Principal Leadership for the Whole Child:

An Exploration of the Role, Vision, and Practices of Two Principals in Whole Child, High-

Poverty, Urban Elementary Schools

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A Capstone Project

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by

Linda B. Chase Sheriff

B.A. Colgate University

M.Ed. University of Virginia

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Executive Summary

Dr. David Eddy Spicer, Chair

With mental health challenges and disparities in educational outcomes on the rise (Blad, 2022; Naff et al., 2022; Reardon et al., 2012; Viner et al., 2022), there is a burgeoning movement to implement a new approach to education that involves integrating and coordinating programs that support student and staff social, emotional, and physical health with academic programs (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018; Lewallen et al., 2015; Mahoney et al., 2020; The Commission on the Whole Child, 2007). Conceived around the notion of the whole child, proponents of these various frameworks suggest that the approach could be a critical factor in improving education equity and academic outcomes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019; Lewallen et al., 2015; McClure, 2016). Implementing the frameworks has been problematic and recent studies suggest this is due to lack of buy-in (Jones & Bouffard, 2012) and beliefs that implementation is too difficult, time-consuming, and labor intensive (Valois & Hoyle, 2000). Implementation strategies have mainly focused on policies (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018; Temkin et al., 2019), organizational and structural changes and supports (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019; Oberle et al., 2016), or changes in instructional methods and curricula (Bailey et al., 2019; Osher et al., 2016). However, there is very little information on the role of the school principal and the leadership necessary to introduce systemic support for the whole child, even though there is nascent evidence that school principal support and involvement is an important factor in the success of a whole child initiative (Bailey et al., 2019; Rasberry et al., 2015; Valois et al., 2015). This gap in the literature is potentially hindering the spread of the whole child and its success. Having a framework to both guide principal training and future

research on the role of the principal is an important next step in advancing the whole child approach.

This study was designed to explore the role of the principal in a school that supports the whole child and has a significant student population from high-poverty and minoritized communities. As whole child approaches gain interest from education leaders, a number of models for whole child-like approaches have been promulgated, including the Whole School, Whole Student, Whole Community framework (WSCC), systemic social and emotional learning (SEL), and two different whole child frameworks. Using Bronfenbrenner's (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) theory of socio-ecological spheres and Maslow's (Maslow, 1943; Mcleod, 2018) developmental theories as a foundation, I found commonalities among the models mentioned above and developed an exploratory, unified whole child framework to ground this capstone research. Among other aspects, the analysis of the five models yielded six school-based conditions that are common among the models and that can be influenced by the principal: whole school change, student centeredness, systems-orientation, caring school climate for students and staff, coordination and collaboration, and cultural responsiveness and family/community connections. A non-systematic review of the affective leadership and school change literature revealed that none of these models include what is known about the principal's role in a whole child school or the conditions identified in the available whole child models. Therefore, the conceptual framework for this study includes elements of caring leadership (Smylie et al., 2020), transformational leadership (Sun & Leithwood, 2012), and Fullan's (2015) theory of systems change.

Guided by the foundations of caring leadership (Fullan, 2015; Smylie et al., 2020), this capstone research was designed to explore the beliefs, aims, knowledge, and practices of a

principal in a school considered exemplary in implementing a whole child approach, as well as their definition of the whole child approach and how they take into consideration internal school conditions and external environments. The research involved exploratory, descriptive case studies of two principals in elementary schools in the same school district in a mid-sized, Mid-Atlantic city who were involved in two different whole child initiatives. The core findings are based on two semi-structured interviews with the two principals which were triangulated by interviews with two to three staff members and an officer in the Parent Teacher Organization, and a review of relevant documents.

Key findings include the view of both principals that the whole child is a mindset and not just a program and that their beliefs, aims, knowledge, and practices are remarkably similar. These findings suggest the possibility that there are common beliefs, aims, knowledge, and practices that can be taught to principals who want to implement a whole child approach, no matter the design of the initiative. Other findings include the cohesion of their beliefs, aims, knowledge, and practices; their systems-orientation; and their person-centeredness. The latter highlights relationship building across the socio-ecological spheres of students, teachers, staff, and community, their mutual desire for a sense of community, their understanding that everyone can grow and learn, and their understanding of the link between health and learning and the societal influences that affect child development. Specific beliefs, aims, knowledge, and practices are provided and can be used by principals, districts and organizations interested in providing training for principals on whole child implementation. Furthermore, exploratory frameworks for the whole child and for the principal for the whole child and a research agenda to continue to understand and promote the whole child approach are provided.
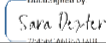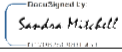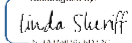
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Approved Title of Doctoral Capstone:

Principal Leadership for the Whole Child: An Exploration of the Role, Vision, and Practices of Two Principals in Whole Child, High-Poverty, Urban Elementary Schools

	Name	Department/University	Signature
Chair	David Eddy-Spicer	EDLF, EHD, UVA	*David Eddy Spicer*
Co-Chair (if applicable)			
Committee Member	Sara Dexter	EDLF, EHD, UVA	*Sara Dexter*
Committee Member	Sandra Mitchell	EDLF, EHD, UVA	*Sandra Mitchell*
Committee Member			
Committee Member			
Committee Member			
Committee Member			
Student	Linda Sheriff	Education Leadership, Foundations & Policy	*Linda Sheriff*

Dedication

To Jack for your continuous support, unflagging patience, and willingness to listen and be my sounding board. I couldn't have reached this milestone without you.

To Peter and Libby for your inspiration and encouragement; watching you grow into such amazing adults has been my north star.

To my family for believing in me, fostering my curiosity and love of learning, and instilling in me the desire to make the world a better place. And especially to my mother who may not have seen me cross the finish line, but has been with me, cheering me on, every step of the way.

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It not only takes a village to raise a child but to complete a doctorate and I want to thank all of the people who have helped me along this incredible journey.

First, thank you to my advisor, Dr. David Eddy-Spicer, for your guidance, for pushing my thinking, and for your constant encouragement. Your thoughtful—and thought-provoking—questions helped me find clarity and inspired not just improvements in the final product but in my approach to my topic. Thank you to Dr. Sara Dexter and Dr. Sandra Mitchell for your support and advice. Your recommendations and coursework strengthened my research. Thank you to all the professors in UVA's ExSEL program for your sharing your expertise and for the adjustments you made throughout the pandemic. The lessons you taught and the ideas you shared and modeled have impacted my own practice in innumerable ways.

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Thank you to "Ms. Jones," "Mr. Williams," and the staff at "Raven" and "Hilltop" for taking the time to help me and share your incredible stories. I was and will always remain inspired by your work and hope others will be as well.

I couldn't have done this without the support from my family and friends who were cheerleaders and offered much needed levity and breaks as I worked my way through this process. Your patience and unwavering encouragement and interest in my work kept me going. And to my husband and children, your encouragement, interest, and constant support and love have been amazing. Thank you for everything.

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Chapter One - Introduction

Our demographics mirror most demographics of any urban school district. We do have incidence of high poverty. We have incidence of high need and in particular, we recognize more, what I like to call the "wounded child," coming through the door, needing and wanting to be educated to the fullest potential. And our question as educators is how do we best do that in spite of all that is happening to the whole child. – Monica Battle, Principal, Cincinnati Public School District. (As quoted in The Center for Health and Health Care in Schools, n.d., :14)

Many schools across the nation are currently struggling to address the ramifications of

the COVID-19 pandemic, including learning loss, decreases in teacher morale, loss of staff, and

increases in student social, emotional, physical, and behavioral challenges. For schools serving

those hit the hardest by the pandemic, such as Black and Hispanic communities and high-

poverty neighborhoods, the concerns are even greater. As evident in the opening quote from an

elementary school principal, even before the pandemic, disparities in wealth were impacting the

health and well-being of students, and schools were having difficulty finding the means to

provide the necessary supports. In a comprehensive study of the relationship between income

and achievement from 1960 – 2010, Reardon (2011) concluded that the achievement gap

increased by 40% from about 0.9 of a standard deviation in standardized test scores to 1.25 over

the fifty-year period.

The large number of students living in poverty highlights the breadth of the problem. In

2017, 17% of children under 18 lived at or below the poverty level in the U.S., with 29% of

African-American and 25% of Hispanic children living in households with less than $25,465

annual income for a family of four (Child Trends Databank, 2019). Thirty-nine percent of children

live in what are considered "low-income households," or 200% of the poverty level (Child Trends

Databank, 2019). Since the start of the pandemic, job loss has increased, and emerging data suggest that poor and minority communities were particularly hard hit, exacerbating already high inequities in education and income (Oberg et al., 2022; Office for Civil Rights, 2021).

The effects of trauma and of poverty can be devasting on a child and a child's development. For example, children growing up in poverty are two times more likely to repeat a grade, two times more likely to drop out of school, two times more likely to have a learning disability or behavioral difficulty, nine times more likely to have food insecurity, and four times more likely to have fair or poor health (Chaudry & Wimer, 2016). Moreover, a child who experiences multiple traumatic events may be less engaged in school and display more behavioral challenges (Bethell et al., 2014). Though studies are still emerging, there is growing evidence that mental, social-emotional, and behavioral difficulties have grown since the pandemic (Hafstad & Augusti, 2021; Naff et al., 2022; Sun et al., 2022; Viner et al., 2022). There are also anecdotal reports from schools that behavioral and emotional challenges have increased (Blad, 2022).

Schools cannot be expected to solve poverty or trauma. However, they can serve as a buffer to mitigate the conditions that undermine students' availability for learning. Many schools are currently seeking strategies to reduce the impact of COVID-19 and the increase in mental and behavioral health challenges. Although schools have been providing children with the safe places, the support services, the prevention programs, the physical activity and nutrition, and the social learning that help a child grow and succeed, these activities have been a low priority and frequently are disjointed efforts. Embracing all areas of a child's physical, social, emotional, and academic development and well-being is frequently called a whole child approach (The Commission on the Whole Child, 2007). While well-being is a nebulous term (Simons & Baldwin, 2021), it encompasses mental and physical health (Centers for Disease

Control and Prevention, 2018), where health refers to "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (World Health Organization, n.d., para. 1). Burgeoning attention to a coordinated approach to address these physical and behavioral health factors conceived around the whole child and a whole school redesign suggests that the approach could be a critical factor in improving educational equity and academic outcomes (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018; Lewallen et al., 2015; Mahoney et al., 2020).

Problem of Practice

Models that provide for non-academic and student supports in schools are rising in prominence among both researchers and practitioners as a strategy to increase equity and reduce the recent challenges wrought by COVID-19. However, implementing the frameworks and programs has been problematic and there have been recent studies that explore why (Hardy, 2018; Quraishi, 2019; Temkin et al., 2019). For example, there is evidence that there is a lack of buy-in from educators (Jones & Bouffard, 2012) and that implementation of a health-promoting school is considered too difficult, time-consuming, and labor-intensive (Valois & Hoyle, 2000). Indeed, since the signing of the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), a focus on the whole child has not been a priority among educators and it is a change of orientation for many recent educators who have been mandated to improve academic indicators measured by standardized test scores (Hunt & Husband, 2015). Furthermore, improving and increasing adoption of the approach has been reviewed from a perspective of state and local policy changes (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018; Temkin et al., 2019), organizational and structural supports within the school and from the district and state (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019; Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018; Oberle et al., 2016), and changes in instructional methods (Bailey et al., 2019).

However, little attention has been paid to the role of the school principal and the leadership necessary to introduce systemic support for the whole child or the whole school changes necessary to maintain it. This is surprising since there is nascent evidence that a lack of school principal support and a lack of understanding by the school principal on what is required for implementation are hindering implementation (Bailey et al., 2019; Rasberry et al., 2015). In this researcher's work with schools that are starting to implement systemic behavioral health systems, the importance of the principal's support and leadership corroborates these findings. Many of the whole child strategies are delegated to or initiated by the student support staff, such as a social worker or school counselor. However, they typically find that the principal's backing is necessary for the success of the project.

Unfortunately, research on the principal's role in implementing a whole child approach is limited. Valois et al. (2015) conclude that further research on the skills and assets of principals in schools that successfully implement a whole child model is necessary. Kennedy (2019) notes that there is scant literature on the education leader's role in implementation. Others have described a similar limitation in popular leadership theories. Wright et al. (2018) decry the siloed focus on academic leadership and created a broader framework to include the examination of both academic and affective leadership. Furthermore, while there are recent leadership theories that start to address affective aspects of school (Kennedy, 2019; Louis & Murphy, 2017), most popular leadership frameworks mainly focus on areas that address instruction or management. Moreover, the theories do not address the frequently heard request for more principal support and buy-in from those charged with implementing the programs. For example, in a study in California, 90% of principals responding to a survey on professional development wanted more professional development on whole child development and over 66% did not feel they were equipped to lead schools that addressed the whole child (Sutcher et al., 2018).

There is a disparity between the growing desire to pursue a whole school approach to the whole child, the current research on the approach, and the lack of information on the principal's role. Given the important role that the school principal has on school culture and on school change (Adams et al., 2016; Anyon et al., 2016; Bossert et al., 1982; Hallinger et al., 1996; Keung et al., 2020; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012), this gap should be filled so that the whole child models have a better chance for success. This capstone aims to increase understanding about a whole child, whole school approach and the role of the school principal in carrying forward the approach. The problem of practice explored is how a school principal can support whole school approaches to the whole child.

Background

Endeavors to improve the quality and equity of public schools have been an aim of federal oversight of public education since the publishing of the Coleman Report in 1964 and the subsequent Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) (Urban & Wagoner, 2009). With the advent of NCLB in 2002, the focus of schools was largely on academic indicators for English and math. The intent was to improve academic achievement for all and decrease the achievement gap (Urban & Wagoner, 2009). To receive federal funding, states were required to implement state tests and take action if a school failed to meet an annual yearly progress (AYP) goal in student test scores. This led many schools to initiate "drill and kill" lessons that teach to the test, and to eliminate such areas as art and recess to add time and other resources to the academic lessons necessary for students to pass the test (Hunt & Husband, 2015; Hursh, 2007; Ladd, 2017). The unintended consequences of the 2002 act are still being identified, but evidence indicates that NCLB not only did not have a statistically significant impact on student achievement or the achievement gap (Holbein & Ladd, 2017; J. Lee & Reeves, 2012; Reardon et

al., 2012), the act may have added to the inequality in student outcomes (Hursh, 2007; Jennings

& Lauen, 2016) and decreased morale (Hunt & Husband, 2015; Ladd, 2017).

Recognition has been growing among practitioners, policymakers, and academics that

the sole focus on academic indicators to decrease the achievement gap has not been successful

and that there are additional factors that influence student outcomes (Ladd, 2017; Spring,

2016). Among these are teacher retention (Podolsky et al., 2016), funding (Spring, 2016),

cultural competence (Blitz et al., 2020), family engagement (Henderson & Mapp, 2002), and

curriculum implementation (Chenoweth, 2015). While not a new concept (Cremin, 1961;

Noddings, 2005; Osher et al., 2016; Urban & Wagoner, 2009), a reemerging area of interest is on

the non-academic areas of physical, social, and emotional well-being, and there is an expanding

acknowledgement that school support of these domains is essential for students to succeed.

Furthermore, a clearer understanding of the impact of poverty, the growing science of cognitive

development, and a burgeoning field of school health have provided new evidence to support

the importance of this area (Cantor et al., 2021; Jones et al., 2019; Michael et al., 2015; National

Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development, 2018; Osher, Cantor, et al., 2020;

The Commission on the Whole Child, 2007).

While NCLB was being implemented and disputed, there was a growth in the field of

school health and an increase in research on the impact of student health on learning outcomes.

There was also an increase in health and behavioral challenges. As the nation entered the 21st

century, childhood obesity reached epidemic proportions (Deckelbaum & Williams, 2001) and

school health advocates pushed for healthier school lunches, snacks, and breakfasts, as well as

an increase in physical activity (Lee et al., 2006). More recently, depression, anxiety, and

behavior problems have increased across the nation (Ghandour et al., 2019) and there is

emerging evidence that the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a further increase in mental, social,

emotional, and physical health problems (Hafstad & Augusti, 2021; Naff et al., 2022; Viner et al., 2022). While the understanding that healthy students learn better (Basch, 2011; Kolbe, 2019; Michael et al., 2015) has been gaining recognition among education stakeholders (Loeb et al., 2017), studies have also indicated that wellness is particularly critical for students who are economically and racially disadvantaged since they are more likely to experience such challenges as poor health, unsafe home environments, food insecurity, and community violence, all of which can have an impact on school engagement, behavior, and learning (Bethell et al., 2014; Burke et al., 2011; Chaudry & Wimer, 2016; Raver, 2012; Slopen et al., 2010; Yoshikawa et al., 2012). Unfortunately, many schools lack the essential supports necessary to handle these non-academic challenges (Whitaker et al., 2019; Willgerodt et al., 2021) which can lead to lower academic achievement. Not only are teachers, principals, and policymakers struggling to provide for students and prioritize supports for students, a focus on well-being is a potential factor in improving education equity, the achievement gap, and student health and well-being.

To counter these physical, social, and mental health challenges and pursue a more equitable educational experience, there is now a recognition that non-academic factors matter and should be prioritized in combination with instruction. This approach is epitomized by the inclusion of a non-academic indicator in the 2015 signing of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). However, even prior to ESSA, approaches were developed to increase collaboration between health and education. In 1987, Allensworth and Kolbe (1987) published their seminal work on coordinated school health which sought to promote a broad range of coordinated school health programs, including nutrition, health education, physical activity, and mental and physical health services. This was followed by a proliferation of school health programs that focused on various aspects of a child's physical, social, and emotional development, including school breakfast programs, bullying prevention programs, and school health centers. As mental

and behavioral health difficulties have increased, such school-based initiatives as social

emotional learning (SEL) curricula have gained adherents. Other, more recent programs that

address student well-being include restorative practices, mindfulness, and trauma-informed

practices (Barr & Gibson, 2015; Bethell et al., 2014; Plumb et al., 2016; Temkin et al., 2019).

Indeed, a 2011 report by the U.S. Department of Education found that on average public schools

in the U.S. implemented over nine physical, social, and mental health prevention programs at a

time, with 11.1% using more than 20 programs (Crosse et al., 2011). Research has only recently

emerged on the newer approaches to strengthening student physical, social, and emotional

well-being, possibly because they are so recent, but there is substantial research on how SEL

positively impacts learning (Corcoran et al., 2018; Durlak et al., 2011; Mahoney et al., 2020) and

a growing view that social and emotional well-being is a key to improving academic and social

equity (Barr & Gibson, 2015; Civic Enterprises et al., 2013; Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey,

2018; Wright et al., 2018).

Confusion over which program to select for different schools and difficulties sustaining

the programs is now occurring. Furthermore, there is indication that one-off programs, while

having a positive effect, are not achieving the overall desired results and student health and

academic outcomes are not improving at anticipated rates (Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Temkin et

al., 2019). Evidence is beginning to emerge that implementation of programs is not always

strong and that the siloed and distinct nature of each program makes the implementation more

challenging (Kolbe, 2019; Osher & Berg, 2017; Temkin et al., 2019).

Preview of the Literature

To better understand and ground this movement, literature on the achievement gap,

the science of learning and healthy child development, and the various whole child models is

reviewed in Chapter Two. Some experts now suggest that a whole school design change needs

to take place, one that supports well-being on multiple fronts and involves a focus on physical and social emotional health as well as academics (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018; Lewallen et al., 2015; Mahoney et al., 2020; Valois et al., 2011). This model integrates social and emotional skill building, a caring environment, and physical, mental, and social health prevention and support and is increasingly seen as essential to providing students with academic and life-long success (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018; Dusenbury & Weissberg, 2018; Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Kennedy, 2019; Michael et al., 2015). This concept is referred to by various names, including SEL systems (Oberle et al., 2016), comprehensive school behavioral health systems (Hoover et al., 2019), whole child approach (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018), caring schools (Noddings, 2005), affective programs (Kennedy, 2019) and Whole School, Whole Child, Whole Community model (WSCC) (Lewallen et al., 2015; Rasberry et al., 2015).

To guide this capstone, five prominent or well-articulated whole child models were reviewed and synthesized. Through the process of synthesis, essential features and school conditions that support a collaborative whole school, whole child approach were identified. Though called by varying names, the models seek to provide a school environment where students are safe, healthy, and supported and develop the social and emotional skills to thrive. They are being put together by uniting research on programs and policies and by pulling from studies on individual schools (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018; Dusenbury & Weissberg, 2018; Lewallen et al., 2015; Michael et al., 2015). Furthermore, though studies are just emerging, the approach has shown promise (McClure, 2016; Rasberry et al., 2015; Reyes et al., 2013; Roffey, 2016; The ASCD Whole Child Initiative, 2016).

With this synthesis as a guidepost, research on whole school, whole child implementation, what is known about the principal's role, and literature on areas where the

principal has influence are presented. The literature on affective and selective school change leadership models are then reviewed to see if any of the models include what is known about the principal's role and the conditions identified for implementation of the whole school, whole child approach.

Purpose of Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this capstone is to better understand the role of the school principal in shaping a whole school approach to supporting the whole child. Research suggests that providing for the healthy development and well-being of students and staff could be a pathway toward greater education equity (Cantor et al., 2019; Darling-Hammond et al., 2019; National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development, 2018; Osher, Cantor, et al., 2020). However, there have been challenges with scaling and implementing programs, and improvements in academic outcomes have not been as substantial as anticipated. Moreover, there is recent recognition that the school environment and predominant approaches to learning may require a shift in mindset towards affective models to optimize student outcomes, particularly in high-poverty and minoritized communities. The challenges in implementation have been researched from a state or district policy perspective and from a program, structural, and classroom practice (technical) perspective (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019; Mahoney et al., 2020; Temkin et al., 2019). But if schools are to be redesigned with a focus on the whole child, there needs to be a subsequent understanding of what school principals need to know, believe, and do in implementing and maintaining a whole school approach to the whole child so that implementation is successful. While the empirical literature points to the importance of the principal in the implementation effort, there is little knowledge of their role, particularly of their mindset, values, and priorities and how they enact their vision for whole school change. This research is intended to start to fill this gap.

Therefore, this capstone study seeks to provide an initial grounding for what it means to be a principal for the whole child. I explore what school principals should know to enact a whole school, whole child approach and identify initial themes in the beliefs, knowledge, and practices of school leaders who are positive deviants in implementing a whole school model for the whole child. Positive deviants are the "successful exceptions" (Pascale et al., 2010, p. 3). My research questions and subquestions are:

- How do school principals who support a whole school approach to the whole child define the approach and what do they identify as its key features and conditions for success?

- What is the role of the school principal in implementing a whole school approach to the whole child?

  - How do they describe and understand their role in supporting the whole child?

  - What is their vision for supporting the whole child?

  - What actions and behaviors do they take to enact their vision?

- In what ways do principals take into consideration internal school conditions and external environments? What facets of school conditions and external environments do they prioritize, if any?

The questions are designed to help identify themes between the responses from the principals in the two schools and provide insights into the role of the school principal in implementing the whole school, whole child approach. The first question is meant to identify the principals' understanding of the approach and what it means. The question may also provide insights into the principals' priorities and why they think the approach is important. The second question focuses on how the two principals view their role, especially on their vision and actions in support of the whole child. I am using vision to encompass beliefs, aims, and knowledge. As

will be discussed in the literature review, the few research studies that exist on the topic suggest that beliefs, aims, and knowledge are an important aspect of the principal's capacity to lead a whole child approach (Rasberry et al., 2015; Storey et al., 2016; Valois et al., 2011). The final question explores a common theme in the various whole child models that was identified through the literature review: a recognition and embracing of the various systems that surround the developing child.

The questions respond directly to one of the difficulties in implementing whole school, whole child models to provide equitable education environments and help improve the achievement gap. School leaders do not know what they should do to support the effort and are looking for guidance. Furthermore, school support personnel who are frequently tasked with the approach's implementation are looking for support from the principal, but do not know what to ask them to do. The questions are designed to elicit data on the necessary knowledge, beliefs, and behaviors of principals who have successfully led a whole school, whole child approach.

The findings from this research may help to inform the development of a whole child leadership model and provide school principal and administration training programs with information on practices school principals can implement, information they can learn, leadership mindsets they can develop, and strategies they can use to prioritize the whole child.

Study Context

The mid-sized, Mid-Atlantic city where this research took place is an excellent example of this movement from single programs to a more unified, whole child approach. Before the pandemic, suicide ideation rates among youth and chronic absenteeism were high, and a large number of students were identified as having an emotional, behavioral, or developmental condition. To counter these statistics across the school system, city legislature passed numerous

pieces of legislation to address different issues, such as youth suicide prevention, a school

climate survey, bullying prevention, and expanded school behavioral health services. In addition,

there have been numerous initiatives being promoted to and implemented by schools, such as

restorative practices, school-based health centers, free lunch for all, trauma-informed care,

social-emotional learning programs, and mindfulness. A number of schools are attempting to

combine these programs to create a whole child approach and there is a brand-new, district-

wide whole child initiative that was launched in SY2022/2023 and a connected initiative

organized by a non-profit organization that is actively pursuing implementation of a whole child

model. However, while these initiatives are just underway, results from previous attempts have

not been as successful as the district had hoped. Anecdotal reasons include the lack of buy-in

from staff, poor implementation of programs, and a need for principal support and buy-in,

leaving education leaders across the city highly interested in this research topic.

Overview of Methods

Two interconnected, conceptual frameworks were developed to guide this capstone.

First, a consolidated and holistic definition and model for the whole child is proposed that

encompasses the similarities among the various whole child models discussed in Chapter Two.

The model uses Bronfenbrenner's (1977, 2005; Rosa & Tudge, 2013) theory of the ecology of

human development as a way to understand the various environments that impact a child's

development and where the school and the principal fit within this complex schematic. The

second conceptual framework will be used to guide the research and highlights the role of the

principal within the whole school, whole child model. Aspects of transformational leadership,

caring leadership, and change leadership are united with what are known to be important

beliefs, aims, competencies/knowledge, and practices from the whole child literature.

Research involved exploratory, descriptive case studies of principal leadership in two

elementary schools in a mid-sized urban area in the Mid-Atlantic United States that are

considered successful in implementing a whole child approach[1]. A case study methodology

involving an in-depth study of a bounded environment helped me explore the role of the

principal (Hancock & Algozzine, 2016). I sought recommendations from local leaders to learn

about schools that have a reputation of being exemplary in implementing a whole child

approach. I selected two that were recommended. Data collection involved semi-structured

interviews with both principals and 2–3 staff members from each school who the principal

recommended as being particularly engaged in the initiative. I also asked for recommendations

for a person who can provide insights into the perceptions of families. To further triangulate the

data, I reviewed relevant documents on the principals' actions. In analyzing the data, iterative

cycles of deductive coding based on the conceptual framework and inductive coding were used.

