B = The Baldrige Program

The outer band = the operational level within the award-winning district

Gear C = Stakeholder Participation

Legend

1 = Emotional Intelligence Theory
2 = Instructional Leadership Theory
3 = Systems Thinking Theory
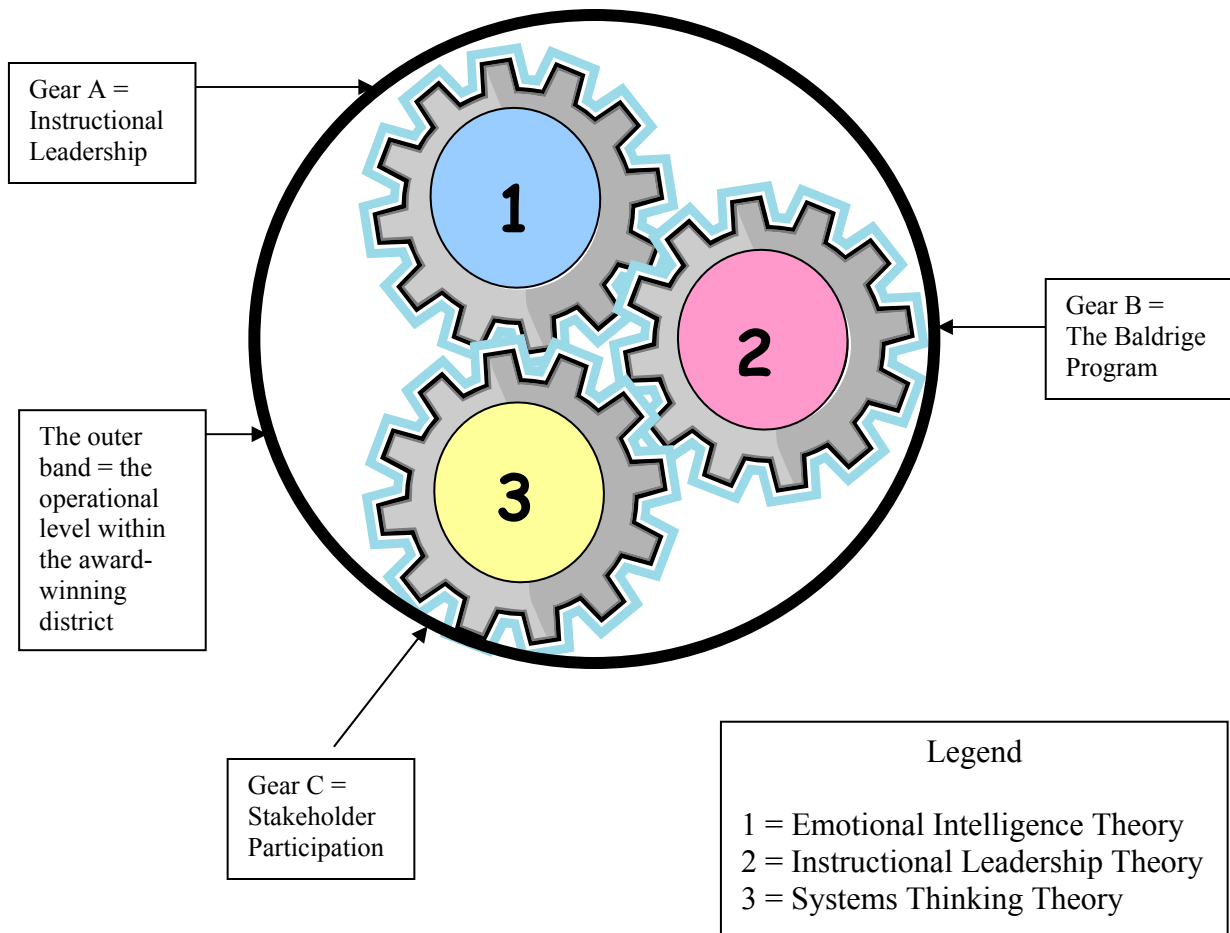
(© 2008, Original illustration created by Felicia M. Coleman)

Note. Within any given Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award-winning district, this conceptual diagram would be repeated three times, with each diagram representing one operational level within the district (either district operations, school operations, or classroom operations). Each diagram would be connected to the next diagram by the theory rods that simultaneously rotate that same gear at each level of operations. Because every level is dependent on appropriate functioning ability at the level above or below it, the spinning

movement of the rods must be in compliance with the movement of the other two rods, otherwise the dynamic, multi-tiered turning of gears does not take place.

Summary

A reviewer might question why the heavy reference to theoretical frameworks was necessary for this educational research project. Suppes (1974) answers this inquiry with four assertions, including (1) the recognition of theory leads to progress; (2) a requirement of theory is to provide analysis of the processes; (3) theory pushes for deeper understanding and a complete process analysis; and, (4) theory illuminates the mechanisms or processes as to why something works the way it does. Throughout their chapter entitled, *Framing Leadership Research in a New Era*, Kezar and his associates (2006) argued that educators move past the current research and pursue underlying theoretical themes and questions pertinent to educational leadership. Kezar also discussed how studies about the power dynamics that surround leadership and inspections into the relationship between learning and leadership were needed (Kezar et al., 2006).   It is important that we learn about leadership - a multidimensional phenomena occurring at multiple educational levels and with multiple educator/learner perspectives – and the context that influences that leadership in regards to instructional leadership and Baldrige-based educational practices.

Instructional leadership, emotional intelligence leadership, and systems thinking theories framed this research study, clarifying the leadership paradigm that existed at the district level for a superintendent and at the middle school level for principals and teachers when a continuous improvement model such as the Baldrige National Quality Program (BNQP) was implemented. District superintendents, middle school principals, and middle school teachers from the four districts who have won the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award were interviewed about

instructional leadership roles and leadership styles. Data were collected regarding the adoption, implementation, and maintenance of the BNQP from each research participant, forming a second avenue of investigation. Understanding how the Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence (BECPE) assessment instrument was utilized at the district and school levels completed the third avenue of investigation, and provided insight into its application and depth of impact.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

An inquiry-based, qualitative case study method was utilized in order to accurately capture perspectives in a rich, descriptive, flexible manner (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003; Marshall & Rossman, 1999). The case study approach investigated perspectives from a total of four purposefully selected Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA) winning district superintendents, combined with perspectives from two middle school principals and four middle school teachers within each targeted district. Because the history of qualitative research is deeply rooted in the areas of early American sociology and anthropology, which have traditionally collected data in those fields, the goal of this qualitative research project was:

> …to better understand human behavior and experience … to grasp the processes
>
> by which people construct meaning and to describe what those meanings are …
>
> to use empirical observation because it is with concrete incidents of human
>
> behavior that investigators can think more clearly and deeply about the human
>
> condition (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 38).

This research allowed for the collection of data in a naturalistic setting, providing the researcher with insights from the superintendents, middle school principals, and middle school teachers and the actions, beliefs, and leadership influences that potentially contributed to the winning of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award and the maintenance of Baldrige-based practices within the award-winning districts. This research also investigated the interrelationships between the three tiers of participants. The initial focus, although broad and open-ended, allowed for important meanings to be discovered (Maykut & Morehouse, 2000).

This chapter describes the research methodology, which included the following components: research design, research procedures regarding interviews, the research population, the unit of analysis, methods for data collection, data analysis, and the provisions of trustworthiness and safeguards. This chapter outlines the methodology that was used to discover the leadership styles of these award-winning participants and the impact of the adoption, implementation, and maintenance of Baldrige-based practices on instructional leadership capacity within each of the targeted districts and, more specifically, in the middle schools within the targeted districts.

Research Question

The primary focus of this study was to investigate the over-arching question: How has the adoption of Baldrige-based practices permeated instructional leadership beliefs and actions in middle level education? Four sub-questions were also utilized: (1) What specific changes in instructional leadership have been realized in your middle school since the implementation of Baldrige-based practices? (2) What instructional leadership ideals and beliefs were communicated during the different phases of Baldrige implementation and maintenance? (3) How have you been involved in the design and implementation of Baldrige-based practices in your middle school? (4) How is the effectiveness of Baldrige-based practices and their subsequent impact on instructional leadership within your middle school monitored?

Rationale for Qualitative Research
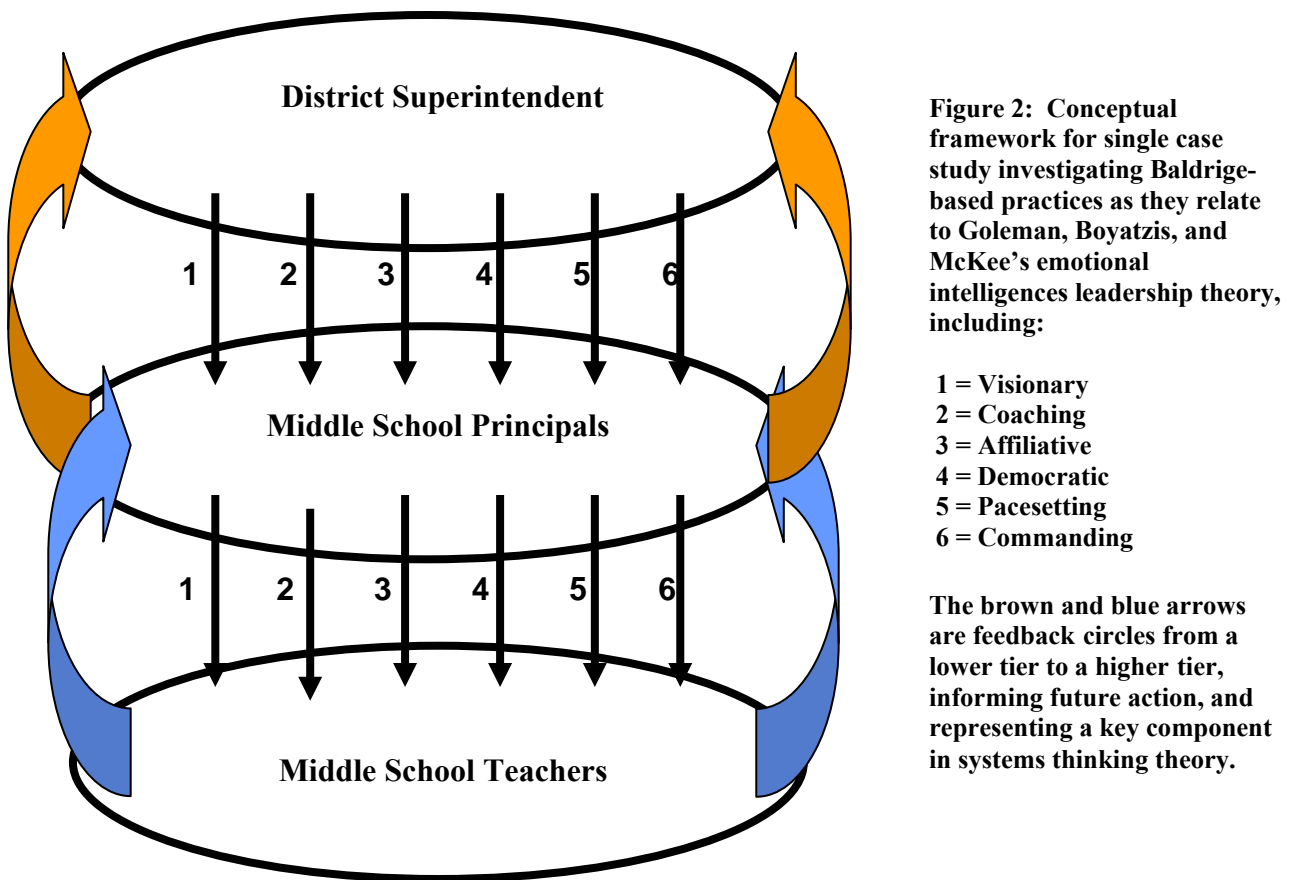
After reading Strauss and Corbin's 1998 publication, entitled, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*, I determined that qualitative methodology was the most appropriate methodology for my research study. It was Strauss and Corbin's (1998) three suggestions that the method: (1) should be related to the researcher's

personal views and experiences; (2) should agree with the nature of the research problem to be investigated; and, (3) should be utilized to investigate the unknown, that clinched the selection. Since the goal of this research study was to gain an understanding of how Baldrige-based practices impacted instructional leadership in middle level education, it was imperative that the perspectives of three tiers of educators were investigated. Knowing that I would be gaining insight into the participants' experiences, beliefs, and actions, the most appropriate qualitative methodology for this research study was phenomenology. As defined by Rudestam and Newton (2001), phenomenological inquiry seeks to explain the meaning of human experience through the personal articulation of each research participant. This method of collecting data seemed most appropriate for my chosen topic.

This descriptive research study utilized holistic educator perspectives from personnel at three distinct levels (district superintendent, middle school principals, and middle school teachers), preserving the complexities of human behavior and attempting to make sense of practiced instructional leadership qualities and actions.

A holistic and context-sensitive single prong study approach was utilized, but repeated four times to accommodate for the four school districts. Within each district, each tier of research participants was treated as a complete body from which research data were collected. An illustration of a single case study is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2
Conceptual Framework for Single Case Study

District Superintendent

1   2   3   4   5   6

Middle School Principals

1   2   3   4   5   6

Middle School Teachers

Figure 2: Conceptual framework for single case study investigating Baldrige-based practices as they relate to Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee's emotional intelligences leadership theory, including:

1 = Visionary
2 = Coaching
3 = Affiliative
4 = Democratic
5 = Pacesetting
6 = Commanding

The brown and blue arrows are feedback circles from a lower tier to a higher tier, informing future action, and representing a key component in systems thinking theory.

(© 2008, Original illustration created by Felicia M. Coleman)

Since four MBNQA winning districts participated in this study, this conceptual framework was repeated four times, collecting data from each tier of educators. Comparisons among the participants did create a three-tiered, case study methodology, but the data were reported from individual superintendents, individual principals, and district teacher groups in Chapter 4. The reporting of data in Chapter 4 revealed the perspectives of all respondents regarding one of the three gears noted in Figure 1, and provided a more comprehensive viewing of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award-winning districts.

Although I originally believed that I would treat each district as a single case study, reporting the findings from each district for a total of four case study reports, and comparing the findings from one district to the other three, the assurance of confidentiality to all research participants directly conflicted with separate district reports. Reporting of the findings in Chapter 4 does not identify any of the participants with regard to their school or school district, as guaranteed by me to the research participants prior to the phone interview or in the email correspondence.

Emerging patterns and themes among the data from all the respondents provided evidence about the main focuses of the study (Gall et al., 2003; Maykut & Morehouse, 2000), specifically the adoption, implementation, and maintenance of Baldrige-based practices and the instructional leadership observed in middle schools. By using case study methodology, I was able to collect rich data regarding Baldrige-based practices while remaining focused on each educator's role in building or contributing to instructional leadership (Brause & Mayher, 1998).

Role of the Researcher

According to Marshall and Rossman (2006), the qualitative researcher is one who views phenomena holistically, utilizes self-reflection throughout the research process, is sensitive to personal choices that may shape the research study, and uses complex reasoning. Strauss and Corbin (1990) identified personal qualities of the qualitative researcher, stating the researcher must have the "attribute of having insight, the ability to give meaning to data, and the capacity to understand" (p. 42). It is these three qualities that I embraced when I initiated this qualitative research study. I also referred to Patton's (1990) discussion throughout my research, understanding that my decisions in the field and when collecting data would contribute directly to the credibility of the report, as well as to the confidence level of the readers.

I believe my research background in the educational world prepared me for this research quest. The decision to utilize the proposed format to conduct interviews was based on my extensive training and practice with focus group and individual interview protocols utilized during Louisiana District Assistance Team (DAT) processes, Louisiana Accountability and Needs Assessment (LANA) processes, the Louisiana Assessment and Assistance Program (LATAAP) mentoring framework, and the Southern Association of Schools and Colleges (SACS) accreditation process. Acquiring data through individual and focus group interviews for more than ten years, I utilized audiotapes and field notes to provide a clear picture of the educational settings I was assigned to investigate. In addition to the appropriate fit between the research topic and the chosen methodology, it is because of my extensive use of qualitative methodology that qualitative research seemed the most appropriate venue for investigation.

Researcher Bias

I am an administrator in a school district that begun Baldrige implementation more than ten years ago. Since we have 66 schools in our district, and the Baldrige implementation is at varying degrees in each of the schools within the district. I thought researching the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award-winning districts would provide insight about the implementation and maintenance processes within each of the award-winning districts. I have also been trained as a trainer in the Baldrige method, but implementing the processes at the school level has not arrived at the level of award-winning status. I wanted to investigate how the award-winning districts implemented Baldrige-based practices in their own schools. More importantly, the central question to this research study - How has the implementation of Baldrige-based practices impacted instructional leadership in middle level education? – kept resurfacing in my mind, forcing me to investigate the possible answers.

I made careful considerations to ensure that my perspectives about Baldrige and my educational background would not interfere with data collection or analysis. The interview protocols were established so that I could remain focused on the questions developed, and not stray to other topics when those topics presented themselves during the interviews. Researcher bias was monitored throughout the research process. To ensure that the words and perceptions of the participants' were accurately articulated, I revisited the findings several times. I also reread transcripts several times to ensure that the quoted or paraphrased material was taken in the right context and represented the participant's meaning in the answer given.

Ethical Considerations

Before the study began, permission was sought and granted from the University of New Orleans' Institutional Review Board (IRB) to pursue data collection within the four targeted school districts. Permission to pursue this research study was granted in May 2008. The IRB application (see Appendix A), and the IRB Approval notice (see Appendix B), served as the impetus for a formal permission letter to the four MBNQA districts. Before I created any documents to send to the research participants, I referred to the Human Participants Protection Education for Research tutorial, (see Appendix C), to ensure that all of the principles outlined on the online coursework were reviewed. At that point in the process, the following principles were reviewed.

- Key historical events and current issues that impact guidelines and legislation on human participant protection in research.

- Ethical principles and guidelines that should assist in resolving the ethical issues inherent in the conduct of research with human participants.

- The use of key ethical principles and federal regulations to protect human participants at various stages in the research process.

- A description of guidelines for the protection of special populations in research.

- A definition of informed consent and components necessary for a valid consent.

- A description of the role of the IRB in the research process.

- The roles, responsibilities, and interactions of federal agencies, institutions, and researchers in conducting research with human participants.

The permission letter, (see Appendix D), outlined the intent of the research, the participants, and the significance of the research study. With targeted district approval, a participant consent form, (see Appendix E), was sent to the targeted participants, with oral or written agreement allowing for the onset of the research processes. Throughout my research study, ethical considerations were made during the investigation, data collection and analysis, presentation of the findings, and discussion of the participants' perspectives regarding the impact of Baldrige-based practices on instructional leadership in middle level education settings. Confidentiality concerns were addressed through the use of pseudonyms for all tiers of educators.

Assumptions

It was my primary assumption that the research participants would share their experiences, insights, and beliefs about the impact of Baldrige-based practices on instructional leadership in their district and in their middle schools. A second assumption pertained to the willingness of all respondents to participate in this research study, since (1) their school district had been nationally recognized and (2) most educators enjoy sharing their successes with other educators. The second component of the second assumption was true for all of the

superintendents and middle school principals, but it proved more difficult in encouraging participation among two of the targeted teacher groups. A third, and more general assumption, was that the respondents would provide revealing insight about Baldrige-based practices that could be directly linked to the research literature regarding the three underlying theories for this research study, including, instructional leadership theory, emotional intelligence leadership theory, and systems thinking theory.

Population

Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA)-winning recipients were asked by the American Society for Quality (ASQ) and the National Institute for Standards and Technology (NIST) to participate in ongoing evaluations and research investigations that would aide other educational entities in their quest for quality in education. Although this understanding has been established with each district superintendent, this understanding does not extend past the district office to the principals and teachers. The purposeful selection of the four award-winning school districts was initiated to increase the likelihood that variability common in any social phenomenon would be represented in the data (Maykut & Morehouse, 2000). The four school districts included Chugach School District in Anchorage, Alaska and Pearl River School District in Pearl River, New York (the winners for 2001); Community Consolidated School District 15 (the winner for 2003) in Palatine, Illinois; and, Jenks Public Schools (the winner for 2005) in Jenks, Oklahoma.

For this research study, the entire population of the MBNQA-winning districts was included in the sample set. This purposeful selection of the respondents sought information-rich data that concentrated on each participant's perspectives, as recommended by Patton (1990) and Lincoln and Guba (1985). To ensure a fuller, better-rounded picture of the targeted school

districts, I employed chain sampling methods to select the middle school principal and teacher participants in this research study. This type of sampling asks for assistance from a designated contact (in this case the superintendents were the contacts for the principals and the principals were the contacts for the teachers). From each designated contact, I received a list of names of potential participants who were believed capable and willing to share their rich perspectives about the impact of Baldrige-based practices on instructional leadership in middle schools. The superintendents compiled a list of all middle school principals and assistant principals, and then shared the list with me. The principals compiled a list of at least ten middle school teachers, and then that list was shared with me. I randomly selected two middle school principals or assistant principals from each district (for a total of 8 principal respondents), and then I selected four middle school teachers from each school district (for a total of 16 teacher respondents). No specific recommendations regarding gender, race, or years of experience were conveyed to the supervisory levels. All district demographic and historical data were obtained from the district websites and verified by the district superintendents.

Three of the targeted superintendents were the only superintendents to date to win the prestigious MBNQA since the award's inception in 1990, creating a fully inclusive and exhaustive sampling of the entire population of the highest tier of public educational administration. The fourth superintendent, although new to the award-winning school district, revealed that he was not new to the Baldrige National Quality Program, and he willingly participated in the study.

<div align="center">**Research Plan**</div>

An individual interview protocol was designed to allow the superintendents the opportunity to provide personal insight about Baldrige-based actions and influences that directly

<div align="center">50</div>

influence instructional leadership at the district level. A similar interview protocol was designed for the middle school principals and an additional focus group interview protocol was developed for the middle school teachers. The interview protocols were field-tested within my own school district, utilizing the district superintendent, a group of administrators from four different middle schools, and a small cadre of middle school teachers to examine questions for bias, sequence, clarity, and face-validity. The field testing of the interview instruments also provided me with information about (1) the appropriateness of the method to the problem studied, (2) accuracy of the measurement, (3) generalization of the findings, (4) administrative convenience, and (6) avoidance of ethical or political difficulties in the research process (Marshall & Rossman, 2006), leading me to change wording and meaning so that the participants could interact with the questions to the level and depth required.

Interview protocols are included in the appendices of this proposal, providing a comprehensive view of questions asked during individual interviews and focus group interviews. The superintendent interview protocol (see Appendix F), the interview protocol for the middle school principals (see Appendix G), and the teacher focus group interview protocol (see Appendix H) contain questions that were aimed at the identification of common themes that existed among the tiers of respondents and common practices and/or beliefs that were realized by each of the four Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award-winning districts.

To ensure the confidentiality of school and district personnel were maintained, the participant consent form, (see Appendix E), explaining the rules of confidentiality, as well as the parameters of this study, the individual interview protocol, and the focus group interview protocol were sent to each district superintendent, and discussions with the targeted superintendents (the gatekeepers of each district) were conducted prior to the onset of the actual

interviews. I read the consent form at the onset of each phone interview to make sure that each

participant understood the study, its purpose, its procedures, and the participant's rights. After I

discussed the consent form and my commitment to confidentiality with the participants, I again

asked whether the participant fully understood everything discussed. All participants vocalized

that they understood their rights. (For those teachers that chose to participate via email

correspondence, an email message containing the contents of the consent form was sent prior to

the sending of the teacher interview protocol. Participation via email indicated their

understanding of their rights.)

The confidentiality of the participants was safeguarded in two ways. First, I assigned

pseudonyms to each participant in order to protect confidentiality. Secondly, I kept all audiotapes

and transcribed notes separate from one another, and in private, locked locations. Lastly, all

email correspondences were downloaded to my personal laptop computer, printed, and then

deleted from my email message container. Each email correspondent was also given a

pseudonym, and their email transcript was treated like a transcribed tape recording.

Data Collection

Before the interview process was implemented, the district superintendents, serving as

the gatekeepers of their own district, were contacted so that research access could be attained.

Personal contact between me and each of the superintendents was initiated prior to the onset of

the project. Each of the superintendents also provided access to the middle school principals and

teachers within their designated district.

At the onset of this research study, I generated three similar documents that provided

documentation that allowed for coding and trend analysis. For those teachers who chose to send

email communications defining their perspectives, those correspondences were treated as if they

had been conducted via phone communication. The email correspondences were added to the teacher body of knowledge and included within the study. .

I created three flexible, but structured interview protocols (see Appendices F, G, and H) to ensure that the same sets of questions were asked of each respondent at each operational level. I collected insight from the four MBNQA-winning districts' educators, with similarities and differences noted among participant responses. Sub-questions were listed on each interview protocol to elucidate more information from the participant, in cases where the respondent seemed reluctant to answer the main question posed. The interview protocols were also established so that transcription of the responses would be manageable. As suggested by Denzin and Lincoln (1994), the participants were asked to share specific points of view during the detailed interview sessions. Patton (1990) explained that "We interview to find out what is in and on someone else's mind, to gather their stories" (p. 341). The purpose of my interviews was to obtain the stories of adoption, implementation, and maintenance of Baldrige-based practices in each of the targeted school districts.

All interviews included a standard set of questions, but each respondent group was not limited to the list of questions alone. An outline for the interview process was given to each research participant prior to the actual interview session, and permission to audio tape the interview session was obtained from each research participant prior to the onset of the interview. Each interview session was taped and transcribed into an electronic word processing document.

 I conducted a phone interview with all four superintendents, all eight middle school principals, and three of the sixteen middle school teachers. The interviews with the superintendents lasted from one hour to one and one half hours. The principal interviews lasted between forty-five minutes to one hour and fifteen minutes. The teacher interviews lasted for

one hour. All interviews were audio taped, transcribed verbatim, and then the tapes were erased. Transcriptions were assigned pseudonyms, and then placed in a secure location for future access.

The original research plan included focus group interviews that would combine middle school teachers of different content areas into a small, intimate group to gain insight about the actions, beliefs, and influences of the school administrator during all phases of adoption, implementation, and maintenance of Baldrige-based practices within the targeted middle school. Focus group interviews were not possible due to scheduling conflicts, after-school responsibilities, extra-curricular activities , and distance issues that would have proved challenging to the teacher respondents. Since the teacher focus group interview protocol had been established and approved by my proposal committee, the same format was emailed to the teacher respondents and they were given the choice of either a phone interview or to respond via email correspondence. Three teachers chose to be interviewed via phone conversations.

The remaining thirteen middle school teachers who did not participate in phone interviews chose to answer the interview protocol questions via email correspondence. Five of the thirteen email respondents needed multiple correspondences in order to create a full understanding of their viewpoints. All email correspondence was downloaded to my personal laptop, printed, and then removed from my email container. The printed correspondences were assigned pseudonyms, and then placed in the same location as the other transcriptions.