Role of Researcher

My work and the values that I hold led me to this capstone topic. As a consultant and

research-to-practice translator, I have worked with states, schools, and districts where school

principals understand and actively support health and well-being and with those who do not.

Moreover, I worked as an active promoter of school health, particularly in social and emotional

well-being in schools. In my role at the Center for Health and Health Care in Schools at the

Milken Institute School of Public Health at the George Washington University, I advocated for

understanding community contexts and working with community organizations and local

government agencies to develop a network of school-connected mental, behavioral, and

physical health supports. Having worked in a school of public health, I also adhere to a systems

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[1] Pseudonyms have been used throughout this capstone research to protect the confidentiality of individuals and organizations.

orientation and recognize the social determinants of health—and education. When working

with schools and districts, I seek to understand the contextual root causes of health and

education challenges and unabashedly pursue equity. Furthermore, I believe that compassion,

caring, and respect are key factors in positive outcomes for most situations.

I also provided technical assistance and consulting on the integration of mental and

behavioral health and education to the public schools and public charter schools in the Mid-

Atlantic district that was part of this research. Mainly, I worked with either community members

or with student support personnel who were trying to implement and sustain well-being

programs. In my conversations with them, they frequently said they need leadership support

and buy-in for the programs to succeed. As noted, even with that support, a single program will

not necessarily have the desired impact. Because of my experiences in schools, I strongly believe

in a whole school approach to the whole child. One of the contributions I hope to make through

this research is to advance the approach, highlight the importance of principals, and start to

describe a pathway toward effective whole child leadership. I recognize that this view is also a

liability and address the methods I use to limit the impact of my beliefs in the research bias

discussion in Chapter Three.

Limitations

There are several limiting factors in this study. The newness of the field has made it

difficult to land on a concrete definition of what to study. The approach remains conceptual and

theoretical even though there is practical evidence to back-up each factor involved. What is not

as well-known is the impact that a unified, whole child approach has, though the evidence is

promising. In addition, there are a number of frameworks that encompass a whole child, whole

school approach, making it difficult to identify what to study. Furthermore, each factor involved

has multiple different options that can be implemented. What is being looked at is a system

level approach, which is more difficult to codify. Another limitation is in the use of a case study

and consequent limitations of generalizability will be limited beyond the specific cases.

However, I hope that the results will initiate testing of a framework for future research. Finally,

my personal beliefs and values, discussed above, are a limitation and I will attempt to limit their

influence by triangulating the data.

Delimitations

In looking at the role of the school principal in establishing a whole school, whole child

approach, I decided to limit research to school principals and not other school leaders because

the school principal is an acknowledged influence on school change (Bryk and Schneider, 2004)

and because so many of the people I have worked with, whether school-based or community-

based, mention the need for principal support. I have focused on relationships within the school

itself rather than other interactions, such as with community leaders or leaders at the district

level. I am interested in the impact within the school as a starting point and determined that

understanding what a principal knows, believes, and does is a good place to start. Furthermore, I

chose to focus on the whole child and not other non-academic factors that can influence

wellness and achievement, such as funding, facilities, teacher wellness, specific curriculum,

discipline policies, school safety, or physical health. Likewise, I am looking at the principal's role

in establishing the conditions that support well-being and not exploring whether school culture

or climate impacts individual well-being or whether individual well-being impacts outcomes.

These links are discussed in the literature review. I also chose to synthesize current prominent

or more articulated whole child frameworks rather than focus on a single model. I wanted to

focus on commonalities among the models in the hope that the research could be generalized

to these and any future models.

Conclusion

This study is designed to contribute to the conversation on implementation of a whole school approach to the whole child. In Chapter Two, I review the literature on the conditions necessary for optimal learning and development, the key characteristics of the most prominent whole child approaches, and the role of the principal and current leadership models that could be utilized in support of the whole child. In Chapter Three, I describe my conceptual framework and my methods for conducting this study. In Chapter Four, the findings from the case studies are presented, first individually, and then compared. In Chapter Five the findings are then reviewed and compared to the literature, revisions to my conceptual frameworks are proposed, and recommendations based on the findings are offered.

Chapter Two - Literature Review

A recent development in school improvement efforts is a whole school focus on student wellness and the whole child. This approach has seen an increase in interest as schools have encountered an escalation in mental, behavioral, and physical health challenges since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (Hafstad & Augusti, 2021; Naff et al., 2022; Sun et al., 2022; Viner et al., 2022). Moreover, several different frameworks have been introduced to support the whole child. While the adoption of these models is gaining momentum, implementation has been slow and disjointed. Proponents of these approaches have researched the structures, policies, and classroom practices that support them, but little research has been conducted to understand the role of the principal and how the principal influences the conditions necessary for effective implementation. The purpose of this capstone is to better understand the role of the principal in a whole school approach to the whole child.

To ground the discussion on the whole child and the conditions for positive development, I first conduct a review of the literature on the association between racial and income inequities and the achievement gap, and on the recent research on the non-academic factors that affect learning and development. This is followed by a review of the literature on school-based programs developed to mitigate these challenges and on the whole school, whole child frameworks that have subsequently been developed to unite the programs and integrate them into the school's culture and systems. In order to both make the research useful for all of the frameworks and to add some cohesion to the field, these models are then analyzed and synthesized. I then provide a review of the literature on what is known about implementation

and leadership for the various models described. The literature review concludes with a review of leadership models that involve some of the non-academic aspects of schooling and an analysis of how they overlap with the empirical research on the principal's role in implementing a whole school, whole child approach.

Search Strategy

A variety of search methods were used to identify literature for this review, including database searches, key author searches, use of reference sections from key articles and meta-analyses, and searches on websites of key organizations. While searches focused on articles written after 2005, seminal articles prior to that date are included and were identified during the literature review. Furthermore, empirical research and articles from peer-reviewed journals were prioritized. However, this was not always possible, particularly with the research on the whole child frameworks where the articles are mainly theoretical in nature.

Different search strategies were found more useful for different areas of the review than for others. For example, for the review of the whole child literature, Google Scholar and EBSCO searches were conducted using such keywords as "caring," "whole child," "school health," "school," "school principal," "administrator," "education," "WSCC," "Coordinated School Health," "Social and Emotional Learning," and "SEL." Searches were also conducted on the resource sections of the websites for the Aspen Institute, the Collaborative for Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), the Learning Policy Institute (LPI), the Science of Learning and Development (SoLD) Alliance, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and ASCD's Whole Child website. These are all organizations that have actively promoted and conducted research on a whole child approach. In addition, a search was conducted in the archives of the Journal of School Health, which provided several articles on the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) model and its precursor, Coordinated School Health (CSH).

The search for articles on health and poverty was more straightforward and involved mainly

Google Scholar and EBSCO, using the terms "ACES," "trauma," "poverty," "high poverty

schools," "impact OR influence on education," and "achievement gap." Articles for this area are

based on empirical research, or are meta-analyses or literature from peer-reviewed journals.

Finally, the articles on leadership and leadership theories were identified through a combination

of EBSCO and Google Scholar searches, looking at articles referenced in key articles, and in

meta-analyses and overviews of the subject area. Leadership models outside of education were

also reviewed, particularly leadership for social work and public health since, like education,

they are a social-service, multi-layered organizational structure with fairly independent staff

who are client-centered (Sullivan, 2016). Unfortunately, this search yielded minimal results,

except to identify that similar challenges exist in these institutions.

Student Well-Being and Achievement

Twenty years after No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was authorized and was viewed by many

as the means to decrease the achievement gap between races and socio-economic status (SES)

through accountability, teacher credentialing, and standardized tests, the gap remains and some

contest the SES gap has grown even larger (Berliner, 2014; Hursh, 2007; Ladd, 2012, 2017;

Reardon et al., 2012; Wilgus, 2019). In a synthesis of data from 19 different studies on the

relationship between income and academic achievement, Reardon (2011) concluded that the

SES achievement gap for children born in 2001 is 30–40% larger than it was for those born 25

years earlier and that the income achievement gap is currently twice as large as the racial

achievement gap. While the increase in the SES achievement gap has been contested (Hanushek

et al., 2019), it is generally acknowledged that the SES gap not only still exists but has not

changed over the last 50 years. Furthermore, NCLB has wrought numerous negative side

effects, including a decrease in teacher morale, less instruction time in social sciences, science,

and art, an increase in stress, lowered expectations, and sanctions against schools with a majority of low-achieving students (Hunt & Husband, 2015; Hursh, 2007; Ladd, 2012).

To counter these reported disparities, a plethora of solutions have been suggested and studied. There have been studies on effective instructional methods (Hirn et al., 2018); school climate (Berkowitz et al., 2017; Cohen et al., 2009); school financing models (Jackson, 2020); teacher retention (Simon & Johnson, 2015); mindset (Dweck, 2007; Ferguson et al., 2015); motivation (Pizzolato et al., 2011); family engagement (Henderson & Mapp, 2002); health (Basch, 2011); and implementation of a program or curriculum (Gouëdard et al., 2020). Most of the studied strategies have focused on the teachers' role. In an analytic essay on why so many school reform efforts have produced so little improvement, Berliner (2014) argues that income inequality is the source of the problems and that we've been pursuing solutions that focus solely on inside the school rather than recognizing the underlying external factors that affect learning and education. As Ladd (2012) states, NCLB and other recent policies are misguided because "they do not directly address the educational challenges experienced by disadvantaged students" (p. 2). The author also claims that the policies can do serious harm and calls for a broader approach to education policy that encompasses context.

Non-Academic Factors that Affect Learning

Among the reactions to NCLB and efforts to improve education equity is a growing movement to re-introduce health and well-being as a priority into school systems. For example, one of the more recent additions to the core standards for administrators is to promote academic success and well-being of each student (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015), and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the latest version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), includes a non-academic indicator. However, unless schools recognize the connection between physical, mental, and social health and

learning, they may not create conditions to better support students. Indeed, according to an analysis by FutureEd, 75% of states selected chronic absenteeism as one of their indicators and 66% selected college and career readiness (Jordan, 2018). While a focus on chronic absenteeism can lead to changes in the culture and climate of the school, this is not guaranteed, and unless strategies are pursued to look at the underlying reasons for the absenteeism, it doesn't necessarily address the growing recognition that physical, social emotional, behavioral, and mental health have an impact. As will be discussed, there is a plethora of recent evidence coming from different disciplines that physically and mentally healthy students learn better and that students from racially and economically marginalized neighborhoods are disproportionately disadvantaged by environments that contribute to poor health and academic outcomes (Basch, 2011; Cantor et al., 2021; Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018; Kolbe, 2019; Michael et al., 2015).

Healthy Students Learn Better

There have been numerous approaches to understanding what influences a child's learning capacity. Among them is now a general acknowledgment that healthy students learn better (Basch, 2011; Kolbe, 2019; Michael et al, 2015; WHO, 2011). In his seminal literature review of the seven health issues that have a high prevalence in urban minority youth, Basch (2011) concludes that these seven issues have an influence on student outcomes and that there are programs that could be put in place to mitigate their impact. He writes,

> if their ability to concentrate, use memory, and make decisions is impeded by ill-nourishment or sedentary lifestyle, if they are distracted by negative feelings, it will be more difficult for them to learn and succeed in schools…. If they are not in school, because of uncontrolled asthma or because they are afraid to travel to or from school, they will miss teaching and learning opportunities. (p. 76)

Basch (2011) argues that supporting student health should be a fundamental part of

elementary and secondary education but particularly in schools with a high percentage of urban

minority youth since they are most affected by health and education disparities. He concludes

that if children do not have the health factors identified, their ability to learn will be diminished.

These findings have been corroborated by the World Health Organization (2011) among others,

which considers health and education "mutually reinforcing interests" (p. 2) and recommends

that schools promote health as well as learning.

Basch's (2011) literature review provided a foundation for new studies that

demonstrate the link between school health programs and education outcomes. For example,

there is evidence of connections between mental health, behavior, and academic achievement

(Kase et al., 2017); food insecurity and behavioral and emotional development (Kleinman et al.,

1998; McLaughlin et al., 2012); hunger and behavior problems (Burke et al., 2011); physical

activity and cognitive functioning (Michael et al., 2015); unmanaged chronic health conditions

(such as asthma, diabetes, and obesity); and lower attendance and decreased test scores

(Michael et al., 2015).

Contextual Factors

There is also growing recognition of the effect that contextual factors have on learning,

growth, and development. In 2018, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and

Medicine identified multiple factors that influenced the formation of knowledge and cognition,

including the "learners' cultural, social, cognitive, and biological contexts. Understanding the

developmental, cultural, contextual, and historical diversity of learners is central to

understanding how people learn" (2018, p. 13). More recently, a team of authors reviewed

meta-analyses, peer-reviewed literature, and handbooks on the last 20 years of science on

learning and brain development to understand the influences on learning and development

(Cantor et al., 2019; Osher, Cantor, et al., 2020). To validate their findings and vet source

materials, the authors sent multiple drafts to experts for review and held two invitational

meetings where they presented the research and solicited feedback. The result is a set of two

articles where the authors provide a synthesis of their findings and outline the attributes that

are conducive to learning. The authors look at both micro- and macro-contextual factors and

argue that both have an impact on development.

Based on this review, the authors conclude that human growth and development is fluid

and is influenced by both environment and genetics (Cantor et al., 2019; Osher, Cantor, et al.,

2020). Furthermore, they find that the contextual elements that impact learning and

development can have a positive or negative influence (Osher, Cantor, et al., 2020). For

example, they recognize relationships as a key driver of child development, and identify

reciprocity, trust, awareness, compassion, support, stimulation, safety, and cultural

responsiveness as positive factors for development. The authors also conclude that racism and

poverty have a negative impact on developmental growth. However, because of the fluidity of

development, they suggest that new environments and relationships can counteract or support

the effects of other environments (Cantor et al., 2019). This finding implies that schools have the

capacity to either buffer or reinforce both positive and negative developmental influences from

outside the school environment.

Adverse Childhood Experiences

The recent research into Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) further supports the link

between learning and non-academic factors (Bethell et al., 2014; Blitz et al., 2020; McLeod et al.,

2012) and their particular impact on racial and economic disparities (Berkowitz et al., 2017;

Bethell et al., 2014; Burke et al., 2011; Kolbe, 2019). ACEs are potentially traumatic events such

as physical, emotional, or sexual abuse; divorce; food insecurity; parent or guardian death;

incarceration; mental or physical illness; substance abuse; neighborhood violence; and

homelessness (Sacks et al., 2014). Studies have shown that students who live in violent or

unsafe neighborhoods, have food or housing insecurity, or have experienced childhood trauma

frequently have lower academic outcomes than students who do not face these adversities

(Bethell et al., 2014; Burke et al., 2011; Sacks et al., 2014). Furthermore, a child who does not

feel physically or emotionally safe will also have difficulty learning and suffer poor outcomes (D.

D. Allensworth & Kolbe, 1987; Basch, 2011; Berkowitz et al., 2017; Cantor et al., 2019; Darling-

Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018). While ACEs are distributed across income levels, they are

most prevalent in households at or below the federal poverty level (FPL), which the federal

government defines as $25,465 annual income for a family of four (Child Trends Databank,

2019). For example, according to one analysis, 11% of children aged 0 – 17 who are at or below

the FPL experience four or more ACEs, while 2% of children at 400% or more of FPL had four or

more ACEs (Halfon et al., 2017). The authors also found that high ACEs is associated with a

higher prevalence of one of five health problems regardless of income, putting these students at

greater risk for lower academic achievement (Basch, 2011). The five health problems were

general health, dental health, weight, asthma, and emotional, development, behavioral health

(Halfon et al., 2017).

Similar to the research by Osher and Cantor et al. (2020) and Cantor et al. (2019), there

is evidence that supports can be put in place that buffer and mitigate the impact of adverse

experiences and trauma (Bethell et al., 2014; Burke et al., 2011; Chafouleas et al., 2021). Indeed,

studies on motivation, assessment, and instruction practices reinforce the conclusion that non-

academic factors such as a positive school climate, caring relationships, and trust influence

outcomes for minority, high-poverty students (Hirn et al., 2018; Sandilos et al., 2017).

Furthermore, creating these environments supports all students, regardless of race or income

level. In their meta-analysis of 1400 meta-analyses on the factors that work best for student

achievement, Hattie and Zierer (2019) identified 250 effects across nine domains that impact

positive achievement: student, home, school, classroom, curricula, teacher, teaching strategies,

implementation methods, and learning strategies. The results highlight the influence of

relationship-building on academic success. Moreover, school climate has an impact on

achievement and a positive climate can mitigate the effects of poverty. In a synthesis of 78

studies on school climate, Berkowitz et al. (2017) found that a positive school and classroom

climate have a positive effect on student achievement and that while each has a positive

influence, a combination of the two has the largest effect.

Summary

In conclusion, physical and social emotional well-being make a difference in student

outcomes. Moreover, supporting the physical and social emotional well-being of students who

are racially and economically disadvantaged is particularly critical. The need is even greater in

the era of COVID as trauma, social and emotional development, and depression and anxiety

have increased (Hafstad & Augusti, 2021; Naff et al., 2022; Viner et al., 2022). For

neighborhoods hit the hardest by the pandemic (frequently high-poverty and minority

populations), the uncertainties and fears have been even greater (Lopez et al., 2020). Moreover,

there is evidence that by improving health and providing buffers and support for youth who

experience stress, depression, or anxiety, academic outcomes can be improved (Bethell et al.,

2014; Cantor et al., 2019; Osher, Cantor, et al., 2020). As Basch (2011) concludes,

> Healthier students are better learners. Urban minority youth are disproportionately
>
> affected by educationally relevant health disparities… Even if health factors had no
>
> effect on educational outcomes, they clearly influence the quality of life for youth and

their ability to contribute and live productively in a democratic society. These are

worthy goals for elementary and secondary education. (p. 77)

Models to Support Health and Well-Being

Basch's (2011) conclusion that healthy students learn better is not necessarily a new

idea. Schools have provided school lunch, physical and mental health promotion and education,

and caring and supportive school climates in the past. Indeed, those advancing the work of

education philosophers such as Nel Noddings, John Dewey, and Pestalozzi have been advocating

for more supportive and developmentally focused schools for years (Cremin, 1961; Laubach &

Smith, 2011; Noddings, 2005; Urban & Wagoner, 2009). There is also evidence that pre-Brown v.

the Board of Education and integration, Black principals established caring, contextually

responsive schools for their Black student bodies (Tillman, 2004). However, with the

introduction of NCLB, many of the remaining supports were reduced or eliminated to focus on

academic fundamentals and test scores. Recess and lunch times were cut, classes in physical

education and health were reduced, and harsh discipline policies were introduced (Berliner,

2014; Ladd, 2017; Wilgus, 2019). As the strict policies of NCLB have not made a difference and

economic and racial disparities have increased, educators and policymakers have searched for

other means to decrease the achievement gap. While many have turned to understanding how

instructional practices can be improved, there is also a growing momentum to improve the

health and well-being of students.

This movement has ignited the development of a plethora of programs to support

different areas of developmental growth. For example, many schools and districts have

implemented such interventions as school-based health centers; mental health programs;

school lunch and breakfast programs; physical activity and recess policies; nutrition programs;

eye and dental exams; anti-bullying programs; and driving, substance abuse, and sex education.

There have been numerous empirical research studies demonstrating the effectiveness of the various programs that address these different issues on both the health issue and on education outcomes (Michael et al., 2015).

However, the programs are frequently difficult to maintain and sustain as they are often siloed from each other and not integrated into the school or coordinated with other programs (D. D. Allensworth & Kolbe, 1987; Kolbe, 2019; Osher & Berg, 2017). Furthermore, it is difficult to understand the differences, prioritize, and select a program given the numerous approaches. For example, in their focus groups with policymakers, Temkin et al. (2019) found that while participants recognized the benefits of each program, they struggled to distinguish between them. Indeed, a report from the Department of Education found that schools have an average of nine or more individual prevention programs to support child health and well-being (Crosse et al., 2011).

An excellent example of this is social, emotional, and behavioral health development—one of the most urgent needs since the pandemic. Depression in young adults has increased (Mojtabai et al., 2016), and depression, anxiety, and behavioral/conduct problems are high (Ghandour et al., 2019) and have increased since the pandemic (Naff et al., 2022; Viner et al., 2022). Schools are struggling to select the best way to help their students from among a myriad of different evidence-based programs, most of which only focus on a specific aspect of social and emotional well-being, such as mindfulness, bullying trauma-informed care, restorative practices, school climate, discipline policies, and social and emotional learning (SEL) programs (Temkin et al., 2019; Weissberg et al., 2015).

Of these, SEL is one of the most studied approaches currently being implemented. SEL focuses on the competencies and skills that can be learned and that promote healthy development and social skills that lead to better academic and life outcomes (Osher et al., 2016;

Weissberg et al., 2015). Even within SEL, there are several conceptualizations of the intervention

(Cantor et al., 2021; Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Osher et al., 2016). However, the most well-known

are the five competencies championed by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional

Learning (CASEL). Formed by a group of experts to advance research and support for social,

emotional, and academic competence, CASEL promulgates five core competencies that can be

taught: self-awareness; self-management; social awareness; relationship skills; and responsible

decision-making (Weissberg et al., 2015). There is ample evidence that teaching SEL influences

academic and behavioral outcomes and improves SEL competencies (Corcoran et al., 2018;

Durlak et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2017). Furthermore, it is a promising approach to improving

outcomes for minority students in high-poverty areas (Berliner, 2014; McClure, 2016; Roffey,

2016) and is considered by some as a key to improving academic and social equity (Barr &

Gibson, 2015; Wright et al., 2018). However, CASEL identified 77 evidence-based programs that

demonstrate effectiveness in their most recent program guide (Collaborative for Academic,

Social, and Emotional Learning, 2021), adding to the confusion about how to select an approach.

Moreover, there have been critiques of SEL curricula and programs, as well as difficulty

in implementing and sustaining them. For example, programs need to be implemented with

fidelity to be effective (Bailey et al., 2019; Jones & Bouffard, 2012), implementation is often

difficult and expensive (Bailey et al., 2019; Jones & Bouffard, 2012), and lessons are typically

siloed into a half-hour or less with little daily support (Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Weissberg et al.,

2015). Programs have also been criticized for taking a behaviorist approach (Hoffman, 2009).

Furthermore, a lack of a common definition for SEL has been found to lead to confusion

(Allbright et al., 2019; Hoffman, 2009; Jones & Bouffard, 2012). Bailey et al. (2019) suggest that

there is limited buy-in from staff, lessons are not integrated into educational practice, and the

typically strict curricula do not allow the teacher flexibility to provide for individual or school

contexts so that the programs are not always implemented with fidelity. Programs have also

been found to be difficult to scale (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). Furthermore, there have been

critiques that most SEL programs are not culturally responsive to the needs of the community

and that SEL programming champions values of a white, western, upper-middle-class male

culture, making it culturally unresponsive to solving equity issues (Jacobson, 2020).

Whole Child Models

Over the last decade, a number of different frameworks have been developed that

attempt to either coordinate the varying programs or integrate them more fully into the school

in a systemic manner to counter the inefficiencies and support sustainability of the variety of

programs. Many of these frameworks refer to the whole child and it is difficult to distinguish

between the different approaches.

To understand these frameworks and identify a common definition, the following

sections provide an overview of the more prominent frameworks currently being promoted to

schools: the WSCC model; systemic SEL; school-wide SEL; whole child education from Darling-

Hammond and Cook-Harvey; and a newly developed whole child model from SoLD. Most of the

frameworks described below started with a focus on a single program and gradually adopted a

whole school, integrated model. They also take different lenses when approaching their specific

problem of practice or discipline, such as health, social-emotional learning, brain science, or

policy.

These are not the only models and programs that are expanding into a whole school,

whole child approach. There are other models that are just developing. They are not included in

this review since they are either not as well articulated, not as comprehensive, or not as well-

known, such as comprehensive school mental health systems, safe and healthy schools, trauma-

informed schools, and thriving schools. These models contain many similar elements to those

described, or, as is the case with trauma-informed schools, are in the process of developing a more comprehensive model. Moreover, this field is rapidly advancing in the wake of COVID-19 and there may already be other new models. The hope is that the unified version described here will also encompass the major components of those models and add clarity to this burgeoning and complex field.

Whole School Whole Child Whole Community

The Whole School Whole Child Whole Community model (WSCC) model is an organizational model that combines the elements of the Coordinated School Health (CSH) model championed by the CDC and the Whole Child model developed by ASCD. In the realm of school health, Allensworth and Kolbe (1987) recognized the inefficiencies and lack of cohesion in school health delivery and conceived of a coordinated method to encompass eight different areas: nutrition, physical activity, health services/school nurses, health education, counseling and psychological services, parent and community engagement, physical environment, and social emotional climate. Recognizing that each component influenced the outcomes of the others, the authors envisioned leaders of the different areas working together to promote student health and well-being across the system, leading to better efficiencies and improved implementation. The CSH model was heavily promoted by the CDC to state education and health agencies, non-profit organizations, and professional associations (Rasberry et al., 2015). In a similar movement, ASCD convened a 20-member Commission on the Whole Child (2007) to create a new definition of successful learning built on the conditions of learning. In a rejection of the limiting definition of learning and the narrow accountability measures of NCLB, the Commission's resulting framework called for more focus on the elements that support children and learning and recognized that children are more than test scores. The members' Whole Child framework is illustrated by a diagram with the child in the center surrounded by the following

elements: emotionally and physically safe and challenging environments; physical, social, and emotional health; connections to the school and to the community; engagement with caring, trained adults; and a broad learning base that prepares students for college and employment. ASCD further refined the elements to *healthy*, *safe*, *challenged*, *engaged*, and *supported* and created tools and resources to support their implementation that they promoted to their members.

In 2013, the CDC joined forces with ASCD to convene a panel of experts to explore how ASCD's Whole Child framework and the CSH model could be integrated (Lewallen et al., 2015). According to Lewallen et al. (2015), the resulting WSCC framework combines the child-centered elements of safe, engaged, supportive, challenged, and healthy of the whole child initiative from ASCD and wraps around it the ten areas from CSH (Figure 1). This is further overlaid with a socio-ecological framework that emphasizes coordination between policies and practices at the individual, school, and community levels. A socio-ecological framework is a child development theory that highlights the layers of interactions that influence human development (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). The WSCC is meant to underscore the interactions in the system, particularly policy, and how the interactions both influence and buoy a system that supports healthy child growth, development, and school success. Most importantly, rather than viewing health and education as separate systems within schools, the panel wanted to unite them in a coordinated, integrated framework. Lewallen et al. (2015) conclude that the model should be used in every school to integrate health and education within the context of every community. The authors specify that the model is meant as an organizing framework rather than an intervention or program. Furthermore, the authors state that "after years of observing the CSH approach in action in local schools and districts, the consultation team noted that without

coordination, policies, practices, and processes in place, the model would not be effective in achieving its intended outcomes" (p. 734).

Figure 1

Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child Model

Note. This figure represents the WSCC model. From *Whole school, whole community, whole child: A collaborative approach to learning and health* by ASCD, 2014, p. 13. ASCD and CDC. (https://files.ascd.org/staticfiles/ascd/pdf/siteASCD/publications/wholechild/wscc-a-collaborative-approach.pdf).

Systemic SEL

There is also an emerging understanding of what is being called systemic SEL. A number of proponents of SEL have emphasized that SEL should be two-pronged: explicit teaching of SEL skills and a positive learning and community environment that is engaging and supportive of practicing SEL skills (Oberle et al., 2016; Osher et al., 2016; Weissberg et al., 2015). CASEL

recently created a blueprint for a whole school approach to SEL that advocates for SEL to be

integrated into classroom lessons, school environments, and community and family interactions

(Mahoney et al., 2020; Oberle et al., 2016; Weissberg et al., 2015). The model contextualizes

elements of social emotional learning competencies, the socio-ecological framework, and the

broader policy and climate environment. As seen in Figure 2, the authors place social and

emotional learning in the center of the framework, surround it with CASEL's five SEL

competencies, and then surround those with a socio-ecological framework of an inner ring of

classroom and outer rings of schools, families and caregivers, and communities. An earlier

illustration of the model included schoolwide SEL, state policies and supports, and federal

policies above and below this circle to highlight the importance of coordination of policies

across these different realms (Weissberg et al., 2015). Though no longer included in the

diagram, the CASEL website (https://casel.org/systemic-implementation/) includes information

on systemic SEL in district, state, and federal policy as well as within the school. Oberle et al.

(2016) view this model as the center of a logic model that proposes that districtwide SEL leads

to schoolwide SEL which in turn leads to short-term student outcomes of social emotional skills,

positive attitudes, improved relationships, less behavioral challenges and emotional distress,

and improved academic performance. Long-term outcomes focus on graduation and well-being.

Interestingly, their conceptual framework focuses on federal and district policies and classroom

practices and not on other aspects of school.

Figure 2

Systemic SEL Framework
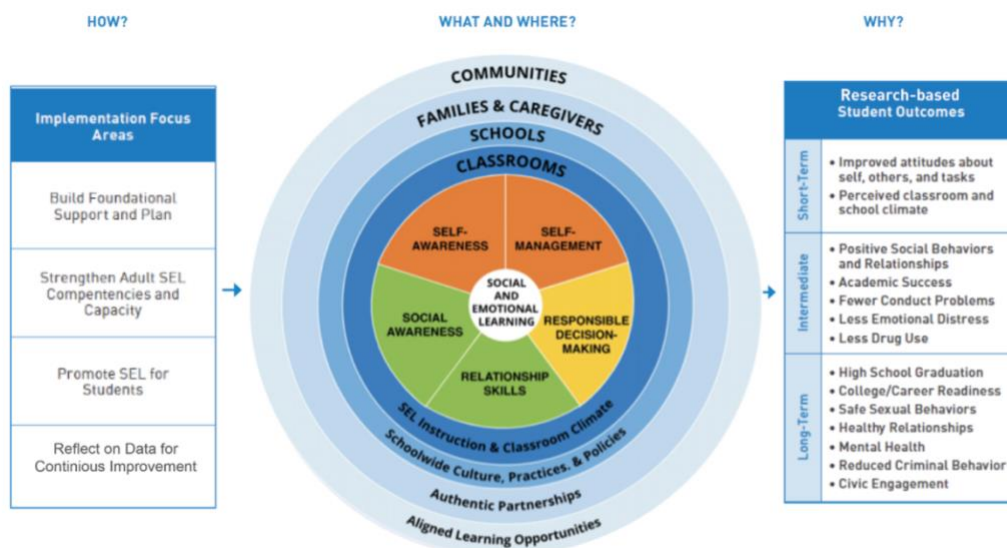
Note. This figure represents systemic SEL. From Mahoney, J. L., Weissberg, R. P., Greenberg, M. T., Dusenbury, L., Jagers, R. J., Niemi, K., Schlinger, M., Schlund, J., Shriver, P. P., VanAusdal, K., & Yoder, N. (2020). Systemic social and emotional learning: Promoting educational success for all preschool to high school students. *American Psychologist*, *Advance online publication*. https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000701. p. 35

School-Wide SEL

Jones and Bouffard (2012) offer another alternative for integrating SEL skills into the school environment. They identify four principles for SEL development: 1) consistency and continuity, 2) interdependency of social, emotional, and academic skills, 3) the social and contextual necessity of SEL development, and 4) the interconnections of classrooms and schools as interdependent systems. They categorize the competencies differently than CASEL and outline three areas of student development for social-emotional skills and behaviors: emotional processes, social/interpersonal skills, and cognitive regulation. The authors also suggest that there is a mutually beneficial relationship between the climate and culture of a school and SEL and recognize the importance of the principal's vision in creating that environment. They describe a feedback loop of a teacher modeling positive social and emotional strategies and

student behaviors and place the school and classroom context in a continuum with the
community context and with the teacher's own background, social-emotional competence, and
pedagogical skills. In their model (Figure 3), SEL competence influences culture and climate,
which in turn influences SEL, and through this process the authors suggest that educators can
shift the social norms and improve school climate and culture. In addition, Jones and Bouffard
recognize the broader, interactive nature of SEL with the community, family, and peers, as well
as district and state policies, and their framework is developmental, contextual, and socio-
ecological. However, even while they describe an interactive and highly connected system, their
main focus is on the SEL components that teachers can incorporate into their classroom and not
on the conditions necessary to develop and support the system or the external factors that
affect SEL.

Figure 3

School-Wide SEL Model
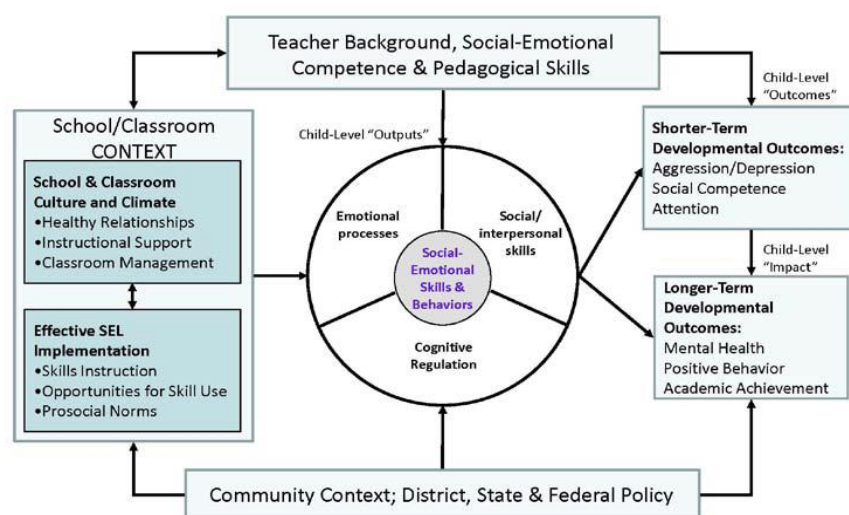
Note. This figure represents school-wide SEL. From Jones, S. M., & Bouffard, S. (2012). Social and
emotional learning in schools: From programs to strategies and commentaries. *Social Policy
Report*, *26*(4), 1–33. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2379-3988.2012.tb00073.x. p. 4.

Whole Child Education by Darling-Hammond and Cook-Harvey

In another framework that promotes an expanded vision of SEL, Linda Darling-Hammond and Channa Cook-Harvey (2018) proposed a new model for whole child education that is centered on the academic, cognitive, ethical, physical, psychological, and social-emotional development of the child. Similar to the WSCC, it places the child in the center of the diagram and surrounds them with domains (Figure 4). In this case, the authors identify four domains: positive school climate, productive instructional strategies, social and emotional development, and individualized supports. Darling-Hammond and Cook-Harvey further define these areas by providing more specific strategies, such as a structure for effective caring, learning-to-learn strategies, integration of social-emotional skills, and coordinated access to integrated services. The authors state that given the new research from the science of learning and development it is essential that schools provide a learning environment that is supportive of social and emotional growth and well-being. They further state that the goal of education should be "to empower individual students to reach their full potential" (Darling-Hammond and Cook-Harvey, 2018, p. 9), foreshadowing their 2021 recommendations for redesigning schools that is discussed below. Darling-Hammond and Cook-Harvey emphasize the need to incorporate social and emotional well-being into schools by creating positive school climates that foster relationships and provide emotionally safe learning spaces, social and emotional learning, motivating instructional strategies, and individualized, integrated supports for health and learning. They also argue that a positive learning environment supports this development, linking school climate to support for the whole child. However, while they state that they are looking at how schools can use research-based practices to create these settings, they focus mainly on policy strategies and organizational structures. They conclude by providing three

policy recommendations: focus on systems to support child development; create schools that support healthy development; and ensure educators understand child development.

Figure 4

Whole Child Education Model
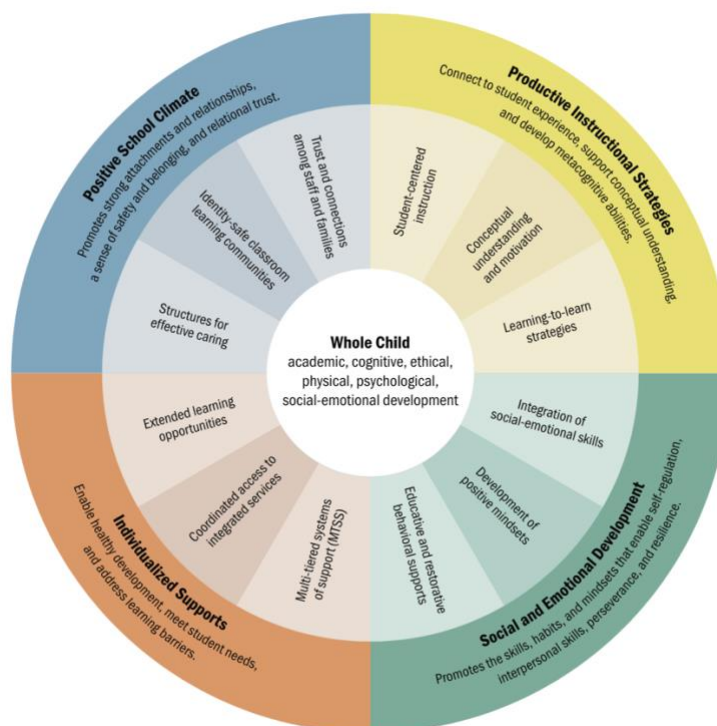
Note. This figure represents whole child education. From Darling-Hammond, L., & Cook-Harvey, C. M. (2018). Educating the whole child: Improving school climate to support student success (p. 81). Learning Policy Institute. https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/productfiles/Educating_Whole_Child_REPORT.pdf. p.14

The Whole Child Approach by SoLD

In 2017, the Aspen Institute formed the National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development to re-envision school success. The Commission listened to students, teachers, school and district leaders, community members, and experts. Their final report, "From a Nation at Risk to A Nation at Hope" (National Commission on Social, Emotional, and

Academic Development, 2018), outlines how learning occurs and lays out recommendations on ways schools can change to support the whole child:

1) expand the definition of student success to honor the whole child;

2) provide safe and supportive learning environments;

3) embed social and emotional skills building into instruction and school-wide practices;

4) grow adult expertise in child development;

5) address the whole child by aligning school and community resources and leveraging partners.

The work also spawned articles on child development, a research agenda, and a new organization, the SoLD Alliance, that is focused on advancing the Commission's principles.

In the last two years, the founders of SoLD have written several articles and books to advance their concept of schools that support the whole child. In a series of articles, they describe the science undergirding their model and situate it within a systems dynamic model (Cantor et al., 2021), define thriving as a model for school success (Osher, Pittman, et al., 2020), and recommend school design principles that adhere to this conceptualization (Darling-Hammond et al., 2021). In the article where they suggest a new blueprint for how schools can be designed to support their students, Darling-Hammond et al. (2021) also identify goals for youth learning and development. The goals include:

- the ability to solve problems critically and creatively, deeply understand content, and apply their knowledge;

- self-awareness and the ability to engage meaningfully with others;

- positive self-direction and future planning;

- healthy life choices;

- concern and an action orientation to the welfare of their community.

Darling-Hammond et al. (2021) suggest structures and practices that should be in schools to enact these principles which are building on those Darling-Hammond and Cook-Harvey (2019) previously outlined in their model for whole child education. Furthermore, they support their recommendations with research from the literature on the brain, child development, and education. Their new conceptual framework for schools and school success places healthy development, learning, and thriving in the center of their concept, surrounded by five conditions that they identify as being scientifically demonstrated to provide for student success: integrated support systems, positive developmental relationships, environments filled with safety and belonging, rich learning experiences and knowledge development and development of skills, habits, and mindsets. As shown in Figure 5, moving in a dynamic circle around these domains are the overarching aims of each element: to provide an environment and experience that is personalized, empowering, culturally affirming, and transformative.

Darling-Hammond et al. (2021) provide examples of the structures and practices that can enable each of these different domains. For example, the authors suggest that schools that have fostered positive developmental relationships have supportive structures such as small schools and learning communities, advisory systems, looping, home visits and other outreach, staff collaboration, and opportunities for shared decision-making. The practices they propose involve behaviors that communicate respect, caring, and valuing; pedagogies that provide opportunities for teachers to obtain deep knowledge of their students and families; classroom and school-wide strategies that dispel stereotypes; and skills for collaboration between staff and families. The authors highlight many of these strategies with short case studies of schools that exemplify the strategy.

Although the authors provide these examples, they acknowledge that few schools, if any, exemplify every element in their model. They also recognize that within their overall framework, there can be variations in implementation strategies to meet the needs of the students. Some of the authors' recommendations are radical yet doable, while others are relatively simple to implement. Overall, the authors advocate for a change in how society views education and the structures that support that view.

Figure 5

The Whole Child Model by SoLD
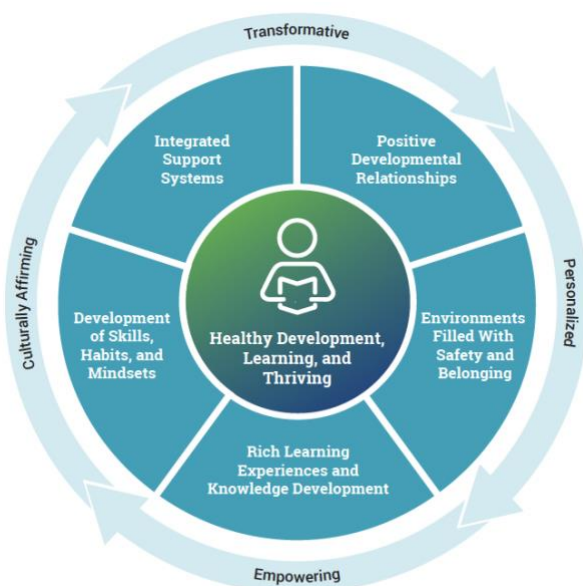
Note. This figure represents the whole child model by SoLD. From Darling-Hammond, L., Hernández, L. E., Schachner, A., Plasencia, S., Cantor, P., Theokas, C., & Tijerina, E. (2021). *Design principles for schools: Putting the science of learning and development into action*. 182. p. ix.

Effectiveness of Unified Models

Since these approaches are mainly theoretical models that are relatively new, there are scant empirical studies on their efficacy (Kolbe, 2019; Mahoney et al., 2020; Michael et al., 2015; Willgerodt et al., 2021). However, the few studies that exist suggest that the models hold

promise for a coordinated, whole school approach and that health and education can be united

to become part of a school's ongoing culture (Mahoney et al., 2020; Storey et al., 2016; The

ASCD Whole Child Initiative, 2016; Valois et al., 2011, 2015). In their evaluation of their Whole

Child Initiative, an ASCD pilot project yielded positive results. All of the nine schools saw a

moderate to major impact on student engagement, with five schools observing a major change

in student engagement (The ASCD Whole Child Initiative, 2016). They also saw an increase in

health awareness, physical activity, and a focus on mental health. Moreover, 89% had a

moderate to major improvement in school climate. In a retrospective evaluation of CSH in 158

public schools in Delaware, the authors concluded that schools with successful implementation

had better school-level performance and progress ratings (Rosas et al., 2009). Similar results

were found in a secondary analysis of five separate studies of the implementation of a

comprehensive school health project in 50 different schools in Alberta, Canada (Storey et al.,

2016). Storey et al. (2016) found that successful implementation yielded positive cultural shifts

and improvements in health behaviors. But these are only three studies and a number of

researchers have called for more research to evaluate both the implementation processes and

outcomes of systemic coordination (Kolbe, 2019; Mahoney et al., 2020; Michael et al., 2015;

Murray et al., 2007; Rasberry et al., 2015; Willgerodt et al., 2021).

However, there are other indications that a coordinated and integrated approach holds

promise for improving health and learning. The models were developed in an effort to improve

the implementation and scaling of siloed programs that have extensive research supporting

their efficacy; they are based on extensive experience working with districts, states, and schools

to implement programs; and there appears to be a nascent organic practice of combining

programs as some state and schools have already initiated or are considering the process. As

noted, most of the models were developed as a reaction to the difficulties of implementing and

sustaining a single, evidence-based program or curriculum and a recognition that a more whole

school, coordinated approach was required (D. D. Allensworth & Kolbe, 1987; Dusenbury &

Weissberg, 2018; Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Temkin et al., 2019). The original programs have been

shown to be effective when implemented with fidelity. For example, there is extensive evidence

that SEL influences academic outcomes (Corcoran et al., 2018; Durlak et al., 2011; Taylor et al.,

2017), and each of the components in the WSCC framework has been shown to have a positive

impact on well-being and academic success (Michael et al., 2015). There is also evidence that

uniting several of the WSCC components improves school engagement, behavior, test scores,

and grade point average (Kolbe, 2019; Michael et al., 2015).

Furthermore, the models were based either on the experiences of the researchers

working with multiple districts and schools on implementing programs and realizing that a

broader, coordinated, whole school approach was required to gain full impact or on the

implications of empirical research. Mahoney et al. (2020) derive their systemic SEL model from a

combination of their twenty-five years of experience helping schools, districts, and states

implement SEL; current educational objectives; and new research from the science of learning

and development. Darling-Hammond and Cook-Harvey (2018) reviewed the empirical research

on brain development and learning to outline the four domains of their Whole Child model and

then reviewed policies and classroom practices that have been demonstrated to support those

domains. And Jones and Bouffard (2012) grounded their theory in "research on how students'

SEL skills develop and how program implementation works" (p. 4). The SoLD and WSCC models

are the outcomes of groups of experts who reviewed research on how to create schools that

result in successful learners (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019; Lewallen et al., 2015). The SoLD

model was also based on the authors' extensive experiences with schools and education leaders

(Darling-Hammond et al., 2021).

There is also a growing practice to connect the various programs, particularly at the state level. In their interviews and focus groups with state education leaders, Temkin et al. (2019) noted a nascent acknowledgment by states that a number of initiatives should be linked under a larger umbrella. In their review of state policies that support SEL, Dusenbury et al. (2018) describe how some states are connecting SEL programs with other initiatives that support well-being, such as trauma-informed practices, chronic stress reduction, school climate, bullying, restorative practices, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), mental health, and growth mindset. There are also recent efforts to demonstrate alignment between SEL and other initiatives that support well-being, such as restorative practices, school climate, and trauma-informed care (e.g. Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2020; Garnett et al., 2020; Hulvershorn & Mulholland, 2018; Osher & Berg, 2017).

Defining a Whole School Approach to the Whole Child

This history and description of some of the most prominent non-academic frameworks provide evidence of a movement towards a whole school, systemic approach to the non-academic elements of learning and child development. However, even as approaches are starting to be united in the WSCC, the SoLD model, whole child education, and systemic SEL, these multiple models can be confusing and add to the difficulty in understanding and implementing the whole school change they seek. Therefore, what follows is a synthesis of the models to assist in identifying common practices, beliefs, and knowledge in the school leaders.

Appendix A provides a chart that outlines the main elements of each model to help distinguish commonalities and differences. Because the models are derived from different perspectives, such as school health, SEL classroom practices, or policies, a theory was identified to help with the consolidation. As will be described below, the domains from Maslow's theory of human motivation were used to categorize the differing elements in the models since all of the

models are concerned with whole child development and not just academic success. Maslow's

model is generally accepted as a framework for positive growth and motivation, and is

commonly identified among educators as an authoritative model for whole child development

(Mcleod, 2018). Furthermore, many of the theory's concepts are similar to the recent research

on child development and learning described earlier in this review and that the whole child

models support. Together, Maslow's theory and the research on child development and learning

highlight the unique educational needs of students, especially those who live in high-poverty

neighborhoods.

Maslow originally proposed that there are five areas of needs in the growth of a person

that build on each other (Maslow, 1943), though he later expanded this to eight areas (Mcleod,

2018). For optimal development, Maslow suggested a ladder of basic needs. The following

characterization is a summary of Maslow's (1943) original article and an overview of Maslow's

work by Saul McLeod (2018). At the foundation are basic elements such as food, drink, shelter,

clothing, warmth, and health. If these needs are not cared for, an individual may not have the

capacity to focus on the more complex areas of development. The next component focuses on

safety, both physical safety and psychological and emotional safety. The third level is

relationships, including intimacy, belonging, trust, and acceptance; the fourth is esteem, both

internal and external; the fifth is cognitive needs; the sixth is aesthetic needs; and finally, self-

actualization or reaching one's full potential. The eighth level is transcendence, where

motivation is based on values that transcend the self. The interactions of these areas have also

been likened to that of a sailboat, where safety, physiological, love and belongingness, and self-

esteem are the boat and the security one needs to stay afloat. The sail represents the growth

areas that when raised and supported by the boat, can propel growth and transcendence

(Kaufman, n.d.). This analogy is useful since it emphasizes the interactions between the different

levels as constant rather than seeing them as hierarchical and linear, a clarification that Maslow

made later in his career (Mcleod, 2018).

Categorizing the elements of each of the whole child models into Maslow's levels is not

clear-cut since each model used a different disciplinary lens and different language when

developing their frameworks (e.g., school health, education, SEL, science of learning and

development). However, Maslow's model does offer a general view of the developmental areas

that each framework covers. Best judgment was needed when placing some elements within

the different categories. The models also offer a mix of recommendations for practices, policies,

results, and aspirations, including aspirations for the individual, classroom, and school systems,

which makes comparisons across models more difficult. Furthermore, there were elements that

did not fit into any specific category or that encompassed most of the categories. These were

placed in an "other" section and will be referred to as conditions since they are all "something

that must exist or be present if something else is to be or take place; that on which anything else

is contingent; a prerequisite." (Oxford Languages, n.d.) and offer the conditions for supporting

the development of the outlined skills and/or needs. Maslow also referred to necessary

conditions as prerequisites for meeting the basic needs (Maslow, 1943). Nonetheless, even with

these difficulties, Maslow's categories help to demonstrate the areas that each model

emphasizes, offer a way to compare and contrast the different models, and provide a roadmap

for programs, policies, and practices that can be implemented to support the whole child.

In reviewing the chart in Appendix A, it is apparent that the differing visions of a unified

framework have many similar components to support their goals for student development and

that together they cover most of Maslow's areas. Furthermore, all of the models are aspirational

and provide basic principles of what a student should be experiencing in the school system and

beyond. Not surprisingly given the origins of the models, the most overlap is in the areas of

safety needs and interpersonal relationships of love and belongingness. The WSCC model offers

the most comprehensive services for the physiological needs, though both whole child

education and the SoLD model touch on this area in their descriptions. On the other hand, none

of the models specifically address self-actualization, though this could possibly be seen in the

rich learning experiences of SoLD (Darling-Hammond et al., 2021). The WSCC, whole child

education and SoLD models cover nearly all of the areas.

In addition to the curriculum, service, and practice-based areas mentioned in the

models, such as health education, teaching SEL skills, and classroom management, there are

broader components, many of which could not be easily categorized into the framework and

were placed in "conditions." These areas are nearly identical across all the models. They include

a whole child developmental perspective; whole school change and integration; a positive,

caring school environment; partnerships with families and the community; coordination and

collaboration across systems and within policies, structures, processes, and practices; and an

understanding of the influence of the broader community on both the students and the school.

On the most fundamental level, all of the models focus on the student and share the

view that the student should be central to all activities. A focus on a caring school environment

and climate for both students and staff is another similarity. Indeed, it is a crucial component in

all of the models and is seen as critical for learning to occur. Climate fits into several of Maslow's

categories since it has an impact on a number of development areas, and is also included in

"other" because of its overarching effect.

Another common theme that runs through the literature is the need for whole school

change and reform: All of the models provide a broader vision of school than the one solely

focused on academics and test scores. Darling-Hammond et al. (2021) call for redesigning

schools and Valois et al. (2011) suggest that the WSCC be promoted as organizational change.

Indeed, Valois et al. (2011) conclude that a whole school culture change is necessary to integrate health and learning. Both CASEL's (Mahoney et al., 2020; Oberle et al., 2016) and Jones and Bouffard's (2012) models for SEL also recommend a whole school change, although they suggest a change in school culture and not the sweeping changes envisioned by the proponents of the SoLD and WSCC models.

A fourth similarity is their system orientation. They all portray the ecosystem of the school and the supports that they recommend implementing through multiple layers: classroom, school, families, and community. Indeed, all of the models portray the school as part of a larger, interactive, and interconnected system. However, the socio-ecological aspects and the interplay between the different areas are most emphasized in the systemic SEL model and the Jones and Bouffard (2012) model. Both of these models specify the interaction between classroom practices and district, state, and federal policies in addition to the need for contextual support from the community described in the other models. Jones and Bouffard's (2012) model is the most specific about the interconnections and feedback loops amongst these various layers. However, all of the models also recommend coordination and collaboration across both the socio-ecological layers so that there is consistency and cohesion amongst the different systems and within the school itself. Indeed, in a fifth similarity, most of the models suggest that collaboration should occur among teachers, as well as across the different areas of the school.