Data Analysis

This research study recognized that one of the defining characteristics of qualitative research was an inductive approach to data analysis (Maykut & Morehouse, 2000). The data analysis protocol used brought order, structure, and interpretation to the mass of collected data (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). In this qualitative study, I collected multiple forms of data to gain

a deep understanding about the phenomenological elements within each of the MBNQA-winning districts and the phenomenon of instructional leadership as perceived by each of the district superintendents, middle school principals, and middle school teachers (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Marshall & Rossman; Maykut & Morehouse).

Three forms of data collected included individual oral interview responses, individual written interview responses, and completed district-level MBNQA applications, containing demographic, historical, adoption, implementation, and maintenance information regarding Baldrige-based practices and processes. During the process, I stayed close to the research participants' feelings, thoughts, and actions as they broadly related to the focus of inquiry (Maykut & Morehouse, 2000). Emerging patterns within the multiple data sets were identified, providing insight about possible themes, obstacles, and successes encountered when the application of Baldrige-based practices and processes were utilized.

All interview questions were exploratory and descriptive, so the outcomes were not necessarily generalized. The results indicated a deep understanding of the experiences and perspectives of each level of research participant–from the superintendency to the classroom teacher. The interviews served as an interpretive-descriptive emergent design, relying on the words and meanings as the basis for data analysis. The collected data was analyzed for trends, similarities, differences, and subsequent interviews with any of the research participants were conducted to clarify any themes or patterns that emerged (Maykut & Morehouse, 2000).

To identify emerging themes, the analysis process began by looking for recurring regularities in the data, revealing patterns that could be eventually sorted into specific sub-themes. The sub-themes were then prioritized using value, uniqueness, and utility as guides for numerical status. Each sub-theme was tested for priority completeness and coherence. The

potential to add to a complete picture of the research project was also a testing consideration. Lastly, the sub-themes were tested for credibility and understandings, ensuring that the categories made sense to someone not directly involved in the research study. Throughout the steps in the process, it was necessary to distinguish which pieces of data did not seem to fit any of the designated sub-themes, and then to determine what should be done with those pieces of data. In the final analysis, process descriptions were distinguished from the outcomes, and linkages between the processes and outcomes were revealed.

This qualitative study utilized triangulation techniques to clarify and verify the interpretations of the data (Brause & Mayher, 1998). Triangulation involved the use of a minimum of three data sources to corroborate findings and/or emerging themes. More than three data sources were utilized, including individual interviews, email correspondence answers reflecting the teacher focus group interview questions, historical demographic and test data, and official MBNQA applications (Brause & Mayher, 1998; Gall et al., 2003). An inductive analysis of the qualitative data involved the discovery of patterns and themes emerging from the data. A deductive analysis, involving the analyzation of the data according to Hallinger and Leithwood's (1998) instructional leadership tenets, Goleman and his associates' (2003) emotional leadership characteristics, and Senge and his colleagues' (2000) systems thinking components, was conducted. The analyses contributed to a deeper, all-encompassing understanding of the research focus from the perspectives of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award-winning educators- the impact of Baldrige-based practices on instructional leadership in middle schools.

Establishing Trustworthiness

Provisions of trustworthiness and safeguards were clearly described and outlined for each of the research participants, ensuring that all ethical considerations were clearly denoted orally

and in text format within the letter of consent. I worked with the dissertation committee to ensure that research bias did not occur and that all possible safeguards were taken to prevent bias (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Glesne (1999) equated trustworthiness to establishing rapport with the participants. In this research study, rapport was established both in the written documents sent to the participants and in the oral interviews. In the participant consent form (see Appendix E): the following principles regarding trustworthiness were identified.

1. Sufficient information about the study, to ensure informed decisions about research involvement, were provided to each research participant prior to the onset of the study.

2. Research participants were able to withdraw, without penalty, from the study at any point. (If a Superintendent did withdraw, a designee for that superintendent would be appointed to speak on the superintendent's behalf, but only with the superintendent's written approval. If a principal decided to withdraw, the researcher contacted an alternate candidate, possibly another middle school principal or a middle school assistant principal, naming the new participant as the research participant.)

3. This research study eliminated all unnecessary risks to the participants.

4. Benefits to the research participants or to the targeted district, preferably both, outweighed all potential risks.

5. The right to privacy, along with the guidelines for securing confidentiality, was discussed with the superintendents, middle school principals, and middle school teachers during the introductory phase of the interview session, and followed-up with an email from the researcher.

6. All ethical considerations were discussed and consent forms were obtained prior to the onset of the interview session and self-assessment completion.

In phone interviews, I established trustworthiness by orally reviewing the participant consent form, keeping the interviews within the allotted time frame, staying focused on the interview protocols, and by maintaining a personal conversation with each respondent. Phone interviews began with a cheery, "Hello," and were concluded with a message of gratitude for participating in the research study.

For those teachers who chose to respond to the interview protocol via email correspondence, I established trustworthiness through follow-up email correspondences that thanked the respondent for participating.

Summary

The chapter provided both an outline and a rationale for utilizing qualitative methodology to explore the perceptions of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award-winning district superintendents, middle school principals, and middle school teachers. Methods of data collection and analysis were discussed, as well as the limitations and possible implications of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

Research Findings

Introduction

The primary purpose of this study was to reveal the perceptions and insights of superintendents, middle school principals, and middle school teachers who are part of the only four Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award-winning districts. The qualitative inquiries focused on educational leadership in middle schools and revealed nuances regarding the implementation and maintenance of Baldrige-based practices in those same settings. The researcher conducted one-on-one phone interviews with each superintendent and middle school principal. Three middle school teachers from the same district chose to participate via phone interviews. The remaining thirteen middle school teachers chose to reveal their insights via email correspondence. The central focus of this study was to uncover the impact of Baldrige-based practices, processes, and tools on instructional leadership in middle schools.

Chapter Four contains two primary sections. In the first section, the four participating school districts are discussed and my reflections during the data collection process are revealed. Immediately following my insights, the district superintendents and the middle school principals are introduced. A collective summary introduces the participating middle school teachers. The second section includes a summary of the data analysis, procedures, and emerging themes revealed during the interviews with each of the three groups of educators. The data answer the general research question posed in this study – How has the adoption of Baldrige-based practices permeated instructional leadership beliefs and practices in middle level education?

The selection process included respondents from three tiers of educators – the district superintendent, middle school principals and/or assistant principals, and middle school teachers.

All research participants currently work in one of the four Malcolm Baldrige National Quality

Award winning school districts. The four superintendents, one from each district, and at least

two principals and/or assistant principals from each district were interviewed via a one-to-one

phone call. To ensure confidentiality, the administrators at both the district and the school levels

were given pseudonyms. In districts where there were more than two middle schools, the

researcher randomly selected the participating school administrators from the total number of

middle school principals. In districts where there was only one middle school, the principal and

the assistant principal were asked to participate in the research study. General information

pertaining to gender, years of experience, and highest degree held by the administrative

participants can be viewed in Table 1 below.

Table 1
Demographics of Administrative Participants

Superintendents	Sex	Years of Educational Experience	Highest Degree Held
Allen	Male	20+	Ed.D.
Bailey	Male	20+	Ph.D.
Conley	Male	20+	Ph.D.
Dillard	Male	20+	Ed.D.
Principals and/or Assistant Principals	Sex	Years of Educational Experience	Highest Degree Held
Evans	Male	15+	Master's +30
Feurst	Female	15+	Master's +30
Gilbert	Female	15+	Master's +30
Hinch	Female	15+	Master's +30
Ingels	Male	15+	Master's +30
Jacobs	Female	15+	Master's +30
Klein	Female	15+	Master's +30
Laurents	Male	15+	Master's +30

Phone interviews were scheduled with the administrative participants via phone call or email correspondence, and the actual interviews were conducted during each participant's work day. To further safeguard confidentiality, the researcher did not link any of the content of the discussion with the participant (i.e. reference to Superintendent Bailey by the principal or the mention of the district name by the superintendent) when reporting the results.

The same general protocol of confidentiality for the administrative participants was followed for the sixteen middle school teachers. A pseudonym last name was assigned to the group of teachers from the same district, and each teacher within the district was assigned a different first name pseudonym. This process was implemented to ensure the answers given by the participants were safeguarded. Nine female middle school teachers and seven male middle school teachers participated in this research study. Number of years of teaching experience and highest degree earned data were not part of the teacher interview protocol, so that demographic data were not acquired. Specific demographic data about each teacher respondent had the potential to serve as a qualifying identifier by those who choose to read the results of the research study. Although each teacher was asked what subjects that person taught in the middle school setting, it was realized that this information could also link a teacher to a comment made about that teacher's unique course offering, so consequently, this information was not provided to the reader in the reporting of this research study.

Interviews and email correspondence began in June 2008 and continued through October 2008. While the superintendents were in their district offices during the summer months, most of the principals, assistant principals, and middle school teachers were not in their home schools until after Labor Day. The interview schedule was changed to reflect the calendars of the four school districts, stretching the interview timeline to the early days of October 2008.

The Four School Districts

Four School districts to date have won the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. Those districts include Chugach School District in Anchorage, Alaska; Pearl River School District in Pearl River, New York; Community Consolidated School District (CCSD) 15 in Palatine, Illinois; and, Jenks Public Schools in Jenks, Oklahoma. It is shown in Table 2 the current number of students and teachers within each district. One unique demographic feature, as well as a unique characteristic not shared by other districts, is reported within the table. The year the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award was won by each district is also noted.

Table 2
District Demographics

DISTRICT NAME	APPROX. NUMBER OF STUDENTS	APPROX. NUMBER OF TEACHERS	UNIQUE POPULATION FEATURE	UNIQUE DISTRICT FEATURE	YEAR AWARDED MBNQ AWARD
Chugach	214	30	50% are Alaska Natives	All students, in all grade levels, have an Individual Learning Plan (ILP)	2001
Pearl River	2,715	216	89.5% Caucasian	96% of the students continue to higher education institutions	2001
CCSD 15	12,400	869	70 different languages are spoken within this district	Nine district schools are recognized as Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence	2003
Jenks	nearly 10,000	approx. 820	Diverse population spread across 39 square miles	Consistently performs in the top 1% of Oklahoma schools	2005

The information in Table 2 was obtained from each district's website and verified during each phone interview with the superintendents.

Researcher's Perspectives Regarding Administrative Interviews

As I approached the beginning days of interviews, I worried that the superintendents and principals would not be enthusiastic about participating. Since each interview protocol was to engage the respondent in conversation for at least 45 minutes to one hour, I wondered if the district and school administrators would be reluctant to sustain a conversation of that length. Knowing that the interview protocols also required the administrators to reflect on their own leadership styles and actions, I also wondered whether the respondents would hesitate to answer the questions posed. And since two of the four superintendents were not in their current positions when the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award was won by the district, I questioned whether the new superintendents would be disinclined to speak of the leadership exhibited by their predecessors.

Throughout the administrative interviews, I was inspired by the willingness of the respondents to safeguard the necessary timeframe for the interview, to share their vision and mission of their school or district, and to reflect on their leadership strengths and areas for improvement. Of the 12 administrative interviews (four for superintendents and eight for middle school principals), eight remained within the proposed timeframe. The four interviews that lapsed beyond the one hour allotment lapsed because the respondent wanted to speak in greater depth about a question or questions posed. All of the administrative respondents offered me a personal invitation to their district or school, and all district superintendents presented me the opportunity to speak directly to their school boards about the findings of this research study. I

did reiterate that an executive summary would be sent to each superintendent so that it could be shared with school board members, principals, teachers, and community members.

I introduced myself, identified the degree that I hoped to obtain at the end of the research study, and, clarified the leadership elements within the study. Since the research study investigated the impact of Baldrige-based practices, processes, and tools in each of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award-winning districts and schools, there was a common language between the respondents. In the remaining paragraphs in this section of the chapter, a general portrait of each participant will be defined, highlighting the leadership and usage of Baldrige-based practices, processes, and tools by the participant.

Every district superintendent and school administrator was provided a copy of the appropriate interview protocol (see Appendices F and G) prior to the phone interview. The superintendents were emailed all three interview protocols so that each superintendent could see the alignment of the data collection process, as well as the types of questions that were to be discussed at each educator level.

The data collection for this research study spanned from mid-June to the end of September. The superintendent interviews were conducted first, mainly because it was necessary to gain access to the district personnel from the superintendent. Each superintendent was first contacted by phone, and then the initial contact was followed with an email correspondence that contained my IRB approval, a letter of introduction addressed to the superintendent, and all of the interview protocols. The actual interview of each superintendent followed the email correspondence. The actual phone interview occurred during a 45 minute to one hour time slot designated by the superintendent. (Two interviews lasted longer than one hour.) All

conversations were taped, and later transcribed by the researcher. All transcriptions were printed for easier data analysis.

The principal interviews began after Labor Day and continued through the second week in September. Each principal was first contacted by phone, and then contacted by email. The email contained a summary of my research project, with the IRB approval notice (see Appendix B) and principal interview protocol (see Appendix G) as email attachments. The phone interviews with the principal respondents were scheduled for 45 minutes to one hour, although two of the interviews lasted approximately 15 minutes longer than the scheduled appointment. Each interview was taped. The researcher transcribed the tapings. The transcriptions were then printed for data analysis.

Three of the 16 teacher respondents were interviewed via telephone conversation. All of the respondents were contacted first by email, sent the middle school teacher focus group interview protocol (see Appendix H), and those that chose to be interviewed via phone were later contacted in that manner. The three respondents who were interviewed by phone were from the same district, and their interviews were conducted at the end of the school day. Their interviews were taped and then transcribed. The transcriptions were printed for easier data analysis.

The 13 teacher respondents that chose to send their reflections via email sent their responses within a two week period after the initial email request. The respondents answered the same interview protocol questions posed during the oral interview sessions. The teacher respondents were asked to click the reply button when they received the email correspondence with the protocol questions, type in their responses, and then click the Send button to return their reflections to the researcher. The 13 respondents complied with the simple instructions. All

email responses were printed when they arrived, and then deleted from the hard drive, for security purposes.

All printed transcripts were analyzed for reoccurring concepts, or themes. Once all interview and email statements were grouped according to similarities that existed within the texts, a printed Post-It note was assigned to a specific theme. Each concept was assigned a different printed tab for easier reference. A list of the emerging themes and sub-themes was made.

The Superintendents

Superintendent Allen

I began this phone interview with a brief introduction, and then explained the purpose of the interview. I reviewed the consent form and acquired permission to proceed. I made sure my tape recorder was working properly, and continued with the interview. I followed the Superintendent Interview Protocol (see Appendix F), collected the general demographic data about Superintendent Allen first, and then moved to the questions that pertained specifically to the research study. In his interview, the superintendent communicated that he transplanted himself into his current district from another U. S. state, hoping to work more closely with students and to empower them to improve both the school and community. Because he followed in the footsteps of like-minded superintendents, he articulated that he had succeeded with his personal goals much more quickly than anticipated.

This superintendent conveyed that Baldrige practices, processes, and tools provided the framework with which both the students and the teachers could systematically measure success. He explained how he renamed Baldrige's seven categories (leadership; strategic planning; student, stakeholder, and market focus; measurement, analysis, and knowledge management;

faculty and staff focus; process management; and organizational performance results) to help all school stakeholders understand the value of the categories in a language that was easily understood by all. He articulated that he believed teacher buy-in of the Baldrige Program was there but wanted to achieve teacher ownership of the program – a much harder goal to attain. The superintendent reported that he displayed both distributive and situational styles of leadership during professional development opportunities for his principals and teachers, modeling what he hoped educators would in turn implement in the school settings. This superintendent helped to develop a list of guiding questions to ensure curriculum alignment among grades and subject areas, demonstrating his belief in hands-on leadership. He admitted that he is heavily engaged in staff training, working to build camaraderie and collegiality, ultimately forming a shared vision among the educators in his district.

Superintendent Allen shared that another important responsibility is working with the school district's community members. In order to craft the district's shared vision, the superintendent worked with community members in the development of the path for improvement. This superintendent conveyed his belief that instruction takes place everywhere and throughout each day to parents and community members during parent and community forums in an effort to engage them in the instruction of the students when the students leave the school campus. He admitted that the challenge of working with community members, although eager to serve, is keeping them focused on the task at hand.

Throughout the interview, Superintendent Allen remarked on the importance of trust when implementing and maintaining Baldrige-based practices and processes. He stated that his teachers and principals expected him to do what was ultimately right for the students. He determined mentorships among teachers based on student results. He also shared the indicators

that he used to measure teacher or principal successes were applied when teachers and principals rated his success.

This superintendent looked outside the school setting to the community at large when reflecting on his leadership style. He explained that he welcomed support from his parents and community members, and that he was constantly working to improve those relationships so that the school district truly had a shared vision and deep trust amongst its stakeholders. His parting words to me were, "Get all the pieces. Make sure that all stakeholders feel that they are on the same path." I knew he was giving advice for future Baldrige adoptees, but I pondered whether this was not just good advice for reporting the research results, too.

Superintendent Bailey

I followed the Superintendent Interview Protocol (see Appendix F), collecting the general demographic data about Superintendent Bailey first, and then moving to the questions that pertained specifically to the research study. Superintendent Bailey began the Baldrige implementation in his district. His ultimate vision was to increase student performance and academic achievement. According to Superintendent Bailey, his philosophy of "There are no substitutes like success," remains on the forefront of conversations with staff members, parents, and community members. Although this superintendent shared that Baldrige-based practices and processes are firmly in place, he remarked that he has had to work longer and harder to win over the parents to this educational "way of life" in the school district.

The resounding message from Superintendent Bailey was that Baldrige-based practices and processes have impacted the use of data, establishing the direct link between instruction and what occurs as a result of teaching. He informed me that both teachers and students manage data efficiently and use the data to prioritize goal setting efforts. He further explained that teachers

use the data to translate or inform instructional practice. This superintendent estimated that 85 to 90% of his teachers were using student performance data effectively. Superintendent Bailey explained his belief that the middle school arena is the most difficult setting for teachers to work, and then contrasted that thought with the philosophy that all students can and will learn. He further acknowledged that through the use of Baldrige-based practices to collect and analyze data, student learning could occur.

Although Baldrige-based practices were utilized within his district, the superintendent himself did not utilize the Baldrige language when speaking to the stakeholders. He also indicated that the support from the parents and community was minimal. Although this situation might discourage most superintendents, he remained focused on what is going right for his district and the high levels of academic achievement his students attained.

When asked about giving advice to those contemplating the adoption of Baldrige-based practices in their own district, he had a four-part message. First, Superintendent Bailey said that schools new to Baldrige should focus on the Quality tools that comprise an integral part of Baldrige, especially the Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) cycle of refinement (see Appendix I), the affinity chart (see Appendix J) for building consensus, and the Plus/Delta form (see Appendix K) for collecting feedback. Secondly, in an effort to improve practice and depth of implementation, Superintendent Bailey encouraged other districts to apply for the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award repeatedly until the award is won. His third piece of advice stated, "Every stakeholder should be prepared to get feedback on his actions." This feedback is important to continuous improvement and to the shared vision. His last remark was one that demonstrated his true servant attitude, "Prepare to be humbled." He stated that he was humbled by the work ethic of his teachers, the feedback from the students about a school program, and the input from the

parents and community members about overall performance. Using a positive, upbeat tone, Superintendent Bailey stated, "I feel criticism is the opportunity for improvement."

Superintendent Conley

I followed the Superintendent Interview Protocol (see Appendix F), collecting the general demographic data about Superintendent Conley first, and then moving to the questions that pertained specifically to the research study. As a new superintendent to his district, Superintendent Conley shared that he researched his district schools and personnel, his predecessors, and his own beliefs about education. This superintendent shared that the foundational components of the Baldrige program were in place years before the district won the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. He stated that his research showed that the district had changed superintendents twice before his arrival, and that the vision of improving student performance, the quality of instruction and teacher collaboration was evident before his arrival. Superintendent Conley stated that the district's focus would continue to be his focus for the future.

When posing questions to this superintendent, he revealed that he had recently visited the schools in his district, looking for the common thread among the classrooms. Superintendent Conley thanked me for sending the interview protocol prior to the interview. He indicated that it gave him an opportunity to compare his in-school observations with an independent set of questions that was focused on Baldrige-based practices, processes, and tools. He reported that the Quality tools, specifically the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycles of refinement (see Appendix I), could be observed in many of the classrooms. He also noted that students, under the guidance of their teachers, were using student portfolios, or data binders (see Appendix L) to

track student performance, behavior, and attendance. He stated that constructivist learning was a reality in his district, and he was glad for that reality.

Superintendent Conley argued, "My biggest challenges, standing as elephants in the educational arena, are that of staff development and teacher collaboration." He indicated that the staff as a whole was committed to maintaining status quo, and he hoped that through a book study based on Jim Collin's well-known inspiration, *Good to Great*, that the school administrators and teachers would resurrect the commitment to and pursuit of Baldrige-based practices in middle schools. This superintendent noted, "I feel it is my responsibility to bring Quality processes to the forefront, to build Level 5 leadership on all of the school campuses." For those who have not read the book, *Good to Great*, Jim Collins defines a Level 5 leader as one who foregoes the leader's ego needs in an effort to build a great company (Collins, 2005).

Superintendent Conley's parting advice revealed his research regarding the historical events and actions that are part of the job he was hired to do. Although he viewed the leader's role in the implementation and maintenance of Baldrige-based practices as critical to the success of the program, he stated, "The true success of a program should be measured according to the depth and retention of that program in the district. I call this measurement of success, 'institutionalization.' Practices and processes should be institutionalized. Is the program vital to the operations and success of the schools? The Baldrige Program should be an integral part of the systemic processes within your school district, and not solely dependent on the leader in charge. Continuity is the key."

Superintendent Dillard

I followed the Superintendent Interview Protocol (see Appendix F), collecting the general demographic data about Superintendent Dillard first, and then moving to the questions that

pertained specifically to the research study. Superintendent Dillard stated that he researched the Total Quality Management (TQM) program in the 1990's. He stated, "Although I thought the foundational concepts to be useful in educational arenas, I thought that there was too much emphasis on the management, and not enough focus on growth." In the mid 1990's, this superintendent shared that he adopted the Baldrige principles and core values for his district, and renamed the efforts in his school district "continuous improvement."

To set the district was on a path of continuous improvement, Superintendent Dillard hired outside consultants to survey three groups of stakeholders, including the certified staff (educators), classified employees (support staff), and parents/community members. The results of the scientific surveys were, and still are, reported to the school board annually. Superintendent Dillard explained that the survey results are utilized to direct the annual PDSA cycle of refinement (see Appendix I), or as he noted "cycle of improvement," created by each district department and each district school. This superintendent communicated that he worked with school board members to create biennial goals during the first years of Baldrige implementation, but he was now working with his school board members to create triennial goals and strategic objectives that focus on student achievement.

Although a working relationship with the school board was a reality for this superintendent, he reported that he was not satisfied to work with just the school board and district cabinet. He created a continuous improvement leadership team, which consisted of a principal from each educational level, the superintendent, and members of his executive staff. According to Superintendent Dillard, the role of this team is to monitor the pulse of the district, and to assess progress toward district and school goals while ensuring that continuous improvement becomes part of the culture of the district. This team also discussed professional

development and conference opportunities that are available, and the best investments of both their time and money.

Superintendent Dillard remarked that he had also formed a task force of approximately 60 members. He shared that parents, teachers, and community members were, and still are, active participants in the task force, and that their responsibilities include the alignment and development of a K-12 curriculum continuum, based on national, state, and local curriculum standards.

The district has benefitted from the collaboration between the members of this task force. They have paved the way for consistent teaching and learning. And they share their thoughts with other parents and teachers to set the best direction for where we need to go.

Superintendent Dillard also told,

In the early years of my life as an administrator, I probably was a traditional leader. I handled only the managerial aspects of this job. As time progressed, I was transformed into a dreamer. I knew it was my responsibility to develop a vision with clear expectations and long range goals that focused on building student leadership. I knew that I could not achieve this vision alone, and I vowed to get as many people as possible involved in the vision and the improvement processes of the district.

He further explained that he adopted the philosophy that "Change is required if improvement is to take place." Superintendent Dillard shared that he meets with all new certified teachers two or three times per school year to ensure that the district vision is clearly articulated to teachers and to discuss district goals. He said that all new teachers are also trained about continuous

improvement efforts. He remarked that training for new teachers helped to ensure the understanding of district and school goals, and perpetuated the preferred culture in the schools.

According to Superintendent Dillard, "Teamwork has the most impact." This superintendent explained that remaining focused on predetermined goals helps to keep everyone headed in the same direction. I asked Superintendent Dillard, "What advice do you have to other districts contemplating implementation of Baldrige-based practices?" He replied, "Rely on the data to ensure that your course is rigorous and achievable. Use the data to improve student achievement, as well as instructional practices."

The Principals

Principal Evans

The interview with Principal Evans was the first principal interview I conducted for this research study. I followed the same format of introducing myself, introducing the research study, and then reviewing the consent form as I had with the targeted superintendents, but I utilized the Middle School Principal Interview Protocol (see Appendix G) for this interview. This interview took place in the early morning hours of school in this principal's district.

I learned from Principal Evans that he was both a teacher and a principal during the early years of Baldrige implementation in his district. When the current superintendent in the district moved from the principalship to the superintendency, Principal Evans took his place at the school. Like the superintendent, this principal shares the simple focus of the district – "We must improve." Although Principal Evans admitted that his leadership methods are a bit different from his predecessor's, he said having the same focus helped to form a seamless transition from one leader to the next.

This principal indicated that building commitment in his school and community was at the forefront of his actions. He conveyed that he gained input from his teachers, mapped out strategies that could be employed, shared the strategies with the faculty members, revised the plan of action if necessary, and then proceeded to implementation. Principal Evans explained that his philosophy regarding middle level education was that, "Education must be done with the students. We often teach to the students. We must include the students in designing their personal learning goals. We cannot teach students to be accountable if we do not allow them to be." He shared that he is a strong proponent of classroom environments that foster open communication, and hires new teachers according to this conviction. He commented that his shared leadership approach to education has helped his teachers and students to rise to leadership roles and that his approach has held each group to the highest level of accountability and performance.

Since this principal served as a teacher in the district prior to acquiring this principal position, Principal Evans's perceptions of obstacles faced during implementation were from the vantage point of a teacher. He stated, "Community buy-in was difficult during the early days of implementation. Although it is better than it was, it is still a challenge for my teaching staff." Principal Evans shared that he has ongoing conversations with the superintendent, where they analyze new methods and strategies to positively impact parent and community engagement with school-based initiatives.

Principal Evans reported that the systems approach, a philosophy that is the foundation on which Baldrige operates, has had the most impact with middle school student performance. He explained,

Students use their performance data and the PDSA cycles to guide their learning paths. The student determines the curriculum standards that he will include in his project. The student, with the help of the teacher, creates a rubric or scoring guide to determine how the project will be evaluated. And the student knows that he must prove mastery of the content from the beginning of the project to the final presentation.

Principal Evans explained that peer and teacher feedback, as well as student self-assessment of the product, helped the student to reflect on attainment of the student's goals, and then the cycle was repeated with the student creating future goals and learning objectives.

The advice from Principal Evans to other principals who are planning to adopt Baldrige practices is to remember that "students are unique, with unique learning styles." He encouraged using the Quality tools and PDSA cycles of refinement, (see Appendix I), to ensure learning is meaningful, engaging, and matched to the needs of the students. He reiterated, "Education must be done *with* the students, not *to* the students, if learning and performance is to be significant and lasting."

Principal Feurst

"Student success is for all students. And we must focus on both subject skills and life skills to measure success." These two sentences summed up the philosophy of this principal. Principal Feurst serves as lead teacher in her school and on a district team, working to establish a new mission for both the school and district. She stated that it is important to educate the parents about the systems of Baldrige.

Principal Feurst shared special insights about the impact of Baldrige-based practices, processes, and tools on teaching and learning in her middle school. She indicated that she still considers herself a facilitator of learning. She also reported that even though direct instruction

does take place, each student has individual growth targets which allow for more creativity and ownership of the student-generated product. She explained that students were given flexible guidelines with more input about what and how they learn. She argued that it is the job of educators to move students toward independency and self-motivation. She said middle school is the "stepping stone from group work to self-directed learning."

This middle school principal stated that she utilized a shared leadership approach in her school. She explained,

> When a school-based function is to be held, the tasks of setup, monitoring, and takedown are given to the students. We allow the students the opportunity to direct the project, and to demonstrate to parents and community members that they can cooperate and collaborate so that the task can be accomplished. At the same time, students are taught basic communication skills that enhance their leadership abilities.

Principal Feurst argued that students need character education as much as they need an academic education. She credited the service projects that are assigned during the school year as having the best impact on her middle school students. She also stated that using the Baldrige-based practices of setting goals, ensuring alignment with each student's learning goals, and reflecting on the end product/performance has helped students to understand the power of their own leadership abilities. Her recommendation to other schools in the adoption phase of Baldrige was, "Look for a connection between the classroom and the community, and use the systems approach to set and meet goals. If everyone if focused on the same end product, you are more likely to meet your goals."

Principal Gilbert

Principal Gilbert stated that she and her teachers do not allow students to forget information that was taught earlier in the year or in previous years. She articulated that her focus was on the scaffolding of constant teaching. She indicated that she keeps a central question in the forefront of conversations with her teachers, "When you assess students, what do you do with the results?" She stated that the assessment should be utilized as a tool for instructional development.   She explained, "My fundamental interest in data is shared by my superintendent. The goals of my school are in direct alignment with the district goals. We are all trying to minimize the gaps in teaching and learning."

This principal commented that she served as a leader in her school when her district began the Baldrige implementation. She shared that the district as a whole needed to improve student achievement, and that the superintendent realized that the only way to make that happen was to focus on what the data revealed. She affirmed this by saying,

With the adoption of Baldrige, the district and each of the schools began to meet the challenges of the district head on. My school developed a transition program to assist students moving from middle school to high school. Two more programs, one for gifted students and another one for at-risk students, were created to address the individual learning needs of each student. For those students who needed more special education support, a course of study was designed to meet their specific needs. And for the students who did not qualify for any of the previous programs, four courses of study were offered so that every student rotated from one course to another throughout the school year. No matter which "track" the student qualified for, performance data was examined at least

twice per year to determine whether the student stayed in or was removed from a learning track.

Principal Gilbert referred to student goal setting, charting progress toward mastery of goals with the use of student Quality folders, or data binders (see Appendix L), and the use of PDSA cycles of refinement (see Appendix I) as being the components of Baldrige-based practices that could be easily observed within her middle school. Principal Gilbert argued that educators must remember that middle school years are crazy years for adolescents. She articulated that the Baldrige program encouraged student choices and student collaboration, two crucial components in the middle school setting. This principal was confident that 90 – 95% of her teachers utilize Baldrige practices, processes, and/or tools in their daily instruction.

This principal shared that her leadership style was more situational in that she utilized different strategies to meet the needs of the issue at hand. When collaboration was needed, she set the parameters, selected the committee members, and then allowed them to work within the parameters set. She clarified her authoritative type of leadership by saying, "Teachers need opportunities to discuss and analyze a problem, and then they need to develop a solution. I remind committees that they are to work with both long-term and short-term goals in mind, and that they are to use the PDSA cycle of refinement (see Appendix I) to ensure clear communication among all of the stakeholders."

Principal Hinch

During the phone interview with this principal, I learned that she had the least years of administrative experience of all the principal respondents, and she was serving as a classroom teacher when Baldrige was implemented in her district. As a result, Principal Hinch's interpretation of Baldrige is founded more in the classroom, and less from the vantage point of

an administrator. She conveyed that she has only served as an administrator for the past two years and that she would not comment on the leadership of her superintendent during the interview. She asked if it was allowable for her to speak about the leadership exhibited by her former principal. After a moment to reflect, I decided that letting her answer the interview questions might reveal something that would directly link her principal to the superintendent, and I allowed her to continue. In actuality, the interview revealed nothing about the superintendent's role in the implementation and maintenance of Baldrige-based practices. (Since this interview was different with regards to district leadership data, the reporting for this interview is quite a bit shorter than the other interviews.)

Principal Hinch indicated that she worked directly with her teachers, in sort of a literacy developer role, to ensure instructional continuity. This principal alluded to personal modeling and mentoring of teachers during faculty conferences, teacher-led department meetings, and vertical team meetings, in an effort to assist teachers so that they could meet the needs of all students. Principal Hinch discussed her use of student performance data, both academic and behavioral in nature, to improve the current programs in place in her school, to ensure proper placement in classes, and to inform parents during student-led conferences. She explained that she works directly with the superintendent, analyzing data from classroom observations, to determine tenure status of teachers. This principal said, "I believe my strength is my collaborative leadership style and that I can motivate teachers during tough times." She credited the Baldrige processes for helping her to make data-driven decisions, removing any bias due to emotional reasons.

When asked for advice, this new principal suggested, "Acquire buy-in from staff members up front. Invest heavily in professional development, or Quality training, to ensure that

all teachers feel supported. Everyone needs to be on equal footing during both the

implementation and maintenance stages of Baldrige."

Principal Ingels

Through my phone conversation with this principal, I learned that Principal Ingels has

served as a school principal longer than any other principal respondent, and longer than two of

the four superintendent respondents. He stated his belief that his school district, and more

specifically his superintendent, was entrenched in Baldrige-based practices long before the

nation's No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was made into law. Principal Ingels stated, "All

children can and will learn. There are NO excuses." This principal explained that Baldrige has

best impacted his school through the use of data and by using the data to develop tutoring

interventions for those students in need.

Principal Ingels spoke of the superintendent who initiated the Baldrige processes in this

school district. The principal explained that his superintendent wanted to create a "world class"

student population by providing a connected learning community. Principal Ingels told me he

was asked by the superintendent to research a definition of "world class" that could be applied

throughout the district. Principal Ingels explained "I finally found enough sources to determine

that for this district, 'world class' indicates that 90% or more students would meet or exceed

standards. When I presented this information to the superintendent I also added that there would

be no significant difference between subgroup performances. The superintendent approved my

definition and we are still operating with that same definition today."

Principal Ingels explained that he continues to analyze curriculum benchmarks and

examine classroom results. He concludes that at least 75% of his teachers utilize some sort of

Quality tool or process. He stated,

I see my teachers using the PDSA cycles to help their students create and check

their learning goals. I see teachers using the Plus/Delta feedback sheets to

understand where gaps are in their teaching. And I see students using the affinity

charts to organize their thoughts when they are working with other students.

This principal explained how he uses a self-designed method of collecting data from his teachers

called "fast feedback." He said this method of data collection contains a standardized form that

includes a 5-point Likert scale that requires the person to rate of five to ten questions and a

Plus/Delta open-ended response section. Principal Ingles shared,

I use this form at faculty meetings to examine good use of meeting time, and to gain

feedback about the presentation. I also obtain reflections from my teachers. I know which

'muddy points' I need to clarify at our next meeting.

Using the fast feedback data, this principal explained that he was able to assist his teachers with

instructional concerns, professional development questions, and general methods of operations.

Principal Ingels elaborated that he uses a similar form on a monthly basis to establish the morale

and level of teacher satisfaction in his school. He further noted, "I share the results from this

second feedback form with my lead teachers in the building, in order to create upcoming faculty

meetings agendas."

When asked about his leadership style, Principal Ingles began to reference the National

Middle School Association's (NMSA) group of fourteen practices/characteristics that could

assist schools in creating cultures that support middle school students. (NMSA's position paper

called, *This I Believe*, contains the fourteen characteristics in both narrative form and in a chart

format, and can be viewed by accessing Appendix M.) Principal Ingels began his reflection on

his own leadership by reflecting on the practices and characteristics in the paper, stating that he

and his teachers reference the characteristics when discussing school-based issues. He also

clarified his own belief that middle school is not a preparation for high school. He explained by

stating, "Middle school students are unique in their development and understanding in

comparison to their elementary and high school counterparts. All students can achieve

academically and in non-academic areas such as the arts, technology, intramural sports, and in

school-sponsored clubs." He proposed, "Every student should be provided a connected and

balanced curriculum that meets the student's cognitive and affective needs." He shared that he

asked his teachers not to ask a middle school student, "What were you thinking?" because it puts

the student on the defensive, and most often, the response tends to result in unnecessary

disciplinary action. Principal Ingels revealed his focus on a national program called Positive

Behavioral Interventions and Supports, or PBIS, stating, "Focus on teaching and reteaching good

behavior to students. Find the root causes and antecedents for the behavior. If we can identify the

causes and the antecedents, then we can help the student to correct his behavior." He claimed

that he has seen a significant reduction in office referrals since the institution of this program.

He also cited the Baldrige-based practice of data-driven decision making as being responsible for

seeking out the PBIS program in the first place.

> When asked to reveal his instructional leadership style, Principal Ingels explained,
>
> Instruction should be developed using solid, research-based practices. I want my
>
> teachers to be well-informed proponents of both literacy and numeracy in their
>
> content area of expertise. My teachers are experts, but it is also my responsibility
>
> to continually put current research in their hands. The research is the approach.
>
> The way research finds its way into daily instruction is deployment. I allocate
>
> time each day to look for alignment and depth of deployment in my classrooms. I

want to determine the causes for why my students perform and for the results we

get. It is the only way that we can systematically improve.

He remarked that often the reason why the students perform the way they do is attributed to the

lack of a standardized approach between grades and same subject areas. Principal Ingels

conveyed that he thought it was also his responsibility to help teachers to focus on Baldrige's

seven categories (leadership; strategic planning; student, stakeholder, and market focus;

measurement, analysis, and knowledge management; faculty and staff focus; process

management; and organizational performance results) in day-to-day operations.

This principal listed two obstacles that he had to overcome during the early days of

Baldrige implementation. The first obstacle was to debunk the business model myth that is often

associated with Baldrige-based practices. This principal explained that because Baldrige utilizes

specific language and applications, there is often a large learning curve for teachers and students

to overcome. Principal Ingels argued that with the adoption of Baldrige-based practices and

tools, there must be a solid commitment to professional development to reduce the lengthy

learning cycle. He shared that he models the affinity diagram (see Appendix J) to set priorities

with his staff and teachers. He also stated that he consistently used the force field analysis

(see Appendix N), identifying drivers and preventers of a particular program or initiative. And

lastly, Principal Ingels reflected on the use of the PDSA cycle (see Appendix I) to determine the

effectiveness of a program or initiative to the ultimate school goal – to improve student

achievement.

Principal Ingels recognized obstacles that currently exist in his school and district. He

established that there needed to be consistent communication from the superintendent to all

school employees that "Baldrige is *what* we do and are, and the Quality tools are the *how* we get

to where we need to be." He reflected on the "can do" culture that was established in the early

implementation, and argued that this concept also needed to be included in top-down

communications. He shared, "Systematic supports from the district, especially Baldrige training,

needs to be re-evaluated. We need to institute training for the 60% or more of the teaching staff

who came to us after winning the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award." His last point of

contention related to the school and district stakeholders revealed,

> The superintendent meets four to six times per school year with community stakeholders
>
> to 'feel the pulse' about the school from their viewpoints. Even though this is a great
>
> start to involving the community, the parent-teacher organization members need to more
>
> closely represent the current demographics of the school and the district.

As evidenced by the length of the interview report for Principal Ingels, this principal

offered a substantial amount of information about Baldrige-based practices, processes, and tools.

When asked for advice to new Baldrige adoptees, he suggested the following actions, including:

> Become familiar with the Quality tools and model them consistently when
>
> working with students, teachers, parents, and community members. Also you
>
> should become familiar with the Baldrige National Quality Program by visiting
>
> the central website at http://www.quality.nist.gov/ and accessing both the
>
> questionnaires and program information pertinent to educational institutions.
>
> You should also aim to become a Baldrige external examiner. By completing the
>
> case studies and working with the criteria, I feel that every leader can positively
>
> impact his or her school or district.

Principal Jacobs

Principal Jacobs was the last principal interviewed. She began her interview with an explanation of what she believed a connected learning community should be. "Although teachers often considered themselves islands within the building," Principal Jacobs remarked, "using a modeling and mentoring approach, pairing experienced teachers with novice teachers, has promoted a climate where teachers share a deep commitment to work with adolescent students." She explained her belief that conversations should begin with the rigorous curriculum at the forefront of discussion. She further explained that discussion should contain the alignment of the curriculum to state standards, while remaining focused on developing a student's literacy, creativity, analytical, and problem-solving skills. Principal Jacobs confessed, "The majority of my time is spent on non-curricular activities, but I always make time to attend in-house team meetings, both with grade-level teams and with content teams."

Similar to other principals interviewed before her, this principal utilizes a team approach to solving the issues faced on the campus. She reported, "Together, the faculty members created a vision for our school, focusing on improving student achievement in all grades and content areas." She stated that her teachers utilize data binders (see Appendix L), or tracking charts to indicate growth and declines in grades, attendance performance, and behavior performance. She indicated that the tracking charts were utilized at teacher-parent-student conferences, putting the issue of accountability squarely on the shoulders of the student. She clarified, "From the tracking charts, teachers and parents can guide the student toward a stronger performance in the areas where the student encounters the largest obstacles." Principal Jacobs indicated that because she requires the tracking charts to be used in every classroom, this provides for a

blameless, proactive form of communication with parents, and consequently, everyone of value to the student can actively participate in helping the student to achieve the student's goals.

When the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award was won by this principal's district, Principal Jacobs was a member of the Continuous Improvement team. She confessed how the district struggled with the vocabulary that is contained within the Baldrige National Quality Program. She also shared that the assessment instrument, the Baldrige Educational Criteria for Performance Excellence, was difficult to absorb. She disclosed that she and her faculty members had to spend long hours with the given definitions, and then the school personnel had to arrive at their own conceptual realizations as to what that vocabulary would look like, sound like, and feel like in their school environment. Principal Jacobs said,

Working through the vocabulary process brought the members of my faculty

closer together, because they had embraced a common, working language from

which their performance would be judged. It made us realize that we were more

alike, in that we wanted the same things for our students. We were more than a

team, at that point. We were family.

Principal Jacobs claimed the Quality tools and the way the teachers utilize data have been the strongest, most positive aspects of adopting the Baldrige National Quality Program. She cited the PDSA cycle (see Appendix I) as being used during professional development opportunities, to arrive at goals and processes to ensure the targeted goals are met. She explained, "The Plus/Delta sheets have been revised to include four quadrants that focus on 'comments, questions, concerns, and kudos.' This allows members of the school's Parent Teacher Association to collect feedback at monthly meetings about the issues discussed during the meetings." This principal reflected on the superintendent's use of two Quality tools – the

affinity chart (see Appendix J) and the force field analysis chart (see Appendix N) – in meetings

with executive members of his staff and principals. She revealed that because the superintendent

modeled the use of the two charts, she felt certain that she would also use the charts to address

issues on her own campus.

Although the Quality tools had a positive impact on the teachers within the school,

Principal Jacobs claimed that the use of data had a far more reaching impact on the student and

the parents of the school. She explained, "No longer do the parents think a teacher is 'playing

favorites' or 'has a personality conflict' with their son or daughter." Instead, during the student-

teacher-parent conferences, this principal reported hearing students admitting to homework

incompletion, lack of dedicated study time, and too much interference from friends and extra-

curricular activities as having a negative impact on their school performance. With the use of

student performance data, Principal Jacobs clarified that a concerted effort existed among the

three stakeholders – student, teacher, and parent – to create an action plan with achievable goals

for the student. From the stakeholders' efforts, the principal reported she monitors the student's

growth and checks to see how the student progresses toward the student's goals. Principal

Jacobs explained. "This positive connection between student actions and student performance

has helped more than 75% of the students to reach their goals during the last grading period.

This performance percentage has tripled since we began Baldrige in our school."

This principal warned that the BNQP did not come neatly packaged and ready to

implement. She argued,

> The framework is open to interpretation by the school's stakeholders. During the
>
> first years of implementation, monthly, and sometimes weekly, meetings had to
>
> be conducted in order to clarify procedures or processes, so that all stakeholders

had the same understanding. It was during these 'bumpy' times that I was

thankful that I had open lines of communication with my superintendent. During

these times, the teachers felt safe confiding in me, and I would offer words of

encouragement and actions of support to my instructional staff. It was during

these times I remained focused on the ultimate goal – to increase student

achievement. Sometimes I might not have liked what my staff members were

saying, but I had to listen if I wanted them to listen to what the students were

saying.

When asked for advice, Principal Jacobs's words of wisdom seem somewhat simplistic:

"Read your students. Know what they like. Listen to their words and the tone of their voice.

And know that none of us operate in a vacuum. Ask for assistance if you can't do it alone." Her

profound words stuck with me long after the interview was complete. Although she claimed to

be more situational in her leadership style, my impression was that Principal Jacobs had

established a visionary leadership that promoted insightful reflection into the depths of the

student, not just a passing, surface glance of the outside layer.

Principal Klein

This principal communicated that she is the leader of teachers and instruction, and

therefore strives for consistency of language and actions in her school. She articulated that she

was using Baldrige-based practices long before she became aware of the Baldrige National

Quality Program. Although Principal Klein elucidated, "I do deal with both discipline and

curriculum issues in my school, but I utilize a personal approach with all my school personnel

and stakeholders." She discussed that she attends professional development with her teachers,

and shares the newest research-based strategies with her teachers in an effort to bring everyone to the same level of expertise.

When prodded for more information, Principal Klein claimed, "My leadership style is hands-on. I model what I want, and then expect my teachers to utilize the strategy within their own instructional day." She told of her grass roots efforts, explaining that she is often asked by teachers to come to the classroom and work with the teacher and students on a PDSA cycle (see Appendix I). When describing her school climate, this principal reported, "I challenge teachers to use Quality tools in new ways and to keep Quality in the forefront of instruction." When asked to describe her teaching staff, Principal Klein said, "The teachers bought into Baldrige. They just get it!"

This principal mentioned that the biggest challenge faced during the implementation of the Baldrige Program was making the Baldrige vocabulary meaningful to the school stakeholders. She told of when the Baldrige examiners came to observe in her school, they knew that the processes were in place because they could see both the teachers and students using the tools correctly, but the vocabulary was still a struggle for most teachers. She reported, "After many years of Baldrige implementation, approximately 90% of my teaching staff has the language 'down pat.'" Principal Klein told of the prevalent attitude among her staff, "We are all in this together," and how they offered assistance to new teachers, helping the newest members of the staff in claiming the Baldrige language for their own.

The principal shared that she has a close working relationship with her superintendent, and that the goals of the school mirror that of the district. She informed me, "Our school goals are three-fold. First we want to improve student learning. Next, we want to improve fiscal support and spending. Lastly, we want to improve internal and external stakeholder

satisfaction." She credited the consistency of language by the superintendent in helping growth in every school, as well as support for collaboration by the superintendent in helping students transition from one campus to the next. She elaborated, "I spoke with a feeder school about their current 'cycle of refinement,' and I noticed that there were no questions regarding the definition of 'cycle of refinement.' We were all on the same page, and we knew the same language." Principal Klein claims that the superintendent has set the tone for the district, helping all leaders at all levels to focus on their goals, demanding that schools utilize best practices to ensure continuous improvement.

Principal Klein declared that the Baldrige practices, processes, and tools are solidly implemented in her school, but argued that there are still obstacles to overcome. She pointed out that making Baldrige-based practices applicable to all school personnel remains a challenge. She questioned, "How do I make Baldrige a part of the operational foundation for my school clerk, the custodians, our bus drivers, and the maintenance personnel?" She continued by relaying that she has provided inservice opportunities, as well as question and answer sessions to address this obstacle. She reiterated the importance of using the correct language during these sessions. She also shared that she regularly invites the school's non-certified staff to participate in the revision of the school's mission and goals.

Principal Klein also credited the support of the district in meeting the challenge of educating new personnel about the Baldrige Program. She cited, "There is an abundance of professional development opportunities that bring unity to the district. They focus on consistent language and practical uses of Baldrige-based practices and processes." This principal gave a breakdown of the meetings held in the school, from grade level meetings to data team meetings to leadership meetings, explaining, "Every meeting is an opportunity to use Quality tools. It is an

opportunity to model goal planning. We must establish the consistency of language and practice throughout the school." The same components can be viewed at the district level, according to this principal.

The biggest impact of the Baldrige Program on this middle school, as identified by Principal Klein, was the use of Quality tools. She named several tools and the ways she has observed their use in the school, including,

The lotus diagram (see Appendix O) is used for setting the climate of the classroom. The fishbone diagram (see Appendix P) can be used for sharing best practices for a particular curriculum issue. Everyone uses the PDSA cycle (see Appendix I) to determine what is to be taught or studied in a specific curriculum area. And we cannot forget the force field analysis (see Appendix N) tool to determine the driving and restraining forces with school uniforms.

To ensure that teachers consistently utilize the Quality tools, Principal Klein stated that she addressed the teachers' use of the tools on their formal evaluations. This principal reported that she has 100% compliance with the use of Quality tools.

The most significant paradigm shift, as shared by Principal Klein, is the move from "I think - I believe - I feel" to "My data shows." According to this principal, data-driven decision making is a part of every classroom. She further explained, "Experimentation is allowed only if data is collected prior to the experiment, during the experimentation process, and then reported back to me. Programs are kept or discontinued based on multiple years of data collection and analysis." Principal Klein also discussed the collection, analyzation, and utilization of attendance data, instructional practices data, and behavioral data to continuously improve the school and the performance of students and teachers. When presented with data, this principal

said that she asked her teachers to share the connections between the data and future plans. She explained, "Using data to drive decision-making is helping to build relationships among all of our school's stakeholders."

Principal Laurents

This principal shared that he was part of his district's Continuous Improvement Team since he became a principal and he played an instrumental part in winning the district's Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. He reported that he was introduced to the Baldrige National Quality Program at one of the American Society for Quality's annual conference. Upon his return to his district after the conference, Principal Laurents reported that the superintendent and the Continuous Improvement Team began the implementation of the program. This principal related, "There were several aspects of the program already implemented in our district. Although continuous improvement had been the emphasis by the superintendent, it seemed more of a cliché. We worked to change the language to solidify the focus for our district." The principal reported that the new focus of the district has moved from using the Quality tools and processes to "How do we get the students to use the Quality tools and processes?" To build upon that focus, Principal Laurents explained that the district and school also wanted the students, as well as the teachers, to distinguish between "good" and "bad" data. This principal explained, "Good data points the student, or teacher, in the right direction and gives the student a way to improve. Bad data, on the other hand, is collected, but when analyzed does not provide any support to changing focus or direction."

This principal informed me that the Baldrige-based practices, processes, and tools are now part of the culture of his school. He confessed, "I had to convince my teachers that the program was nothing new or different. Instead, it was what we have been doing, but it now has a

specific name." At the time of his interview, Principal Laurents elucidated that 100% of his core content teachers use pre/post tests, essential elements testing, and other testing results to drive instruction and to ensure maximum student achievement.

The implementation of the Baldrige Program was not without challenges in this principal's school, according to Principal Laurents. He disclosed, "Teacher buy-in is a continuous hurdle. I must continually remind my teachers that this program improves efficiency. We've seen that by the constant increase in test scores." This principal also recommended that a school administrator must be willing to balance teacher responsibilities so that everyone has an equal opportunity to meet with success. "I make sure that no teacher has multiple courses or multiple club sponsorships while another teacher has only one basic teaching responsibility. I try to balance the load and that in turn proves that I want everyone to be involved with the school's success."

Principal Laurents also explained that teachers should be supported with a large amount of school-based Quality training, i.e. administrators training new teachers during two full-day sessions, teachers training other teachers in the use of a specific Quality tool, and model lessons shared at leadership team meetings. This principal identified,

> I saw excellent usage of Quality tools and processes during my classroom
> observations. When I see those kinds of things, I recognize those certified and
> classified personnel during our monthly staff meetings. Since our focus is on
> continuous improvement, and everyone shares the same high expectations, I feel
> that we have met critical mass proportions.

Principal Laurents indicated that Baldrige is no longer "what we do," but instead, "It is what we are."

According to Principal Laurents' comments, monthly staff meetings are held to talk about student learning, proven strategies, and assessment results compared to established goals. He alluded to the active engagement by the teachers in interactive learning activities and visual displays of PDSA cycles (see Appendix I) as a normal part of these meetings. The focus, as articulated by the principal, is continuous growth and appropriate goal setting. He advocated,

Data collection and analyzation of the data is not an option. I demand that my teachers explain how they will use the data to determine effectiveness. I stress that the goals must be real, and I even gave an example, 'We will improve vocabulary retention by 20%, using X strategy, and maintaining both control and experiment groups.'

Because this type of goal setting cannot be taken lightly, Principal Laurents demanded the creation of a PDSA cycle (see Appendix I) with the results reported directly to him.

Although this type of leadership may cause one to think that this principal is commanding, he maintained that because of his leadership, and alignment between his leadership style and that of the superintendent's, the goals of the school are set and met. He declared,

Even though NCLB legislation has caused myopic vision with regard to testing, and many schools have detoured middle level education from teaming and project-based learning, I believe shared leadership helps teachers to engage students in meaningful learning. I encourage teachers to build upon student curiosity and to adapt lessons to the needs of the society. I want my students not to take things at face value, but to question, to be active learners, and to be prepared to be a productive citizen for a global world.