A sixth commonality is their acknowledgment that context matters and that whatever is implemented should be connected to the culture, values, and beliefs of the community. There is a recognition that one-size-fits-all programs will not produce the anticipated outcomes in all schools and that the specific practices and programs should be selected and adapted to meet the needs of the school community.

While there are a lot of common themes between the models, there are also differences. One of the major differences is in their focal areas for implementation and the direction of the research around each. All of them highlight classroom practices and specific interventions or programs within their frameworks and much of the research found provides evaluations of these practices or programs. Research on WSCC, systemic SEL, and the SoLD framework also offers insights into the impact of district or state policies on those practices (Darling-Hammond et al., 2021; Mahoney et al., 2020; Temkin et al., 2019).

Furthermore, while they each embrace a socio-ecological approach, they emphasize different aspects of it. For example, not surprisingly, one of the main differences between the models is the prevalence the WSCC model gives to physical health while the other models focus mainly on emotional, social, and cognitive development, thus neglecting the social determinants of health and education and the wrap-around services necessary to bolster Maslow's foundational areas of food, housing, and security. In addition to more specifics on the elements of health that should be included, the WSCC recognizes the need for coordination through policies, processes, and practices among the different elements so that there is coherence across efforts. Furthermore, like systemic SEL, the WSCC prioritizes the external element of community, a piece that Darling-Hammond and Cook-Harvey's (2018) version of the whole child doesn't prioritize. However, unlike either the WSCC or the SoLD model, systemic SEL identifies the full spectrum of the socio-ecological system, such as classroom, school, family, community, district, state, and federal influences on a school.

Given the systemic nature of all the models, it is interesting that only Jones and Bouffard's (2012) analysis identifies the system within the school and the interconnecting aspect of the work that should occur. As Jones and Bouffard state, "SEL skills develop in a complex system of context, interactions, and relationships…this suggests both that schools must take a

systems approach to promoting SEL and that such approaches must be designed to match the needs and context of individual schools and communities" (p. 5). Furthermore, they suggest that one of the most available ways that SEL influences the system in a school is through school climate and culture. Systemic SEL, SoLD, and WSCC all talk about having a systems orientation and interconnections, but focus more on the need for connections with the community, district, and state policies than the relational and contextual interrelationships within the school.

The Role of the Principal in the Whole Child Models

Though the movement is growing, there is little understanding of how to implement the whole child models and limited research on the factors that support success. In articles that articulate the models, many of the authors focus on the specific tasks necessary to implement their strategies in the school. These tasks include identifying the elements essential to effectively integrate a program in the classroom (Bailey et al., 2019), changing policy (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019; Temkin et al, 2019; Dusenbury et al, 2018), or providing structural supports within the school and from the district and state (Oberle et al., 2016; Darling-Hammond, 2021).

However, there is some evidence that the principal is a pivotal leader in ensuring the approach is successful. In their discussion of the elements they deem necessary for a whole school approach to SEL, Bailey et al. (2019) note that limited local buy-in of school leaders frequently hinders implementation. And, in their overview of systemic SEL, Mahoney et al. (2020) provide recommendations for the practices and settings that could create the environments to support systemic SEL. The settings include a trusting, challenging, caring and culturally responsive environment, consistency, adult encouragement and fostering of motivation, space for student voice, and restorative practices. They also identify school leadership as critical to the success of the initiative.

In research conducted on the implementation of CSH, the precursor to the WSCC model, there is more evidence of the importance of the principal in school implementation. In 2006, ASCD created the Healthy School Communities program, a two-year pilot program in 11 schools to provide a formative evaluation of CSH and to understand the levers of change (Valois et al., 2015). ASCD worked with the schools to implement and draw lessons from the program. In addition to concluding that health and academics can be integrated into the school, the authors identified nine elements that supported change. These levers highlight the importance of an active and engaged principal in the success of the program as well as distributive team leadership. In fact, Valois et al. (2011) found that of the nine levers, the principal was the most critical and that without the school principal leading the efforts, the initiative was not as successful. They also found that with the principal's leadership the initiative was more systemic and embedded into the school improvement plans and community and caregiver collaboration increased (Valois et al., 2011). Furthermore, in their literature review of lessons learned from implementation of the Whole Child and CSH approaches, Rasberry et al. (2015) note the critical role the principal plays in the effective implementation and sustainability of both models, as do Rooney et al. (2015) in their review of implementation strategies for the WSCC model. And, in a secondary analysis of five studies on the implementation and sustainability of comprehensive school health in Alberta, Canada, Storey et al. (2016) identified three types of essential conditions to support successful implementation: "core conditions" which are necessary for successful implementation, "contextual conditions" that are not essential but influence the availability of the core conditions, and "process conditions." According to the authors, the most important of the core conditions was a principal who was an active implementer and leader of the initiative. Other core conditions included engaged students, a dedicated staff champion and

distributed leadership, community support, ongoing professional development, school ability to customize for their community, and effective use of data when making decisions.

It is evident from this review that an engaged principal plays a crucial role in the implementation process of the WSCC model. While studies are even more limited on the principal's role in implementing systemic SEL frameworks, Mahoney et al. (2020) suggest that the school principal is crucial for effective implementation and Anyon et al. (2016) conclude that principal buy-in is key to the implementation of an individual SEL program. The principal also has an important influence on school climate (Darling-Hammond et al., 2021; Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Temkin et al., 2019). These findings reflect earlier research on the importance of the principal in enacting school change and improvement (Hallinger, 2003).

The Principal's Role in Implementing Whole Child Models

Despite the importance of the principal to the successful implementation of the approach, there is very little research about the role that they can take. Indeed, several researchers note the dearth of research on the topic and recommend that more studies be conducted (Kennedy, 2019; Ryu et al., 2020; Wright et al., 2018). Though Bailey et al. (2019) identify a lack of leadership buy-in as a challenge, they do not address how to obtain it. In their review of the research that supports the latest Professional Standards for Education leaders, the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) calls for more research on how school leaders can broaden and balance academic, social, emotional, and physical supports for students to support leader efficacy and professional development (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2019).

Valois et al. (2011) is one of the few studies that provides evidence for the principal's role. The authors suggest that the principal's knowledge and belief that student physical and emotional health are important for their academic success is vitally important to the initiative's

success. They also found that successful schools had principals who had a systems orientation and a detailed understanding of the whole child. As the authors state:

> They [successful principals] provide resources for their school, communicate effectively, embrace resistance, maintain a visible presence, and build and sustain relationships inside the school and with community stakeholders. The manner in which the principal develops relationships can in fact fundamentally determine the success or failure of the change process. (p. 277)

Valois et al. (2011) found that principals who lead initiatives had more success and that initiatives were more likely to be embedded into school improvement plans. The authors also recommend more research on the specific skills of principals but suggest that the most effective principals demonstrated attributes of effective change agents. Based on their experience with schools, Mahoney et al. (2020) echo many of these conclusions. The authors particularly point to three functions of the principal as having an impact: their ability to both model and communicate a vision of systemic SEL, their influence on creating a positive school climate, and their interaction, connections, and partnerships with student families and the school community. They state that school leaders communicate a shared vision, model the use of SEL practices, create an appropriate school climate, and encourage family engagement.

Since research is limited on the role of the principal in a school that supports the whole child, in the next section what is known about the *influence* of the principal in a school is reviewed. This information may offer additional insights into how a principal influences support for the whole child.

The Influence of the School Principal

There have been a plethora of studies on the role of the principal, even while there are few on the role of the principal in a school that supports the whole child. A non-systematic

review of the literature indicates that much of the research has focused on student academic

outcomes and principals' influence on teaching and teachers. For example, there have been a

number of studies to better understand the relationships between leadership and learning

outcomes (Tan et al., 2021; Wu & Shen, 2022) and there have been several recent meta-

analyses that attempt to better understand this relationship (Liebowitz & Porter, 2019; Sun &

Leithwood, 2015). One aspect of the principal's effect on student outcomes is generally

acknowledged: that it is indirect (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood & Sun, 2012; Sebring et al.,

2006; Tan et al., 2021). For example, in their multi-year study of the link between leadership and

student learning in Chicago Public Schools, Leithwood and Seashore-Louis (2011) envision that

school leadership pathways to student learning are through two-way interactions between the

principal and school conditions, teachers, and classroom conditions. Recent meta-analyses of

the empirical literature on the influence principals have on student outcomes reach similar

conclusions on its indirect nature (Liebowitz & Porter, 2019; Robinson & Gray, 2019; Tan et al.,

2021; Wu & Shen, 2022). However, they also found that most of the literature focused on either

transformational leadership and the principal's influence on teacher efficacy or instructional

leadership and the principal's influence on teaching practices.

There is a call for a better understanding of the relationship between the principal and

non-academic aspects of student scholarship (Tan et al., 2021; Wu & Shen, 2022). While

Liebowitz & Porter (2019) concluded from their meta-analysis that the principal behaviors that

were not instructional were important to student achievement, little is known about *how* the

principal influences school conditions that support students or which of the many pathways that

principals influence are most important. Wu and Shen (2022) conclude that while there is a

positive association between the principal and student achievement, there still is not enough

evidence to specify a practice or series of practices that have the most influence.

There are a few recent studies that examine the principal's influence on other aspects of the school that impact student learning. For example, there is evidence that the principal has an impact on establishing a positive school climate and culture (Burkhauser, 2017; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012), and that a positive school climate is correlated with academic success (E. Allensworth et al., 2020; Berkowitz et al., 2017; Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018). Indeed, in their mixed methods, multi-year exploration of Chicago Public Schools, Allensworth et al. (2020) conclude that it is through school climate that principals have the most influence on student achievement. Furthermore, Darling-Hammond and Cook-Harvey (2018) claim that school climate is at the core of a successful educational experience. The findings are promising even though the use of the term school climate is inconsistent across studies (Rudasill et al., 2018). Similarly, there is growing evidence that school climate and the principal have an influence on family and community engagement (Smith et al., 2021), and there is ample evidence that family and community engagement have a positive effect on student outcomes (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). In addition, in a recent empirical study, Adams and Olsen (2019) suggest that the principal support of student psychological needs led to the most faculty trust in students and a greater student sense of autonomy.

The school leader is also the catalyst of school change, though there are numerous theories on how they effect change and the knowledge and beliefs that they hold that influence the change (e.g. Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2018; Fullan, 2015; Kovačević & Hallinger, 2019; Sebring et al., 2006). In a recent bibliometric analysis of the theories and knowledge basis for studies on leading school change and improvement, Kovačević and Hallinger (2019) identified 1,613 journal articles, books, and chapters from 1960–2017 on leading school change and improvement (LSCI). While the authors group the articles into four clusters of similar thinking (instructional leadership, transformational leadership, shared

leadership, and school improvement), these groupings encompass a wider range of overlapping

ideas. For example, principals can enact school change through systems thinking (Fullan, 2010;

Shaked & Schechter, 2020), developing relational trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2002), personal and

staff growth (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2018), structural changes (Kania et al., 2018),

changes in mental models (Kania et al., 2018), and their own goals, beliefs, and knowledge and

how well they communicate them to the school community (Abdullah et al., 2013; Hallinger et

al., 2018; Keung et al., 2020; Leithwood & Seashore-Louis, 2011; Nadelson et al., 2020; Sun &

Leithwood, 2015).

This non-systematic review suggests that school principals have an impact on the

conditions identified as common among the whole child models, such as school climate, school

change, and family and community engagement, all of which have an impact on student

outcomes (Berkowitz et al., 2017; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Kovačević & Hallinger, 2019).

However, much of this research on the principal is focused on their interaction with teachers

and classroom management. Some researchers have noted the lack of research on the influence

of principals on non-academic aspects of school and their impact on students. In the next

section, leadership models are reviewed to understand how and whether they focus on the

identified conditions that are consistent across the whole school, whole child models.

Leadership Models

In this section, leadership models are briefly reviewed to see which, if any, encompass

the principal leadership criteria identified as important to a whole school, whole child approach.

Given the developmental nature of the whole child model and the supportive conditions that

are influenced by the principal, leadership models that pursue an affective approach were

researched. Several studies concluded that there is a need for different leadership frameworks

that look beyond technical aspects of education and understand the principal's relationship with

the non-instructional, affective areas that impact learning (Kellar & Slayton, 2016; Kennedy,

2019; Tan et al., 2021; Wright et al., 2018; Wu & Shen, 2022). However, others have recognized

this deficit and there are newly emerging school leadership theories that focus on non-

instructional, affective areas. These leadership models were selected for review. The models

include transformational leadership, positive leadership, affective leadership, caring leadership,

and culturally responsive leadership (CRSL). With the exception of transformational leadership,

which has been one of the most studied leadership theories in the last twenty years (Gumus et

al., 2018; Kovačević & Hallinger, 2019; Wang, 2018), the other theories have been recently

developed. Interestingly, early research on CRSL, caring leadership, and positive school

leadership use transformational leadership as a base (Khalifa et al., 2016; Louis & Murphy, 2017;

Ryu et al., 2020). Therefore, transformational leadership is the first discussed in this review.

Furthermore, finding that the affective leadership models did not address all of the whole

school changes prevalent in the whole child models, a selection of school change literature was

also reviewed, particularly Fullan's (2015) model for change which is consistent with many of

the whole child precepts.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership was selected for this review because of its focus on

relationships, mission, and inclusiveness in decision-making. Leithwood and Sun (2012) also

describe transformational leaders as making a significant contribution to school conditions that

enable teaching and learning. While Leithwood and Sun (2012) define the transformational

leader as one who motivates and inspires people, Hallinger (2003) describes it as bottom-up

leadership that fosters the conditions for personal growth and development among teachers as

well as organizational change. He also emphasizes that the transformational leader creates a

caring, trusting environment, adapts to context, and by focusing on the well-being of staff,

creates the conditions for change. In a meta-analysis of dissertations that studied the impact of

transformational leadership on student academic achievement, Sun and Leithwood (2012)

identified 11 transformational leadership practices that include developing a shared vision,

providing intellectual stimulation and individual support, modeling behavior, holding high-

performance expectations, rewards, building collaborative structures, strengthening school

culture, engaging communities, and improving the instructional program. They found that

leaders had an indirect impact on student outcomes through the mediating factors of collective

teacher efficacy and teacher commitment. Indeed, transformational leadership is mainly

focused on the school leader's relationship to and impact on the capacity and commitment of

teachers (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Sun & Leithwood, 2012). Furthermore, transformational

leadership is frequently associated with charismatic leadership because of the influence leaders

have on staff (Gumus et al., 2018; Sun & Leithwood, 2012).

Positive Leadership

In positive school leadership, Murphy and Louis (2018) have posited a theory that is

"defined by its ability to create meaningful work, a transcendent work ethic, and moral

relational communities" (p. 12). In addition, it takes a growth and improvement approach rather

than a deficit approach focused on correcting problems (Louis & Murphy, 2017). Murphy and

Louis (2018) suggest that the principal sets a foundation for all interactions within the school

ecosystem, including between students, teachers, families, administration, and district leaders.

Moreover, they emphasize that the principal's characteristics, virtues, and moral values impact

the school environment and create a positive feedback loop such that dyadic relationships and

the organizational environment work in parallel to create a positive environment. They conclude

that trust is the glue that connects all of the elements in a school as well as being the

antecedent and outcome for positive change. While Murphy and Louis (2018) suggest that the

principal's moral compass has an influence on both interpersonal relationships and the school environment, the theory does not encompass knowledge or skills.

In addition, as with most of these models since they are in their infancy, there is little empirical evidence to support the model. Murphy and Louis (2018) base the theory on a synthesis of the literature from positive psychology and leadership frameworks. However, they started to outline the theory in an empirical, quantitative study of teachers and principals in 116 schools in the United States that examined whether principals impact organizational learning through trust and caring (Louis & Murphy, 2017). The authors conclude that elements of positive leadership do have a place in education leadership and suggest that a caring principal– teacher relationship could be one of its foundations.

Caring Leadership

Described as a subset of positive leadership, caring leadership focuses on caring relationships and envisions caring as both interpersonal and organizational (i.e., the conditions that support caring) (Louis et al., 2016; Smylie et al., 2016, 2020). In an exploratory, quantitative study of 2,900 teachers in 134 schools in 9 states, Louis et al. (2016) conclude that caring is important to student and teacher success and well-being and start to outline the framework for caring leadership. The authors suggest that caring leadership is the enactment of a positive climate and culture and a leader's knowledge, motivation, and recognition to provide for positive relationships. They also found that caring principals were more likely to be found in elementary schools and less likely in schools with higher poverty.

Smylie et al. (2020) expand on these findings to create a theoretical model for caring school leadership. Drawing from multiple sources, including their experiences working with leaders, scholarly and professional literature on caring and education leadership, input from leaders and teachers, and theories from multiple social sciences, the authors define and

describe the characteristics of caring school leadership and provide specific practices that have

their foundation in theory and research, though not necessarily empirical validation. Their

framework starts with a leader's aims, virtues and mindsets, and competencies, or what they

call "the foundations for caring leadership" (p. 35). Acting on these foundations leads to the

"arenas of caring leadership practices" (p. 35), which in turn influence positive outcomes for

students. The arenas of caring leadership practice are split into three distinct interactions: caring

relationships with students; cultivating a caring school community by developing the capacity to

care for others and by supporting organizational conditions for caring; and fostering caring in

families and communities. The authors highlight the importance of environments that are

student centered and characterized by personal interactions and relationships as well as

academic press.

A unique aspect of the model is the emphasis on the leader to both demonstrate caring

toward individuals and cultivate caring communities in schools and in contexts beyond the

school. Smylie et al. (2020) describe the caring community as extending beyond the school walls

to families and the community, through fostering connections between families, providing

support and education, and being involved in the community through projects, advocacy, and

support for community organizations.

While the authors base their discussion of community on the work of Sergiovanni, that a

caring leader focuses on both relationships and the environment was demonstrated in a recent

case study of two schools where students had high academic achievement (Ryu et al., 2020).

Ryu, Walls, and Louis (2020) use transformational leadership as a sensitizing framework to

examine the role of the leader in creating a caring culture and the organizational elements that

support or challenge their efforts. They concluded that school leaders do have an impact on the

caring culture and identify the following elements of caring leadership: modeling, building

capacity of others, creating relationships, creating the conditions for caring, and developing

caring contexts outside of school. The authors suggest that future research look beyond the

dyadic relationships in a school to the structures and environments that support learning and

trusting relationships. They also support the need for holistic initiatives that focus on the whole

child, rather than fragmented programs. These elements reflect the lessons from implementing

whole school, whole child approaches previously discussed. Furthermore, the theory is child-

centered, systems oriented in its interest in community and family caring, and community and

climate focused.

Culturally Responsive School Leadership

Another leadership theory that covers many of the conditions is culturally responsive

school leadership (CRSL). In their literature review of culturally responsive leadership practice,

Khalifa et al. (2016) identify four leadership behaviors: critical self-awareness, culturally

responsive curricula and teacher preparation, inclusive environments, and engaging with

communities. Critical self-awareness refers to a principal's examination of their values and

beliefs and extends the emotional intelligence of social emotional learning to the confrontation

of how their own conscious and unconscious biases affect interactions. Culturally responsive

curricula and teacher preparation is explained as part of instructional and transformative

leadership (Marshall & Khalifa, 2018) and involves developing a vision that promotes diverse

cultures through modeling, mentoring, professional development, and curricula adoption. The

authors stress that it is also critical that the vision be well articulated and communicated.

Inclusive environments speak to the school climate and culture, with a focus on discipline

policies, referrals, and practices. Community engagement includes partnering with the

community to celebrate its culture and support advocacy efforts (Khalifa et al., 2016).

In a qualitative study of instructional coaches, Marshall and Khalifa (2018) expanded on the work of Khalifa et al. (2016) to understand how leadership promotes CRSL. Among other aspects, they note the positive influence of policies that support cultural responsiveness. This interconnection between different levels in the organization of schools illuminates the need for consistent and comprehensive support of various organizational levels in order to authentically implement and sustain an initiative, underscoring the systemic nature of school systems.

Affective Leadership

In affective leadership, Kennedy (2019) recognized the lack of information on leadership for affective strategies, which she describes as "programs, curricula, and reforms meant to service the emotional, non-academic aspect of schooling" (p. 2), and developed a theory of SEL leadership for diverse learners based on the literature of SEL, school leadership, and policy development. The framework is heavily inspired by distributed leadership and consists of 25 specific leadership practices and interactions to support SEL through an equitable and caring lens. She focuses on the technical aspects of leadership and the specific practices that a leader can take to address the challenges of implementing SEL for diverse learners that she identifies. However, she does not consider the broader, adaptive leadership skills necessary to create the conditions to support the whole child.

Change Leadership

As discussed in the section on the impact of the school principal, the principal is frequently the catalyst for school change and there is an abundance of studies and research on school reform as well as varying approaches to studying leadership for school change. For the purposes of this study, Fullan's leadership for whole system change was reviewed since, like the whole school, whole child model, it takes a holistic perspective that encourages coherence across systems (Fullan & Quinn, 2016) and focuses on conditions (Fullan, 2015). Furthermore,

there is ample material on the leader's role in supporting change. While trust is a common theme in the whole child literature, Bryk and Schneider's (2002) theory of relational trust was not selected for this purpose since there is little information about the principal's role or vision in influencing the trust.

In the *New Meaning of Educational Change*, the 5th edition of his seminal work, Fullan (2015) defines change as "shared meaning, which means that it involves simultaneously individual and social change" (p. 11). He also presents three dimensions of change that are essential for changes to occur: changes in materials, practices, and beliefs. To truly enact change, there needs to be a change in beliefs and intellectual meaning, thus supporting the idea of organizational learning as a means for systemic change and thus sustainability. This is not a new idea; Argyris argues for a similar process in his theory of organizational learning (Brazer et al., 2019). However, Fullan places this within a holistic environment for change rather than the problem-solving and improvement exercise of Argyris' theory. Flaspohler et al. (2008) use a similar heuristic, but for capacity building, which he defines as "the skills, motivations, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to implement innovations, which exist at the individual, organizational, and community levels" (p. 183). Though for change, Fullan shares this view and places it within the different educational spheres, recognizing that students, teachers, administrators (particularly the principal), the family and community, and the district administration all play an important role.

In addition, Fullan (2015) explores drivers across systems and suggests that identifying the right drivers to support change is critical for obtaining the desired outcomes. Drivers are defined as "a force that attracts power and generates motion on a continuous basis" (Fullan, 2021, p. 5), and Fullan concludes that the right drivers for educational change are capacity building, alignment, cohesiveness, practices, and collaboration. Furthermore, the drivers need

to be cohesive and coordinated across school, local, state, and federal arenas. Within the

school, the principal is the lead learner and supports change in beliefs, materials, and practices

by establishing a culture of learning, collaboration, and continuous improvement (Fullan, 2015).

Summary and Analysis of Leadership Models

While none of these models specifically addresses the whole child, there are some

mutual themes that are helpful to note. Like the research on the impact of the principal

discussed above, the leadership models focus mainly on the role of the principal in influencing

the staff and staff environment and not on the students. The exception is Fullan's (2015) model

for change, which encompasses all the stakeholders in the school community.

Furthermore, several of the leadership models highlight the importance of the leader's

goals, beliefs, and knowledge. For example, critical self-awareness is one of the four leadership

behaviors found to be critical to CRSL (Khalifa et al., 2016). Similarly, positive leadership

emphasizes the leader's characteristics, virtues, and values (Murphy & Louis, 2018) and

transformational leadership includes developing a shared vision (Hallinger et al., 2018;

Leithwood & Seashore-Louis, 2011; Sun & Leithwood, 2012). Fullan (2021) also emphasizes the

importance of beliefs, knowledge, and mindset. As discussed, in caring leadership, Smylie et al.

(2020) take this a step further and include the leader's aims, virtues and mindsets, and

competencies.

The view that the leaders' goals, beliefs, and knowledge are both important and

teachable is a common theme in many leadership models (Bauer & Brazer, 2019), including

systems leadership (Kania et al., 2018; Shaked & Schechter, 2020), synergistic leadership (Irby et

al., 2002), and other change leadership models (Abdullah et al., 2013; Hallinger et al., 2018;

Kania et al., 2018; Leithwood & Seashore-Louis, 2011; Nadelson et al., 2020; Sun & Leithwood,

2012). Furthermore, principal beliefs have been demonstrated to shape collective teacher

efficacy in school changes (Abdullah et al., 2013; Hallinger et al., 2018; Keung et al., 2020; Nadelson et al., 2020). It is also a factor in the whole child literature. For example, in a study of whole child implementation in Hong Kong, Keung et al. (2020) found that principals' support and beliefs positively influenced the teacher's beliefs in the approach.

In addition, several of the models mentioned conditions and the importance of leaders in creating conditions that are supportive. Smylie et al. (2020) discuss the principal creating the conditions for caring, and Sun and Leithwood (2012) seek to understand the conditions that principals impact through transformational leadership. Khalifa et al. (2016) suggest that a culturally responsive school leader "would promote the conditions and a school vision" that would support minoritized youth (p. 1288). However, research into conditions is limited both with the affective models and other leadership models. Indeed, Wu and Shen (2022) call for more studies on the principal's impact on conditions, and Sun and Leithwood (2012) conclude that future research should include the mediators and moderators that have been shown to have a significant impact on student achievement and the leadership actions that improve these variables or conditions.

Given that the principal has an impact on the conditions that support learning, Table 1 explores which, if any, of the affective leadership models overlap with the conditions identified in supporting a whole school, whole child approach. While all of these models describe aspects of leadership for the non-academic areas of education, they are mainly concerned with relationship building and interactions between the principal and the teachers, and few focus on the conditions to support the non-academic aspects of a student's development and education. For example, Affective Leadership only focuses on specific practices, but not the conditions that they may foster (Kennedy, 2019). However, as can be seen, caring leadership and CRSL both accounted for every condition except for whole school change. Transformational leadership

(Leithwood & Sun, 2012; Sun & Leithwood, 2012) and Fullan's (2015) change leadership include this area.