This principal explained that he goes a step farther than just articulating what he wants for his students. Principal Laurents shared, "I spend at least five minutes each day in five different classes. Combined with my assistants', we have three observations of every teacher on staff per week for a total of 75 observations." This principal enlightened the quote by adding that before formal evaluations are conducted, he and his administrative staff have observed a teacher at least ten times. He claimed that the informal observations helped him to "keep a finger on the pulse of instruction." He also clarified his belief that evaluations are not a means to correct behavior, but opportunities to make adjustments in teaching and learning. He added, "I used the mentor and model approach during the implementation of the Baldrige Program and it has helped me to maintain approachability with my teachers." And he closed this part of the interview, stating that the superintendent in his district utilized this same type of approach with his principals, always asking "What next?" This principal stated that the superintendent's question is one that always causes a bit of anxiety, but it always ends in a more focused outlook on the task at hand.

Principal Laurents claimed that the way that his school approaches goal setting has been greatly enhanced by the Baldrige Program. "It has changed the way the school measures how we do what we do. Baldrige-based practices have also increased opportunities for teachers to collaborate and ask for assistance." When asked for advice to share with other schools and administrators who are investigating the Baldrige National Quality Program and its components for possible implementation, Principal Laurents shared four related suggestions for successful Baldrige implementation, including, "Identify a core group of leaders that have 'street credibility' with their peers. Identify a core group of leaders who will analyze the data from all angles. Be approachable. And, stay focused on continuous improvement."

The Teachers

Although my original intent as the researcher was to interview teachers from the same district in a single focus group interview, the restrictions of time, class schedules, and distance between schools led the teachers to change the way in which data was obtained from these respondents. I contacted each teacher first by email, introducing myself, explaining the research study and detailing the confidentiality that was inherent in the project. I had attached the middle school teacher focus group protocol (see Appendix H) to the email message. Three teacher respondents communicated that they preferred to be interviewed by phone. The remaining thirteen teacher respondents indicated that they would correspond with me via email. Occasionally, more than one correspondence between the respondent and me was necessary to ensure the respondent's understanding of the question posed or the information needed. The three teachers that were interviewed via phone conversation were from the same school district, and indicated that they preferred a phone conversation so that their information could be recorded. Two of the teachers chose to be interviewed together, and the remaining teacher indicated that another phone conversation with that respondent only would be necessary.

Email correspondences possess inherent limitations of written communications: voice tone cannot be interpreted, extensive questioning to pursue a unique thought or idea is not available, answers are flat in nature, and answers may or may not provide an encompassing picture of the targeted research participants. Although the limitations listed above are inherent in written correspondence, I found that the respondents for this research study provided in-depth explanations to the questions posed. I provided them with their interview protocol, allowed them a week or more to respond, and supplied them the time for reflection and insight into the

Baldrige-based practices and instructional leadership within their schools. The email responses provided a thorough, well-rounded description of their school and district.

Although email correspondence contributed to the majority of data collected from teacher respondents, phone interviews were conducted with three of the teacher participants. The answers from the phone respondents were similar in depth and information as those from the email respondents. In juxtaposition of the email correspondences, the phone interviews with teachers added the components of voice and tone. The teachers were interviewed for approximately 45 minutes, and one interview lasted approximately one hour. During these phone interviews, I was able to build a rapport with the respondents, and all three interviewees shared their hopes that I would one day visit them in their schools. The phone interviews were more inspiring to me because I enjoyed the immediacies of our interactions.

The Mason Teachers

There were two male and two female teachers in this group. Three of the four teachers in this group chose to participate in this research study via phone interviews. The two female teachers were interviewed during a single conference call, while the phone interviews with one male teacher was conducted at two different calling times. The second male chose to send his responses via email. The four teachers in this group have each taught for more than seven years. As with all subsequent respondents, the teachers come from all teaching specialties and with various degrees of Baldrige understanding.

When asked about the superintendent's and principal's leadership within the district, all of the teacher respondents in this group articulated that the original mission, created in the beginning years of Baldrige, was more than 200 words in length. None of the teachers could vocalize the mission without a printed copy in front of them. The district superintendent asked

two of the four respondents and the school principals to collaborate with other district personnel to create a new mission statement that is simple and memorable. The two teachers who are not participating in the mission redesign alluded to the community members who are representing their schools on the committee, and the team members confirmed that about 25% of the committee is comprised of parents and community members. The four respondents communicated their belief that leadership in their district is shared among its stakeholders.

The Mason Teachers indicated that they had a shared purpose and that attaining student success for all students was always at the forefront of teaching and learning. One of the female teachers advised that "all students are able to learn, and teachers must learn how they learn so that we can help them to improve." The second female group member confided, "We must help them to become independent learners. We can assist them in becoming self-directed." One of the male group members added, "It is our responsibility to prepare the students for the jobs of tomorrow. We can do that if we use the data to help them be the best that they can be."

All teacher respondents reflected that the focus of Baldrige processes in their district is being aimed at building student leadership. The Mason teachers shared a four-part process, including: (1) planning, (2) implementing, (3) evaluating, and (4) revising, that is used to guide both academic and social growth of students. One of the respondents commented on the four-part process in regard to fundraising, stating, "When we have a fundraiser, it is the students that take care of set-up, advertising, and clean-up. They are the leaders." The other group members alluded to similar student-led processes in their own schools, mentioning "My students work together to create a school-based community newsletter. They interview parents and community members. The community loves it!" Another group member cited how the students organized an annual community celebration from start to finish. A third group member spoke about the

student-led community service projects that build cultural pride. All group members disclosed that their students were reaching their learning goals, and meeting proficiency levels that have not been achieved in the past.

In this group's district, the teachers were asked for their input. They were asked for honest feedback, and given choices to whether the school participated in a given program. Each teacher participated on the school's leadership team, helping to develop the school's plan for improvement. Each of the group members recognized that through hands-on projects, the schools were demonstrating to parents the need for student responsibility, the role that data collection and analysis plays in the cycle of improvement, and the desire to involve parents and community members in their students' educational lives.

When asked for advice to share with other middle school teachers, this group offered a three-part message, including:

> Ask for specific, constructive criticism from parents and community members, because remarks like, 'It was great,' does not provide insight into what could be done to improve the initiative. Use the data to guide improvement efforts that aim at both the social and academic needs of the students. Lastly, use Baldrige's processes for goal setting, strategic planning, and acquiring stakeholder feedback to build student leadership.

The Nelson Teachers

This group of two female teachers and two male teachers responded to the interview questions through email correspondences that they all began their teaching careers in the district under Baldrige auspices. Each of the respondents shared that they took part in Quality training

sessions upfront. They wrote that what had been happening in the school was really Baldrige, but they had called it something different. One of the group members shared,

> Baldrige calls the method for acquiring feedback the Plus/Delta chart, but in my
> early years of teaching, I called the same feedback method, 'Positives and
> Negatives.' I think the Plus/Delta method is more focused on specific feedback,
> such as 'The lesson activity left me confused about the real meaning of
> emancipation,' and not just 'Great job, Mrs. Teacher.'

Another teacher referred to Baldrige's affinity chart (see Appendix J), taking students' ideas and then grouping them into like categories. He noted, "In my early days of teaching, I called this same concept brainstorming and the students went to the board and recorded their thoughts, erasing, and moving their scripts around until they were grouped in similar groups."

The other two members added that with the Baldrige Program, there have been more opportunities for teacher input than ever before, and that more teacher-originated ideas had been set into motion. The same two group members credited Baldrige with changing the professional climate, increasing collaboration and cooperation among teachers.

All of the respondents said the messages from the district superintendent and the school principals were identical – "We must help students to improve their own academic achievement." Two of the respondents in the Nelson Teacher group shared that they were observed by the superintendent, and that he asked both of them, "What do you do to ensure that your students meet with success?" Both of the teachers reported that they responded with answers that focused on data binders (see Appendix L), or Quality binders, that assisted both teachers and students to reflect on collected data when creating student learning goals. A subsequent question from the superintendent was "And how is that working for you and your

students?" Each teacher responded by explaining the gains that the students had seen in their performance, and linking those gains with specific changes in their attendance, homework completion, and studying for tests.

The two other group members spoke about conversations with their principal during school-based professional development sessions. They explained that his focus was on student learning, and that he would ask questions that probed into classroom implementation, such as "Why did you chose that strategy?" or "How is that strategy working for the five ESL students?" Both teacher respondents explained that he wanted more than anecdotal data; he wanted concrete data to support their beliefs.

The four teacher respondents noted parental/community involvement as the ongoing challenge within their district. One teacher stated, "My conversations with parents are positive, but the parents depend on the school to direct their child's educational success." Another teacher remarked, "Getting the parents to participate in school-based activities is a constant struggle." The remaining two teachers worked with their colleagues to create opportunities for the parents to work with the teachers, and although they have seen progress, they both admitted that progress is slow.

According to the four respondents in this group, data are what binds group members together. They all agreed that they use the data to inform their instruction, to build assessments to meet the targeted standards, and to communicate with students and parents about academic progress. One group member elaborated about data by saying, "I use data more often now to analyze my strengths and my areas for improvement." Another group member stated, "I never thought I would rely on data to make the decisions I make about what I teach, but now I am not sure I could teach any other way." A third group member shared that "I meet with my grade

level colleague to make sure we cover all the required standards, and the data revealed what we needed to re-teach before we moved on."

The advice from the Nelson Teachers was proffered by one of its members, "Hang in there." One group member elaborated by stating, "Once you overcome the learning curve that comes with the Baldrige Program, everyone will be working for the same thing - better student achievement." Another teacher respondent wrote, "Learn the Quality tools and let students practice using them as often as possible." The last piece of advice from one teacher summed up the prevailing feelings of all the respondents of the Nelson group, noting "Stay focused on the students and what they can and will achieve. Believe in their success."

The Peterson Teachers

The three female teachers and one male teacher of the Peterson group responded to the interview questions via email correspondence. These teacher respondents relayed that they were all teaching in the district when Baldrige was implemented. The four teachers remarked on the changes in district leadership, and how Baldrige-based practices have not always remained on the forefront of district level communications. They explained through their writings that they felt the Baldrige Program would be brought to the forefront in future days, mainly due to the vision of the new superintendent and what he had communicated to them during his school visits.

The teacher respondents in this group defined their working knowledge of Baldrige by identifying the Quality tools that they used on a daily basis. One group member commented, "I use the PDSA cycle to determine units of study in my classroom." Another member identified, "I use Quality binders in my classroom so that I provide the students with a fair and impartial way for them to look at their own data. The Quality binders help my students to create attainable goals once they analyze their data." A third group member recognized, "The force field analysis

method helps my students to determine what things are interrupting their performance and what things would increase student performance. We call these opposing ideas *preventers* and *drivers*." The last group member alluded to the use of student, teacher, and parent surveys to obtain attitudinal data, helping to gauge stakeholder satisfaction.

Although all of the group members conveyed a working knowledge of Baldrige-based practices, processes, and tools, each of the members stated that the district needs to reinstitute Baldrige professional development training sessions for all teachers, but especially for the newest teachers in the school. One member conveyed, "Although the district has grown significantly since the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award was won, there are a large number of new teachers who only know pieces of the Baldrige Program, thanks to their colleagues sharing what they know." One of the teacher respondents in this group shared, "Leadership can continue only if the district devotes time and efforts to seeing that teachers are trained in the Quality processes and tools." Another respondent stated, "We all need to be on the same page. We need to talk the same language. We need to work in the same direction. Alignment is key." The other two group members mentioned consistent communication and a shared vision; otherwise increased student achievement would be out of reach.

One of the group members suggested, "Teachers who are new to the Baldrige Program should stay focused on improving their instructional practices. They should keep data on how their classroom methods impact student learning." Another member also remarked, "New teachers should collaborate with their trained colleagues; they should learn how to use the Quality tools to improve student performance." Final advice from one group member to new teachers was, "Allow students to make the Baldrige practices and tools a part of their 'learning

toolbox,' so that students can pull whatever is needed from their toolbox to help them reach their goals."

The Robertson Teachers

The four members of the Robertson Teachers, one male and three females, responded to the interview questions through email messages, and pinpointed the district's and school's movement toward a more customer-driven approach to their operations. One teacher shared, "We focus on internal and external customer satisfaction, both in our practice and in our communications." Another group member explained,

> Since the principal and superintendent are constantly monitoring teacher
>
> satisfaction, I feel that the leadership has shifted to include more teacher input.
>
> Both my principal and the district superintendent are attempting to give teachers
>
> more of an internal locus of control.

The one male group member indicated, "More surveys are conducted than ever before. More opinions are requested. And more brainstorming sessions are held so that we are part of the 'solution development process.'" One female group member remarked, "We all share leadership responsibilities, and we are all asked to participate in designing an appropriate solution."

The Robertson Teachers identified several ways in which the Quality tools were used in their schools. In one school, the teacher explained, "We display Plus/Delta charts so that parents and guardians can express their appreciation and concerns for their child's education." In another school, another teacher respondent disclosed, "We individually assess the efficacy of instructional strategies with yearly PDSA experiments." One group member wrote, "Since we have implemented Baldrige-based practices, teachers are more focused on teaching the standards." Another group member scripted, "We simply saw the Baldrige Program as a way to

improve as teachers, and as a system to help students guide their own learning progress." This same group member later related, "Faculty members remain motivated and strive to do their best, largely because 95% of us work together as a team."

The biggest challenge noted by each of the group members was teacher buy-in. One member remarked, "Many teachers view new programs as taking time away from their time to teach." Another shared, "I have received negative reactions from teachers who feel that spending class time on training students how to maintain a Quality binder interferes with teaching required standards." One group member countered that revelation with, "Once our teachers understood the Quality processes, practiced them consistently, they decided that these things were not negotiable anymore." The final comment exclaimed, "Teacher buy-in should be supported by training, and training is absolutely necessary if everyone is to feel as if they are part of the process."

When asked to respond about the part of the Baldrige Program that has had the biggest impact on their middle schools, one group member summarized the group's perspectives by stating, "It has changed the way we look at our data." One group member advocated, "Since the implementation of Baldrige-based practices, the teachers and the school administrators work together to collect, analyze, and report the data to the schools' stakeholders." A common theme among the group members' responses was that parents, students, and teachers were regularly surveyed to determine the effectiveness of programs, to assess satisfaction of the systems within the school, and to verify increases in learning. Two group members cited how the data were used to evaluate the effectiveness of instructional practices and the inclusion of Quality tools.

Data Collection, Analysis Procedures, and Emerging Themes

The phone interviews began in mid-June and were completed in by the end of the first week in October 2008. The interviews were conducted during both morning and afternoon hours, and while the superintendents and principals were on the clock. Superintendent and middle principals were audio-taped, and the audiotapes were transcribed by the researcher. After the phone interviews were completed, I began to print all email correspondences. Once both the transcribed phone conversations and email correspondences were printed, I analyzed the data for reoccurring themes. These themes were group according to the similarities that emerged from the participants' responses. I assigned codes to each specific sub-theme for later reference. A list of emerging sub-themes was created and was placed into a table to facilitate visualization of the themes and sub-themes.

A simplistic overview of the emerging themes and sub-themes is presented in chart format, (see Table 3). A detailed examination of each theme and corresponding sub-theme follows. The three emerging themes and the subthemes are (1) leadership: the focus on student achievement, shared leadership, and mentoring and modeling; (2) aspects of the Baldrige Program: the use of data and data-driven decision making, the use of Quality tools, and the Baldrige language; and, (3) stakeholder satisfaction: obtaining teacher buy-in, professional development with teacher collaboration, and, parent/community involvement.

Table 3
Emerging Themes and Sub-themes

THEMES	SUB-THEMES
(1) Instructional Leadership	a. Focus on student achievement b. Shared vision and leadership c. Mentoring and modeling
(2) The Baldrige Program	a. The use of data and data-driven decision making b. The use of Quality tools c. The Baldrige language
(3) Stakeholder Participation	a. Teacher buy-in b. Professional development with teacher collaboration c. Parent/community involvement

To visually comprehend the relationship between the nine sub-themes and the three major themes, it is important that the reader views the revised conceptual diagram of one operational level within a Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award-winning district, as illustrated in Figure 3. In Figure 3 only one level of operation is represented, but the reader must understand that the conceptual diagram would actually occur three times within a district-once for the district level operations supervised by the superintendent, once for the middle school level operations supervised by the middle school principal, and once for the middle school classroom level operations supervised by the middle school teacher.

Figure 3
Revised Conceptual Diagram of One Operational Level within a Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award-winning District

Gear A = Instructional Leadership

Gear B = The Baldrige Program

The outer band = the operational level within the award-winning district

Gear C = Stakeholder Participation

Legend
1 = Emotional Intelligence Theory
2 = Instructional Leadership Theory
3 = Systems Thinking Theory

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Secondary Legend

Focus on increased student achievement

Shared vision and leadership

Mentoring and modeling

Use of data & data-driven decision making

Use of Quality tools

Use of Baldrige language

Obtaining teacher buy-in

PD with teacher collaboration

Parent/community involvement

An analysis of each theme (gear) and corresponding sub-theme can be better understood through the quotes and paraphrased material presented by the research participants. The descriptive information pertaining to each theme and sub-theme follows the same organization as that of Table 3.

Theme 1 Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership focuses on the leader's behaviors and the relationships with those in his organization. Senge and his colleagues (2000) noted that the instructional leaders are "…the people who set a tone for learning within the school…a steward of the learning process as a whole" (p. 15). Although this definition appears somewhat simplistic, it is the more complicated characteristics of creating a shared vision and sharing leadership that Blankstein (2004) argued must be present if failure within an organization is to be avoided. Seang Wee Lee, an instructional leader at the nationally-known communications giant, Cisco Systems, summed up shared leadership by explaining how he used feedback, modeling, and mentoring to become a better leader, stating,

> I have enlisted feedback from those that I work with very closely with the hope of
>
> understanding how I can further improve. I utilize this feedback to further
>
> improve my leadership skills, identify shortfalls, and open up communications
>
> with the team. This promotes trust in my leadership and creates a climate of trust
>
> within the team and with me. I almost always learn about some things I can do to
>
> help develop each individual as well as the team, and also me (Kouzes & Posner,
>
> 2007, p. 85).

The following paragraphs will demonstrate the three sub-themes connected with the major theme of instructional leadership, including a focus on increased student achievement; shared vision and leadership; and, modeling and mentoring.

Sub-theme 1a Focus on Increased Student Achievement

In this research study, all of the superintendents conveyed that their primary focus was on increased student achievement. Superintendent Allen reported that the Baldrige National Quality

Program provided a framework with which both the students and the teachers could systematically measure success. Superintendent Bailey stated that it was his ultimate vision to increase student performance and academic achievement. Although new to his district, Superintendent Conley stated that the previous superintendents put improving student performance at the top of the priority list, and he intended to follow suit. Superintendent Dillard stated that initially, "There was too much emphasis on the management, and not enough focus on the growth." Superintendent Dillard communicated that he was currently working with his school board members to create triennial goals and strategic objectives that focused specifically on student achievement.

All but one of the middle school principals specifically mentioned a focus on increased student achievement. Principal Evans explained that both he and his superintendent shared the same focus for the district, stating, "We must improve." Principal Feurst argued that "Student success is for all students. And we must focus on both subject skills and life skills to measure success." Principal Gilbert shared that the district as a whole needed to improve student achievement.

When speaking with Principal Ingels, he stated, "All children can and will learn. There are NO excuses." He further noted that he wanted to establish a "world class" student population where "…90% or more students would meet or exceed standards…and that there would be no significant difference between subgroup performances." When speaking specifically about his middle school students, Principal Ingels added, "All students can achieve academically and in non-academic areas." He stated that it was his responsibility "to determine the causes for why my students perform and for the results we get. It is the only way we can systematically

improve." Principal Ingels also reported that the ultimate school goal was to improve student achievement.

Principal Jacobs reported, "Together, the faculty members created a vision for our school, focusing on improving student achievement in all grades and content areas." This principal reported that she monitors student progress inside her school, visiting students in their classrooms and helping them to make the connection between their actions and the results that they are acquiring. She elaborated, "This positive connection between student actions and student performance has helped more than 75% of the students to reach their goals during the last grading period. This performance percentage has tripled since we began Baldrige in our school." Jacobs also alluded to the singular focus – to increase student achievement.

Principal Klein indicated that her first goal was to improve student learning. Principal Laurents also alluded to student learning when he spoke on monthly staff meetings, but his interview was laden with the terminology "continuous growth and improvement."

All four middle school teacher respondent groups articulated some connection between instructional leadership and academic achievement. The Mason Teachers indicated that they had a shared purpose and that attaining student success for all students was always at the forefront of teaching and learning. One of the group members elaborated, "all students are able to learn, and teachers must learn how they learn so that we can help them to improve."

The Nelson Teachers communicated that the messages from their superintendent and principals were identical, and that the message "We must help students to improve their own academic achievement," was articulated often. One of the group members shared, "Stay focused on the students and what they can and will achieve. Believe in their success."

The Robertson Teachers were the only group to vocalize the connection between the Baldrige National Quality Program and student learning, as evidenced by their comment stating, "We simply saw the Baldrige Program as a way to improve as teachers, and as a system to help students guide their own learning progress."

Sub-theme 1b Shared Vision and Leadership

This research study revealed that a belief in shared leadership has helped schools and districts to build leadership capacity. Three out of four superintendents, six out of eight middle school principals, and three out of four teacher groups referenced the importance of a shared vision and/or shared leadership in the continuous improvement journey.

Superintendent Allen remarked that he welcomed support from his parents and community members, and that he was constantly working to improve those relationships. He reported that in order to craft the district's shared vision; he worked with community members in the development of the path for improvement. Superintendent Dillard created a continuous improvement leadership team to monitor the pulse of the district and to assess progress toward district goals, while ensuring that continuous improvement becomes part of the culture of the district. Superintendent Dillard also remarked,

> I knew it was my responsibility to develop a vision with clear expectations and
> long range goals that focused on building student leadership. I knew that I could
> not achieve this vision alone, and I vowed to get as many people involved in the
> vision and the improvement processes of the district.

Principal Evans commented that his shared leadership approach to education has helped his teachers and students to rise to leadership roles and that his approach has held each group to the highest level of accountability and performance.

Principal Feurst explained that she utilized a shared leadership approach in her school and further defined that remark by stating,

When a school-based function is to be held, the tasks of setup, monitoring, and takedown are given to the students. We allow the students the opportunity to direct the project, and to demonstrate to parents and community members that they can cooperate and collaborate so that the task can be accomplished.

Principals Jacobs utilized a team approach to solving the issues faced on the campus. When confronted with the Baldrige language, she reported,

Working with the vocabulary process brought the members of my faculty closer together…it made us realize that we were more alike, in that we wanted the same things for our students. We were more than a team, at that point. We were family.

Principal Jacobs left me with an impression that she had established a visionary approach to leadership when she commented, "…meetings had to be conducted in order to clarify procedures or processes, so that all stakeholders had the same understanding…the teachers felt safe confiding in me, and I would offer words of encouragement and actions of support…"

Principal Klein told of the prevalent attitude among her staff, stating "We are all in this together," and how she and the teachers offered assistance to the new teachers on staff. This principal also shared that she regularly invites the school's non-certified staff to participate in the revision of the school's mission and goals.

When referencing the Baldrige National Quality Program, Principal Laurents said it best by declaring, "Baldrige is no longer what we do, but instead it is what we are." When speaking about his teachers and how his leadership impacts their classrooms, Principal Laurents

commented, "I believe shared leadership helps teachers to engage students in meaningful learning."

The Mason Teachers remarked that two of the team members were to serve on a district team to rewrite the mission statement, demonstrating shared leadership on the part of the superintendent. Each member of this group indicated that they had served on their schools' leadership teams and were instrumental in developing the school improvement plan.

The Peterson Teachers explained through their writings that they envisioned that the Baldrige Program would be brought to the forefront because it had been communicated to them in the shared vision of the new superintendent during school visits.

The Robertson Teachers summed up shared leadership by saying, "We all share leadership responsibilities, and we are all asked to participate in designing an appropriate solution."

Sub-theme 1c Mentoring and Modeling

.   Mentoring and modeling are two aspects of instructional leadership that is difficult to find referenced in the literature, but it serves as a discussion point, especially since one superintendent and six principals mentioned these aspects in their interviews.

Superintendent Allen determined mentorships among teachers based on student results. He also shared that during professional development opportunities he modeled what he hoped his principals and teachers would in turn implement in the school settings.

Principal Hamilton alluded to personal modeling and mentoring of teachers during faculty conferences, teacher-led department meetings, and vertical team meetings, in an effort to assist teachers so that they could meet the needs of all students.

Principal Ingels shared that he modeled the affinity diagram to set priorities with his staff and teachers, and the force field analysis to identify drivers and preventers, and the PDSA cycle to determine the effectiveness of a program. These modeling sessions were aimed at helping teachers become familiar with the Quality tools and to ensure the usage of those tools with the students, parents, and community members.

Principal Jacobs, made reference to her own thoughts about mentoring and modeling, stating, "…using a modeling and mentoring approach, pairing experienced teachers with novice teachers, has promoted a climate where teachers share a deep commitment to work with adolescent students.". She also stated, "Sometimes I might not have like what my staff members were saying, but I had to listen if I wanted them to listen to what students were saying."

Principal Klein explained, "I model what I want, and then expect my teachers to utilize the strategy within their own instructional day." She also commented on professional development opportunities, stating, "Every meeting is an opportunity to use Quality tools. It is an opportunity to model goal planning."

Finally, Principal Laurents added, "I used the mentor and model approach during the implementation of the Baldrige Program and it has helped me to maintain approachability with my teachers." The old adages of "practice what you preach" and "model what you want" are integral concepts that have a real place in instructional leadership

Theme 2 The Baldrige Program

The Baldrige National Quality Program is based on seven over-arching categories, including: (1) leadership; (2) strategic planning; (3) student, stakeholder, and market focus; (4) measurement, analysis, and knowledge management; (5) faculty and staff focus, (6) process management; and, (7) organizational performance results. Inside the seven categories, the

Baldrige framework contains eleven core values, or best practices, including: (1) visionary leadership; (2) learning-centered education; (3) organizational and personal learning, (4) valuing faculty, staff, and partners; (5) agility; (6) focus on the future; (7) managing for innovation; (8) management by fact; (9) public responsibility and citizenship; (10) focus on results and creating value; and, (11) systems perspective (ASQ, 2006).

For this research study, both the categories and the core values informed the parameters of investigation. It was the data collected from the respondents that provided a view of the operational components that was most often utilized within the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award-winning school districts. It is important to know that the respondents may have used their own language when referring to the components within the program, but the reality of the components was clearly articulated within the operations of the school and district.

From the data, three sub-themes emerged, including: (1) the use of data and data-driven decision making; (2) the use of Quality tools; and, (3) the use of Baldrige language. Each of the sub-themes were defined by quotes and paraphrased material from the respondents, and those messages are contained in the following paragraphs.

Sub-theme 2a The Use of Data and Data-driven Decision Making

In this research study, half of the superintendents, all but one middle school principal, and all the teacher groups reported that data had a paramount place in the Baldrige Program. Superintendent Bailey reported that Baldrige-based practices and processes had impacted the use of data, establishing the direct link between instruction and what occurs as a result of teaching. This same principal informed me that both teachers and students manage data, and then use the data to prioritize goal setting efforts. He further acknowledged that through the use of Baldrige-based practices to collect and analyze data, student learning could occur.

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Superintendent Dillard hired an outside consultant to collect data annually, and the results

of the scientific surveys were reported to the school board in order to create district-wide goals.

According to this superintendent, certified staff (educators), classified employees (support staff),

and parent/community members participated in the surveys, and the data collected from the

respondents informed cycles of improvement within the school district. When asked for advice,

Superintendent Dillard shared, "Rely on the data to ensure that your course is rigorous and

achievable. Use the data to improve student achievement, as well as instructional practice."

Principal Evans explained how his students use data to make decisions about their

learning. He shared,

> Students use their performance data and the PDSA cycles to guide their learning
>
> paths. The student determines the curriculum standards that he will include in his
>
> project. The student, with the help of the teacher, creates a rubric or scoring
>
> guide to determine how the project will be evaluated. And the student knows that
>
> he must prove mastery of the content from the beginning of the project to the final
>
> presentation.

Principal Gilbert focused on a question concerning the data when she interacted with teachers,

mainly, "When you assess students, what do you do with the results?" She also explained, "My

fundamental interest in data is shared by my superintendent…We are all trying to minimize the

gaps in teaching and learning." When asked how she used the data that was collected at the

school level, she explained that the data was used to place students in classrooms that could

assist them in reaching their learning goals, and that there were different "tracks" on each grade

level. She elaborated by saying, "No matter which 'track' the student qualified for, performance

data was examined at least twice per year to determine whether the student stayed in or was

removed from a learning 'track.'" Although Principal Hinch was in another school district, she also used performance data, both academic and behavioral in nature, to improve the programs in place in her school, to ensure correct placement of students, and to keep parents informed of student progress. She credited the Baldrige processes for helping her to make data-driven decisions.

Principal Ingels explained that he uses a self-designed method of collecting data from his teachers called, "fast feedback." He uses the data to "…examine good use of meeting time, and to gain feedback about the presentation. I obtain reflections from my teachers." He explained that the data collected from the fast feedback forms is used by him to assist teachers with instructional concerns, professional development questions, and general methods of operations. Principal Ingels cited the Baldrige-based practice of data-driven decision making as being the catalyst for seeking out a positive behavior program for his school.

Principal Jacobs claimed the way the teachers utilize data has been one of the strongest, most positive aspects of adopting the Baldrige National Quality Program. She articulated that with the use of performance data, a concerted effort among the student, teacher, and parent to create an action plan with achievable goals was realized.

Principal Klein explained a significant paradigm shift within her school in regard to the use of data, stating that her school's philosophy had shifted from "I think-I believe-I feel" to "My data shows [sic]." According to this principal, data-driven decision making is a part of every classroom. She further explained that "Programs are kept or discontinued based on multiple years of data collection and analysis." She also highlighted another aspect of utilizing data, saying "Using data to drive decision making is helping to build relationships among all of our school's stakeholders."

Principal Laurents explained the difference between "good" and "bad" data, remarking, "Good data points the student, or teacher, in the right direction and gives the student a way to improve. Bad data, on the other hand, is collected, but when analyzed does not provide any support to changing focus or direction." He also reported, "Data collection and analyzation of the data is [sic] not an option. I demand that my teachers explain how they will use the data to determine effectiveness." To ensure that data collection and analyzation are a reality within his school, Principal Laurents identifies a core group of teacher leaders who will analyze the data from all angels.

One of the Mason Teachers explained the impact he believed data had on his students, by saying, "It is our responsibility to prepare the students for the jobs of tomorrow. We can do that if we use the data to help them be the best that they can be." Another group member shared that through hands-on projects, the students were demonstrating responsibility, and the role that data collection and analysis plays in the cycle of improvement. One of the members shared, "Use the data to guide improvement efforts that aim at both the social and academic needs of the students."

The Nelson Teachers explained that data are what binds the teachers in their district together because they use the data to inform their instruction, to build assessments to meet the targeted standards, and to communicate with students and parents about academic progress. When approached by the principal during professional development sessions and questioned about the classroom implementation of a strategy, this group of teachers relayed that the principal wanted more than anecdotal data, he wanted concrete evidence to support their beliefs. One member elaborated about data by saying, "I use data more often now to analyze my strengths and my areas for improvement." Another member shared, "I never thought I would

rely on data to make the decisions I make about what I teach, but now I am not sure I could teach any other way."

One of the Peterson Teachers suggested, "Teachers who are new to the Baldrige Program should stay focused on improving their instructional practices. They should keep data on how their classroom methods impact student learning." The Robertson Teachers expanded that use of data, saying, "Since the implementation of Baldrige-based practices, the teachers and school administrators work together to collect, analyze, and report the data to the school's stakeholders." Two group members cited how the data were used to evaluate the effectiveness of instructional practices and the inclusion of Quality tools. One Robertson teacher summarized the group's perspectives about the impact of the Baldrige Program stating, "It has changed the way we look at our data."

Sub-theme 2b The Use of Quality Tools

In this research study, half of the superintendents, six of the eight principals, and all teacher groups specifically mentioned the use of one or more Quality tools. Explanations and illustrations of all of the Quality tools mentioned can be found in the Appendices section of this dissertation. For easier referencing, each time a Quality tool is mentioned in a respondent's paraphrased material, the corresponding appendix is noted in parentheses.

Superintendent Bailey advised schools new to Baldrige should focus on the Quality tools that comprise an integral part of the Baldrige Program, especially the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle of refinement (see Appendix I), the affinity chart (see Appendix J) for building consensus regarding a particular topic, and the Plus/Delta (see Appendix K) for collecting feedback.

Superintendent Conley reported that the Quality tools, especially the PDSA cycle of refinement (see Appendix I) could be observed in the many of his classrooms, indicating the use of the tool by both the teacher and the students. He also noted that students, under their teacher's supervision, were compiling data binders (see Appendix L), or student portfolios.

More than half of the principals reported the use of the Quality tools in their own schools. Principal Evans stated, "Students use their performance data and the PDSA cycles to guide their learning paths." This principal encouraged teachers and students to use the Quality tools to ensure learning was meaningful, engaging, and matched to the needs of the students. Principal Gilbert referred to student goal setting, charting progress toward mastery of goals with the use of student Quality folders, or data binders (see Appendix L). She also reported the use of PDSA charts (see Appendix I) as being the one of the components of Baldrige-based practices that could be easily observed within her middle school.

Principal Ingels elucidated,

I see my teachers using the PDSA cycles to help their students create and check

their learning goals. I see teachers using the Plus/Delta feedback sheets to

understand where gaps are in their teaching. And I see students using the affinity

charts to organize their thoughts when they are working with other students.

This principal reported that he modeled the affinity diagram (see Appendix J) to set priorities with his staff, utilized the force field analysis (see Appendix N) tool to identify drivers and preventers of a particular program or initiative, and the PDSA cycle (see Appendix I) to determine the effectiveness of that same program or initiative. His parting words in the interview relayed this message about the Quality tools, "Become familiar with the Quality tools

and model them consistently when working with students, teachers, parents, and community members."

Principal Jacobs explained that her teachers utilized data binders (see Appendix L), or tracking charts to indicate growth and declines in grades, attendance performance, and behavior performance. She indicated that the tracking charts were utilized at parent-teacher-student conferences, putting the issue of accountability squarely on the student's shoulders. This principal also cited the PDSA cycle (see Appendix I) as being used during professional development opportunities to ensure the targeted goals were met. She explained that in her school a revised Plus/Delta chart (see Appendix K) had been created and it contained four sections instead of two, and asked the respondents for "comments, questions, concerns, and kudos." Principal Jacobs also shared that because her superintendent utilized the affinity chart (see Appendix J) and the force field analysis chart (see Appendix N) during meetings with principals, she felt comfortable using those same two Quality tools when she met with her teachers.

Principal Klein declared the Quality tools as having the biggest impact on his classrooms, with the lotus diagram (see Appendix O) for setting the climate of the classroom, the fishbone diagram (see Appendix P) for sharing best practices for a specific curriculum issue, PDSA cycles (see Appendix I) to determine what should be taught or studied, and the force field analysis (see Appendix N) tool for determining driving and preventing forces were expressly discussed.

Principal Laurents reported a new focus on the Quality tools, questioning, "How do we get the students to use the Quality tools and processes?" He alluded to the active engagement of the teachers in interactive learning activities and visual displays of PDSA cycles (see Appendix I) during professional development meetings, and followed that with a command that teachers

who create PDSA cycles (see Appendix I) in their classrooms report the results directly back to him.

All of the teacher groups reported the use of Baldrige-based practices and Quality tools in their schools. Although the reports of the use of the tools could be listed here, the reporting was similar in nature to that of both the superintendents and principals. Instead it is the advice from these Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award-winning teachers that is posted within this paragraph. The Mason Teachers suggested, "Use Baldrige's processes for goal setting, strategic planning, and acquiring stakeholder feedback to build student leadership." One of the Nelson Teachers wrote, "Learn the Quality tools and let students practice using them as often as possible." Final advice from on Peterson Teacher group member was "Allow students to make the Baldrige practices and tools a part of their 'learning toolbox,' so that students can pull whatever is needed from their toolbox to help them reach their goals."

Sub-theme 2c Use of the Baldrige Language

Three superintendents, three principals, and two teacher groups made their compelling, opposing arguments regarding the Baldrige language.

On the one side that wants all educators to utilize the unique Baldrige language, Principal Jacobs disclosed that she and her faculty members had spent long hours with the Baldrige definitions, and then developed their own conceptualizations as to what the vocabulary would look like, sound like, and feel like in their own schools. She stated that, "Working through the vocabulary process had brought the members of my faculty closer together, because they had embraced a common, working language from which their performance world be judged." Principal Klein reiterated the importance of using the correct language during professional

development sessions. She reported, "After many years of Baldrige implementation,

approximately 90% of my teaching staff has the language 'down pat.'"

Peterson Teachers clarified the *FOR* position by saying, "We all need to be on the same

page. We need to talk the same language. We need to work in the same direction." This was the

only teacher group that conveyed their position to keep the Baldrige language within their

schools.

The opposing side, in the *AGAINST* position, superintendents and principals argued that

the vocabulary learning curve was just too steep, and that changing the vocabulary to something

that both students and teachers could call their own did not significantly change the Baldrige

program. Three of the superintendent respondents relayed that they had renamed the Baldrige

Program, or changed the language to decrease the steep learning curve encountered by their

teachers, students, parents, and community members, and to ensure that the value of the Baldrige

Program, namely its seven categories and eleven core values, was not taken lightly.

Superintendent Allen vocalized that he renamed Baldrige's seven categories to help all

school stakeholders to understand the value of each category. Superintendent Dillard renamed

the efforts in his school, from the Quality or Baldrige Program, to "continuous improvement."

He stated in his oral interview, "Who can argue with continuous improvement?" Principal

Laurents worked to change the language to solidify the focus of the district, and in his school.

Not one teacher group advocated for the revision of the Baldrige language within their phone

interview or email correspondence.

Theme 3 Stakeholder Participation

This third theme is a component of every school, and is often the reason for concern in

most schools because it is viewed as referencing only parents and community members.,

Stakeholder participation, for this research study, does not pertain to just parents and community members. Instead, this research study defines stakeholders as students, teachers, administrators, and parent/community members that are or could be involved with the school or district.

Dealing with stakeholder participation may not be the top priority of superintendents and principals, but Hall (2005) encourages principals of the 21st Century to examine not only their roles as instructional and visionary leaders, but also their roles as community leaders. Hancock and Lamendola (2005) and Portin (2004) related that it was the responsibility of the educational administrator to diagnose the problems within a school, analyze the available resources, understand the commitment levels of the parents, teachers, and community members, and to unveil the school's or district's academic strengths and weaknesses. White-Hood (2003) argued that a principal should create or re-create a school vision that aligned with the dreams of the stakeholders, and mobilized people to make that dream a reality. Linda Lambert (1998) says it best when she argued,

> Leadership is about learning together, and constructing meaning and knowledge collectively and collaboratively. It involves opportunities to surface and mediate perceptions, values, beliefs, information, and assumptions through continuing conversations; to inquire about and generate ideas together; to seek to reflect upon and make sense of work in the light of shared beliefs and new information; and to create actions that grow out of these new understandings. Such is the core of leadership. Leadership is about learning together (p. 17).

In the follow paragraphs the concept of stakeholder participation is discussed, along with quotes and paraphrased material from the three tiers of respondents regarding

the three emerging sub-themes of (1) obtaining teacher buy-in, (2) professional

development with teacher collaboration, and (3) parent/community involvement.

Sub-theme 3a Obtaining Teacher Buy-in

Teachers are one of the key stakeholders in the educational process, and their

performance can directly enhance or inhibit their students' learning. It is this notion that can

make or break the success of a program or initiative. In the case of the Baldrige Program, two

superintendents, three principals and two of the teacher groups reported that teacher buy-in was

critical to the whether teachers actively participated and embraced the Baldrige Program.

Superintendent Allen articulated that he believed teacher buy-in of the Baldrige Program

was necessary, but he wanted to achieve teacher ownership of the program – a much harder goal

to attain. Principal Hinch suggested that those principals contemplating the adoption of Baldrige-

based practices should "Acquire buy-in from staff members up front." Even if teacher buy-in is

obtained upfront, Principal Laurents disclosed, "Teacher buy-in is a continuous hurdle. I must

continually remind my teachers that this program improves efficiency. We've seen that by the

constant increase in test scores."

The teachers who shared insight about obtaining teacher buy-in related information that

should be considered by the leader of the school. The Mason Teachers articulated that the

teachers in their district were asked for their input, and that honest feedback was requested by the

leaders. They also communicated that they were given choices to participate in a given program

or initiative.

Although positive comments shed a glowing light on teacher buy-in, a leader should

know that even with the best of intentions, negative outcries such as "Many teachers view new

programs as taking time away from their time to teach," might be heard. The previous comment

was shared by one of the teachers in the Robertson Teacher group. Another teacher from that same group remarked, "I have received negative reactions from teachers who feel that spending class time on training students how to maintain a Quality binder interferes with teaching required standards." The final comment from one of Robertson Teacher group disclosed his thoughts regarding teacher buy-in, stating, "Teacher buy-in should be supported by training, and training is absolutely necessary if everyone is to feel as if they are part of the process."

Sub-theme 3b Professional Development with Teacher Collaboration

The research responses indicated that 75% of superintendents, 75% of principals, and 100% of the teacher groups regarded professional development, along with teacher collaboration, as critical components when effectively implementing and maintaining the Baldrige National Quality Program. Superintendent Allen noted that he was heavily engaged in staff training, working to build camaraderie and collegiality among his staff members. Superintendent Conley, being new to the district, remarked that the quality of instruction and teacher collaboration was evident when he arrived. Although this seemed to cast a positive light on his district, Superintendent Conley argued, "My biggest challenges, standing as elephants in the educational arena, are that of staff development and teacher collaboration." He indicated that he was hoping to resurrect the commitment to and the pursuit of Baldrige-based practices in his middle schools. Superintendent Dillard guarantees that all new teachers are trained about continuous improvement efforts, helping to ensure ongoing leadership and alignment to district and school goals, and to perpetuate the preferred culture in the schools.

Principal Hinch indicated that she worked directly with her teachers in faculty conferences, teacher-led department meetings, and vertical team meetings to ensure instructional continuity and so that all teachers felt supported during Baldrige implementation and

maintenance. Principal Ingels recommended that those districts or schools contemplating the adoption of the Baldrige Program make a solid commitment to professional development to reduce the lengthy learning cycle that is often associated with the Baldrige Program. He also shared, "Systematic supports from the district, especially Baldrige training, needs to be re-evaluated. We need to institute training for the 60% or more of the teaching staff who came to us after wining the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award." Principal Jacobs articulated that support should also come from within the school when she confessed, "The majority of my time is spent on non-curricular activities, but I always make time to attend in-house team meetings, both with grade-level teams and with content teams." Principal Klein discussed that she attends professional development with her teachers, and shares the newest research-based strategies with her teachers in an effort to bring everyone to the same level of expertise. This principal also shared, "There is an abundance of professional development opportunities that bring unity to the district." Principal Laurents agreed with Principal Klein's statement, and explained that teachers should be supported with a large amount of school-based Quality training, noting that, "Baldrige-based practices have also increased opportunities for teachers to collaborate and ask for assistance.

All of the Nelson Teachers shared that they took part in Quality training sessions upfront. Two of the group members credited the Baldrige Program as changing the professional climate, increasing collaboration and cooperation among teachers. The two remaining group members shared that they had conversations with their principal during school-based professional development session, and that the focus was always on student learning.

The Peterson Teachers indicated a double-edge sword that exists with professional development and teacher collaboration, stating, "Although the district has grown significantly

since the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award was won, there are a large number of teachers who only know pieces of the Baldrige Program, thanks to their colleagues sharing what they know." Another teacher respondent in that same group wrote, "Leadership can continue only if the district devotes time and efforts to seeing that teachers are trained in the Quality processes and tools." Another respondent stated, "We all need to be on the same page. We need to talk the same language. We need to work in the same direction. Alignment is the key."

One Robertson Teacher articulated his views of teacher collaboration, saying, "More surveys are conducted than ever before. More opinions are requested. And more brainstorming sessions are held so that we are part of the 'solution development process.'' One of the female group members stated, "We share leadership responsibilities, and we are all asked to participate in designing an appropriate solution." The final comment made by one of the group members exclaimed, "…training is absolutely necessary if everyone is to feel as if they are a part of the process."

Sub-theme 3c Parent/Community Involvement

As stated earlier in this chapter, parent/community involvement is in the forefront of literature and in educational conversations. Getting parent and community members involved in the school setting is a challenge that often is manifested in a student's ability to perform. Superintendent Allen shared his belief that instruction takes place everywhere and throughout each day. He articulated that he conveyed this message to his community members and parents in an effort to engage them in the instruction of the students once the students leave the school campus. To mobilize collaboration between teachers, parents, and community members, Superintendent Dillard formed a task force of approximately 60 members. This district leader outlined responsibilities for the members of the task force, including the alignment and

development of a k-12 curriculum continuum based on national, state, and local standards. He
added,

> The district has benefitted from the collaboration between the members of this
>
> task force. They have paved the way for consistent teaching and learning. And
>
> they share their thoughts with other parents and teachers to set the best direction
>
> for where we need to go.

The principal respondents in this research study shared a wide array of responses that
looked at parent/community involvement from all aspects. Principal Evans indicated that
building commitment in his school and community was at the forefront of his actions. He
conveyed that he was always analyzing new methods and strategies to positively impact parent
and community engagement with school-based initiatives. Principal Feurst recommended that
other schools in the adoption phase of Baldrige, "Look for a connection between the classroom
and the community…" Principal Ingels explained, "The superintendent meets four to six times
per school year with community stakeholders to 'feel the pulse' about the school from their
viewpoints." Principal Klein identified the school's third goal as "Lastly, we want to improve
internal and external stakeholder satisfaction." She explained, "Using data to drive decision-
making is helping to build relationships among all of our school's stakeholders."

One of the Mason Teachers mentioned, "My students work together to create a school-
based community newsletter. They interview parents and community members. The community
loves it!" Another group member cited how the students organized an annual community
celebration. A third group member spoke about the student-led community service projects that
build cultural pride.

The four Nelson Teachers noted parental/community involvement as the ongoing challenge within their district. One teacher stated, "My conversations with parents are positive, but the parents depend on the school to direct their child's educational success." Another teacher remarked, "Getting the parents to participate in school-based activities is a constant struggle." The two remaining group members explained how they worked with their colleagues to create opportunities for the parents to work with the teachers.

Summary of the Findings

Three major themes emerged from the analysis of the interviews and email correspondences with the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award-winning superintendents, middle school principals, and middle school teachers. The first theme of instructional leadership provides a portrait of the leadership actions that exists within the award-winning districts. Respondents from all four districts identified three sub-themes as informing the impact of their superintendent's or principal's instructional leadership including: (1) a focus on student achievement; (2) shared vision and leadership; and, (3) mentoring and modeling.

Theme 1 Focus on Student Achievement

It was identified in the responses that the focus and mission of each district was communicated to all of the stakeholders-from the students and teachers in the classroom to the parents and community members at large. There was no doubt that the four school districts were focused on improving student achievement in all grade levels and in all subject areas. To ensure that a steady focus remained in the forefront of all educators, data was managed in a manner that assisted each leader in keeping the school or district focused on continuous improvement. Consequently there existed a common belief that improvement was inevitable. With the belief in improvement, there was also a willingness exhibited by the leader to assist the teachers or

principals in reaching their goals, and in turn, that willingness was shared by the principals and teachers when it was the students who needed assistance.

The response indicated that a collaborative community of learners exists in the four Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award-winning districts, with a climate that nurtures and promotes leaders at all levels. The vision was clearly articulated, and alignment existed among the three tiers of educators. It was the responsibility of every stakeholder to assist students in reaching and exceeding their targeted goals.

Superintendents, middle school principals, and middle school teachers articulated their responsibilities of modeling and mentoring, assisting other educators in attaining instructional leadership status. Many of the respondents seized the opportunity to provide the role model for a fellow colleague or a struggling student in the classroom, because their philosophy of education was simple – whatever it takes to increase student achievement.

In Table 4, the instructional leadership theme, its three sub-themes, and the supportive findings are discussed, indicating that which emerged from the data.

Table 4
Theme 1   Instructional Leadership Findings Reviewed

Theme 1 Instructional Leadership Theme	
Sub-Themes	**Supportive Findings**
Focus on Student Achievement	- Mission shared with all stakeholders - Focus on improvement in all grades and content areas - Manage data so that the focus remains on student achievement
Shared Vision and Leadership	- Collaborative community of learners - Nurture and support the learning of all stakeholders

Theme 1	Instructional Leadership Theme
	• Clear articulation of the vision and alignment among the tiers of educators • Shared responsibility for student learning
Mentoring and Modeling	• Many educators seized the opportunity to be a role model to other colleagues or struggling students • Shared philosophy to do whatever it takes

Theme 2 The Baldrige Program

The second theme focused on the Baldrige Program. From the respondents' data, three sub-themes emerged, including: (1) the use of data and data-driven decision making; (2) the use of the Quality tools; and, (3) the use of Baldrige language. These three sub-themes informed the depth of implementation of the Baldrige Program in each of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award-winning districts.

The responses from the participants indicated the widespread use of data within all four of the targeted districts. Data was collected, analyzed, and reported in manners that form the basis for much of the communication within the four districts. Direct links between instruction and student performance were investigated in all of the districts, and the importance of the findings remained top priority in all of the districts. Programs were kept or discontinued because of the data results, and data were utilized at every educator level to inform decision making. Data were collected for numerous reasons, but always with the intention to utilize it for continuous improvement-to improve student achievement, to improve classroom instruction, to improve communication between the school and its stakeholders.

Quality tools were regularly utilized in the four award-winning districts to demonstrate new learning, collaboration, and consensus building. Whether it was the PDSA cycle of refinement that was used to identify the gaps in student learning, or the affinity chart to organize brainstormed ideas, or the Plus/Delta chart for collecting feedback, the Quality tools were utilized by all three tiers of educators and students whenever the occasion called for it. The additional tools mentioned in this study, the fishbone, the force field analysis, and the lotus diagram were also utilized by students and educators, although the mention of their usage was not as prevalent in the responses as the PDSA cycle of refinement, the affinity chart, or the Plus/Delta form. The use of data binders, or Quality folders, was consistent in the responses from the participants, although there were concerns that training students how to use the folders might interfere with classroom instruction.

The use of the Baldrige language moved respondents either into the *FOR* or the *AGAINST* category. Those for the use of the language pointed to the consistency among educators within the district, facilitating understanding between feeder schools and their receiving schools. The respondents also indicated that embracing the language helped all stakeholders to understand the value of the Baldrige Program to their school and district. Those who opposed the use of the language explained the difficulty in learning the vocabulary associated with the Baldrige Program, stating that often times that same concept or tool pre-existed in the district with a different and more familiar name. Opponents also cited that changing the language fit the needs of the users, keeping to the non-prescriptive and adaptable nature of the Baldrige National Quality Program.

In Table 5, the Baldrige Program theme, its three sub-themes, and the supportive findings are discussed, indicating that which emerged from the data.

Table 5
Theme 2 The Baldrige Program Findings Reviewed

Theme 2 The Baldrige Program Theme	
Sub-Themes	**Supportive Findings**
The Use of Data and Data-Driven Decision Making	• Widespread usage of data to inform instruction and ensure increased student achievement • Data informs communications within the districts • Data utilized at all educator levels
Use of Quality Tools	• Utilized to demonstrate new learning, collaboration, and consensus building at all educator tiers • Most prevalent were PDSA cycles of refinement, affinity charts, and Plus/Delta forms • Other tools illuminated were fishbone charts, force field analysis charts, and lotus diagrams • Teaching the management of Quality binders to students interfered with classroom instruction
Use of the Baldrige Language	• (FOR) Consistent language among stakeholders, feeder schools, and receiving schools • (FOR) Helped stakeholders to understand the value of the Baldrige Program • (AGAINST) Difficult to learn vocabulary inherent to the program • (AGAINST) Should be changed to fit the needs of the school community

Theme 3 Stakeholder Participation

The third theme focused on stakeholder participation. From the respondents' data, three sub-themes emerged, including: (1) obtaining teacher buy-in; (2) professional development with teacher collaboration; and, (3) parent/community involvement. These three sub-themes informed systems at work within each of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award-winning districts.

Since this research study relied on the perceptions of three different tiers of educators, it was necessary to expand the parameters that defined stakeholder participation. For this study, stakeholder refers to any person or group of persons that have a vested interest in the school. The first group of stakeholders mentioned within the responses from the research participants was teachers. All four district superintendents articulated that ongoing support of and positive relationships with teachers were necessary to ensure teacher engagement with the Baldrige Program. The most positive comments about teacher buy-in were from the teachers themselves, indicating that those leaders that valued their input and collaboration were the same leaders that the teachers trusted to lead their schools to success.

Among the responses collected, support, training, and collaboration were elements identified as necessary to the successful implementation and maintenance of the systems within the Baldrige Program. Through continuous support and training, teachers and students could learn and build their knowledge base about Baldrige-based practices and processes. It was also revealed that school-based professional development opportunities allowed for teacher collaboration and continued focus on increasing student achievement. Those opportunities also provided occasions for conversations between school principals and teachers, building collaborative relationships that focused on the success of all stakeholders.

Parent/community involvement remained at the forefront of conversations with all of the respondents. Although the majority of the respondents explained that interactions with parents and community members were favorable, all of the respondents claimed that there were just not enough interactions with them. It was argued that the success of students was dependent on the involvement of their parents or guardians in their school life, and respondents did allude to the need to educate the parents about their students' educational lives. Although the educators shared that parents and community members should become active participants in school and district leadership, data did not support that parents and community members shared those same beliefs. The respondents did establish that a strong connection between the classroom and community was needed in order for students to make what they were learning in the classroom applicable to the community and so that community members could view the students' commitment to service.