Table 1

Proposed Conditions to Support Whole Child and Leadership Models

Conditions to support the whole child	Affective leadership	Positive leadership	Caring leadership	CRSL	Transform-ational leadership	Change leadership
Whole school change					X	X
Child-centered	X		X	X		
Systems orientation			X	X		X
Caring school climate for staff		X	X	X	X	
Caring school climate for students	X		X	X		
Coordination and collaboration	X	X	X	X	X	
Cultural responsiveness and family/comm-unity connections			X	X		

Summary

Research suggests that providing for the healthy development and well-being of students and staff could be a pathway towards greater education equity. However, there have been challenges with scaling and implementing programs and improvements in academic outcomes have not been as substantial as anticipated. More recently, practitioners and researchers have started to recognize that the school environment and predominant

approaches to learning may require a shift towards affective models that provide both rigor and

supports to optimize student outcomes, particularly in high-poverty and minoritized

communities. Many of these models focus on providing for the whole child.

There are a number of theoretical frameworks that support the whole child. An analysis

and synthesis of these models was conducted to highlight their commonalities. However, none

of the theoretical frameworks explicitly addresses how individual schools undertake this new

paradigm or the conditions necessary to support the changes required for implementation. The

theoretical underpinnings of the models focus on individual teaching practices, structural

changes, or policies, but not on the conditions needed to support the whole child. In schools

that have had success with the approach, the leadership of the school principal has been critical

(Anyon et al., 2016; Mahoney et al., 2020; Rasberry et al., 2015; Storey et al., 2016; Valois et al.,

2011).

However, there is little research that explores the leadership necessary to implement

the various frameworks. This is interesting since many of the evaluations of SEL and whole child

implementation found that without principal leadership, the chances for success were limited.

Moreover, a review of the leadership models that emphasize affective practices found that none

of the models encompass the full range of conditions to support a whole school, whole child

model.

In the next chapter, I develop a conceptual framework that is based on the findings from

this literature review. Then I describe how it guides the methods and data analysis for this

capstone research.

Chapter Three - Methods

The purpose of this capstone study is to better understand the role of the school principal in shaping a whole school approach to supporting the whole child. While the empirical literature points to the importance of the principal in the implementation effort, there is little understanding of their role, particularly of their beliefs, knowledge, and priorities and how they enact their vision throughout the school. These are areas that the emerging literature has suggested are important for successful implementation. This capstone research seeks to provide an initial grounding for what it means to be a principal for the whole child by exploring how principals who are positive deviants in this movement understand their role and enact their vision.

This chapter provides an explanation of the methods that were used to explore this problem of practice. I start by describing a conceptual framework for the whole child based on the synthesis of the whole child models reviewed in Chapter Two. The framework uses Bronfenbrenner's (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 2005; Rosa & Tudge, 2013) theory of human development and his socio-ecological model. Then I explain where I understand the principal to fit within this unified whole child model and offer a second conceptual framework that is a detailed representation of how the principal influences the conditions that support the whole child. The second framework will be used to guide the interview questions and includes a synthesis of what is known about whole child leadership and aspects of the most relevant leadership theories reviewed in Chapter Two. Next, I describe the research design, data collection, and data analysis. A comparative case study design was used to examine the

principal's role in two elementary schools in a mid-sized city in the Mid-Atlantic with a high

minority population and severe economic disparities. Finally, the methodological limitations for

this study are identified, in addition to researcher biases.

Conceptual Framework

As described in the literature review, the number of different programs available in the

burgeoning field of non-academic elements of learning and the difficulty in effectively

implementing and sustaining them is a challenge (Herlitz et al., 2020; Temkin et al., 2019; Valois

et al., 2011). A nascent movement to understand and unite these different areas to generate

whole school change has led to several different frameworks, which further add to the

confusion. To address the ambiguity of the term "whole child" and the variety of different

programs that support student well-being, the previous chapter identified common themes and

conditions across the models. In this chapter, a unified whole school, whole child framework is

offered to both make the research in this capstone potentially useful across all of the

frameworks and to add cohesion to the field. The model utilizes Bronfenbrenner's (1977) theory

on the ecology of human development to conceptualize the spiraling distal spheres of influence

on a child's development and the role of the school and the principal within this environment.

The unified, whole school, whole child framework grounds this work.

The composite whole school, whole child framework undergirds the system in which the

principal operates. It is used in this exploration of the principal's place within this dynamic

system and in particular on the relationship between the principal and the identified conditions

that support the whole child. Existing research shows that the principal has an indirect impact

on student outcomes by influencing these conditions (E. Allensworth et al., 2020; Kovačević &

Hallinger, 2019; Smith et al., 2021). Focusing on the school conditions, rather than on individual

practices and programs, opens a line of research that highlights the influence of external forces

on student learning as well as those areas that indirectly affect student outcomes. It also

addresses contextual factors and the need for adaptability and flexibility to meet the needs of

different school environments, potentially making it easier to implement than an inflexible

program or practice dependent on implementation fidelity for success. How a principal

influences these conditions, and their role in influencing the conditions, is little known, even

though the literature suggests that both are crucial to implementation of the whole child

approach.

However, there is very little empirical research that considers the beliefs, aims,

knowledge, or actions of a principal that supports these conditions so that they can be

replicated (E. Allensworth et al., 2020; Kennedy, 2019). Indeed, as discussed in the literature,

even among the affective leadership theories and models the focus is on either instructional

leadership, how the principal supports conditions for teachers, or change in classroom practice.

The theories do not emphasize how the leader creates the school-wide conditions that support

the non-academic aspects of student learning.

As will be discussed, to develop the conceptual framework, five prominent affective

leadership models were cross-walked with the identified conditions to determine the

characteristics and models that align with these areas. Since none of the models cover all of the

conditions, elements from the three leadership models that were most relevant and aligned

with what is known about whole child leadership were selected. These leadership models are

caring leadership, systems leadership, and transformational leadership.

Systems View and Socio-Ecological Model

Based on the analysis of the five whole child models in Chapter Two, it is apparent that a

systems view and a socio-ecological frame is an important feature in the models. While

Bronfenbrenner's (2005) theory on the ecology of human development is an acknowledged

influence on the WSCC model (Lewallen et al., 2015), all of the other whole child models include aspects of Bronfenbrenner's theory, making it a useful framework for understanding the principal's influence on whole child development.

Bronfenbrenner's theories evolved over time to become more complex and focused on how individual characteristics and context influence proximal processes, which Bronfenbrenner viewed as the engines of a person's development (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). In early versions of the model, Bronfenbrenner (1977) outlines a theory on the ecology of human development to demonstrate the interacting contextual influences on a child's development. Bronfenbrenner suggests that there are increasingly distant spheres of an individual's ecological environment that influence their growth, such that each sphere is surrounded by the outer levels. Later, Bronfenbrenner (2005) described the spheres as being similar to Russian nesting dolls, with the developing child in the center and spheres of increasingly distal relationships surrounding and encompassing the child. The levels include the microsystem (complex relations between an individual and a specific setting and environment), the mesosystem (interrelations among major settings at specific times in an individual's life, such as school and family life), the exosystem (formal and informal social structures, major institutions of society, community contexts and social networks), and the macrosystem (cultural, political, and societal influences) (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Furthermore, Bronfenbrenner suggests that there is a two-way interaction and influence between the developing child and the different levels. In later revisions, the chronosystem was added as an outermost layer to the system (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). The chronosystem involves growth over time as well as societal, contextual, and political change over time (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). In his final version of the model, Bronfenbrenner included individual characteristics and how child development occurs through the interaction of developmental processes, individual biology and characteristics, context (the socio-ecological

model), and time (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Rosa & Tudge, 2013). He referred to this as the bioecological theory.

Consistent throughout the various phases of the model are the connections between the different ecological layers and their reciprocal relationship and interactions as originally introduced. Bronfenbrenner's understanding of the influence of the continually distal ecosystems forces a broader perspective when looking at influences on development. Furthermore, it encourages schools to consider the many factors that influence a child's learning and to engage with community and family contexts to adapt the learning environment to meet the needs of the students—another premise of the various whole child models.

The initial theory of the ecology of human development has had a substantial influence on research and the original ecological model has been adapted and used in multiple contexts (Kilanowski, 2017; Rosa & Tudge, 2013), even while Bronfenbrenner decried the use of the model for only looking at context (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). For example, McLeroy et al. (1988) used the model to describe levels of influence on health behaviors. The authors renamed the various levels to be interpersonal, organizational, community, and public policy. Bronfenbrenner's model has also been used to explore the interrelationship between schools, communities, families, and universities (Stanley & Kuo, 2022), school climate (Rudasill et al., 2018), and the influence of high stakes testing on students of color (Nichols & Valenzuela, 2013).

Furthermore, Bronfenbrenner's model encourages schools to consider the many factors that influence a child's learning, and to embrace community and family contexts and adapt the learning environment to meet student needs. For example, the theory of the ecology of human development was complicit in the focus on parent training and family engagement work that is critical to the Head Start program (Darling, 2015). Bronfenbrenner was highly influential in the development of Head Start, and family engagement and parent training were incorporated into

the program at his insistence (Darling, 2015). This use of Bronfenbrenner's external spheres of

influence implies that while Bronfenbrenner's intended use was as a model to design research

on child development, it has also been used to understand how the behaviors, policies, and

conditions of the surrounding ecological levels can be developed and changed to improve

outcomes for the developing child. Indeed, in his original paper outlining the theory of the

ecology of human development, Proposition Nine states, "Research on the ecology of human

development should include experiments involving the innovative restructuring of prevailing

ecological systems in ways that depart from existing institutional ideologies and structures by

redefining goals, roles, and activities and providing interconnections between systems

previously isolated from each other" (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p. 528).

 While there are other systems theories that could be used for the conceptual

framework, they illuminate aspects and influences of systems change and not the child. For

example, there are theories that focus on the conditions necessary for change (Kania et al.,

2018), the right drivers necessary to create coordinated change across systems (Fullan, 2021), or

the intersection of systems theory, characteristics of education leadership, and leadership

training (Shaked & Schechter, 2013). Bronfenbrenner's theory on the ecology of human

development centers on the development of the child and how the various ecosystems

influence their positive outcomes (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). It offers a solid foundation for

studying the layers of influence on the whole child. As Stanley and Kuo (2022) write, "Overall,

Bronfenbrenner's theory calls for meeting the needs of the whole child by knowing the factors

that affect the child's learning and development" (p. 2). The question then becomes, how does

the principal influence the contexts which in turn influence child development and whether it is

a strategic choice for developing the whole child.

Suggested Synthesis of a Whole School, Whole Child Approach

Based on the analysis of the whole child models in Chapter Two, I offer the following synthesized framework as a means for schools to think about and organize their whole child supports (Figure 6). To create this composite model, Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs was used to consolidate and organize the different whole school approaches to the whole child and their overlapping aims and concepts. As discussed in the literature review, most of the whole child models provide for Maslow's needs, but they also involve certain areas that I have called conditions for supporting the integration of these needs into the school environment. The conditions involve whole school change, child centeredness, a systems orientation, a caring school for students and staff, coordination and collaboration, and responsiveness to and connections with the local and family community. Surrounding the conditions are Bronfenbrenner's increasingly distal ecological systems that impact the developing child. The model is discussed in more detail below.

Although grounded in prior research, the framework offered here should be treated as suggestive, serving as a means of synthesis, until directly examined empirically. One of the hopes in creating this overarching model that encompasses conditions relevant for all the models is that the findings about the principal's role can be generalized to each of the models reviewed and to any similar models as they develop.

Figure 6

Unified Whole School, Whole Child Framework
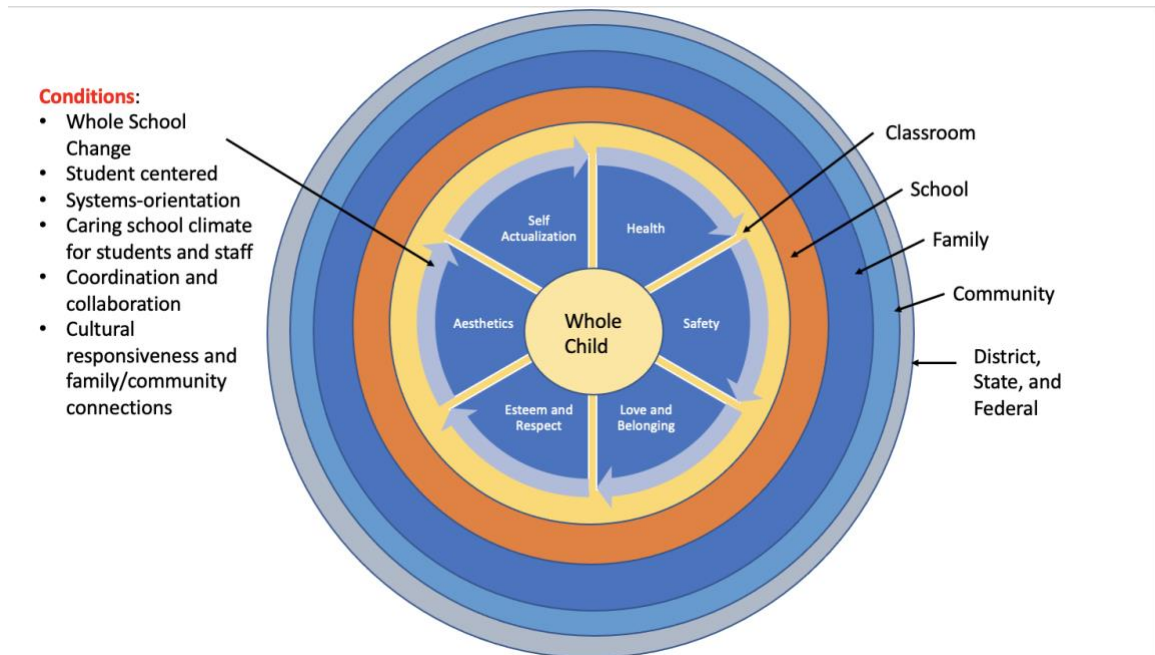
This consolidated whole child framework places the child in the center surrounded by the following consolidated elements organized around Maslow's areas of need:

- Health: Physical activity and education, nutrition environments and services, physical health (education and services), physical environment, integrated systems

- Safety: Counseling services, social and emotional climate, employee wellness, integrated systems

- Love and belongingness: Social and emotional climate, employee wellness, SEL, caring relationships, integrated systems

- Esteem and respect: Challenging, rich learning experiences and knowledge development, cultural responsiveness

- Aesthetic: Breadth of subjects, including art, literature, invention, music, theater

- Self-actualization: Student leadership opportunities and SEL

Around these are placed the conditions that support the implementation of these areas. The conditions are dynamic and interactive and create a web of support for the elements. The conditions are then surrounded by the system level layers of the socio-ecological ecosystem of classroom, school, family, community, district, state, and federal. The model also illustrates the interconnection of all the elements.

Combining the components from each currently available model and placing them within a unified framework provides a cohesive approach that integrates mental and physical health, well-being, and learning and places them within the context of the students' lived experiences and the external forces that influence their environment. As Mahoney et al. (2020) suggest, a child's development is influenced by both proximal and distal factors and this model incorporates both. Like the models it was derived from, this is not a curriculum or an intervention, but a framework designed to illustrate the dimensions that impact student development and academic success. It also has the potential to help education leaders think about the role of schools and how they can support each dimension. For example, it can lead policymakers to consider how each layer of the socio-ecological network supports each element of a student's development within their community context. It could also lead the school principal to consider the contextual factors of family and community when selecting programs with each component. Furthermore, it offers an overarching framework that encompasses all of the models. And, as a practical matter for this capstone, it provides a consolidated definition for the whole child to use in this exploration of the principal's role in whole school, whole child approaches.

Whole Child Model and the Principal

The conceptual framework that guides this study is one small part of this suggested composite model for whole child education. What is discussed next is where the principal fits within the composite model to put the final conceptual framework in context.

Figure 7 illustrates where the principal fits into the composite whole child model. Nestled between the school and the family and community, the principal has an influence on the school, classroom, and student by impacting the conditions that support the whole child. However, as discussed, Bronfenbrenner (2005) suggests that the influence does not just move from the outer layers to the inner layers. Influence moves in both directions so that there is mutual reciprocity between the levels (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). The model depicts how layered and diffuse that influence can become. From the literature, we know that the principal has an indirect influence on the child, through the school environment, staff, and classroom environment (Leithwood & Seashore-Louis, 2011; Liebowitz & Porter, 2019; Sun & Leithwood, 2015). However, the model also illustrates the importance of interactions with the environment outside of the school and how a disregard of external factors can potentially limit the influence of the school. This classic open system depiction of a school organization highlights the complexity of the principal's role and of the education system (Brazer et al., 2019). How the principal understands this role and their place in the system will be important in understanding their role in developing a school that supports the whole child and optimizes student outcomes.

Furthermore, as identified in the literature review, most of the research on the principal looks at the role of the principal in the dyadic relationships between principal and teacher or with other external settings, without looking at other subsystems, such as the students, their families, or the local community. This capstone explores whether the principal recognizes other subsystems and if so, how they try to influence them. While Bronfenbrenner (1977) created his

model to explore an individual's development and force a researcher to recognize and include

the multiple systems and subsystems that influence change and development of that individual,

this capstone will explore the subsystem of principal and the multi-tiered relationship they have

with the student and how the principal interprets this relationship.

Figure 7

Proposed Principal's Placement in the Unified Whole School, Whole Child Framework
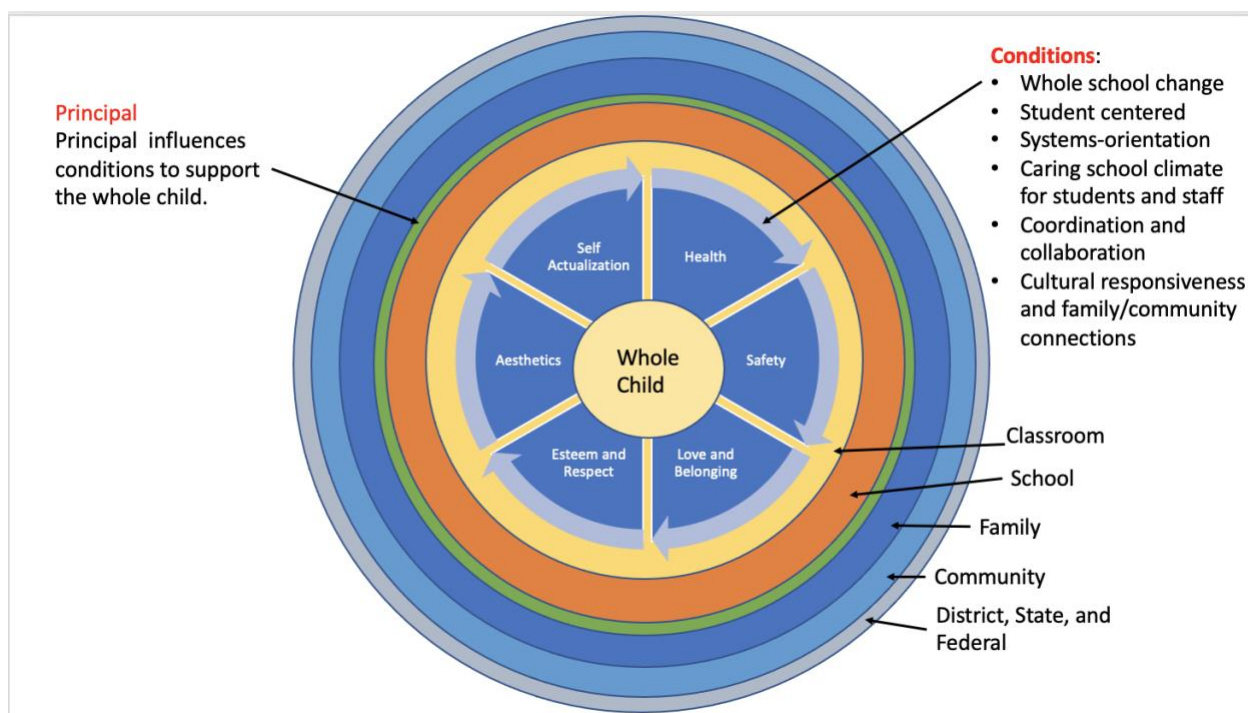
Leadership Models

To further examine the role of the principal in influencing a school that supports the

whole child, this capstone explores a subsection of the composite whole child model, while

acknowledging the numerous spheres of influence and interactions that are involved. In this

section, I describe how I selected the leadership models that help to guide this study and

provide a theoretical basis for the conceptual framework. This process involved analyzing how

the leadership models align with what is known about principal leadership for the whole child as

identified in the table in Appendix B. Based on this analysis, aspects of caring leadership, change

leadership, and transformational leadership were selected for the conceptual framework.

As discussed in Chapter Two, current leadership models account for some aspects of the

composite whole child model, but not one covers them all. Therefore, several steps were taken

to identify the relevant elements of the leadership frameworks described in the literature

review. First, the leadership models were cross-walked with the identified conditions for the

whole school, whole child approach (see Table 1 in Chapter Two). The leadership models that

covered the most conditions were caring leadership, CRSL, transformational leadership, and

change leadership. The potential characteristics of whole child leadership as identified in the

literature were then cross-walked with these four leadership models and then categorized into

the areas of "Competencies/knowledge," "Beliefs/mindsets," "Aims," and "Practices" which are

used by Smylie et al. (2020) as the "Foundations for caring leadership" (p. 36). A table for this

cross-walk is available in Appendix B.

The characteristics identified through this analysis were then combined to create the

conceptual framework for this study. While Figure 7 represents the composite model for the

whole child and the principals' place within that context, Figure 8, below, represents the

conceptual framework that looks at the principal's influence on the conditions that support the

whole child. The green sections in this framework represent the sphere of the principal, the light

blue sections represent the sphere of the conditions, and the yellow sections represent the

child. The dark blue around the edge of the framework represents all of the external spheres of

the unified whole school, whole child framework. Figure 9 illustrates how the conceptual

framework aligns with the unified, whole school, whole child model.

While the principal's sphere in the unified whole school, whole child framework will be

explored in this capstone, the focus will be on their vision and actions that influence the school

conditions and how and whether they recognize external environments. The conceptual

framework combines aspects of Fullan's (2015) theory of systems change, caring leadership

(Smylie et al., 2020), and transformational leadership (Sun & Leithwood, 2012). On the left-hand

side of the conceptual framework is what is referred to as the "vision" in this study. Described in

more detail below, the main constructs of competencies/knowledge, beliefs/mindsets, and aims

of the principal are adapted from caring leadership (Smylie et al., 2020), while the definition for

each construct combines aspects of caring, transformational, and change leadership. In the

middle are the proposed actions that a principal takes to support a whole school approach to

the whole child. Similar to the process used to determine the vision, the practices are a

combination of the elements of transformational and change leadership that align with what is

known about leadership for the whole child. Practices from caring leadership are not included

since they have not been empirically examined. Practices from CRSL were also not included.

Both caring leadership and CRSL are narrow in scope and lack the breadth of the whole child

framework. Nor is the empirical research as applicable. These four categories, aims,

competencies/knowledge, beliefs/mindsets, and practices, address the topics of the research

questions and reflect perspectives on the principal from different theories.

Figure 8

Conceptual Framework for the Principal in the Unified Whole School, Whole Child Framework
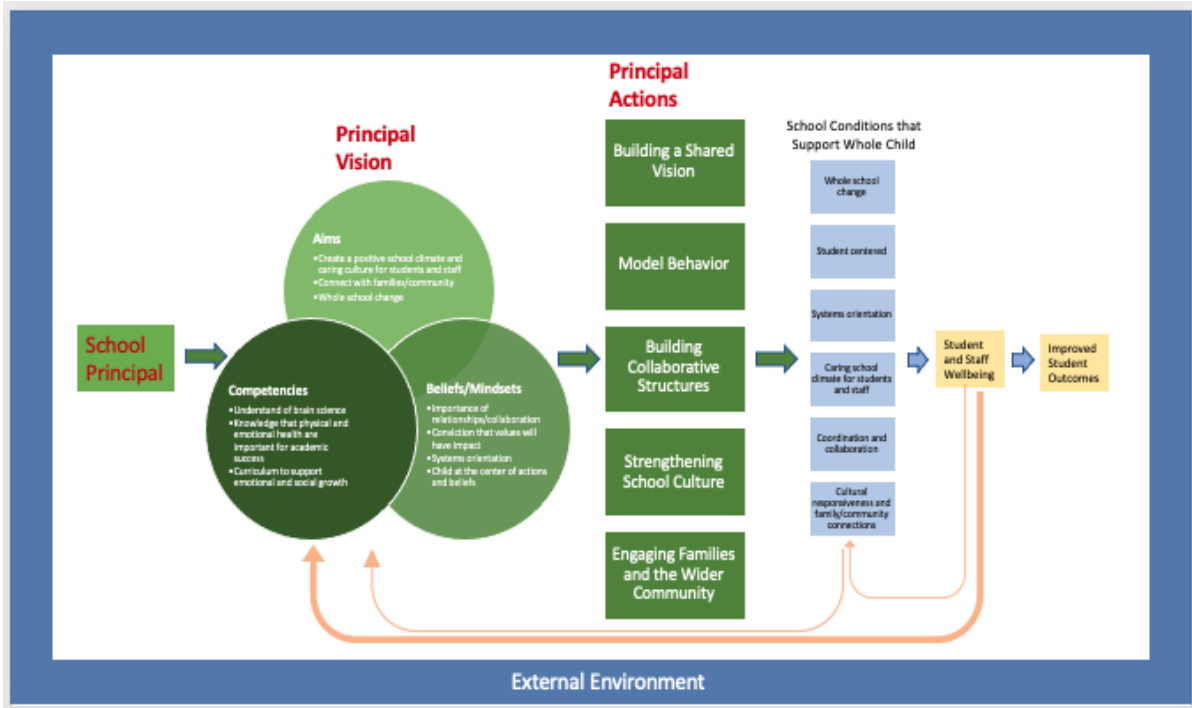
Figure 9

Unified Whole School, Whole Child Framework Indicating Alignment with Conceptual Framework
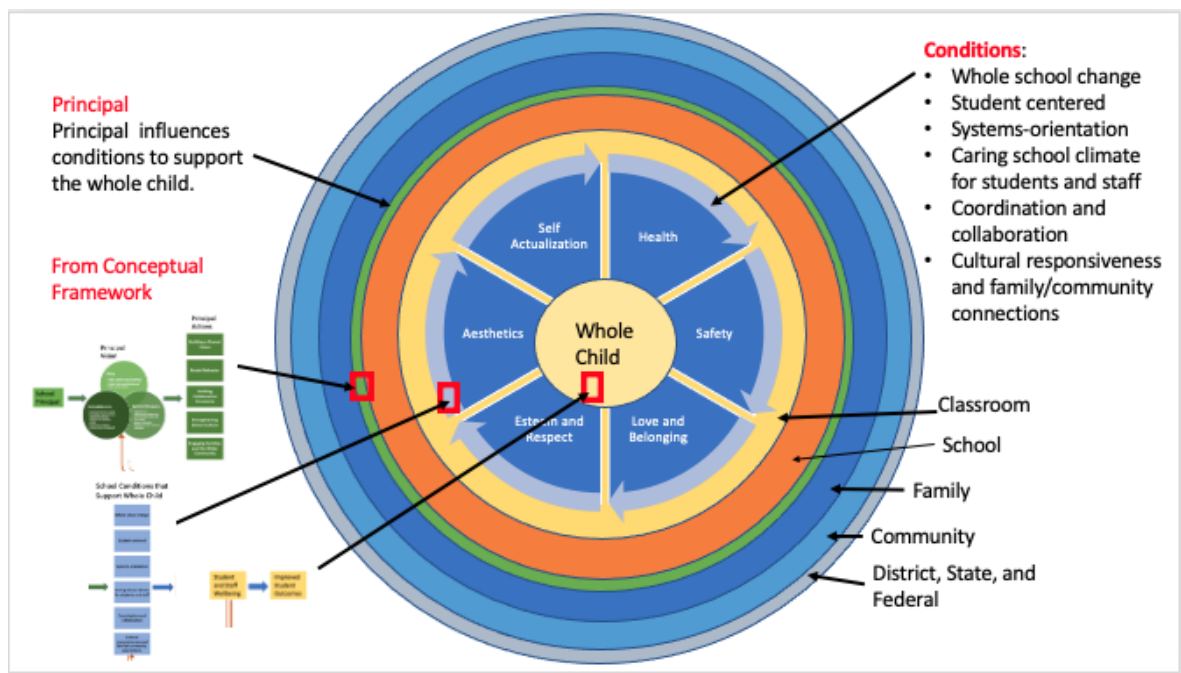
While the four areas are the main focus of this research, the conceptual model is built on the assumption that the principal's actions influence the conditions that support the whole child, which in turn influence student and staff well-being and improved student outcomes. These connections have been suggested by a number of studies (Berkowitz et al., 2017; Burkhauser, 2017; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Leithwood & Seashore-Louis, 2011; Michael et al., 2015; Osher, Cantor, et al., 2020; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012; Sebring et al., 2006) and therefore are not a part of this study. Furthermore, the model adheres to the socio-ecological model by indicating feedback loops between the varying socio-ecological interactions (student and staff well-being to the school conditions and the principal's vision, and school conditions to the principal's vision), as well as the external factors that influence the school community. These areas are smaller and in less intensive colors since, while important aspects of the framework, they are not the focus on this study. Below is a deeper discussion of the different elements of the conceptual framework and how they were selected.