In Table 6, the Stakeholder Participation theme, its three sub-themes, and the supportive findings are discussed, indicating that which emerged from the data.

Table 6
Theme 3   Stakeholder Participation Findings Reviewed

Theme 3 Stakeholder Participation Theme	
Sub-Themes	**Supportive Findings**
Obtaining Teacher Buy-in	• Ongoing support and positive relationships with teachers are necessary for successful implementation of Baldrige Program • Leaders must value teacher input and collaboration
Professional Development with Teacher Collaboration	• Continuous support and training needed • School-based professional development allowed for best opportunities of collaboration

Theme 3 Stakeholder Participation Theme	
	• Collaboration between different tiers viewed as positive interaction
Parent/Community Involvement	• Interactions with family and community are favorable, but few • There is a need to educate parents about their student's school life and responsibilities • Strong connection between classroom and community is needed for student success

The following chapter is a discussion of the findings and their implications for other middle schools and districts contemplating the adoption and implementation of Baldrige-based practices.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

Introduction

This qualitative case study investigated the perspectives of Malcolm Baldrige National

Quality Award-winning districts' superintendents, middle school principals, and middle school

teachers regarding the adoption, implementation, and maintenance of Baldrige-based practices.

This chapter contains an overview of the research study, discussion of the findings according to

the three emerging themes of instructional leadership, the Baldrige Program, and stakeholder

involvement, limitations, study implications, recommendations for theory development,

suggestions for future research, and a conclusion.

Overview of the Study

This study revealed the perspectives of superintendents, middle school principals, and

middle school teachers in the four Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award-winning districts

regarding the impact of the Baldrige-based practices and processes on instructional leadership on

middle level education. Although a single case study approach would have sufficed for a single

school district, this research study explored four school districts simultaneously, so repeating

case study methodology four times was necessary. Educators at each tier in each district were

interviewed either by phone or through email correspondence, and commonalities between the

four Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award winning districts were explored.

Since empirical studies focusing on the impact of the Baldrige National Quality Program

on middle level education could not be located, it was imperative that this study collect insights

from those educators who had first-hand knowledge of what the Baldrige Program required, what

Quality tools needed to be in place for maximum student achievement to be obtained, and

whether the adoption, implementation, and maintenance of Baldrige-based practices and processes were applicable to other districts of different demographical features.

The primary focus of this study was to investigate the over-arching question: How has the adoption of Baldrige-based practices permeated instructional leadership beliefs and actions in middle level education? Four sub-questions were also utilized: (1) What specific changes in instructional leadership have been realized in your middle school since the implementation of Baldrige-based practices? (2) What instructional leadership ideals and beliefs were communicated during the different phases of Baldrige implementation and maintenance? (3) How have you been involved in the design and implementation of Baldrige-based practices in your middle school? (4) How is the effectiveness of Baldrige-based practices and their subsequent impact on instructional leadership within your middle school monitored?

Data were collected from the superintendents and the middle school principals through individual phone interviews, with each participant having a copy of the questions to be asked prior to the onset of the interview. Only three of the sixteen middle school teachers chose to be interviewed by phone. The remaining thirteen teachers chose to complete the interview protocol created for the planned focus group interview by way of email correspondence. All participants shared their knowledge and experiences of Baldrige-based practices, as well as the leadership demonstrated during both the implementation and maintenance of Baldrige-based practices in the middle school and district. This phenomenological exploration provided the researcher with valuable insights from those persons who share the status of teaching and supervising teachers and administrators in a Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award winning district.

Discussion of Findings

This section of the chapter delves into the study's findings as they relate to the literature contained in Chapter Two and to the overarching and sub-questions posed during the interviews. Similarities and differences between the findings resulting from the interviews and the corresponding literature will be examined. The three theories and how each theory informed the results will also be discussed in this portion of the chapter.

Three major themes: (1) instructional leadership, (2) the Baldrige Program, and (3) stakeholder participation, along with the nine sub-themes that emerged from the data, will be explored in this section of Chapter Five.

Theme 1: Instructional Leadership

Sub-theme A: Focus on increased student achievement.

Instructional leaders possess common characteristics that set them apart from managerial leaders. Student learning and academic achievement are top priority for instructional leaders. Connors (2000) and Cuban (2004) contends that effective leaders must promote a philosophy of continuous improvement that is focused on teaching and learning. Several educational experts, including Marzano and his colleagues (2005), DuFour and his colleagues (2004), Sparks (2005), Sergiovanni (1990), and Blankstein (2004) have pointed to causal links between quality leadership and increased student achievement. Chrisman (2005) and Marzano et al. (2005) argued that increases in student achievement are a direct byproduct of quality leadership and effective instructional programs, practices, and school operations. The quality of the instructional leader's guidance and direction determines the pulse of the school, and whether student achievement continues to increase. Connors (2000) argued that effective leaders possessed a philosophy of continual improvement and advancement. Possessing a clear focus on

student achievement is a primary element of effective leadership, and utilizing Goleman and his colleagues' (2002) pacesetting leadership abilities, a school administrator can meet the challenges, get high quality results, and confront the data. As explained by Jim Collins in his book, *Good to Great* (2001), successful leaders consistently and accurately evaluate performance with a dedication toward improvement. As presented in Alan Blankstein's book, *Failure is NOT an Option* (2004), the second principle of a professional learning community focuses on ensuring achievement for all students, creating systems for both prevention and intervention.

Sub-theme B: Shared vision and leadership.

When Warren Bennis identified four characteristics of an effective leader in his book, *On Becoming A Leader* (2003), his first component was to engage the members of an organization through a shared vision. Schmoker (2005) reported that an administrator must be a master at building school community, and a person who could foster a sense of commitment, collaboration, and value. Linda Lambert (1998) argued that leadership was a combination of creating meaning and knowledge both collaboratively and cooperatively. White-Hood clearly outlined five authentic relations that formed thriving relationships, including (1) creating a shared vision, (2) designing a visionary, goal-oriented plan of action, (3) sharing teamwork, (4) motivating and inspiring others, and (5) removing obstacles that prevent success. Goleman and his colleagues (2002) identified the visionary leader as a person who moves others toward a shared dream, with clear purpose and direction. In Jim Collins' book, *Good to Great (2001)*, this visionary leader is a Level 5 leader, one who puts his own ego aside to promote the shared values of the organization's stakeholders.

Sub-theme C: Mentoring and modeling.

Although the number of responses for this sub-theme was fewer in comparison to

responses for several other sub-themes, an interesting twist regarding the role of the instructional

leader surfaced. In Goleman and his colleagues' book, *Primal Leadership* (2002), the

instructional leader who demonstrates mentoring and modeling approaches is more closely

related to the coaching leader described in the book. Utilizing a coaching ethic, the leader

connects the organizational goals to that of its members, helping the employee to improve

performance by building long-term capabilities.

Theme 2: The Baldrige Program

Sub-theme A: Use of data and data-driven decision making.

Although the Baldrige Program is not prescriptive in nature, it does possess specific

practices, processes, and tools that can impact the operations of the school and the academic

achievement of the students. One might wonder what parts of the Baldrige Program should

remain the focus at the beginning of implementation. The answer might lie with the researchers

Hancock and Lamendola (2005), who provided a leadership plan that guides an effective leader's

course. The plan includes: (1) diagnosing the problem at hand, (2) analyzing available resources,

(3) learning the level of commitment from the stakeholders, and (4) unveiling the strengths and

weaknesses in the organization. This plan of action could also be referred to as a data-driven

plan, since the data determines what action is required. In Alan Blankstein's book, *Failure is*

NOT an Option (2004), his fourth principle is noted as "using data to guide decision making"

(p. 141). He proposed that data should be used (1) to drive decisions and set goals, (2) to target

interventions, (3) to prescribe interventions, (4) to support change initiatives, (5) to guide

continuous improvement and redefine success, (6) to monitor progress, and (7) to guide

professional development. Blankstein also suggested that data be used regularly by collaborative

teams, for just-in-time interventions and planning. As the data in this research study

demonstrates, data collection, analysis, and reporting are integral components in the day-to-day

operations within the Baldrige Program.

Sub-theme B: Use of Quality Tools

McClanahan and Wicks, in their 1993 book entitled, *Future Force: Kids that Want To,*

Can, and Do! created a handbook that outlines all of the Quality tools that were utilized in the

predecessor to the Baldrige National Quality Program, namely the Total Quality Management

Program. Seventeen different tools are discussed and illustrated inside the handbook. Each tool

has a specific purpose and place within the Baldrige Program. The most common tools

explained include (1) the Plus/Delta chart, used to assess any initiative – small or large in scope,

(2) the affinity diagram, used to generate, analyze, and organize ideas, (3) the force field analysis

chart, used to consider both driving and restraining forces, (4) the fishbone diagram, used to

explore causes and effects, and (5) action planning charts, such as the Plan-Do-Study-Act chart,

used to plan and carry out a project or initiative based on the data collected. Although many

teaching strategies and teaching tools exist, editors Marino and Raines (2004) argue that Quality

tools are not simply used to change the teaching/learning setting; Quality tools are about

improvement for all students and stakeholders.

Sub-theme C: Use of the Baldrige Language

This sub-theme had the smallest number of responses out of all the sub-themes identified,

with proponents both for and against the use of the terminology specific to the Baldrige National

Quality Program. On one side of the argument are those that declared that although the learning

curve may be somewhat steep, educators should learn the Baldrige language so that a common

language exists amongst the players. On the other side of the argument are those opponents who claimed that using terminology that makes sense to the players is more beneficial in the adoption of the program, ensuring that the players feel that they own the program.

Theme 3: Stakeholder Participation

       Sub-theme A: Obtaining teacher buy-in

Teacher buy-in, sometimes called teacher ownership, was identified as a key element in whether the Baldrige Program would move from the ground level to a school-wide or district-wide implementation. This particular sub-theme was brought to the forefront by half of the superintendents, almost half of the principals, and half of the teacher groups. Although teacher buy-in is a coined phrase that appears differently in the literature, such as "enabling teachers" in Sergiovanni's *Value-Added Leadership* (1990, p. 96), or "enabling others to act" in Kouzes and Posner's *The Leadership Challenge* (2007, p.14), the same foundational truth exists - teachers must have the discretion, the support, and the guidance necessary to do their job. Sergiovanni (1990, p. 21) also referred to teacher buy-in as "teacher empowerment," but clarified that the empowerment must be linked to teaching and learning goals within a shared plan of action. Kouzes and Posner (2007) defined teacher buy-in through the eyes of the leader, explaining that leaders know that if preferred results are to be obtained, then the members of the organization must feel a sense of ownership and pride in arriving at the results. Every member's capacity for success must be strengthened, and every member should remain within the proverbial communication loop. It is with this foundational belief that the systems thinking theory can be directly connected to the findings of this study, identifying the relationships that exist between the leader and those within the organization.

For those that wonder how teacher buy-in might be obtained, the literature revealed that trust in the leader is absolutely imperative. According to Kouzes and Posner (2007), a leader should make the educators under his/her supervision feel strong, independent, and part of the team. The authors further explained this requirement by saying,

> Authentic leadership is founded on trust, and the more people trust their leader,
>
> and each other, the more they take risks, make changes, and keep organizations
>
> and movements alive. Through that relationship, leaders turn their constituents
>
> into leaders themselves (p. 21)

Goleman and his colleagues (2002) defined the type of leader who values people's input and gets commitment through active participation as the democratic leader. The authors elaborated further by saying that for the organization to meet its goal and acquire success, this leader must build buy-in or consensus among its members, and that valuable input must be continually obtained from the organizational members. This democratic leader must also utilize his/her skills in conflict management to ensure a sense of harmony. The key strength of the democratic leader is that of listening to the members, and then building teams that function for the greater good of the organization.

Utilizing systems thinking theory components, the interplay between the democratic leader and the members of the organization contribute to the success of the organization in meeting its goals and objectives. As Senge and his colleagues identified in *Schools That Learn* (2000), the feedback loops that consist of information be shared among different tiers of educators, are critical to the interrelationships that exist, informing the beliefs and actions of those within the organization.

Sub-theme B: Professional development with teacher collaboration

In *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 10th ed.* (2001), the first definition of *collaboration* is "To work jointly with others or together esp. in an intellectual endeavor" (p. 224). In the introduction to Chapter 9 of Kouzes and Posner's *The Leadership Challenge* (2007), they use a quote from Lily Cheng of PACE Learning & Consultancy in Singapore, stating "To be successful, teams must adopt a www.com (we will win) mind-set, and not an imm.com (I, me, myself) mind-set" (p. 221). Both the definition and the application of the definition seem most appropriate for educators at all levels of the working hierarchy.

Collaboration for the sake of conversation, though, is not what Cheng meant when she explained the preferred mind-set. Collaboration, as outlined by Blankstein (2004) describes how collaborative teams should remain focused on teaching and learning. He regards his third principle, collaborative teaming focused on teaching and learning, central to success in high-achieving schools. Utilizing SMART (Specific/Strategic, Measurable, Attainable, Results-oriented, and Time-bound) goals to form the parameters from which the team members operate, the team members collectively brainstorm ways to improve the organization. Through open communication, team members prioritize tasks, assign tasks, and decide on the sequence and timeline of events to follow. Protocols of communication are established and progress is monitored by the team members.

Goleman and his colleagues (2002) argue that a leader who wants to build collaboration within his/her organization must become an affiliative leader. This type of leader concentrates his/her time on building strong relationships amongst the members of the team or organization, fostering a harmonious climate that nurtures its members and expands the connective bonds between them. But the authors warn that this type of leadership should be utilized in conjunction

with the visionary approach, and remain focused on a stated mission, a set of standards, and operational parameters that guide everyone toward success. Sergiovanni (1990) called the interactions collegiality, and further defined the concept as including mutual respect, common work values, sharing of the workload, and conversations focused on teaching and learning.

Since teacher collaboration functions best within specific parameters, those opportunities for discussion must be planned for and executed when teachers are in their element. Through professional development opportunities that are focused on teaching and learning, teacher collaboration thrives. In the middle school arena, former teacher and author of thirteen books, including *The Best Schools*, Thomas Armstrong (2006) argues that social, emotional, and metacognitive growth of students should remain at the forefront of professional development opportunities. DuFour and his colleagues (2004) agreed that strong professional learning communities, consisting of teacher collaboration and professional development opportunities, were critical to gains in student achievement. DuFour et al. also advocated that the "principals who led those learning communities were committed to empowering their teachers" (p. 141).

Systems thinking theory also plays a role in this sub-theme focused on professional development and teacher collaboration. As the founder of systems thinking theory, Russell Ackoff explained, the role of the leader is to bring the followers in the organization into agreement with the leader, aligning actions of all organizational members for that everyone works toward the same end (Lussier & Achua, 2004).

Sub-theme C: Community and parent involvement

The last element to be discussed was community and parent involvement, although this element is one of the most discussed topics in educational arenas. Swain (2005) and Shields (2004) argue that a leader must have an understanding of and commitment to improving personal

relationships with all the stakeholders. Hall (2005) advises every leader to examine the leader's own community leadership. Schmoker (2005) declared that an administrator must be a master at building school community. Chrisman (2005) and Graseck (2005) argue that effective leaders develop relationships with parents and community members, built on trust and focused on the discussion about education. Senge and his colleagues (2000) summarized the current thought about the purpose of the community in the life of a child by saying, "a 'school that learns,' wherever it is located and whatever form it takes, requires a community that fosters learning all around it" (p. 16).

In Hugh Price's book, *Mobilizing the Community to Help Students Succeed* (2008), the author advocated that taking action within the community involves certain actions from the leader including (1) being adaptable, (2) giving volunteers clear objectives, (3) thinking long-term, (4) acting locally, (5) enlisting the media, (6) cultivating relationships, (7) using committees and teams to divide labor, (8) encouraging student participation, (9) keeping the focus on children, (10) not relying too heavily on financial resources, and (11) involving the local churches. Most of these actions were revealed in the responses collected from this study's respondents.

In Senge and his colleagues' book, *Schools that Learn* (2000), the authors referenced a quote from Les Omotani, the superintendent of West Des Moines Community School District, stating, "As the community goes, so goes the schools, and as the schools go, so goes the community" (p. 477). Senge and his colleagues further explained that every educator can learn from the underlying themes that are deeply embedded in the quote, specifically, (1) build on your strengths, (2) be prepared to fundamentally shift thinking patterns, (3) recognize connections,

and (4) respect and value all children. These three components are integral components of systems thinking theory.

Marion (2002) explicated that the role of the leader was to build networks, stating Leaders should initiate, encourage, catalyze, and make connections" (p. 313). This study's findings specifically address the importance of the leaders' understandings, actions, and interactions in measuring the success of the Baldrige National Quality Program in impacting middle level education.

Although each of the four Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award winning districts mentioned different ways of engaging parents and community members in the school lives of their students, specific middle school strategies were not identified. Several strategies for engaging external stakeholders in the internal business within the school were discussed in Blankstein's book, *Failure is NOT an Option* (2004). The author suggested that middle school handbooks emphasize the positive aspects of the school environment, and focus less on the disciplinary infraction system that usually exists in middle schools. He also recommended that progress reports include a feedback system that identifies both cognitive and social-emotional growth. A final strategy that was revealed by the author focused on creating forums for dialogue about cultural and ethnic differences, all in an effort to assist parents and students in adapting to their neighborhoods around them.

Summary

This study examined the perspectives of three tiers of educators, including district superintendents, middle school principals, and middle school teachers from the only four school districts to win the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. Their perspectives regarding the impact of Baldrige-based practices on instructional leadership in middle schools were collected,

analyzed, and reported. Although it was originally thought that each district's data would be reported as a single case study, the limitations of confidentiality precluded that identifying type of reporting. After thorough examination of the data, it was determined that this study's core finding was connection: connection in the form of a positive relationship among instructional leadership, the ongoing use of the Baldrige National Quality Program, and stakeholder involvement. The connections were established by the internal stakeholders (superintendents, principals, teachers, and students), who often referenced the external stakeholders (parents, business and community members) in their responses. The three tiers of educators in this study shared a central focus – improving student achievement. Within the three central themes, nine sub-themes were identified, including (1) focus on student achievement, (2) shared vision and leadership, (3) mentoring and modeling, (4) the use of data and data-driven decision making, (5) the use of Quality tools, (6) the Baldrige language, (7) teacher buy-in, (8) teacher collaboration and professional development, and (9) parent and community involvement.

The respondents came from four different states, with unique populations and district features. The four districts ranged in size from 214 students to 12,400 students, and with instructional staffs ranging from 30 teachers to 869 teachers. All of the districts continue to create mission statements and utilize the Quality tools within the Baldrige Program. All of the districts continue to utilize the Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence to gauge their own progress toward district and school goals. To varying degrees, each school district and the middle schools within the district continue to embrace the Baldrige National Quality Program and the seven categories of (1) leadership; (2) strategic planning; (3) student, stakeholder, and market focus; (4) measurement, analysis, and knowledge management; (5) faculty and staff focus; (6) process management; and, (7) organizational performance results.

Limitations

Certain limitations were inherent in a national research project such as this one. Access to the respondents, timing concerns in regards to scheduling and length of interviews, as well as costs incurred to conduct a national research project were significant issues, and all three issues ultimately inhibited and/or altered the scope of the study.

The original timeline for the research study was to begin in May and extend through the summer months, but many respondents indicated that this timeframe conflicted with end-of-the-year school duties. Several superintendents and middle school principals were not available in May because their schools were planning for summer vacation, so interviews had to be postponed until school resumed in August or September. Consequently, the timeline was extended so that respondents could be interviewed during the early months of the 2008-2009 school year. Another limitation was that the yearly calendars for the four districts were not identical, so scheduling interviews with superintendents and principals proved troublesome. All teacher interviews had to take place during the latter days of August and during the month of September. Also, since I maintained a full-time position while conducting this research, I had to schedule release time from my job to conduct the interviews when it was convenient for the respondents. The scheduling issue for the teachers was much more difficult, and since there were no incentivex for participating, teachers were reluctant to take their planning, teaming, or conference time to engage in a phone interview. Those that chose to respond via email correspondence did answer the same questions posed to those teachers who participated in the phone interviews, and the email correspondence data were treated in the same manner as transcribed conversations.

Data collection proved to be another limitation because of the length of the phone conversations, and the healthy costs incurred therein. Since both a cell phone line and a land line was utilized by me to speak with the respondents, it was often necessary to move from one form of communication to another because of dropped conversations. Access to a healthy Internet source also proved to be a limitation when emailing the respondents, usually because the size of the email attachments proved too large for several of the respondents. Adjustments in the number and method for sending and delivery had to be considered.

Limitations that evolved from the respondents were also documented. Although the original intent was to interview all respondents via Internet-connected web cam or phone, several teacher respondents were unwilling to utilize this method of communication, and chose instead to complete the interview protocol originally design for a focus group interview via email correspondence. Five of the teacher respondents who chose the email form of communication conducted multiple two-way communications with me in order to ensure that their answers represented their true feelings and beliefs.

At the beginning of the data collection process, I called to interview one of the superintendents, and discovered that he was one week away from retiring. When I asked if he would share his thoughts and perceptions with me prior to his leave, I was asked to save the interview for his replacement. I wondered whether this limitation would interfere with the data collection process, and whether a new superintendent would be able to fully explain a district that he had not been a member of.

Another limitation encountered with the superintendents and principals, is that the majority of the administrators asked that some of their statements not be considered for publication or use within this study. One superintendent explained that he often used the phrase

he shared with me, and consequently, anyone in his district reading my dissertation would recognize the remark as belonging to him. Another shared that his comments about the community in which he worked would reveal the district in which he worked by the shear mention of the cultures contained within the community. Another superintendent was explicit that no data regarding student performance be shared within the study report because he felt the results would identify his district from the other award-winning districts. One principal shared that he was reluctant to share historical data about the leadership styles and actions of the former superintendents because a new superintendent was headed to the district and wanted the past to stay in the past. Another principal indicated that she was new to her leadership role, and information contained within the interview protocol might be outside of her understanding or scope of experience within that school setting. All of these elements proved to limit the depth of information reported within this study.

Although the study investigated the perceptions at three different educator levels, the perceptions of external stakeholders, i.e. parents and community members, as well as internal non-certified staff members, i.e. cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, etc. were not collected, limiting the generalization of the results to all school and district stakeholders. Additional limitations were specifically related to generalization across middle schools and educational districts, since only four Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award-winning superintendents, and the middle school principals and teachers within that district participated in this study. The small population may negatively influence a viewer's decision to take the results as significant.

Additional limitations, specifically related to the selected leadership theories that addressed the research problem and clarified the research were four-fold. First, the research

findings may not lend themselves to generalization across middle school and educational districts, depending on the demographic makeup of those districts who investigate the study's findings. Secondly, since only four MBNQA-winning superintendents, and the middle school principals and teachers within that district participated in this study, the small population may negatively influence a viewer's decision to take the results as significant. Thirdly, if the reader wants total understanding of the phenomena of instructional leadership, Guess & Sailor (1993) contend that total understanding may never be achieved. The fourth limitation of instructional leadership theory, as argued by Achilles in 1992, is that instructional leadership may only be a substitute for capable management (Leithwood & Duke, 1998).

Although instructional leadership, emotional intelligence leadership, and system thinking theories supported the exploration of the intricate relationships within an organization and the role of the leader in those relationships, one must know that the opponents to these theories claim that the intricacies of relationships are far too difficult to measure and that most researchers are not equipped to handle multi-level, multi-dimensional observations or interviews with simultaneous bursts of information (Kezar et al., 2006). Further, Hallinger and Leithwood (1998) argued that the meaning of leadership must be examined from the perspective of the people within the organization, requiring in-depth anthropological research rather than simple survey methods. That type of research proves itself both costly and time-consuming.

Finally, since the Baldrige National Quality Program's framework is a non-linear system working simultaneously inside the organization we know as education, it may not be possible to pinpoint the intricacies of the program inside the school or district. An examination of processes over time might be more appropriate, since simple snapshots may not fully demonstrate the depth of the organizational dynamics. Senge (1990) also warned that one must look for the

interrelationships, not linear cause-and-effect chains of action. Again, this type of research

requires examination of processes over time, so simple snapshots may not fully demonstrate the

depth of the organizational dynamics.

Delimitations

For the purpose of this study, I delimited the study only to the exploration of Baldrige-

based practices, processes, and tools. Although other programs and strategies might exist within

the district or school, the impact or interference of those mechanisms were not explored.

However, I was able to address programs and initiatives that were instituted within the district or

school as a direct result of the data-driven decision making processes within the Baldrige

Program. I also delimited the study to include only certified school personnel, including the

superintendents, middle school principals, and middle school teachers.

Study Implications

This research study investigated the perspectives of superintendents, middle school

principals, and middle school teachers regarding the adoption, implementation, and maintenance

of the Baldrige National Quality Program (BNQP) within the educator's school district and the

use of Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence (BECPE) to assess instructional

leadership in middle level educational settings. Only superintendents, middle school principals,

and middle school teachers from the four Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award-winning

districts participated in this study, so it was imperative that their actions, beliefs, and thoughts

concerning instructional leadership and Baldrige-based educational practices were recorded and

analyzed.

There are three themes, revealed through this study, that do not appear to be negotiable –

instructional leadership, knowing and utilizing the parts within the Baldrige Program, and

stakeholder participation. The following paragraphs will identify those elements that are critical to each theme and the recommendations from the respondents for those who are discussing the possibility of implementing the Baldrige National Quality Program.

Instructional leadership theory focused on the leader's practices in defining the school mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting the school climate, and it is this theory that formed the outer parameters of this research. In simpler terms, the premise of this research study could best be summarized by Senge's (1990, p. 69) comments, "[that] a shift of mind from seeing parts to seeing wholes, from seeing people as helpless reactors to seeing them as active participants in shaping their reality, from reacting to the present to creating the future." Two additional theories that inform instructional leadership theory are emotional intelligence leadership theory that focuses on the actions of the leader in relation to those he supervises and systems thinking theory which focuses on the interactions and interrelationships among those within the educational organization. All three theories operate in tandem for this research study, making the delineations between one theoretical application and another somewhat difficult to separate.

The implications of this qualitative research study could conceivably impact educational settings across the nation. The research results could inform and initiate school-based and district-wide professional development opportunities that engage new administrators in enlightenment, discussion, and application of the Baldrige-based practices and processes. When the theoretical frameworks are explored and the practical results obtained, the results could be presented as a white paper report at future American Society of Quality (ASQ) national conferences, assisting school administrators and district superintendents from around the nation in self-assessing their leadership qualifications and embracing successful implementation of

Baldrige National Quality Program (BNQP) framework and successful application of the Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence assessment instrument, as both related to instructional leadership and learning-centered educational practices. Although this three-tiered case study was limited to the perspectives of the research participants from the four educational districts that have won the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, the significance of the data collected could impact self-reflection practices of middle school principals and district-level administrators nationwide.