Elements of the Conceptual Framework

The literature on whole child leadership suggests that beliefs, knowledge, and priorities are important factors in the implementation of the whole child model (Valois et al., 2011) and there is evidence that beliefs, aims, and mindsets can be learned (Bauer & Brazer, 2019; Flaspohler et al., 2008; Swenson et al., 2013), making research in these areas critical to understanding how to support and build the capacity of whole child principals. The terms used in caring leadership were selected because of their breadth and caring leadership's similarities to the whole child model. However, while I used the overarching constructs from the foundations of caring leadership in the conceptual framework, I determined alternate definitions based on what is known about whole child leadership from the literature and where these elements align with empirically tested leadership models. A table of this process is

available in Appendix B. The table in Appendix B was also used to solidify the definition of the

vision as beliefs, knowledge and aims since many of the models refer to similar concepts. For

example, caring leadership, transformational leadership, and change leadership all identify

competencies and knowledge as a factor in their leadership model. As an example of how the

definitions of these areas were determined, on the chart it is evident that the whole child

leadership element of knowledge about the importance of student physical and emotional

health to learning (Valois et al., 2015) is identified in caring leadership and CRSL. In another

example, beliefs and mindsets are prevalent in caring leadership, CRSL, and change leadership,

validating their importance to the vision. Furthermore, the importance of relationships (Darling-

Hammond et al., 2019; Storey et al., 2016), systems orientation (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019;

Valois et al., 2015), and student at the center (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019; Storey et al., 2016)

can be found in caring leadership, CRSL, transformational leadership, and change leadership.

These elements define the beliefs and mindsets, aims, and knowledge of the conceptual

framework and will be used to guide data collection and analysis. The list of potential elements

for the vision in the conceptual framework are:

- Aims
    - Create a positive school climate and caring culture for students and staff
    - Connect with families/community
    - Whole school change
- Beliefs/Mindsets
    - Importance of relationships/collaboration
    - Conviction that values will have impact
    - Systems orientation
    - Child at the center of actions and beliefs

- Competencies/knowledge

    o Understanding of brain science

    o Knowledge that physical and emotional health are important for academic success

    o Curriculum to support emotional and social growth

While the vision utilizes terms from the foundations of caring leadership, the identified practices mainly include relevant aspects of transformational leadership and Fullan's (2015) model for system change. In Fullan's model for system change, the vision undergirds the principal's actions. As seen in the table in Appendix B, Fullan's model for leadership includes some of the aspects of the practices found to be relevant to whole child leadership, particularly system changes and the roles of the principal as lead learner and relationship builder. Aspects of transformational leadership are also reflected in many of the elements identified as relevant for whole child leadership. While there are varying definitions for transformational leadership (Brazer et al., 2019; Leithwood & Sun, 2012), elements from Sun and Leithwood's (2012) framework were chosen for this study. The elements that match many of the elements of what is known about leadership for the whole child are below and included in the conceptual framework:

- Developing a shared vision and building goal consensus

- Modeling behavior

- Building collaborative structures

- Strengthening school culture

- Engaging parents and the wider community

In summary, the conceptual framework hypothesizes that the principals' vision drives their actions that influence the conditions that support the whole child. These conditions in turn

support student and staff well-being, which will influence student academic and developmental outcomes. In adhering to a socio-ecological framework, this process is further influenced by the external environment and there are double loops between student and staff well-being, the school conditions, and the principal's vision.

Research Questions

Based on this analysis of the literature and synthesis of various frameworks, my research questions are:

- How do school principals who support a whole school approach to the whole child define the approach and what do they identify as its key features and conditions for success?

- What is the role of the school principal in implementing a whole school approach to the whole child?

  - How do they describe and understand their role in supporting the whole child?

  - What is their vision for supporting the whole child?

  - What actions and behaviors do they take to enact their vision?

- In what ways do principals take into consideration internal school conditions and external environments? What facets of school conditions and external environments do they prioritize, if any?

Research Design

To explore the role of a school principal in a school that values and supports the whole child, I conducted a comparative case study of two elementary schools implementing a similar type of whole child initiative in an urban setting in the Mid-Atlantic region. As evident in the literature review, there is little known about leadership for a whole school, whole child approach, so studying schools and school principals who have embraced the approach will

provide valuable information on how and why they have adopted the model. A case study approach is ideal for an exploration of the "how" and "why" of a phenomenon within its natural context (Hays & Singh, 2012) for it involves an in-depth exploration to understand the processes, factors, and meaning around the phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Furthermore, using a case study provides for studying how whole school, whole child leadership is being successfully enacted in the field so that the model can potentially be replicated to support other whole child leaders or more research can be conducted.

To augment the ability to theorize, a comparative case study was used since it allows for more external generalizability of the case analysis (Hancock & Algozzine, 2016; Maxwell, 2005; Yin, 2013) and strengthens the validity of the research. It has also been used to explore new leadership models. For example, Ryu et al. (2020) used a comparative case study design of two schools to explore the essence of caring leadership. In that study, Ryu et al. used data from a larger, embedded, qualitative case study project of two schools. Similarly, this study was an embedded, comparative research of the two principals within their school environment. An embedded case study looks at a single unit within the case (e.g., the principal), and helps to maintain focus while remaining aware of the whole (Yin, 2018). Data from interviews with the principals were triangulated with interviews from other school staff and student caregivers, as well as a document review to provide a more holistic view of the schools and the work of the school principals (Yin, 2018). While surveys of all staff and families were considered to gather more varied perspectives, because the research is exploratory, it was decided that surveys would not offer the breadth or in-depth information required by the research questions and are not included. Moreover, interviews with the teachers and family members were used to triangulate the data from the principals and to obtain additional insights into the principals' vision and behaviors, making a new survey irrelevant.

Sampling

The sampling strategy selected for this study was specifically chosen to understand the beliefs, aims, knowledge, and behaviors of a school principal who pursues a school that supports the whole child as a first step in testing and elaborating on the conceptual framework (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) for leadership for the whole child. Two-tiered sampling was used, as is typical for case studies (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). First, interviews with experts were conducted to identify elementary schools that are bright spots and have had success in implementing the approach (Patton, 1990). Currently, the whole school, whole child approach is more prevalent in elementary schools, possibly because barriers to entry appear to be easier (Leithwood, 2016; Mehan et al., 2005; Newmann et al., 2001). Therefore, elementary schools were selected so that a baseline and initial understanding of whole child leadership can start to be identified. Based on Patton's (1990) categorization of sampling strategies, these were intensity samples. Patton describes intensity samples as being frequently used when, "one seeks excellent or rich examples of the phenomenon of interest, but not unusual cases" (p. 171). He suggests that the findings from intensity samples are more generalizable than extreme sampling where the sample may be too unusual to apply to other cases, making it an appropriate strategy for this study. Of the identified schools, two elementary schools who were willing to participate were selected that have similar demographics and are in the same district to further validate the findings (Yin, 2018). This type of purposeful sampling is used to "discover, understand, and gain insight" into a specific situation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 96).

The second tier of sampling involved the selection of the participants and documents to review, which were chosen by a combination of unique and snowball sampling strategies. The two principals are the main object of this study and they were selected as unique contributors to the approach since they have a singular perspective of the school (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). I

also interviewed other members of the school community. Their perceptions of the principal's role allowed for comparisons, additional insights into the principal's role, and triangulation of data from the principals' interviews. To identify the other participants, I used snowball or emergent sampling and asked the principal for recommendations on who in their school community has been particularly engaged in the initiative. According to Patton (2009), snowball sampling is typically used to identify key informants on a topic, in this case, the role of the principal in supporting a whole school approach to the whole child. Potential possibilities included an assistant principal; a student support staff, such as the school counselor, school behavioral health coordinator, or school psychologist; and teachers. I also asked for a recommendation for a person who can provide insights into the perceptions of families, such as a family liaison, the PTA president, or other community representative. I anticipated interviewing 3–5 additional participants.

Selective, relevant, documents were also reviewed, including the school website, vision statements, family newsletters and other documents recommended by the participants that showcase how the principal enacts their vision. Furthermore, although it was determined that a specific survey would not be used for this study, if surveys of teachers or families were available and relevant to the study, they were examined.

Table 2

Sampling Rationale

Participants	Rationale	School A	School B	Total
Principal	Provided insights into their beliefs, mindsets, and knowledge about a whole school approach to the whole child, how they enacted this vision, their perception of the components for their success, and their prioritizing of internal conditions and external environments.	1	1	2

3–5 school staff, such as assistant principal, teachers, or student support personnel	School personnel recommended from the principal provided insights into how the principal has communicated and enacted their vision, whether the vision of the principal has been embraced by others, and the challenges and benefits that they perceive and how the principal has supported and/or lead the initiative. Interviews provided insights into the principal's role and triangulated the data.	2–4	2–4	4–8
Family representative, such as family liaison, PTA/PTO president, or other community representative	An interview with a caregiver leader provided insights into whether the families and students have found that the school embraces a whole school, whole child model, as well as insights into challenges and benefits of the approach. A caregiver leader who represents the families in the school was selected.	1	1	2
Total		4–6	4–6	8–12
Documents	Documents were used to triangulate the data and included such documents as the school website, newsletters, data from family and/or teacher surveys such as school climate or TNTP data as available.			

Selected Sites

The two selected schools are in the Springfield (pseudonym) school district in a mid-size city in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States with approximately 600,000 residents, 18% of whom are under 18. 46.3% of the population is Black, 37% are White, non-Hispanic, 11% Hispanic or Latino, 4.5% Asian, 3% two-races or more, and less than 1% each Native Hawaiian or Island Pacificer, or American Indian or Alaskan native (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). Of the approximately 94,500 students in the public school system, nearly 65% identify as Black, 18.5% Hispanic/Latino, and 12% White[2]. 15% of the population lives in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau,

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[2] The information on the district and schools was retrieved from local government documents. Therefore, source names for all district and school data are withheld to protect confidentiality.

2021). The median income, 2015–2019 was $86,420 and the per capita income for the same

time period was $56,147, indicating a large disparity in wealth (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). Just

over 48% of the students are considered "at-risk," a designation indicating they are homeless, in

foster care, or qualify for temporary assistance for needy families according to the city budget

website.

      With over 246 public schools, the city has a robust charter school initiative. In 2020,

approximately 46,000 students were enrolled in the 135 public charter schools, and over 54,000

students were enrolled in the 115 traditional public schools that comprises the Springfield

school district. Furthermore, students within the district's public schools can choose to attend

either their neighborhood school or one of the other 114 traditional public schools. Every spring,

families decide whether to have their children attend their neighborhood school or enter a

lottery to attend either another district public school or a public charter school.

      There are currently several efforts to implement a whole child model across the city's

schools. The two selected schools were recognized by local education leaders as being among

the most successful in implementing a whole school approach to the whole child. They are part

of two different, but linked, initiatives: one is with a non-profit group working with a cohort of

the city's traditional public schools and the other is with a school district initiative that is

working with a different cohort of the city's traditional public schools. The two different

initiatives share resources and are part of a larger evaluation of the whole child that is taking

place in the city. At the time of this research, there were at least two additional initiatives that

focus on a whole school approach to the whole child in the city.

      One of the selected schools for this study, Hilltop Elementary School (pseudonym), is

part of the Affective Learning Coalition, or ALC (pseudonym). Organized by a non-profit

organization, the ALC started in 2019 with 5 schools and added 6–7 in spring 2022. The initiative

is a learning lab of schools that seeks to replicate a whole child model by centering on student well-being, family partnerships, and student-driven learning and creativity. It is based on an initiative developed with one of the district's public elementary schools, which the organization codified and is now trying to scale. The model involves specific activities that support well-being organized around three themes: meaningful partnerships with families; a positive school climate for all children; and additional supports for those children who need it. Among other features, the practices involve a plan for a joyful classroom design and organization, a common language and tone, consistent classroom routines, a morning greeting circle, and a proprietary restorative disciplinary process. The model is implemented in two separate phases. In the first year, schools create the conditions for the whole child work by developing a shared vision, understanding strengths and needs, increasing staff conviction that the model will work, increasing knowledge of the science of learning and development, and building understanding of the model. The second phase includes adapting and implementing the program and creating the conditions to sustain it. Schools apply to join the network and the selection criteria involves principal dedication and expectations to remain in the school for several years. Schools create a design team and receive individualized training and coaching, as well as attend network meetings.

The second school selected for this research, Raven Elementary School (pseudonym), is part of a different whole child initiative that is organized by the district's public school system called the Enlightened initiative (pseudonym). It is part of a much larger district initiative to become "a whole child-centered, antiracist school system where students thrive and fulfill their lifelong potential." The Enlightened initiative focuses on five key areas for growth: student relationship structures; trust-building interactions; intervention and enrichment structures; co-regulatory and restorative practices; and expectations, norms and routines. Within each of these areas, the district provides looked-for outcomes and offers guiding questions for teachers,

staff, and leaders on where and how to make improvements. While schools implement programs within these growth areas, tools and resources for each area are also offered—and include some of the tools from the ALC. The initiative is based on the science of learning and development. Schools in the program assign a staff member to be the whole child lead in their school and are provided technical assistance and the opportunity to meet with a district level administrator. They can also attend four, two-hour long networking meetings with the other schools in the program.

Hilltop Elementary School has been a member of the ALC since the first cohort and has been identified by ALC leaders as one the most successful at implementing their whole child model. Located in a gentrifying community, the school is part of the district's public school system. The demographics of the school are available in Table 3. Hilltop's vision is for every student to be "loved, challenged, and prepared to thrive in life." It has academic enrichment, wellness and fitness, and art and culture after school programs, as well as offering art, music, and a large recreational space. In 2019, performance on state-wide standardized tests were average in English Language Arts (ELA), but slightly below average in Math for the district. However, in 2019 it made the highest growth of any city school, public or charter, on the state-wide assessments. School climate scores for the 2022/2023 school year as measured by a survey from Panorama were above average in all areas when compared to other district elementary schools, with student respondents indicating they felt challenged, loved, and prepared. Favorability scores from parents on school climate, communication, and overall satisfaction were also all above the district's elementary school average.

Table 3

School Information

School Information	Hilltop (2022/2023)	Raven Elementary (2022/2023)
Number of Students (2022-23)	375 PK3–grade 5 students	510 PK3–grade 5 students
Demographics	46% in boundary Black: 47% Hispanic/Latino: 20% White: 25% Asian: 5% Native/Alaskan: 0% Multiple races: 3% English Language Learners: 23% At Risk: 37% " Special Education: 19%	29% in boundary Black: 62% Hispanic/Latino: 14% White: 19% Asian: 1% Native/Alaskan: 0% Multiple races: 3% English Language Learners: 3% At Risk: 41% Special Education: 13%
Mission	For every student to be "loved, challenged, and prepared to positively influence society and thrive in life."	To "provide a caring environment marked by positive experiences which enhance self-esteem and encourage personal fulfillment."
Special Features as listed on district website	Sports, clubs, chess, literacy lab, art, music, after-school program, mentoring, youth orchestra, running, school garden, outdoor space, community partnerships,	Sports, clubs, dance, mentoring, experiential learning, dual-language Spanish immersion, Spanish film club, creative arts integration, resident artist program, computer lab, music room, outdoor space, community partnerships

The selected school from the Enlightened initiative, Raven Elementary, is considered

one of the most successful by district leaders. Recent demographics of the school are available

in Table 3. The mission and vision are long, but the tag line on the website captures their

essence and is "It's a great day to love and learn at Raven." The school is located in an area with

both multi-million-dollar homes and public housing, as well as a robust niche shopping and

dining strip. It is a Title 1 school, with 41% of the students considered "at risk," and a strong

program for students who have been diagnosed with autism. In fall 2023, the school started a

bilingual-arts program for grades PK3 and PK4, which they hope to expand to the higher grades.

Raven has numerous extra-curricular activities and community partnerships that provide

exposure to art, culture, sports, and music. Performances on 2019 state-wide assessments were

average for both ELA and Math. Nearly all of the student scores on Panorama school climate and

SEL surveys for the 2022/2023 school year were above average for the district. The only less

than average score was student satisfaction, which was one percentage point lower than the

district average, but still in the lower 90s. The student "loved," "challenged," and "prepared"

scores were all well above average and had increased between 15 and 35 percentage points

since the previous year. The results from the survey of families were also above average for the

district elementary schools, with the parent favorable communication rate in the 70s, and

favorable parent satisfaction and school climate rates in the low to mid 90s.

Data Collection

The data collection consisted of semi-structured interviews with people across the

school community in addition to a document review. Interviews offer the best means to uncover

the aims, knowledge, mindsets, and actions of a principal who seeks to implement a whole child

approach to education, for they are typically used to "uncover meaning structures that

participants use to organize their experiences and make sense of their world" (Hatch, 2002, p.

91). Given the exploratory nature of this study, semi-structured interviews offered the

opportunity to delve deeper into participants' responses and ask probing questions about areas

that might not have been previously considered (Hatch, 2002). They also offered the flexibility

to account for the different world views and contexts of the participants (Merriam & Tisdell,

2015) which was essential in understanding the principals' perceptions of whole child

leadership. Table 4 contains information about who was interviewed in each school.

Table 4

Interview Participants by School

Core Role	Secondary Role	Time in School	Time in Role/Time in education	Interview location
Hilltop				
Principal		6 yrs.	6 yrs./20 yrs.	Interview 1: in person Interview 2: Zoom
4th grade teacher	Member whole child design team	5 yrs.	3 yrs./12 yrs.	Zoom
School Culture Leader (former 1st grade reading teacher)	New member of whole child design team	5 yrs.	0 yrs./9 yrs.	Zoom
PTO President	PTO Board for 5 yrs.	5 yrs.	2 yrs./	Zoom
Raven				
Principal		4 yrs.	4 yrs./18 yrs.	Interview 1: in person Interview 2: Zoom
Assistant Principal of Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics	Leadership team	4 yrs.	4 yrs./	In Person
Program Coordinator for Communication Education Support classrooms (CES),		5 yrs.	5 yrs./5 yrs.	In Person
Whole Child Lead	Intervention coordinator, 3–5 grade math coach	2 yrs.	1 yr./12 yrs.	Zoom
PTO Officer		5 yrs.		Zoom

The interview with each principal was the primary source of data and the interviews

with other participants and the document review were used to triangulate that data as well as

to obtain additional insights into the role of the principal. A summary of the data collection

strategy is in Table 5 and is described in the section on data analysis. An initial interview with

the principals lasted approximately one hour and included questions about their vision and how

they enact it, the external forces that influence their beliefs, and any internal or external

challenges and enablers to reaching their aims. Guided by the conceptual framework, questions

also focused on their understanding of the whole child, what policies, programs, and other

actions they have taken to implement the approach, and how they perceive their role as

differing from other principals not focused on the whole child. This was followed with an

additional 30–45 minute, unstructured interview to clarify responses, ask follow-up questions,

and provide principals with preliminary findings to garner their feedback. The interview guide

for the initial interview is available in Appendix C and was written to gain deeper understanding

of the research questions.

Half-hour, semi-structured interviews were used with the other participants. Questions

centered on their understanding of the whole child and their perceptions of the principal's role

in enacting the approach. The semi-structured interview also allowed for questions that would

validate the principals' responses and to further probe their understanding of the whole child

and their perceptions of the principals' actions and aims. The interview guide for the staff and

family representative are in Appendix D. Furthermore, in addition to the conceptual framework,

several sources were used in developing the questions. For example, for questions about

systems thinking, Shaked and Schechter's Principal's Systems Thinking activities (Nadav et al.,

2021) was reviewed and pertinent metrics were adapted. Similarly, the Five Essentials

questionnaire from UChicago Impact (UChicago Impact, n.d.) was reviewed in creating

questions, especially those about climate. Indicators of caring leadership were based on the

leadership model as described by Smylie et al. (2020).

All interviews were recorded and transcribed by Zoom and an external transcription

company, Rev, and then reviewed and edited for transcription and contextual errors and

formatted for coding. Interviewees were asked to member check the transcripts. In addition, in-

field notes were taken during the interviews to capture context and relevant information.

Immediately following each interview analytic memos were written to start to identify salient

themes and patterns, as well as to capture items that might not appear in the transcript (Patton,

2014). Data was stored on my personal computer and in UVA's Box, using the conventions

outlined in Appendix E as well as a spreadsheet to keep track of the data (Lochmiller, 2021). A

data management plan is available in Appendix E.

Relevant documents were identified during the interview process and primary

documents were collected and reviewed that describe the initiative or provide insights into the

principal's role in the whole child effort. Specific documents depended on the school and

included the school website, survey results, professional development schedules, and

newsletters to families. Neither artifacts from individual classrooms nor secondary sources were

included since the focus of the analysis is to understand how the principal has supported a

whole school approach to the whole child. The principal or other participants were provided the

opportunity to recommend additional documents for review. Table 5 summarizes the data

collected by research question and provides the rationale for the collection strategy,

implementation, and analysis.

Data Analysis

In analyzing the data, I followed the three steps outlined by Lochmiller (2021) for

thematic coding and analysis: setup, analysis and interpretation. These steps were not

necessarily sequential, but iterative as I reviewed, conducted a first round of coding, and

identified emerging themes of the data as it was collected rather than wait until all the data was

available (Saldaña, 2013). After organizing and formatting the data files, I read through them

several times to familiarize myself with the materials and wrote analytic memos on potential

initial themes and concepts. Formatted documents were uploaded into MAXQDA for coding.

Coding occurred in iterative cycles of deductive and inductive coding. I started with deductive coding using a priori codes based on the conceptual framework, basic demographic codes, and any themes noted during data collection (Patton, 2014). The second round of coding involved a revised codebook that included inductive codes for any new patterns identified during the first pass at coding (Yin, 2018). As categories and themes emerged, the codebook was expanded and revised as necessary, and additional rounds of coding were conducted. A copy of the initial codebook is available in Appendix F. Documents were coded using the same codebook and process used for the interviews. In the interpretive phase, connections and irregularities were identified and categories were synthesized into overarching themes (Lochmiller, 2021). Furthermore, analytic memos were written to capture the thought processes, significant findings, or changes involved. A summary of the data collection strategies and analysis by research question is available in Table 5.

Each school was analyzed separately and then cross analyzed to identify consistent themes, insights and patterns (Yin, 2018). Similarities and discrepancies in responses between the two cases were identified and discussed.

Table 5

Data Collection and Analysis by Interview Question

Research Question	Rationale	Data Collection	Analysis
1. How do school principals who support a whole school approach to the whole child define the approach and what do they identify as its key features and conditions for success?	Interviews provided information on how the principal, school staff, and community understand the whole child, why they think it is important, and the consistency of understanding and support across the school. Pertinent	Principal: a 45-minute semi-structured interview, followed by a 30-minute unstructured interview with follow-up questions and member checking of analysis. School staff and family representative: ½ hour semi-	Interviews and documents were coded at least twice, deductively based on the theories in the conceptual framework, and inductively from identified patterns and insights to understand how

Research Question	Rationale	Data Collection	Analysis
	documents were also be collected and reviewed, such as school policies, PTA notes, and data from school climate or TNTP surveys if available.	structured interviews each with follow-up questions as necessary. Document review: documents were collected and catalogued.	and why (Yin, 2018).
2. What is the role of the school principal in implementing a whole school approach to the whole child?	Interviews provided information on how the principal, school staff, and community understand the principals' vision. Interviews with school staff and family representative provided additional insights and were used to triangulate the data.	Principal: a 45-minute semi-structured interview and a 30-minute unstructured interview with follow-up questions and member checking of analysis. School staff and family representative: ½ hour semi-structured interviews each with follow-up questions as necessary.	Interviews were coded at least twice, deductively based on the theories in the conceptual framework, and inductively from identified patterns and insights to understand how and why (Yin, 2018).
2a. How do they describe and understand their role in supporting the whole child?	Interviews provided information on how the principal perceives their role in relation to supporting the whole child and how their approach may differ from their peers.	Principal: a 45-minute semi-structured interview followed by a 30-minute unstructured interview with follow-up questions and member checking of analysis.	Interviews were coded at least twice, deductively based on the theories in the conceptual framework, and inductively from identified patterns and insights to understand how and why (Yin, 2018).
2b. What is their vision (beliefs/mindsets, knowledge/competencies, and aims) for supporting the whole child?	Interviews provided insights into the principals' aims, beliefs, mindsets, and knowledge about the whole child approach.	Principal: a 45-minute semi-structured interview followed by a 30-minute unstructured interview with follow-up questions	Interviews were coded at least twice, deductively based on the theories in the conceptual framework, and inductively from

Research Question	Rationale	Data Collection	Analysis
		and member checking of analysis.	identified patterns and insights to understand how and why (Yin, 2018).
2c. What actions and behaviors do they take to enact their vision	Interviews provided insights into the principals' actions and how they support the whole child as well as how the actions are perceived by school staff and the school community. Interviews with school staff and a family representative were also used to triangulate the data. Pertinent documents were reviewed, such as professional development materials, family newsletters, and school websites.	Principal: a 45-minute semi-structured interview followed by a 30-minute unstructured interview with follow-up questions and member checking of analysis. School staff and family representative: ½ hour semi-structured interviews each with follow-up questions as necessary. Document review: documents were collected and catalogued.	Interviews and documents were coded at least twice, deductively based on the theories in the conceptual framework, and inductively from identified patterns and insights to understand how and why (Yin, 2018).
3. In what ways do principals take into consideration internal school conditions and external environments? What facets of school conditions and external environments do they prioritize, if any?	Interviews provided information on the challenges and successes the principal faced, as well as the successes and difficulties perceived by the staff and caregivers.	Principal: a 45-minute semi-structured interview followed by a 30-minute unstructured interview with follow-up questions and member checking of analysis. School staff and family representative: ½ hour semi-structured interviews each with follow-up questions as necessary.	Interviews were coded at least twice, deductively based on the theories in the conceptual framework, and inductively from identified patterns and insights to understand how and why (Yin, 2018).

Methodological Limitations

The research design has several limitations, the most prominent being the lack of

external generalizability inherent in a case study design (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The use of a

comparative case study was purposefully selected to enhance the credibility of the study;

however, even with triangulation and in-depth descriptions of the cases and interviews, the

findings are limited to their specific contexts and to being in the same district. The rich data

presented allows readers to judge how applicable the findings are to their settings.

Furthermore, the bounded nature of the case study, in this case principals in two elementary

schools in a high-poverty, inner-city neighborhood in a large Mid-Atlantic city, further limits the

findings. However, this does not negate the importance of this study, for it can be used to start

to build a theory for whole child leadership (Maxwell, 2005).

There are also limitations to qualitative analysis, including thematic coding, as some

question its rigor and reliability (Lochmiller, 2021). Therefore, specific actions were taken to

improve the reliability and validity of the findings. The codebook was be designed to respond to

the research questions and conceptual framework as well as identified categories when creating

themes (Lochmiller, 2021). Edited transcriptions were member checked by participants and data

from principals was triangulated with documents and data collected from interviews with other

school staff and a PTO member (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Another limitation is lack of available research on a whole school approach to the whole

child. As discussed, much of the literature to date has been theoretical or based on data that

represents a small subset of the whole model, such as SEL. This study also looks at narrow slices

of the whole child pie: a synthesized framework of theoretical models and the role of the

principal within that model. Moreover, within this conceptual framework, the research is limited

only to the interaction between the principal and the conditions—the interactions suggested

between the conditions and student and staff wellness and student outcomes, as well as the

feedback loops, while suggested by the literature, warrant additional research.

Furthermore, an important aspect of the whole child framework is that the school must

reflect local context, making it difficult to derive generalizations. The focus on conditions in this

research is an attempt to mitigate this issue, for processes and general principles have more

flexibility to fit contexts, in contrast to programs which are often evidence-based and must

therefore be implemented and delivered with fidelity, making it difficult to both adjust for

context and obtain optimal results. This is also an initial attempt to identify any similar beliefs,

mindsets, knowledge, and actions among principals who adhere to a whole child approach so

that they can be taught and the main lessons can be replicated. Future studies that further

explore the role of the principal, as well as the interactions with and influence of families,

students, teachers, support personnel, and district leaders and their roles in supporting a whole

child, are warranted. The hope is that this research provides a starting point for future research.

Researcher Bias

In a qualitative case study, the investigator is an essential part of the data collection

process and functions as a data collection instrument (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Therefore, it is

important to note any limitations or biases that the researcher brings to the work. I have

worked in the field of school health for over fifteen years and am passionate about the

connection between physical and mental health and academics. I work with schools to

implement whole school approaches to student and staff well-being, and this research is

undergirded by the assumption that a whole school approach to health and well-being is

essential and appropriate for students to receive in schools. In addition, not only can the

researcher's biases influence the findings in a case study, the researcher's presence as data

collector can influence the responses to the case (Hays & Singh, 2012). To compensate for these

biases the perspectives of many different stakeholders affected by the implementation were

gathered and reported in detail, data was triangulated in a number of ways as described in the

collection methods, and the principals were asked to conduct member checks of the edited

transcription to verify their viewpoints were accurately captured and that the data "ring true"

(Maxwell, 2005; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Summary

To better understand the role of the school principal who leads a whole school

approach to the whole child, a comparative case study of two elementary schools in a Mid-

Atlantic inner-city school was used. The core of the research was from interviews with the two

principals. Interviews with the assistant principals, student support coordinators, teachers, and

at least one caregiver were used to provide additional insights and triangulate the data.

Relevant documents were also reviewed.

Chapter Four - Findings

The overarching research topic for this capstone is to explore the role of the principal in a school that successfully implements a whole child approach. As discussed in Chapter Three, three related research questions are asked and center around three main questions: how do principals define the whole child approach; what is their vision (beliefs, aims, and knowledge), practices, and perspective on their role in relation to the whole child; and how do they consider and prioritize internal and external environments. To better understand the principal's role, two schools were identified by experts who are leading initiatives to implement the whole child in a large, urban, Mid-Atlantic school district. Two interviews were conducted with each of the principals and the data from these interviews provide the core focus of the findings. Interviews with two–three staff and a PTO officer in each school and a document review were conducted to triangulate the data and to provide a more nuanced understanding of the principal's vision, actions, and role.

The two identified schools are involved in two different whole child approaches. As described in Chapter Three, the Affective Learning Coalition, or ALC (pseudonym), model is a structured approach and program led by a non-profit organization that codified the practices and programs of a local school that successfully supports the whole child. The approach includes ways to organize classrooms and a specific disciplinary procedure and SEL curriculum among other elements. The other initiative, the Enlightened model (pseudonym), is a more loosely organized approach being led by district leadership that provides support for whole child concepts and a variety of individual programs to choose from for specific areas within the

approach. Studying the principal's role in two different approaches within the same district

provides a unique opportunity to understand any similarities or differences in how the whole

child can be implemented and the principal's role in supporting it.

The following sections present the findings from the interviews and document reviews

of the two schools. It is important to note that a limitation in the research design is the limited

duration of the research and the reliance on interviews. Therefore, when a participant doesn't

mention a factor in the interviews, it does not necessarily mean that it is not present. It is

possible that the factor was not remembered at the time or that it was not as important to the

interviewee as the factors they do mention. To address this issue, second interviews were

conducted with each principal to clarify and refine the initial findings. Also of note, I use the

term programs to describe a particular curriculum or program that is mainly classroom-based,

such as an SEL curriculum or a disciplinary program. I define a practice as an action or tactic

taken by the principal or someone else in the school. I use the term vision to mean the

principal's beliefs, aims, and knowledge.

The literature review and conceptual framework highlight the importance of the

principal's beliefs, aims, knowledge, and practices in understanding the principal's role. The data

from this study suggest a similar finding. Furthermore, as will be described, the beliefs, aims,

knowledge, and practices of the principal are aligned and integrated. Therefore, to highlight the

integration, add clarity, and avoid unnecessary repetition, in the individual case studies I

combine the findings for the subquestions on vision and practices (2b and 2c). A summary of the

vision and practices is provided in Appendix G. I also present these findings before the

subquestion on the principal's role (2a) since the principals' descriptions of their roles include

many aspects of their vision and practices. All of the topics covered in the questions remain.

The findings from each school are presented separately to provide a holistic view of each of the principals and the schools. The case study for each school starts with information learned about the school and about the participants. The findings from Hilltop (pseudonym) are presented first, followed by the findings from Raven (pseudonym). Once the findings for each school are presented, a comparison is made between the two schools and similarities and differences are identified. In this culminating section, the vision and practices are addressed separately.

Hilltop Elementary School

This section starts with general information about the school and the principal gleaned from the documents reviewed and the people who were interviewed at the school. I then present the findings for each research question. Four people were interviewed from Hilltop Elementary School: the principal, Mr. Williams (pseudonym), the outgoing Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) president who has two children in the school, a 4th-grade teacher on the whole child design team, and a former first-grade reading teacher who just moved into a newly created position of School Culture Leader. Documents reviewed include weekly newsletters to parents, the agenda and PowerPoint for the summer teacher training, the school website, and the 2022 school climate data. The two interviews with Mr. Williams are the core of the findings; the other interviews and the documents are used to triangulate the data and add nuance and additional details.

Principal Williams has been the principal of Hilltop elementary for six years. While this is his first principalship, he has been in education for 20 years. Prior to this role, he was in a principal training program with the district. Before he joined the district schools, he worked in the city's public charter schools as an assistant principal, instructional coach, and teacher. He

lives in the neighborhood surrounding the school and has two sons, both of whom attend the school. One is in first grade and one is in second grade.

Mr. Williams described Hilltop as being in a historical Black neighborhood that is rapidly gentrifying. He said it was a turnaround school; state test scores were low and they were under enrolled when he became principal. To improve this situation, he said that they raised teaching expectations and hired mostly new staff in his first two years at the school. He also introduced Conscious Discipline, a trauma-informed, SEL program. However, after two years, in 2019, the school joined the ALC and transitioned to the whole child model promulgated by the non-profit. As described in the methods section, this model is based on the practices and routines developed by a principal at one of the district's public elementary schools and codified by the non-profit organization. It involves specific practices and programs that the schools are trained in, a coach who works with the school, and a cohort of schools that meet regularly to discuss progress, receive additional training, and share ideas and successes. The school has been very engaged with the non-profit, the principal who originally developed the program for her school, and in implementing the ALC model of the whole child.

Question 1: Defining the Whole Child Approach

I identified three themes related to the definition of the whole child and present them in the following sections. The three themes are: the principal's definition of the whole child; factors of success; and the components of the approach.

Definition

When asked to define the whole child approach, Mr. Williams described it as a "way of doing school" and "ensuring the well-being or wellness of children in all of its dimensions and forms." He then described why it was important to look at any individual from a holistic view. This perspective reflects some of the ways the ALC and Conscious Discipline approaches present

the reasoning behind their models. Therefore, in defining the whole child, Mr. Williams first presented a Maslow-like model that encompassed all aspects of a child's growth and development. He explained that, "based in brain science," a child needs to be physically and emotionally well to access rigorous educational material and that schools need to "ensure that children's physical and physiological needs are met." Once these needs are met, he said it is necessary to ensure that students feel loved and cared for so that they can reach a state for optimal learning. He said that the approach "honors children in all of their facets and angles," including their academic, artistic, physical, social, and emotional interests and provides a safe, loving environment.

Furthermore, belief in teaching the whole child was seen by all the participants as a whole school effort. Mr. Williams said that it was not a one-off program but "it should permeate every aspect of school life." A staff member agreed and said that the belief in the whole child approach was universal throughout the school. Later in the conversation, he added another dimension to how the whole child is embedded in the school when he said that he decided to join the ALC and implement a whole child approach so that there was more "coherence" between their programs and vision and to enact a new approach to school.

Factors of Success

To meet the goal of teaching the whole child, the principal and the two staff members said that there needs to be a change in the way educators think about school for the approach to be successful. They explained that addressing students holistically by acknowledging their physical, emotional, and social needs in order to support them academically was a challenge for most educators. Even though Mr. Williams pursued the approach, one staff member explained that Mr. Williams had himself had a "mindset shift" from seeing non-academic time as a missed opportunity to teach academics, to understanding that teaching non-academic areas bolsters

learning. She also observed that Mr. Williams has enthusiastically bought into the whole child approach, which has helped it spread.

Mr. Williams called it a "mindset shift" and a "paradigm shift" that is "different than how a lot of us were raised and taught" and suggested that it was a way of thinking about school. He noted that understanding whole person well-being is very personal work and that one needs to be prepared to dedicate oneself to thinking about school differently and "transform your own practice so that you can teach it to children." He further elaborated that principals needed to understand themselves first and "live it" so that they can teach the skills of "how to de-escalate, or how to self-regulate, or how to communicate clearly" and other SEL practices. Reiterating a similar sentiment from an earlier part of the conversation he added, "you have to really walk the walk yourself." Moreover, to obtain the necessary buy-in, Mr. Williams said that understanding the impact that trauma has on the developing brain and the science behind the approach was important.

He also said that having people with a similar mindset on the team was a component of success and that he looks for similar values when hiring new staff. Both a staff member and Mr. Williams explained that part of the new team member hiring process was to make sure the potential candidate's values aligned with the goals of the whole child. He said that in his first two years at the school he intentionally hired staff with like-minded values and used district personnel mechanisms and coaching to help create the staff that he wanted. He noted that there was nearly 100% turnover in his first two years as principal and said that "I was able to shape the staff in alignment with my vision and values, which are the school's as well." One teacher agreed, saying that the values are "explicit" in the interview process and they hire "new team members who already have some level of buy-in." The other staff member described her involvement in the hiring process to ensure a good fit in personality and beliefs.

Another factor of success described by several participants was the allocation of resources to the whole child initiative. While he did not mention resources directly, it became evident that Mr. Williams put funding, time, and personnel towards the initiative. One of the most visible areas to support the Whole Child approach was in staffing. Mr. Williams said that having the right people in place and creating the conditions to keep them happy was an important element in successfully implementing the approach. He explained that their success is "driven by our teachers. They are the key lever there. There's just no shortcut, you just have to have really top-notch people." Both staff members indicated that Mr. Williams also valued staff growth and development. One teacher shared how Mr. Williams purchased a book on Conscious Discipline for each staff member and dedicated time in weekly meetings to discuss the concepts and how to incorporate them into their practice. She called it "a small thing," but explained that it demonstrated how he prioritized staff development. The other staff member noted that Mr. Williams made sure that staff was provided the time to participate in the training from the ALC.

As suggested by this staff member, Mr. Williams also put resources towards being a member of the ALC and towards the time required to implement the approach. One teacher described how morning meeting takes time every day and sometimes goes over the allotted time period. She also mentioned that they were adding more "natural elements in the classroom" and that the principal used part of the budget to purchase plants for the classrooms. She expressed concern that other principals might not be willing to spend the time or money necessary for successful implementation. The other teacher said that Mr. Williams was "tenacious" and "relentless" at getting the things that he thinks the students should have and gave the example of finding funding for them to remain in the ALC.

The principal and the two staff members also indicated that district sanction of the approach and the support of the ALC was beneficial. While district support was mainly

mentioned by the staff, the district is supportive of participation in the ALC and Mr. Williams

found the ALC to be valuable. The staff members were more specific about ways the district

supports the effort. The staff member who was new to the whole child design team noted that

the principal was able to tell district leadership that staff couldn't attend a professional

development session because they had a meeting with the ALC. The staff participant who had

been on the Design Team for a few years thought that the vision and values were revised to

include "empathy and love" after the school joined the ALC. She found their work with the ALC

and the organization that ran it a key part of the model and thought it helped them "formulate

what our vision and goal is" as well as providing practices.

Components

In addition to providing a definition for the whole child and describing the factors of

success, Mr. Williams described its various components. According to Mr. Williams, the whole

child approach involves multiple features. These include identifying ways to support student and

family basic needs, creating a loving, fun environment, and the school-wide practices and

programs specific to the whole child model promoted by the ALC. He also mentioned providing

an "inviting," "comfortable," and "clean" environment as well as the resources and appropriate

staff. He added that "relational trust" has an important role in the whole child approach. As will

be discussed in the findings for question two, the principal purposefully studied and acted on

practices that would improve relational trust throughout the school.

Question 2: Understanding the Principal's Role

The second research question, what is the role of a school principal in leading a whole

child approach, has three subquestions: how do the principals describe their role, what is their

vision (defined as their beliefs, aims, and knowledge) for supporting the whole child, and what

actions do they take to enact that vision. A main finding from this case study is the alignment

and interconnections among these areas. It was difficult to distinguish between Mr. Williams'

beliefs, knowledge, and aims since these were so intertwined. In addition, his responses

frequently included aspects of both his vision and his practices, leaving the impression of

cohesiveness and consistency that the data suggest pervades most aspects of his leadership. To

reflect the overlay of vision and practices, I decided to present the findings in these areas

together rather than separately as originally planned. Four themes emerged from the

interviews: view of school, view of growth and development, view of school environment, and

interpersonal interactions as foundational practices. I chose to organize them from the big

picture perspective of view of school to the more detailed actions of relationship building to

highlight how Mr. Williams' perception of school filters into all of these categories and how

relationships act as a foundation to support that view. At the end of each theme, I summarize

the discernable elements of his beliefs, knowledge, aims, and practices. A complete list of his

vision and practices is available in Appendix G. I then present the findings on his understanding

of his role. In doing so, the alignment between his vision and his practices is highlighted.

View of School

Interviews with Mr. Williams suggest that he viewed school as an institution that

advanced social justice and equity so that all children could thrive both during their time in the

school and throughout their lives. He saw school as a part of the surrounding community and

society at large, where external environments influence the school community and the school

community interacts with external environments. In the sections below, I will present the

findings on these three areas: schools as embedded in society, belief in society justice and

equity, and belief in school as creating conditions for students to thrive.

School as Embedded in Society. Data from the interviews with Mr. Williams suggest

that he believes that schools have a critical role in society by providing a foundation upon which

children can grow and succeed. He spoke about schools' "commitment and promise to children and families that we would get their kids ready for whatever their dreams wanted." He understands and looks at the bigger issues in the community and becomes involved in addressing the challenges and barriers that affect students, families, teachers, and the community at large. As will be discussed, he sought to make the school a convening spot for community and officials, suggesting that he recognized the power of the school as a community center and bridge to community improvement, and the influence it can have on both the greater community and the students, families, and teachers in the school.

His attention to the history of the school and the surrounding neighborhood demonstrates his view that schools are an integral part of the community. He said that he always introduces the school by providing this perspective and placing the school in the rich history of the surrounding area and how the school has served the community for over 100 years. When introducing himself to me, he immediately explained the history of the school and the neighborhood and how the school should reflect the diversity of the city. The history is also included on the first morning of preservice for new teachers, indicating that it is important for teachers to know and appreciate.

Mr. Williams' systems perspective of school's place in society permeates the interviews. The data suggest an ability and desire to view the school and students from many different viewpoints. As he said, he tries to keep both a 30,000-foot view as well as "being on the dance floor" and involved in the day to day operations of the school. He also noted that he had to be careful not to get "so down in the weeds that I get stuck and loose perspective." As will be described in different sections throughout the findings on Hilltop, he paid attention to and interacted with the different socio-ecological systems of the school, from students, to teachers and staff, to families, to community members, to people in the district. He describes and is

described by other participants as connecting to them and connecting them to each other to create a web of support for students and families.

Social Justice. The view of school as having an integral role in society is inherent in his belief in social justice and his view that schools are a mechanism by which to generate more equitable outcomes. His drive for equity both now and in the future and in and out of the school building also demonstrates his systems orientation. Mr. Williams explained that he strongly believed in social justice and one of the aims of Hilltop was to provide an equitable education for all. When asked why he went into education, the principal said that it was to pursue racial justice. He said that schools are "on the front lines of today's civil rights movement and I want to be on the front lines, doing the hardest work and there's no shortcut to social justice without working directly with children to help them be well." He also viewed the whole child model as one that supported this belief. He said that "developing a racial consciousness and commitment to anti-racism in and abolitionism in White people" was especially important when implementing the whole child. He acknowledged implicit biases and felt they needed to be recognized when working in a diverse school with high levels of trauma. To pursue this vision, he invited an organization that worked on diversity and inclusion issues to come to the school and facilitate small group conversations to discuss differences and uncover and address biases with interested staff and families.

His belief in social justice was apparent throughout the interviews with Mr. Williams, both in his descriptions of his vision and of his practices. When speaking about the diversity of the school, he noted the difficulty in supporting and challenging every child. When discussing the school's early use of Conscious Discipline, he described how he moved away from the model because of concerns that the sponsoring organization "lack[ed] commitment to racial equity," mainly in their hiring practices. In another example of his racial consciousness, he was

concerned about the lack of minority families on the PTO leadership. He saw this as an area for growth and that "for a while I was sort of beating myself up about it." Moreover, he thought that schools in a diverse urban area should reflect the population of the city and hired staff that mirrored his students and families. He said that he believed that "diversity is good for all people, but especially small people, and that we learn best across difference."

The theme of social justice is also apparent in his aim for equity, which all of the participants mentioned. Mr. Williams said that they were intentionally working towards equitable outcomes for children and families. It was also one of the first things most participants noted when asked about the vision for the school. One teacher said that "we talk about race here, we talk about students who are black and brown and how they and how, you know, the data shows that they're the ones who are failing the most. They're the ones who need the most support. They're the ones who are getting in the most trouble. So what do we do about that?" The drive for equity wasn't just racial. One teacher spoke about the tension between providing for those who need the most without losing touch with the high achievers or the students in the middle. She also talked about always trying to be more inclusive. The principal reiterated this sentiment. He said that they invest the most resources in those with the greatest need, something he said should happen, but that this meant that some children who are in the middle or upper ends "aren't pushed and challenged in the way that they deserve." Figuring out how to handle this disparity was something he felt they still needed to work on.

Thriving. Inherent to his vision of social justice and school as an agent for societal change is Mr. Williams' vision for every child to "thrive." He explained that the goal of the whole child initiative and of the school was for all children to thrive. When asked what he meant by thriving, he said it was for every child to feel comfortable with who they are and to realize "their full potential academically, socially, emotionally, spiritually." For students to thrive, he envisions

all of these areas as being developmentally strong. He also explained that the impact of race and socio-economic status make reaching the goal more complicated. A teacher confirmed that the aim of the principal was for students to thrive. She said that the principal wanted to prepare "students to thrive in life" and that the principal pushes student "ownership of thinking." She explained that Mr. Williams wanted this for students "so that they are prepared to be successful in whatever ways they choose to be as adults." The PTO officer and the other teacher concurred, with the teacher saying that the vision of the school was for students to know that they can achieve academically.

To summarize the main components of his view of school, Mr. Williams sees it as a means to change the status quo and eradicate racial and socioeconomic disparities. His ability to move from big picture to details and his understanding of the two-directional influences between the school and society demonstrate a systems orientation about school. His goal for students to thrive demonstrates his aim to improve the outcomes for children in the school and his knowledge of the impact racial and socioeconomic status have on student outcomes. He works to improve equity through hiring practices, selected curriculum and training, communicating the vision, and connecting with the community. The vision and actions described in this section are also apparent in other facets of his leadership that will be described in upcoming sections.

View of Growth and Development

Throughout the interviews, the importance Mr. Williams places on learning and his understanding of student growth and development was evident. It appeared in his discussion about thriving discussed above, the non-academic supports provided by the school, and his grasp of child development and brain science. Together, these areas suggest a belief in learning and that everyone can and should learn. They also illuminate the alignment between his vision

and practices. In the following sections, his knowledge of the link between physical and emotional health and learning and his belief and expectation that everyone is a learner are discussed.

Connection Between Health and Learning. Undergirding Mr. Williams' belief in thriving is his understanding and belief in the connections between health, well-being and learning. He noted twice that social, emotional, and academic development are intertwined and said that "We believe that they are inextricably linked and mutually reinforcing or undermining." His answers to questions indicate that he understood that a response to trauma was the driver behind the challenging behaviors that students were exhibiting and that he recognized that compassion and not punishment were necessary to support the students. As already mentioned, early in his principalship, Mr. Williams worked with teachers to implement Conscious Discipline, a non-punitive approach to discipline. However, he also acknowledged that they do not yet have the systems in place to "consistently meet [students'] needs to the extent that we would like."

Interviews with Mr. Williams suggest that knowledge of "brain science" was central to his belief in the connections between health and learning and equity. Mr. Williams explained that "we believe deeply, and it's based in brain science, that you can only learn rigorous, academic content if you feel safe and loved first and foremost." As part of his understanding of brain science, he spoke about creating the conditions for students to move from "their survival brain state" and "their emotional brain state" to reach their "executive state where academic learning, new learning, happens." Moreover, he believed that understanding "brain science" was necessary for the whole child approach to work well. He called it "super important" to understand and compared it to the science of reading and how that has impacted reading pedagogy. He said that this information presents the "why we're doing the model and why it works when done well."

He also thought that understanding Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and how trauma impacts behavior is important, and offered that the COVID pandemic demonstrated the necessity of meeting basic needs. As described in his definition of the whole child, he believed that having this knowledge and addressing the impact of health, trauma, and well-being is part of the whole child approach. Knowledge of brain science and the impact of trauma and poverty was known by the staff and the PTO as well. One teacher said that they speak a lot about brain states and ensuring that students are not in "survival mode." She explained how they recognize how their own body movements and language can impact the environment and have an effect on students.

To counteract the impact of disruptive experiences and health challenges, Mr. Williams implemented ways for students to obtain necessary services and installed the SEL and discipline programs supported by the ALC. He created a wellness team with a school psychologist, social worker, community partners, and administration. He also created a new position of school culture leader to coach and support teachers in implementing the SEL and discipline programs. In addition, he said that the school provided support for families who were housing or food insecure during the pandemic and continues to connect them to community organizations "that can meet their basic needs for housing and, and food security and physical safety" now that school is back in person. The PTO officer said that the principal's aim was to create a safe space where students could learn and where there is calm and safety for students whose lives may be in turmoil outside of school. She said that they could be assured a place for breakfast and lunch, a washing machine, clothes, grocery money, and connections to mental health care.