Educators at all levels who are contemplating the adoption of the Baldrige National Quality Program should benefit from the results of this research study. The lessons shared by the superintendent, principal, and teacher respondents provide insights for those who are in the initial stages of implementation. If the focus for educators nationwide is to improve student achievement, the Baldrige Program has several features that promote self-reflection, reliance on data to drive decision making, and collaboration with others in order to arrive at targeted achievement goals.

The Baldrige Program is not a prescriptive program; there is no "one size fits all" approach with this program. There are no specific mandates that determine success. Instead, with the use of the Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence, a district or school can collect data to determine their level of success within each of the seven Baldrige categories. The diversity of the populations supported by the four MBNQA-winning superintendents, principals, and teachers indicates the realistic application of the Baldrige-based practices to districts of different student and community populations nationwide. Utilizing open communication and collaboration among the stakeholders, both long-term and short-term goals and objectives can be established, implemented, and monitored. Progress toward the established

goals should bring about increased student performance in both academic and social-emotional areas of development for all students. As evidenced by the study's findings, the communications and efforts from the superintendency to the classroom must be in alignment, indicating that all stakeholders are working toward the goal of excellence.

The results of this study could be utilized to inform state and district-wide professional development opportunities that engage middle level teachers and administrators, and district-level leaders in discussions and applications of the identified instructional leadership qualities and the Baldrige-based practices, ensuring ongoing school improvement strategies are utilized to create environments of academic excellence. In my home state of Louisiana, possible subsequent research studies focusing on instructional leadership and its relationship to the *Standards for School Principals in Louisiana* (2006), which include the components of vision, school management, school improvement, professional development, school community relations, and professional ethics, could also be conducted, ensuring a more unified statewide cadre of middle level educators focused on instructional leadership. And the same application could take place in other states, comparing the findings to their state or national standards of performance. The significance of this study could impact middle level school improvement efforts nationwide and self-reflective practices of district superintendents, middle school principals, middle level classroom teachers, and district/middle school leadership teams that are working toward performance excellence.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study clearly indicated the need to examine the perspectives of three different levels of educators within an award-winning district to fully understand the challenges and successes of implementing and maintaining the Baldrige National Quality Program in middle school settings.

The perspectives from the superintendents, middle school principals, and middle school teachers addressed the phenomenological gap in the literature regarding how Baldrige-based practices, processes, and tool impacted instructional leadership in middle school settings. The response from the research participants will potentially enlighten those schools and districts who embark on the continuous improvement movement. Insights from each level of participants might assist an educator at a higher level to understand the issues a subordinate might encounter.

Although this study focused on the Baldrige National Quality Award winners, and only those in the middle school arena, further research could target different educational levels – elementary or high school – to examine whether similar results could be obtained. Another study might look at those schools or districts that are undergoing the task of self-assessment with the Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence to fully understand the challenges with understanding the Baldrige vocabulary and deployment of the Baldrige processes. A long-term study, following the students who were immersed in Baldrige practices, processes, and tools, might provide longitudinal data that solidifies the lasting impact of being part of the Baldrige Program, from the standpoints of the student, the teachers, the principals, and the district superintendents. And lastly, a study of the application of the Baldrige Program to a school district larger than the 12,400 students could provide insights into the adoption, implementation, and maintenance of the Baldrige Program by large school district.

Significance of the Study

Perspectives gained through interview and email correspondence data from three tiers of educators, superintendents, middle school principals, and middle school teachers could assist other middle level educators in creating instructional environments based on sound leadership and student achievement. Through this study, an improved understanding of the Baldrige

National Quality Program (BNQP) and the Baldrige Educational Criteria for Performance Excellence (BECPE), specifically the core value of visionary leadership, will inform quality in education environments, and could enlighten educators who wish to ensure student academic success.

Although McREL's *Balanced Leadership Study* (2005) and Leithwood and his colleague's (2004) study shared quantitative findings that revealed a positive correlation between leadership and student achievement, it is the qualitative aspect that ultimately reveals the links between instructional leadership and student achievement that were investigated in this research study. The collection of qualitative data disclosed the specific beliefs, actions, and perspectives of the targeted district participants as the components of Baldrige-based practices and instructional leadership were explored.

The Baldrige Program's impact on instructional leadership was compared to the three tenets of instructional leadership theory developed by Hallinger and Leithwood (1998). The relationship among Hallinger and Leithwood's tenets of defining the mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting school climate provided insight regarding the influence of the Baldrige Program on middle level education in each school district.

The relationships and interactions between the leader and those that person supervised were explored and compared to the six emotional leadership styles identified by Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee (2002) in their *Primal Leadership* model, specifically visionary, coaching, affiliative, democratic, pacesetting, and commanding leadership styles. Because the *Primal Leadership* model was originally researched within the business world, similar in nature to the creation of the Baldrige National Quality Program (BNQP) that was patterned after the Total Quality Management (TQM) model in business and industry, this leadership model was utilized

to investigate the emotional intelligence leadership styles and actions of Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award-winning superintendents.

Finally, because all of the targeted leaders operated within an educational institution, it was also necessary to investigate the systems thinking theory that forms the core philosophy of the Baldrige National Quality Program. This research study investigated the multiple factors that informed the actions and communications of the leaders of all three tiers, heightening awareness of complexity, interdependencies, change, and leverage within each educational organization.

Consistencies and differences between the respondents, the leadership within their school districts, and the demographics of their school districts were also divulged, providing comprehensive insight for critical analysis by other district leaders and school-based teams who might contemplate the adoption of Baldrige-based practices in their own middle schools.

Conclusion

This study adds to the literature regarding the significance of Baldrige-based practices, processes, and tools to middle level instructional leadership. This study reinforced the importance of instructional leadership and stakeholder participation to the success of this district-based and school-based program. The results of this study address the lack of literature about the Baldrige Program and its impact in middle level education.

It is everyone's business to meet the needs of our students, so that they become successful, productive citizens who can lead our businesses and industries of tomorrow (Littke & Grabelle, 2004). With the Baldrige National Quality Program, students and educators alike are focused on the data, analyzing its message, planning to meet the challenges revealed, and monitoring progress along the way. Under the auspices of the Baldrige Program, it is every educator's responsibility to help create a collective culture – one where the students become

leaders and life-long learners. Educators must work as a team to assist students so that they

accomplish the monumental task of reaching their potential. It is with a multitude of leadership

styles – visionary, affiliative, coaching, democratic, pace-setting, and commanding- and with a

shared vision and collective mission, that a district or school can move forward, focused on its

ultimate goal of increasing student performance in all areas. And it is the leader who must

consistently monitor the pulse of the organization, helping its members to utilize best practices to

nurture the students in their development. For as Alan Blankstein's (2004) book announces to

everyone, *Failure is NOT an Option.*

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Appendix A

The IRB Application

IRB Application

A. FACE PAGE

PROTOCOL TITLE: Quality in Education: Perspectives Regarding Baldrige-based Practices and Instructional Leadership in Middle Schools
ALTERNATE TITLE: (none)
TYPE OF REVIEW: New

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Tammie Causey-Konate'
DEPARTMENT: Educational Leadership, Counseling, and Foundations
UNIVERSITY AFFILIATION: Associate Professor
CAMPUS ADDRESS: 348 CEHD
PHONE: 504-280-6449
PREFERRED EMAIL: tcausey@uno.edu

CO-INVESTIGATOR: Felicia Coleman
DEPARTMENT: Educational Leadership, Counseling, and Foundations
UNIVERSITY AFFILIATION: Graduate Student
CAMPUS ADDRESS: 348 CEHD
PHONE: 337-540-7684
PREFERRED EMAIL: fcoleman@uno.edu

B. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

While the number of qualified principals continues to decrease, the demands of time, resources, and instructional leadership steadily increase. Since the enactment of the *No Child Left Behind Act*, a sense of urgency has perpetuated discussion about the instructional leadership roles of district and school-level administrators. Heated debates over what constitutes the most effective administrator and how that person must exemplify the role and responsibilities of the instructional leader continue to gain momentum in schools nationwide. With these leadership concerns, middle level education confronts the increasing lack of motivation and disengagement of adolescents during grades 6 through 8. To address both leadership and instructional issues at middle level education, many school districts have adopted Baldrige-based practices to specifically target instructional leadership needs and maximize school improvement efforts. Since academic failure is not a viable option for any child, it is necessary to research educational frameworks that have produced academic and leadership growth in educational settings. The Baldrige Integrated Learning System (ILS) framework, based on a system thinking concept, combined with the Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence (BECPE) assessment instrument have produced four award-winning school districts since the inception of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA) in 2000. The purpose of this case study is to investigate the perspectives of middle level teachers, middle level administrators, and district superintendents in the only four school districts to receive the MBNQA, regarding Baldrige-based practices, specifically Baldrige's ILS framework and the use of the BECPE assessment

instrument, from implementation through maintenance. Although the Baldrige-based practices form the parameters for the research investigation, the impact on instructional leadership in middle level education remains at the forefront of this three tiered, four-prong case study. Each of the targeted MBNQA winning superintendents will reveal their leadership style(s) and their role in district-wide efforts. In addition to the data collected from the targeted superintendents, a minimum of two middle school principals and four middle school teachers from each award-winning district will provide insight concerning their supervisor's leadership style(s) and role(s) in school-based Baldrige implementation and maintenance, as well as perceptions regarding Baldrige-based practices as they impact instructional leadership capacity within the middle school arena. Finally, the identification of key themes among the three functioning levels of MBNQA participants will reveal the interrelationships and interactions that support and/or inhibit successful implementation and maintenance of Baldrige-based practices, as well as different perspectives about the leadership styles and roles that were, and possibly still are, exhibited within the school or district.

C. DATA COLLECTION

1. Total number of participants that you plan to include/enroll in your study: 30

2. Age range of participants you plan to include/enroll in your study: 22 to 70

3. Do I plan to recruit participants from any of the following groups? No, I will not recruit individuals from any of the following groups, including minors (persons under the age of 18), cognitively or psychologically impaired individuals, prisoners or parolees, specific medical populations, elderly, pregnant women, minority populations, or UNO students/employees.

4. Will recruitment of participants and/or data collection involve any of the following? Yes, audiotapes, videotapes, electronic communications such as email, and focus groups will be utilized. I plan to transcribe my own tapes immediately after my scheduled individual interviews and focus group interviews. The audio and videotapes will be stored in a locked file cabinet for one year or until completion of my dissertation. The audio and videotapes will then be destroyed, and the transcripts will be shredded and disposed of. Upon receipt of email communications, the email will be printed and kept in the same locked file cabinet, where it will also be stored for one year or until completion of my dissertation, and then shredded and disposed of. Email communications will be deleted from the computer after printing of the email is completed.

5. Does the proposed research require that you deceive participants in any way? No.
6. Describe how you will recruit participants and inform them about their role in the study. I will ask the superintendent of each targeted district to provide me with the names of two middle school principals and four middle school teachers, one representing each of the four curriculum areas – English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies – who were actively involved in the adoption, implementation, and/or maintenance of Baldrige-based practices in their schools.

D. FUNDING SOURCE

1. Have you received any source of funding for the proposed research (federal, private, corporate, or religious organization support)? No.

2. Is this project currently consideration for funding (e.g., under review)? No.

3. Do funding source(s) have any potential or professional benefit from the outcome of this study? No.

E. RISKS TO PARTICIPANTS

List both the actual and potential risks to the participants that could reasonably be expected to occur during the course of the study. The list includes:
- Participants may be asked to disclose information that they might consider personal or sensitive.
- Participants may be asked to reveal personal information that is not anonymous who may or may not know them personally (e.g., focus group)

To minimize the risk to the participant, I will follow the steps listed below.
- I will ask participants to share with me their knowledge about the adoption, implementation, and maintenance of Baldrige-based practices in their schools or at the district level. I will explain that the leadership style(s) and role(s) of their supervisor will also be investigated.
- To minimize the risk to the participants, I will inform each participant before the interview, as part of the informed consent process that that person will be asked questions regarding Baldrige-based practices or questions pertaining to instructional leadership in middle schools. I will assess the participant's oral response and body language to determine whether a question is causing undue emotional stress.
- If emotional stress is detected (e.g. avoidance of eye contact, wringing of hands, sweating, blushing, etc.) I will immediately discontinue the interview. I will say to the participant, "I sense that you are not comfortable with this question. Would you like to stop the interview at this time?" If the participant chooses to stop the interview, I will say, "Thank you for sharing your insight with me. Your insight is very valuable to me." [At that point the interview will end.] If the participant wants to continue the interview after my initial assessment, I will ask, "Would you like to skip this question?" The interview will resume after I reiterate to the participant his right to stop the interview or refuse to answer any questions that I may ask.

F. INFORMED CONSENT

Describe the procedures to be used to obtain and document informed consent and/or assent. To obtain informed consent, I will first use an introductory letter (enclosed) to introduce myself and my research purpose. This introduction will be made to the district superintendents prior to their

individual interviews, to the middle school principals prior to their individual interviews, and to the middle school teacher focus groups prior to their group interviews. I will briefly describe the study and why I have chosen to interview the three tiers of educators. I will read through the Informed Consent form (enclosed), answering any questions that may be posed by the participants. After informing the participants of their rights and that they can refuse to participate at any time, I will begin the interview process with that targeted participant or group of participants. At the onset of that interview, I will sign two copies of the consent form, and then ask the participant to sign the same two copies. For the focus group interviews, five copies will be utilized – one for the research and one copy for each of the focus group participants. I will take one copy of the consent form, containing both my signature and that of the participant or participants, and place it in the appropriate letter sized brown envelope marked Perspectives of Superintendents, Perspectives of Middle School Principals, or Perspectives of Middle School Teachers. The other consent form or forms will be given to the participant or participants.

G. DATA USE

1. How will these data be used? I will use data for the following reasons:
   - Dissertation
   - Conference/presentations
   - Publication/journal article
   - Results released to participants
   - Results released to school (individual participating schools)
   - Results released to organization (individual participating school districts)

2. Describe the steps you will take to ensure the confidentiality of the participants and data. Indicate how you will safeguard data that includes identifying or potentially identifying information (e.g., coding). Indicate when identifiers will be separated or removed from the data. Also, indicate where and how you will store the data and how long you plan to retain it. Describe how you will dispose of it (e.g., erasing tapes, shredding data). Be sure to include all types of data collected (e.g., audiotapes, videotapes, and questionnaire/survey).
   - For each tier of participants – superintendent, middle school principals, and middle school teachers – I will prepare a brown envelope containing two copies of the consent form, or five copies for the teachers, and an interview protocol. Each envelope will also contain the district's name. All documents in the folder will be numbered (ex: P1 for participant one, and so on).
   - From the point of the interview on, I will only refer to the participants by number. I will not speak the actual name of the participant into the audio or video recorder, nor will I attach the consent form to the interview protocol.
   - Rather, I will sign two copies (in the case of superintendents and the principals) or the five copies (in the case of the teachers). I will ask the participants to sign the two or five copies, and then I will place only my copy of the signed consent form into the appropriate brown envelope.
   - As mentioned earlier, the participant will be given a signed copy of the consent form to keep for his/her records. I plan to sign the consent form first so I will not look at the name of the participant on the consent form.

- After all consent forms are signed and all interviews are completed, I will seal the brown envelope and mark it Perspectives of Superintendents, Perspectives of Middle School Principals, or Perspectives of Middle School Teachers. Following these steps, I will have little contact with the actual names of the participants.
- Before beginning the data analysis, I will assign each of the participant names to a corresponding participant number (ex: Participant 1 = Amy). I will use a chart with participant numbers and corresponding names during the analysis process to accurately attribute comments and quotes to the proper participant. To ensure that I do not unintentionally use a name that matches a participant, I will cross reference the first names only of the participants against the consent forms in the brown envelope marked Perspectives of Superintendents, Perspectives of Middle School Principals, and Perspectives of Middle School Teachers.
- I will personally transcribe the interview data immediately after the interviews. Once the data are transcribed, pseudonyms are selected, and then pseudonyms are assigned to participants, I will code transcripts. I will assign codes to emerging themes within the transcript data. At no time will there be a mentioning of a participant's actual name or any identifying characteristics. I will remove any information that is identifiable (ex: mention of teacher's room number or school name) so that all participants are discussing either the adoption, implementation, and maintenance of Baldrige-based practices in their school/district or the leadership style(s) and role(s) of their supervisor in the quality in education process.

The analysis process will involve the use of cross case and thematic matrices. The cross case matrices will connect the perspectives of the participants regarding Baldrige-based practices and middle level instructional leadership. The thematic matrices will link perspectives of participants regarding the themes that emerge during the interview process.

Appendix B

IRB Approval Notice

**University Committee for the Protection
of Human Subjects in Research
University of New Orleans**

Campus Correspondence

Tammie Causey-Konate'
Felicia Coleman
University of New Orleans
Department of Education Leadership Counseling and Foundations, ED174,
New Orleans, LA 70148
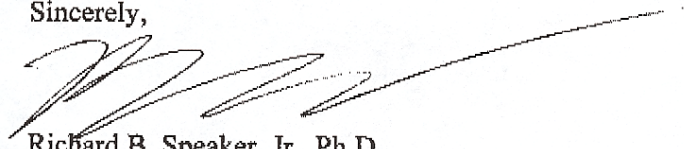
May 7, 2008

RE: IRB# Application 04Apr08

Based on your submission of 5/2/08 in response to committee concerns regarding IRB#
Application 04Apr08, the project is approved as revised.

Please remember that approval is only valid for one year from the approval date. Any changes to
the procedures or protocols must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to implementation.
Use the IRB number listed on this letter in all future correspondence regarding this proposal.

If an adverse, unforeseen event occurs (e.g., physical, social, or emotional harm), you are
required to inform the IRB as soon as possible after the event.

Best of luck with your project!

Sincerely,

Richard B. Speaker, Jr., Ph.D.
Associate Chair
University Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research

Appendix C

Human Participants Protection Education for Research

Certificate of Completion

Human Participant Protections Education for Research Teams

Completion Certificate

This is to certify that

Felicia Coleman

has completed the **Human Participants Protection Education for Research Teams** online course, sponsored by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), on 02/06/2007.

This course included the following:

- key historical events and current issues that impact guidelines and legislation on human participant protection in research.
- ethical principles and guidelines that should assist in resolving the ethical issues inherent in the conduct of research with human participants.
- the use of key ethical principles and federal regulations to protect human participants at various stages in the research process.
- a description of guidelines for the protection of special populations in research.
- a definition of informed consent and components necessary for a valid consent.
- a description of the role of the IRB in the research process.
- the roles, responsibilities, and interactions of federal agencies, institutions, and researchers in conducting research with human participants.

National Institutes of Health
http://www.nih.gov

Appendix D

Permission Letter

<Date>

<Superintendent Name>
<District Name>
<Address of Superintendent>

Dear <Superintendent's Name>,

As a University of New Orleans doctoral student, I am pursuing a qualitative research study that includes the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award winning districts. Information from you as the superintendent, as well as information from two of your middle school principals and four of your middle school teachers will be utilized in my final dissertation, entitled, *Quality in Education: Perspectives Regarding Baldrige-based Practices and Instructional Leadership in Middle Schools*.

As a Baldrige National Quality Award winning district, you and your schools have adopted, implemented, and maintained Baldrige-based practices, such as the Integrated Learning System and the Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence, within your district and district schools. I would like to interview you about your leadership style and the role you played in the adoption, implementation, and monitoring of the quality in education framework. I would also like to interview two of your middle school principals, selected by you and interviewed at different times, regarding the actual implementation and maintenance of Baldrige-based practices in their schools, as well as acquiring their viewpoints regarding the leadership displayed by you throughout the three different processes of adoption, implementation, and maintenance. To finalize my research in your district, I would like to hold a focus group interview with four teachers, selected by the principals, at a designated time, asking questions similar in nature to those asked of the principals.

Since Louisiana is not a neighboring state to the state in which you are located, I would like to hold the interviews either by Compressed Video Conferencing (CVC) or via phone. I will assume the cost for CVC or phone communications. If neither method of transmission of information will work for you or your district personnel, we can resort to email communications. Knowing that most schools close at the end of May, I am hoping to complete my research within the months of April and May of 2008. Upon verbal and written agreement from you, I will set up the conferences so that they do not interfere with instruction or school-based activities.

I am quite excited about this interaction with Baldrige National Quality Award winners. As an educator and administrator in a middle school setting, I know that I will learn from the experiences and insights of all three tiers of participants – superintendent, middle school principals, and middle school teachers. I also know that my paper is the first to target Baldrige-based practices in a middle school setting, so it is my hope that other middle schools across the nation will be enlightened by my research. At the end of the dissertation process, I will provide you with an executive summary of my research findings so that you can share the findings with the research participants in your district, as well as the participating schools within your district.

This is an opportunity of a lifetime for me, and I look forward to conversations with you regarding upcoming times for the interviews. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me via phone (337-540-7684) or email (fcoleman@uno.edu). I would like to thank you, in advance, for assisting me in the collection of incredibly important information – information that has the potential to positively impact middle schools across the nation and internationally.

Thank you for your time and attention to this request.

Respectfully yours,

Felicia Coleman
Doctoral Candidate
Department of Educational Leadership, Counseling & Foundations
University of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA

Appendix E

Participant Consent Form

Participant Consent Form

1. Title of this study

Quality in Education: Perspectives Regarding Baldrige-based Practices and Instructional Leadership in Middle Schools

2. Purpose of this study

This study is to document the perspectives of district superintendents, middle school principals, and middle school teachers in the four Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award winning districts regarding the adoption, implementation and maintenance of Baldrige-based practices. This study may be used by other districts and schools contemplating the implementation of Baldrige's Quality in Education framework.

3. What you will do in this study

You will talk about your experiences during the implementation and maintenance phases of Baldrige's Quality in Education framework, specifically addressing Baldrige's Integrated Learning System (ILS) and the Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence (BECPE). You will talk about successes and obstacles encountered. If you are a principal or teacher, you will be asked to convey your perspectives regarding the leadership style(s) exhibited by your district or school leader. This information will be collected during either an individual interview (for superintendents and school principals) or during a focus group interview (for teachers). The total interview time should last between 60 and 90 minutes. You will speak to me and will be (audio or video) taped to make sure that all of what you say can be typed. Once the study is over, the tapes will be discarded. Your real name will not be revealed in the study. Anything you say can be used in the study.

4. Risks

Some people may not like talking about their own experiences. If you do not want to talk about something, you do not have to. As educators, it is important to hold our colleagues' trust and confidence in highest regard, so consequently, what is discussed during focus group interviews must remain within the confines of the room. Also, since people do get tired during the interview process, we can take a short break to refresh both mind and body.

5. How this may help people

The results of this study may be used to help other school districts, superintendents, middle school principals, and middle school teachers to understand the implementation and maintenance processes involved in the adoption of Baldrige-based practices. The information collected from all of the respondents – district superintendent, middle school principal, and middle school teachers – will also help educators to understand the

relationships and interactions that support or inhibit the building of instructional leadership cadres in the middle school arena.

6. **Can you stop?**

   If you want to leave the interview, you may do so at any time. The interview process will continue without you, and it will be noted that your participation in the interview terminated at the time of your departure. Since your superintendent or principal recommended you for participation in this process, your insights may be collected at another time, or via email or phone communication.

7. **Protection of your name and history**

   Names will not be used on audio or videotapes or any other part of this study. I will listen to the tapes and type what you say. I will keep the tapes and typed reports in a safe, secret place. I will destroy the typed reports and tapes no later than one year from the day of the interview. No details will be recorded that could link any information you provide to you. I will record only the district name and your participant number during the interview so that typed reports accurately reflect your insights about the implementation and maintenance of Baldrige-based practices and the instructional leadership styles of your leaders in your district.

8. **What you will get**

   There is no money, rewards, or payment for participating in this study.

9. **Questions after this study**

   This study does not involve more than a small risk to you. Should there be any questions from participating in this study, please feel free to call Dr. Tammie Causey-Konate' at 504-280-6449.

10. **Oral agreement form to do this study**

    You have been told of what will happen in this study and the risks for participating. Continuing with the interview is your consent to participate in this study.

Appendix F

Superintendent Interview Protocol

Superintendent Interview Protocol

Superintendent # _____   District: _____

Over-arching Research Question: How has the adoption of Baldrige-based practices permeated instructional leadership beliefs and actions in middle level education?

General Questions:
- How many years have you been involved in education?
- When you taught in a classroom, what subjects did you teach?
- Does your background include elementary teaching experience? Middle school teaching experience? High school teaching experience?
- Have you served as a school principal, and if so at what level(s) and for how many years?
- How many years had you held the position of superintendent when you began Baldrige's Quality in Education implementation?

Research Question #1: What specific changes in instructional leadership have been realized at the middle school level since the implementation of Baldrige-based practices?
Probing Questions:
- What was your ultimate vision for your district?
- How did you build commitment to the mission?
- Describe how the specific changes might appear to an outside observer.
- Are these changes evident in every middle school? Why or why not?

Research Question #2: What instructional leadership ideals and beliefs were communicated during the different phases of implementation and maintenance?
Probing Questions:
- What are your fundamental beliefs about middle level education?
- Which instructional leadership style/styles do you feel you utilize most?
- Why were those instructional leadership style/styles chosen during each phase?

Research Question #3: How have you been involved in the design and implementation of Baldrige-based practices in the district or in the middle school(s) within the district?
Probing Questions:
- What were the biggest obstacles faced at the district level in the implementation and maintenance of Baldrige-based practices?
- What supports were you expected to provide for school-level implementation?
- Was the identification of monetary resources to support implementation tackled by you, or delegated to a financial director?

Research Question #4: How is the effectiveness of Baldrige-based practices and their subsequent impact on instructional leadership within middle school institutions monitored?
Probing Questions:
- What Baldrige-based practices do you believe had the most impact on middle level education and what evidence led you to this conclusion?

- What advice do you have to other districts contemplating implementation of Baldrige-based practices?

Appendix G

Middle School Principal Interview Protocol

Middle School Principal Interview Protocol

Principal # _____   District: _____

<u>Over-arching Research Question</u>: How has the adoption of Baldrige-based practices permeated instructional leadership beliefs and actions in middle level education?

General Questions:
- How many years have you been involved in education?
- When you taught in a classroom, what subjects did you teach?
- Does your background include elementary teaching experience? Middle school teaching experience? High school teaching experience?
- At what levels have you served as a school principal, and for how many years?
- How many years had you held the position of principal when you began Baldrige's Quality in Education implementation?

Research Question #1: What specific changes in instructional leadership have been realized in your middle school since the implementation of Baldrige-based practices?
Probing Questions:
- What was your ultimate vision for your school? Was it in alignment with the superintendent's vision for the district? If not, what changes did you have to make to your own vision for your school?
- How did you build commitment to the mission among faculty and staff members?
- Describe how the specific changes might appear to an outside observer.

Research Question #2: What instructional leadership ideals and beliefs were communicated during the different phases of implementation and maintenance?
Probing Questions:
- What are your fundamental beliefs about middle level education?
- Which instructional leadership style/styles do you feel you utilize most?
- Why were those instructional leadership style/styles chosen?
- How would you describe the instructional leadership styles utilized by your superintendent?
- What role/roles did your superintendent assume during implementation of Baldrige-based practices?
- What role/roles has your superintendent assumed during maintenance of Baldrige-based practices?

Research Question #3: How have you been involved in the design and implementation of Baldrige-based practices in your middle school?
Probing Questions:
- What were the biggest obstacles faced at the school level in the implementation and maintenance of Baldrige-based practices?
- What supports were you expected to provide for school-level implementation?

- Was the identification of monetary resources to support implementation tackled by you at the school level, or delegated to the district's financial director?
- Was input collected from you during implementation and maintenance, and if so, how was your input utilized?
- What strategies did your superintendent employ during difficult times to keep people motivated? Did you use the same or similar strategies with your faculty members? Why or why not?
- What strategies did your superintendent use to strengthen connections between stakeholders at the district level? Were those same strategies used at the school level? Why or why not?

Research Question #4: How is the effectiveness of Baldrige-based practices and their subsequent impact on instructional leadership within your middle school monitored?
Probing Questions:
- What Baldrige-based practices do you believe had the most impact in your middle school and what evidence led you to this conclusion?
- What advice do you have to other middle schools contemplating the implementation of Baldrige-based practices?
- Has the usage of Baldrige-based practices impacted instructional leadership and stakeholder relationships in the middle school environment? If so, how?

Appendix H

Middle School Teacher Focus Group

Interview Protocol

Middle School Teacher Focus Group Interview Protocol

Focus Group # _____   **District:** _____

Participants:

PARTICIPANT #	SUBJECT AREA	YRS. TEACHING
1		
2		
3		
4		

<u>Over-arching Research Question</u>: How has the adoption of Baldrige-based practices permeated instructional leadership beliefs and actions in middle level education?

Research Question #1: What specific changes in instructional leadership have been realized in your middle school since the implementation of Baldrige-based practices?
Probing Questions:
- What is the ultimate vision for your school district? For your middle school?
- Were you involved in building the mission statement for the school?
- Were you involved in obtaining commitment from faculty and staff members?
- Describe how the specific changes might appear to an outside observer.

Research Question #2: What instructional leadership ideals and beliefs were communicated during the different phases of implementation and maintenance?
Probing Questions:
- What are your fundamental beliefs about middle level education?
- Which instructional leadership style/styles do you feel your principal utilizes most?
- What role/roles did your principal assume during implementation of Baldrige-based practices?
- What role/roles has your principal assumed during maintenance of Baldrige-based practices?

Research Question #3: How have you been involved in the design and implementation of Baldrige-based practices in your middle school?
Probing Questions:
- What were the biggest obstacles faced at the school level in the implementation and maintenance of Baldrige-based practices?
- Was input collected from you during implementation and maintenance, and if so, how was your input utilized?
- What strategies did your principal employ during difficult times to keep people motivated? Were you involved in implementing the strategies? If so, how?
- What strategies did your principal use to strengthen connections between school stakeholders – school faculty and staff, students, parents, and community members? Were you involved in implementing the strategies? If so, how?

Research Question #4: How is the effectiveness of Baldrige-based practices and their subsequent impact on instructional leadership within your middle school monitored?
Probing Questions:
- What Baldrige-based practices do you believe had the most impact in your middle school and what evidence led you to this conclusion?
- What advice do you have to other middle school teachers who might become involved in the implementation of Baldrige-based practices?
- Which Baldrige-based practices have impacted your own instructional leadership?
- Have Baldrige-based practices impacted relationships between you and your students, you and your parents, and you and your principal? If so, how?
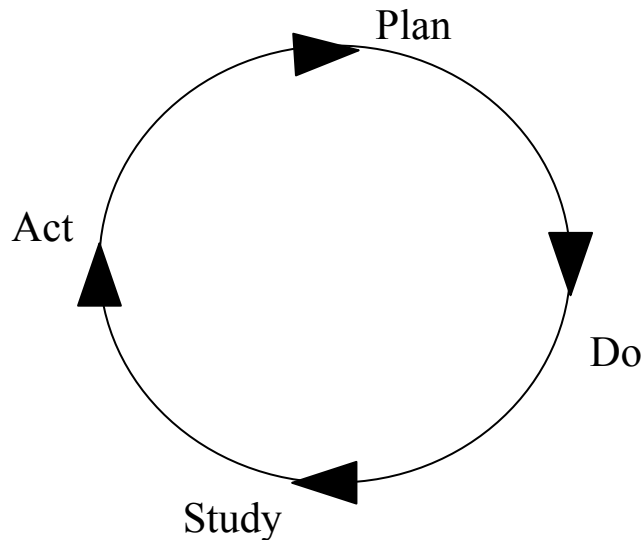
Appendix I

Plan, Do, Study, Act

PDSA Cycle of Refinement

PDSA – Plan, Do, Study, Act
Six Steps to Continuous Improvement

This cyclical process encourages stakeholders to make decisions based on data rather than hunches. This cycle of refinement promotes finding the root cause and seeking out all pertinent information to inform the next plan. This simple method of process improvement was developed by Dr. Shewart of Bell Laboratories in the 1920's (McClanahan & Wicks, 1993). It was originally illustrated in the continuous circle pattern shown below. To accommodate for easier word processing and the use of guiding questions, the contents of the circle were moved into chart form.

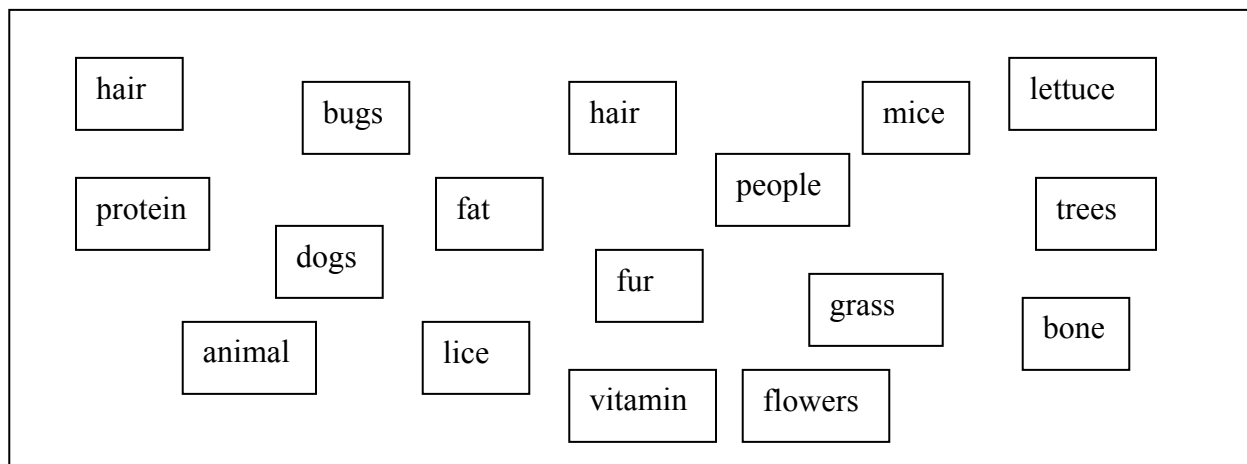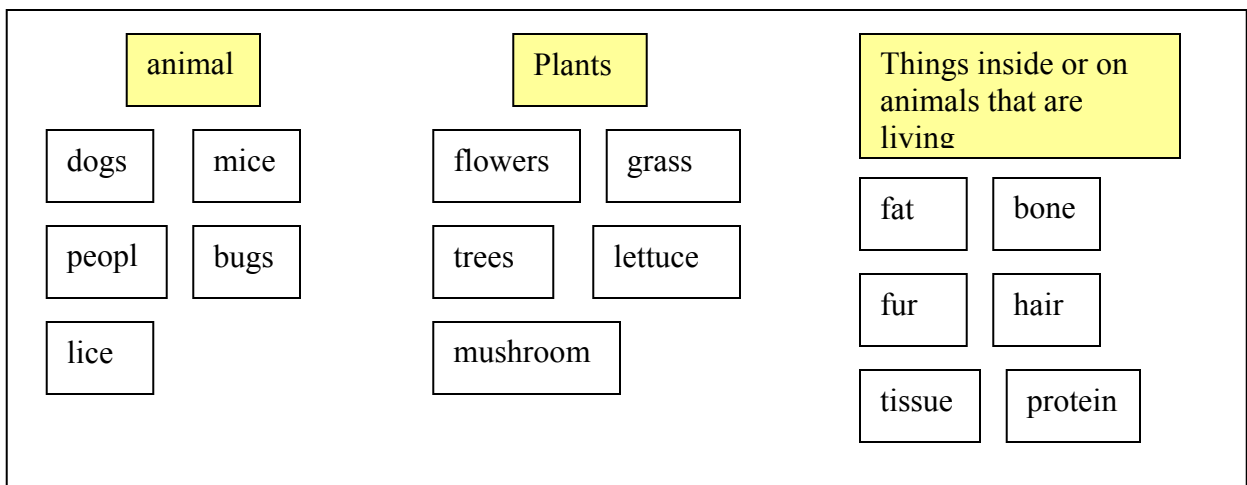|	
Plan	**Validate the need for improvement.** • How are we doing? • How do we know?
	Clarify purpose, goals, and measures. • Why are we here? • What do we need to do well together? • How will we know how we're doing?
Do	**Adopt and deploy an approach to continual improvement.** • How will we work together to get better?
	Translate the approach to continual improvement. • What will we do differently?
Study	**Analyze the results.** • What happened?
Act	**Make improvements.** • What did we do with what we learned?

Appendix J

Affinity Chart

The Affinity Chart

An Affinity Diagram is a silent brainstorming tool that allows groups to identify and organize large quantities of information or ideas in a short time. Each person in the group is given Post-It notes to record their ideas about a selected topic. When the leader calls time, the group members place their notes on a board or poster. The leader selects two or three members of the group to classify or organize the information into like groups. The ideas are lined up under a heading that is determined by the members who sort the ideas. See the Before and After illustrations below.

LIVING THINGS
(Before the Affinity process)

hair	bugs	hair	mice	lettuce
protein	fat	people	trees
dogs	fur	grass	bone
animal	lice	vitamin	flowers

LIVING THINGS
(After the Affinity process)

animal

dogs	mice
peopl	bugs
lice	

Plants

flowers	grass
trees	lettuce
mushroom	

Things inside or on animals that are living

fat	bone
fur	hair
tissue	protein

Appendix K

Plus/Delta Form

The Plus/Delta Form

The purpose of the Plus (+) Delta (Δ) is to improve personal and team performance through targeted development by opening lines of communication. The evaluation can be customized to address specific developmental needs of a particular individual or a group. Participants are allowed to answer individually and share collectively to identify the right solution and determine the appropriate course of action for continuous improvement. Plus/Delta can be used with groups of any size.

Plus (+)	Delta (Δ)
+ We associate the Plus (+) as the sign for positive situations, ideas, activities, events, etc.	Δ The Delta (Δ) is the Greek symbol for change.
+ It provides participants with the opportunities to identify areas of success.	Δ It allows participants the opportunity to suggest possible changes which allows the possibility for ownership which enhances performance!
+ What went well?	Δ What could we change to improve the process?

There are several variations of the Plus/Delta form, as shown below. The +/Δ concept can be added to other quantitative instruments to ensure reflective qualitative perceptions are obtained from the respondents.

For an activity or strategy that was presented:

PLUS (+)	Activity/Strategy	DELTA (Δ)
+	•	Δ
+	•	Δ

For an issue discussed that needs a solution or remedy:

PLUS (+)	DELTA (Δ)	Rx
+	Δ	•
+	Δ	•

To acquire information about resources:

HAVE	NEED
•	•
•	•

Appendix L

Data Binders

Data Binders, Quality Folders, and Data Trackers

Data binders, Quality folders, and data trackers all refer to the same concept and that concept could be called *portfolios*. Clemmons, Laase, Cooper, Areglado, and Dill (1993) defined the portfolio as "a vehicle for engaging students in the process of self-evaluation and goal setting" (p.12). Within the data binder, a representative collection of work should be included. Samples reflecting improved work should be contained within, along with pivotal pieces and best works. Student work that contains teacher and student comments, and indicate a clear connection to the student's goals should be housed inside. The samples within a data binder should be selected and reviewed throughout the grading period with routine "upgrades." Because the data binder would be complete without data that indicates student progress, or lack thereof, it is mandatory that the student's standardized test scores, unit tests, and a tracking device for weekly and daily grades is included within the binder. Attendance and behavior data may also be stored within the data binder. An example of the front and back of a tracking chart that is often included within the data binder is illustrated below.

Front of the Tracking Chart

Name	Teacher	Grade
	Subject Area	Lexile Level
Class Mission Statement		
My Personal Goals		
My Action Plan to Reach My Goals		

Back of the Tracking Chart: Three charts comprise the back of this data tracker, including: (1) a grades chart, (2) a behavior chart, and (3) an attendance chart.

	Grades Earned for the			3rd Six Weeks		Grading Period				
A										
B										
C										
D										
U										
Assessment Titles	Unit 1 test	Unit 1 Vocab.	Proj. 1	Unit 2 Vocab.						

	Behavior for the _____3rd Six Weeks										
A major infraction											
More than 3 infractions											
2-3 infractions											
One minor infraction											
No minor infractions											
Class Days											

These 3 charts would be repeated for a total of 6 six weeks, or the 6 charts could be combined into a single chart.

	Attendance for the _____1st week _____ of the 3rd Six Weeks				
Present					
Tardy					
Absent					
Class Days	9/1/08	9/2/08	9/3/08	9/4/08	9/5/08

	Attendance for the _____2nd week _____ of the 3rd Six Weeks				
Present					
Tardy					
Absent					
Class Days	9/1/08	9/2/08	9/3/08	9/4/08	9/5/08

	Attendance for the _____3rd week _____ of the 3rd Six Weeks				
Present					
Tardy					
Absent					
Class Days	9/1/08	9/2/08	9/3/08	9/4/08	9/5/08

Appendix M

NMSA's *This I Believe* Poster

NMSA's *This I Believe* Poster Text

I have chosen to be a middle level educator, for I recognize that the years of early adolescence are pivotal and abound with individual potential and opportunity. Therefore, I will care for these students personally, listen to their voices, respect their concerns, and engage them in meaningful educational experiences that will prepare them for a promising future.

I believe that every young adolescent …

- has the capacity to learn, grow, and develop into a knowledgeable, reflective, caring, ethical, and contributing citizen.
- must have access to the very best programs and practices a school can offer.
- must be engaged in learning that is relevant, challenging, integrative, and exploratory.
- thrives academically, socially, and emotionally in a democratic learning environment where trust and respect are paramount and where family and community are actively involved.
- faces significant life choices and needs support in making wise and healthy decisions.
- deserves educators who are prepared to work with this age group, who are themselves lifelong learners and committed to their own ongoing professional development and growth.

Therefore, I proudly dedicate myself to becoming the best middle level educator I can be and an active advocate for all young adolescents.

Appendix N

Force Field Analysis

Force Field Analysis

This planning tool encourages discussion among team members, identifying the driving and preventing forces that affect goal attainment. The purpose in mapping out both sides of the situation is to reduce or eliminate the restraining forces.   Most often, this tool identifies the goal at the top of the chart or diagram, with the recommended actions listed at the bottom of the tool. Each restraining or preventing force is numbered and given a corresponding arrow. The corresponding recommended action or actions are numbered to match the restraining force.

The example below was borrowed from Byrnes & Baxter's book (2005) entitled*, There is Another Way!: Launch a Baldrige-Based Classroom.* It is the same example that we use when we train teachers and students about using the force field analysis.

GOAL Improve the presentation capabilities of the class	
Driving Forces **+**	**Restraining or Preventing Forces** **—**
1 We are enthusiastic. → **2** We want to do well. → **3** The topic is interesting. →	**3** ← We can't find enough materials. **4** ← The computers are broken. **2** ← Not enough time to practice speaking. **1** ← The instructions for presenting are not clear

Recommended Actions
1. Teacher will explain criteria and set operational definitions. (1)
2. We will collaborate to set aside time to practice daily for one week. (2)
3. Miss Jones will research more materials and give us a list by Monday. (3)
4. Miss Jones will complete a work order to have the computers fixed. (4)
5. Miss Jones will work with Mr. Boone to trade classrooms twice a week to use his computers. (4)
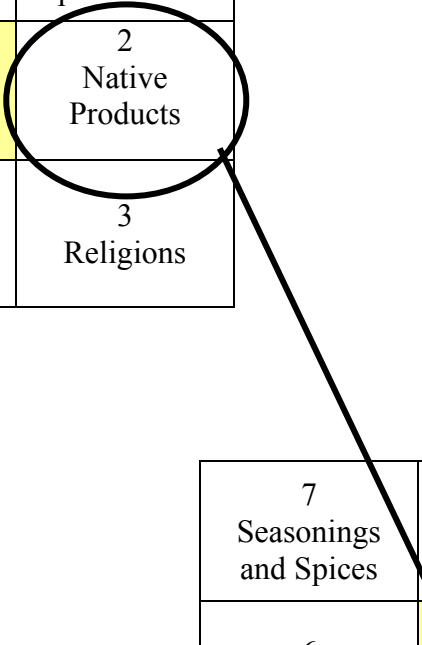
Appendix O

Lotus Diagram

The Lotus Diagram

This Quality tools is an analytical tool used for brainstorming and organization. It assists the user in breaking down the information to be explored in palpable chunks. The center square is the main topic to be explored, and the outer eight sections are the subtopics that need to be investigated in order to completely understand the main topic. Once the initial lotus diagram is complete, any one of the eight subtopics can become the main topic in an offspring lotus diagram. The process can be repeated as many times as necessary. This process is demonstrated below.

7 Historical Events	8 Major Cities	1 Famous politicians
6 Other Famous People	Louisiana	2 Native Products
5 Festivals	4 Cultures	3 Religions

7 Seasonings and Spices	8 Ruston Peaches	1 Crawfish
6 Sugarcane	Native Products	2 Rice
5 Soybeans	4 Angus Cattle	3 Louisiana Hot Peppers

More information about the lotus diagram and its uses can be found in Byrnes & Baxter's (2005) book entitled, *There is Another Way!: Launch a Baldrige-Based Classroom* and in McClanahan & Wick's (1993) book entitled, *Future Force: Kids That Want To, Can, and Do!*
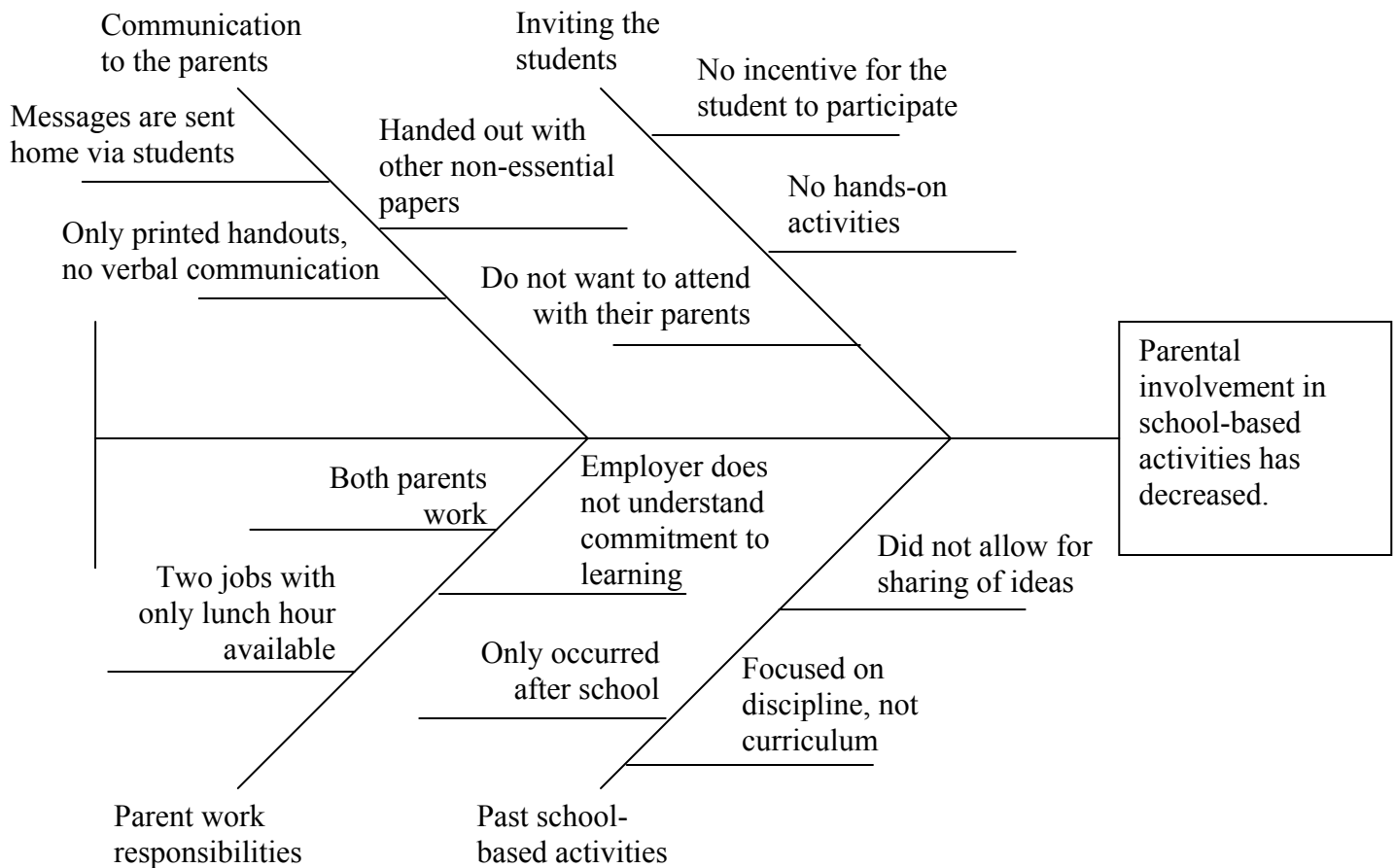
Appendix P

Fishbone Diagram

The Fishbone Diagram

The fishbone diagram is a tool used to identify cause and effect. Its basic structure provides automatic sorting of ideas into categories. It is used to recognize possible causes for a problem and for structuring brainstorming sessions.

To create a fishbone diagram, the problem is written in the head of the fish, which is represented by a box. A horizontal line is connected to the box, forming the spine of the fish. The major causes of the problem are determined during a brainstorming session and are recorded along the branches, or fishbones, that extend from the horizontal line. An example of a fishbone diagram is illustrated below.

More information about the fishbone diagram and its uses can be found McClanahan & Wick's (1993) book entitled, *Future Force: Kids That Want To, Can, and Do!*

Communication to the parents

Inviting the students

No incentive for the student to participate

Messages are sent home via students

Handed out with other non-essential papers

No hands-on activities

Only printed handouts, no verbal communication

Do not want to attend with their parents

Parental involvement in school-based activities has decreased.

Both parents work

Employer does not understand commitment to learning

Did not allow for sharing of ideas

Two jobs with only lunch hour available

Only occurred after school

Focused on discipline, not curriculum

Parent work responsibilities

Past school-based activities

VITA

Felicia Maria Vaughn Coleman is a native Louisianan with roots in both the Italian and Irish cultures of the state. She graduated from Alfred M. Barbe High School with honors, and then attended Louisiana Tech University and McNeese State University where she received a Bachelor of Science degree in Criminal Justice. She also received her Master's degree in Curriculum and Supervision, completed her Master's +30 hours with a concentration in Educational Technology, and completed the Administrative /Principal certification courses at McNeese State University.

Mrs. Coleman began her educational career as a second grade teacher at Fairview Elementary in Lake Charles, Louisiana in 1990. During her eight years at the school, Mrs. Coleman received the Calcasieu Parish Fannie Mae Award for new teachers, was recognized as Teacher of the Year for Fairview Elementary, and won the Louisiana State Partners in Education Award with Cameron State Bank for promoting savings of more than $2000 per week in the first elementary school-based bank, La Petite Banque, in Southwest Louisiana. Mrs. Coleman and the Cameron State Bank representatives were presented at the Governor's Mansion in Baton Rouge, LA. In 1998, Mrs. Coleman moved to Prien Lake Elementary, and it was then that she and two teaching colleagues, and five French Immersion students traveled to Austin, Texas to share a student-generated multimedia presentation with the creator of Hyperstudio software, Roger Wagner, and an internationally broadcast audience.

In 1999, Mrs. Coleman left the classroom to serve as the Louisiana Challenge Grant facilitator for the Region V area, serving the parishes of Allen, Beauregard, Calcasieu, Cameron, and Jefferson Davis. The following year, 2000-2001, Mrs. Coleman wrote and directed a $500 K state-funded technology grant, entitled BUILT (Building Understanding and Instructional

Leadership through Technology) for the Bayou, providing professional development and technology hardware for administrators and teachers. The evaluation consultant from SEDL (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory) and Mrs. Coleman presented the grant's data study at the American Educational Research Association's National Conference in 2001. The following school year, 2001-2002, funds to renew the grant were obtained from the state, but only half the original amount was funded.

During the 2002-2003 school year, working with McNeese State University's Education Department and key representatives from each of the parishes in Region V, Mrs. Coleman wrote, defended, and directed the E3 (Ensuring Educational Excellence) Grant. This grant focused on modeling and mentoring relationships between pre-service educators and public school classroom teachers. The grant is still in existence today, although it is operated through the Calcasieu Parish School System's Technology and Training Department.

In 2004, Mrs. Coleman was chosen to serve as administrator of Jake Drost Special School for severe-profound handicapped students and to serve as assistant principal in charge of curriculum for LeBlanc Middle School. Both schools are located in Sulphur, Louisiana. During her tenure at these two schools, Mrs. Coleman has supervised new teachers in the Louisiana Assistance and Assessment Program (LaTAAP), developed and supervised the professional development sessions under both the Teacher Advancement and Placement (TAP) and the Continuous School Improvement (CSI) umbrellas, and served as chairman for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and Quality Assurance Review Team (QART) assessments.

In addition to the AERA presentation, Mrs. Coleman has presented at numerous conferences including Region V's annual Technology and Teaching (TNT) Conference, the

Louisiana Middle School Association's annual conference, and the National School Board

Association's annual conference. Currently, Mrs. Coleman serves the district as a Quality

trainer, a Promethean ACTIVboard trainer for middle schools, a Leadership Academy and

LaTAAP mentor, and the School Improvement Plan (SIP) coach for middle schools.

Mrs. Coleman is actively involved in civic and professional organizations which promote

teacher and student leadership, benefitting educators of today and tomorrow.