Belief and Expectation that Everyone is a Learner. According to Mr. Williams and to both teachers, Mr. Williams believes that everyone can learn and has that expectation for himself as well as for teachers and students. His interest in continual learning extends from

personal learning about oneself to learning about new initiatives from others to expecting others to be continuous learners. His expectation for students is underscored by his goal for every student to thrive described above. He is also always looking for ways to improve himself and the school. He called the work his "lifelong journey" and spoke about "outgrowing ourselves every day as a sort of cultural value." Demonstrating this belief, throughout the conversation he mentioned the books that he's read on various subjects and described immersing himself in Conscious Discipline and attending seminars in Florida to better understand it. He recommended that anyone interested in initiating a whole child approach be prepared to spend the time learning about themselves and their biases, as well as using the social and emotional skills that are expected of the students. He said that the most important part of leading a school invested in the whole child approach is to recognize that you won't have it "mastered because we're all learning." Moreover, he said that he is still trying to figure out how to support every child in the different areas of development – academic, social, and emotional – or in how to consistently meet every child's needs.

Both teachers also commented on Mr. Williams' aim and belief in personal and professional improvement. A teacher noted that he is "obsessed with feedback" and "a feedback maniac" and asks for feedback constantly. The same teacher also said that "he's always trying to outgrow himself." She noted that when hiring people, he looked for those who were always trying to improve. The other teacher said that they are always trying to be better as a school by making minor changes to programs or trying different things. She described it as a "commitment to like trying things differently or seeing education a little bit differently" and that if it doesn't work, they move on knowing that they at least tried something new. She also noted that people who would not fit into the school would be those who are not prepared to "change the way they do things…. we kind of always have to be willing to like, try something different."

To summarize his view of growth and learning, Mr. Williams demonstrated his belief that everyone can and should learn and continue to improve, including himself. Mr. William's view of growth and learning grounds his view that schools should be champions for equity and social justice and create conditions so children can thrive. His perspectives of school and the whole child as a "mindset" demonstrate that he not only believes that everyone can and should learn, but that schools have an obligation to support that growth. He understood and believed in the connection between physical and emotional health and learning and saw countering poor health and trauma as a way schools can support student growth and academic success. He did this by creating positions to support student well-being, implementing SEL and positive discipline programs, providing and connecting families to health and social services, and modeling continuous self-improvement and learning.

View of School Environment

Data from the interviews and documents suggest that Mr. Williams aimed to support his view of learning and growth by creating a loving, rigorous environment, installing collaborative structures and modeling collaborations, valuing and developing community, partnering with families and the community, and modeling relational trust. In this section I will further describe each of these areas.

Loving, Rigorous Environment. According to the staff and the PTO officer, Mr. Williams desired a safe, calm, loving atmosphere at Hilltop so that students and staff felt at their best. All of the participants acknowledged that he was the promoter and instigator of a positive climate. One teacher mentioned six times during the 30-minute interview that creating a caring, supportive environment was the school's vision and the goal of Mr. Williams. She also said that his goal for education was to "create an environment where students feel loved and also feel safe enough to access whatever we're teaching." The other teacher said that Mr. Williams'

"focus is on meeting kids' emotional needs across the building." She also noted that he hires

"adults in the building that reflect their families and cultures and people who look like them and

make them feel comfortable and also make them, allow them to see what is possible for them

as well." The PTO officer said that the "love at Hilltop is tremendous." In response to a question

of whether a lot of families would agree that the school is joyful, she responded "without

question."

As evident in these quotes, participants noted that the principal wanted all children to

feel both cared for and pushed. One teacher said that "challenged and loved" are the two core

principles of the school and that "both joy and rigor are very alive at [Hilltop]." She also noted

that the instructional team "pushes rigorous and evidence-based instruction" as well as "just

really care about kids having a good time and feeling really good at school." The other teacher

found that in addition to the aim of being happy and joyous, the vision of the school was for all

students to achieve academically. She described it as the students being "pushed with love to

the highest academic and social emotional expectations." The PTO officer noted that the school

had strong academics and told a story about her eight-year-old son being inspired by his teacher

to get a PhD in math, illustrating the focus on joy and learning.

Even though a loving and safe atmosphere was described by all the participants, both

Mr. Williams and one of the teachers suggested that there were difficulties in maintaining the

safe environment this last year because of the trauma experienced by some of the students. He

elaborated, "We've had more instances of bullying, more fights than ever before. And it's still

not regular, but it's more than we should." He was concerned because for the first time since he

started, they haven't been able to "guarantee student safety like we should be able to."

However, his concern over these challenges reinforces his desire for the school to be a safe

haven for all.

Collaboration. In addition to the environment being loving and rigorous, all of the participants mentioned that everyone worked well together. The school staff and PTO officer noted that Mr. Williams is a collaborative leader. Mr. Williams said that he views himself as a facilitator who helps make operations run smoothly in the direction of his vision rather than being the sole leader of the whole child initiative. He said that he doesn't try "to do it all" but that he has "the right people who can do a lot of it for me, and at a higher level than I would be able to." He positions himself as the orchestrator and called his team members on the whole child design team his "thought-partners." Both of the teachers commented positively on his delegation. One of the ways he distributes leadership is through teams. The school has multiple teams including a wellness team, the sunshine committee, a soon-to-be re-formed school culture team, and teams for events and specific programs. He also has other staff lead certain areas. For example, the 4th grade teacher is in charge of whole child implementation for grades 3–5. She said that she is "responsible for it" as well as for delivering the professional development to the other 3–5 grade teachers and confirming that they know and follow the priorities of the initiative. She also runs a weekly girls' group and she described having autonomy over the curriculum and activities. She said that "he kind of lets us, like if we have ideas and things that we want to do, he is in full support of that."

Sense of Community. The interviews also indicate that Mr. Williams values and believes in a sense of community or togetherness and that he aims to create a sense of community among the teachers within the school, among the families, and among the larger community. He said that they not only call themselves a "school family" but that it seems that way. He added, "sometimes families fight and sometimes we see the [school mascot] fight too. But we always try to come back together and reconnect and ensure that everyone feels safe and loved." Both teachers commented on the love and community at the school and found it to be supportive.

One teacher described the school as having a "smaller familial feel." She spoke at length about the sense of community among the teachers and the strength of the co-teaching teams, saying that "a lot of the teams are like, really close." She described how everyone had common beliefs about students and similar values which helped to create a positive, welcoming community. She said, "It doesn't feel like a community where people don't like each other, are trying to undercut each other, where I've definitely been in those environments before." She also described how Mr. Williams created buddy classes between lower and upper grades in order to build community across the students in the building. Per the school climate survey, nearly 90% of the students responded that they felt like they belonged at the school. The PTO officer described the community among the families as well, calling it "incredibly strong" and noting that there had been a lot of work in the past five years to "bring the whole community together." These actions are further described in the section on family and community engagement below.

Mr. Williams explained that he purposefully acts in ways to develop community among the teachers and that he wants teachers to feel safe and supported. He described how he put in place staff who have similar perspectives on teaching and who get along. He said, "it helps to have the right people.... People who are vision and values aligned, and who act with integrity, you know in alignment with their values." One teacher noted that Mr. Williams worked to put together a like-minded team who enjoy each other and who share "common beliefs about our kids." In addition to hiring like-minded staff, he put in place systems to encourage community among teachers. A teacher described how the principal included members of the teaching team on the hiring committee, an action that he agreed was designed to ensure that teams of teachers and other staff got along. In the preservice training prior to the school year, Mr. Williams spends part of the first two days on team building and getting to know you exercises, such as "Adult Connection Bingo" and "Purposeful Partnering." He also described the history

and values of the school and the teachers practiced exercises to help calm and focus, similar to what the students would use.

Family and Community Engagement. Mr. Williams also demonstrated a belief in the power of families and described working to create community among the families and between families and school staff. He said that engagement between teachers and families led to better outcomes for students and he encouraged teachers to join the PTO because it built "connection and community." According to the PTO officer, Mr. Williams supported the PTO to be more open and supportive of all families. She said that when she started the PTO was siloed, but under his leadership it had opened up. For example, there are no dues and everyone is automatically enrolled in the PTO unless they say they are not interested. Mr. Williams also described how they've purposefully created a culture where families understand that they are to look out for each other. Furthermore, he has encouraged more connections between the PTO and the teachers by asking teachers to join the PTO and by suggesting that the PTO provide funding for classroom supplies.

Mr. Williams also encourages a sense of community through events and activities. Hilltop has multiple community-building events for families and Mr. Williams has a monthly "Coffee with Will" for family members to meet together and discuss school issues with him. He sends out a bi-weekly email in English and Spanish to families that includes news, updates, upcoming events, and shout outs. The three newsletters reviewed were filled with appreciative notes and joyful adjectives, such as these examples from one page: "big smiles and full hearts" and "beautiful Staff Appreciation efforts," and "delicious Ethiopian dinner," and contributed to the sense of community, love, and respect. He also explains to new families that they are "part of something larger than themselves and their own child's direct needs" and that they should support each other. The PTO officer noted that they've worked hard to make the school a safe

space for parents to feel okay to let the school know when they are having difficulties. She said that this came from the principal. She called him "really vocal" in having families invest their time in the school and not just with their children. He encourages them to focus on the community and all the children at the school. She said about the community that "he has cultivated, he has built that. And, and he shows that every day in, in how he presents himself."

In addition, Mr. Williams demonstrated an aim of connecting with the broader community. He meets with local churches and brings in local politicians and government officials to talk about community issues. For example, he has a relationship with a local history museum that helps the school celebrate Hilltop Day every year. Furthermore, he has connections with government and local services and connects families with them when a family experiences difficulties. The PTO officer noted that there are churches and other organizations that are "really invested in the school" and provide supports and resources. She also mentioned that the reading teacher at the school is "unbelievable" and that reading staff from across the district come to the school to train with her and learn how they started their reading program, illustrating Mr. Williams' connection to district infrastructure as well. The school also holds movie nights on the playground that everyone can attend according to a teacher. A teacher noted that understanding and knowing the neighborhood is a priority. She spoke about how Mr. Williams talks to staff and families about the community context and the challenges of gentrification so that they understand how important it is to the school. The teachers also conduct annual home visits to get to know the families and the neighborhoods. Mr. Williams said, "you have to get to know people. And, in a diverse community there are always friction points and conflicts that arise, and the stronger the relationship, the easier it is to navigate those when you've accumulated some trust and some capital."

Relational Trust. Mr. Williams particularly emphasized "relational trust" as an aspect of a healthy culture and said that he purposely sought to create trust throughout the school community and surrounding neighborhood. He noted that he had read a number of leadership books on how to build and retain trust and that he kept the principles in mind. He said that "a whole child approach is one that first grounds itself in relational trust and in, you know, building a culture of safety and love."

Reiterating themes that were identified throughout the conversations, and which will be elaborated on in the next section, Mr. Williams described that he intentionally worked to build trusting relationships with individuals. Through his descriptions and those of the other participants, it became evident that he built a culture of trust that permeated the school environment, similar to the web of relational trust described by Bryk and Schneider (2002). He spoke about having "each other's backs" and ensuring families know that they love their children and will take care of them. He expounded on building functioning teams based in trust and that trust is "essential and a prerequisite" to a loving, and supportive climate.

Nearly all of the participants spoke about trust and how there was a culture of trust at the school. Indeed, participants used the word "trust" 16 times throughout the interviews. The PTO officer said that Mr. Williams had made the culture "really trusting" and that in doing so he built community. A teacher also described how Mr. Williams demonstrates trust in her by giving her the opportunity to pursue interests and to have some autonomy. And, as will be described, the staff and PTO officer explained that the students felt loved and trusted him implicitly.

To sum up the section on school environments, the school environment at Hilltop was joyous and rigorous, fulfilling Mr. Williams aims for a positive climate that engages students and staff and supports his belief in the factors that influence student growth and learning as described in the previous theme. He collaborated and distributed leadership, put in place

structures and hired staff that support collaboration, engaged with families and the community, and developed a sense of community. The positive climate and his actions to build it were grounded by a culture of trust, which he purposefully developed. The inter-relational practices he put in place to develop community and trust are discussed in the next section.

The Intersection of Vision and Practice: Building Trusting Relationships

To develop the culture of trust described in the previous section, Mr. Williams described the individual relationship building skills he practiced. Examples of his positive relationship building are woven throughout the interviews and are the foundation of his views of school, growth and learning, and school environments described above. The participants' descriptions of Mr. Williams' interactions with students, staff, families, and the surrounding neighborhood indicate that he valued people and practiced skills that developed trusting, positive relationships. While the integration of his vision and practices is apparent in the themes already described, it is especially evident in his view of interpersonal relationships. I witnessed an interaction with a student that offers an excellent example. During the interview a student burst into the office to learn if Mr. Williams had spoken to his caregiver about an upcoming field trip. Mr. Williams respectfully asked him to try it again, knocking first and waiting for him to respond. Once the child accomplished this, he calmly told the student "I'm in a meeting. How can I help you?" The student started to explain his concerns and Mr. Williams quickly assured the student that he would speak with the student's aunt after school to make arrangements. After the student left, Mr. Williams told me that the student was going to go with himself and seven other students on a special day trip over the upcoming holiday. He explained that the student had experienced significant trauma and was exhibiting challenging behavior. The student's recently hired teacher, who the principal described as not thriving at the school because she was not prepared to change her ways and work within the community, did not understand why the

student should receive this treat. He described her to me as having difficulty understanding "the distinction between equality and equity," and that it was now up to her to decide if she wanted to embrace the community and school vision or find another position.

This scenario illustrates how the relationship building practices used by Mr. Williams undergird the themes described in the previous sections. It demonstrates Mr. Williams' belief that school should be concerned with equity and supporting students who have experienced racial, socio-economic, or personal challenges, and his belief and expectation that everyone should be their best and continuous learners. It highlights his understanding of the connection between health and learning and the trust that he has established with students and the community. It also demonstrates his caring, respectful practices, his engagement with families, his availability, and his communication skills. In the following sections, I will expand on his relationship building practices, which he told me he purposefully models so that everyone in the school community can see the practices in action. This section is organized into five emerging themes that highlight the alignment between his vision and practices and how he applies them across the socio-ecological spheres of the school community. The themes that will be discussed are valuing people and modeling trust, caring, authenticity, openness, and availability.

Modeling Positive, Trusting Relationships. Mr. Williams develops a caring, trusting environment through modeling practices to build positive relationships that he wants everyone in the school community to use. Mr. Williams intentionally models how he wants staff and students to interact and behave. He explained the importance of practicing "the skills that we want children to practice" because otherwise it won't be "authentic with children." When asked about the most important thing to do when leading a whole child school, he replied that "you have to live it and walk it yourself first. Because you can't teach or communicate or exemplify that which you are not practicing yourself."

He developed individual trusting relationships by modeling ways that he said the literature suggests develops trust: authenticity, transparency, follow-through, clear communication, caring, and being present and available. He described that he communicated the reasons for his actions and was as transparent as possible. Furthermore, he would take feedback and let people know that he was using it, why he was using it and why he wasn't using it if that was the case. He was also available at most events or at any time during the day. He said,

and if you keep showing up day, day after day, and you know, making good on small promises then and, and trying to live in alignment with your values. And when you fall short of that saying, you know, I screwed up. Here's, here's why. Here's how, here, here's what I learned. And then try to actually act on that, then it, it builds up over time.

His modeling actions to build trust appear multiple times throughout both the interviews with Mr. Williams and the Hilltop school participants and reinforce the alignment between his practices and his vision. In the following sections, I elaborate on his practices of caring, transparency and authenticity, communication, and availability and how they align with the other themes described above.

Caring. It is apparent from the interviews that Mr. Williams cares about the students, staff, families and community. He demonstrates this caring attitude through his interactions and models it for everyone in the school community. He said that "we value people" and that he knows that everyone brings their whole selves to the school every day. He believes that this should be honored because not doing so "seems impossible, and at least short-sighted and limiting." It is noteworthy for the success of the whole child framework that he develops relationships across the spheres of influence in a child's development, from the children themselves, to teachers and families, and to the surrounding community and governing bodies.

The PTO officer was particularly effusive in describing how Mr. Williams "genuinely cares about what's going on about all of these kids." She offered an example of how he'll pull a student into a hug when he sees them entering the school and you can tell that they child is having a bad start to the day. She said "you can just see like the kids' shoulders will like, ease down. You can like watch him do this. And it's like, oh, it's really, it's really special." She also told a story about how her son assured her that if anything ever happened to either his mother or father that he knew his way to the school and that Mr. Williams would be there to help. She said her son's trust and belief in Mr. Williams ability to take care of him during a crisis nearly had her in tears and that "that's what this school and this community means to my children." She said it was her son's "safe spot." One of the teachers agreed and explained that Mr. Williams built relationships with the students, knew all of their names, and was available. She said that the students "love, love principal Williams," and noted that he sees the kids "all the time." She described him going to recess every day and playing soccer with the students. She also said that he visits every classroom in the morning to say hello to the students. When asked what Mr. Williams does to support the whole child and the approach, she responded by saying "him being seen and building relationships with the kids."

According to the participants, he builds caring relationships with teachers and families as well. The teachers described how he comes by classrooms to say hello. They both described the environment as loving and that they felt cared for and part of a community. They also felt respected. He reported that he celebrates teachers and that he views his main role as keeping teachers happy and making it easier for them to be their whole selves. One teacher explained that she feels he looks after their interests by allowing them to try new ideas, get paid for taking on extra initiatives, and being provided with the resources they need. The PTO officer described Mr. Williams as "just incredibly welcoming."

Transparency and Authenticity. All of the participants described the various actions Mr. Williams takes to demonstrate transparency and authenticity: holding difficult conversations, being open when he has difficulty with a problem, explaining the decisions he makes and why, asking for feedback, and being honest. He noted it is important to hold difficult conversations in order to build trust. He said that he tries to "create as much transparency as is practical and possible" and that he has "tough conversations" with teachers and holds "them accountable when they fail, as we all do." He described speaking with families in the same manner. He said that "families know that we love their children and that we take the best care of them that we can, and that we'll tell them when they're doing great and we'll tell them when they screw up." He said that you have to have the difficult conversations or it "undermines trust, or it just like stagnates."

The other participants concur. They all mentioned his transparency in particular. The two teachers spoke about how he discusses his own struggles. One teacher described him as "really reflective, like openly with us or like transparent about his own struggle with like when he's dealing with a student. So not giving off the air that I always know what's best and I always do the right thing, but as a partner in the work." She continued, "he can lean on us as well, just as, you know, we lean on him." She said that this was incredibly powerful and helps make the staff feel understood and part of a team. The other teacher said that he's "very transparent in a lot of his decision making when he can. And I think that really helps for teachers to feel heard."

The PTO Officer was especially taken with how open he was. She said that "he doesn't hide behind attitudes" and acknowledges his mistakes. She also noted that "one of his defining traits is he calls things as you see it." Furthermore, she explained that he has conversations about race and inequities and challenges, topics that many people avoid because they are difficult. Based on discussions with her friends with children in other schools, she said that this

was unique in a principal and thinks it helps build goodwill because any issues are out in the open and don't have the opportunity to fester. She also thought that this openness supports change. She said that it is important that he is "calling these things [racial and ethnicity injustices] out and like finding ways to address them."

Communication Skills. The way he communicates also demonstrates that he cares about people. Two communication skills that were identified multiple times by participants are that he listens and that he clearly explains the reasons behind his actions. Mr. Williams explained that he constantly asks for feedback. He added that he then acts on the knowledge and explains what he did so that people understand that he cares about and respects their opinion. A teacher and the PTO officer concurred. The teacher said that "he's listening all the time." She said that "he wants to know what people think about things, to know what's going well and what needs to be changed." She said that this helps teachers feel "heard." The teacher also described how he clearly explains expectations so that you understand your working parameters.

Furthermore, Mr. Williams described using multiple formats to continually explain the vision. He said that he talks about priorities at staff meetings, posts the values all over the school, and discusses them at the beginning of the year. Mr. Williams said he also embeds the vision in the weekly newsletter to staff and the bi-weekly newsletter to families, as well as through first Friday coffees and school programs. He stated that he communicates the vision "every which way, as often as possible and as needed." A teacher mentioned that he has the vision, talks about it, and makes "it accessible for kids to understand as well" by putting in place initiatives like "an empathy tree" or a "shout out" to a student for doing something well.

Availability. Data from the interviews suggest that Mr. Williams was also visible and available for families, teachers, and students. All of the participants commented on his being at

arrival every morning to greet children and families and that he knows the name of all the students and their families. The PTO officer described him as "incredibly accessible. It's actually like shocking." She also noted that this engendered trust in families and that it helped them feel comfortable in contacting the school when they are facing difficulties, such as experiencing domestic violence or homelessness. She said that he had an "open door policy" where any family can talk to him about their concerns. One of the teachers said that "he's like very present." The other teacher noted that he is "willing to show up and be involved on the front lines every day, I think makes a huge difference, as well with the kids." Mr. Williams explained that "you have to be around and you have to get to know people."

In summation of his actions to support interpersonal relationships and support his vision of school, growth and learning, and a positive school environment, Mr. Williams valued people and centered many of his practices on improving the culture for students, staff, and families, and removing barriers they that might get in the way of their ability to do their job, be it learning, teaching, supporting the school in some way, or parenting. He modeled the behaviors he wanted everyone in the school eco-system to practice and purposefully worked to develop relational trust throughout the school. He engaged students, family members, staff, and the community and he practiced authenticity, transparency, openness, clear communication, caring, availability, listening, consistency, and love with all of them.

Summary of Vision and Practices. Mr. Williams' aims, beliefs, and knowledge were not only aligned, but they aligned with his practices. He accepted the principalship at Hilltop with the goal of redefining school to improve academic outcomes and decrease racial and socio-economical inequities. To do this, he created a team and sought a model to support his vision of a caring school that uplifted and provided services to all children. In selecting Conscious Discipline and then the whole child model of the ALC, he pursued a whole school approach that

matched his vision of school. He modeled the behaviors and interactions that he wanted staff and students to emulate and which created community and a positive learning environment where students, staff, and families thrive. A summary of the components of the vision and practices is available in Appendix G.

Vision of Role

Subquestion one of question two concerns the principals' role in the whole child initiative and was meant to explore how the principals' described their role. However, based on the interviews, documents, and the findings on his vision and practices, I identified other roles that the principal held. Although this subquestion originally preceded the subquestions regarding his vision and practices, I decided to place it after the vision and practices since it was through analyzing his vision and practices that I identified the other two roles. While Mr. Williams saw himself mainly in an administrative role, the findings indicate that he was also a connector and a visionary. These three roles are described in the next sections.

Administrator. Mr. Williams described his main function as an administrator or manager who put the processes and people in place so that others could do their jobs well and implement the vision. He said that "I see my core function as hiring and retaining great people." He described accomplishing this by hiring people who are a good fit for the school as well as excellent teachers, reducing or eliminating any barriers that diminished their ability to teach, and organizing and implementing systems that make the school less chaotic. For example, as already described, the hiring process for new staff included a team member who could evaluate whether they would work well together. He also provided teachers with opportunities to grow and lead. He considered himself a facilitator and had staff be the "doers." In this role, he also described himself as a "coach" and a "counselor." He explained, "It's really just removing

barriers that waste their time and suck their spirit. And then being around to, yeah, to solve problems, to cheer them on."

Both teachers agreed with this assessment of his role and appreciated the structure he brought to the school. They also commented on his organizational skills. One teacher explained that in school operations Mr. Williams was very "type A." This was evident in the preservice slide deck where he had sign-up sheets for various roles, something that the other teacher explained as well, saying that they helped set expectations for the year. She also noted that things "to me work kind of like a machine here for the most part. There are of course some areas that we could definitely improve upon, but there are systems in place that like keep the culture going." She described how in other schools where she had worked, programs would frequently stop if a person who led that program left the school. She said that didn't happen at Hilltop because it was systematized by Mr. Williams. Mr. Williams explained that he set up school-wide rituals that everyone could count on, such as their weekly Monday morning video produced by students and every class starting the day with a greeting time.

Both teachers also explained that they clearly knew what the expectations were for their positions, but that they were the outlines rather than the specifics. One teacher described it as knowing the parameters in which to work and having the freedom to do what she wanted within those boundaries. The other teacher agreed, saying that the Mr. Williams provided a "mix of high structure" and "room for personalization" by providing a "baseline" of expectations. Mr. William's practice of creating systems helped to sustain programs and create a framework for consistency.

Connector. The way Mr. Williams described his actions and beliefs also highlight his role as a connector of the community and the school as a place to bring together different community members. Data suggest that he envisioned this role as making connections across

the different spheres of social and professional groups. For example, he spoke about bringing together different church groups from the historical Black community and from the new "mega" church that serves mostly young White families. He said, "I try to position [Hilltop] as sort of a gathering place and a, you know, a connector for this community." He also noted that he connected community groups with local elected officials to discuss issues important to the neighborhood and the community. He said "being a school principal is in many ways like being the mayor of a small town." He viewed himself as connecting teachers to each other to support their work. As described in the vision and practice section, he created community by instituting grade-level teams, encouraging teachers to join the PTO, making the PTO free to all families, and providing information on local services and community issues in his bi-weekly newsletter.

Furthermore, it is apparent from the interviews that he sought to connect systems and processes to create alignment between the different school departments and programs. Developing more cohesiveness across systems was one of the reasons they are using the whole child approach. When he started at the school as the principal, Mr. Williams said that there was a "mishmash" of approaches around school discipline, SEL, and school environment and culture and he wanted a more holistic approach. He said, "what we wanted was to move towards greater coherence. And you know, alignment of our vision and values to our practices." The alignment encompassed families as well and he explained that he strove to partner with families so that their home language and behaviors aligned with those at school.

Visionary. Mr. Williams was frequently described by all of the participants as the person who set and communicated the vision. He explained how he embarked on reshaping the school over his six years as principal. He said that he spent the first semester getting to know the school, and then started introducing new practices and ideas around discipline and SEL in the second semester. At the same time, he researched and learned about different programs that

would align with his vision. He became invested in Conscious Discipline, an SEL-oriented program that has a lot in common with a whole child approach, and implemented it in the school. After experimenting with Conscious Discipline, he decided that it did not align with their vision as closely as he hoped and started working with the ALC. He said that "I was ultimately the one deciding on and articulating and guiding the schools' direction."

He also hired and retained staff who had a similar vision and perspective on school and child development. One teacher explained how excited she was to join the school. She said that she joined because he told her that "we have an opportunity to like create school like how we haven't seen it before. And like that sounded so like cheesy and inspirational, but it really is true." The other teacher noted that the principal sets the vision and communicates it across the community. Mr. Williams acknowledged that he was looking to spread his vision throughout the school. He describes a staff exodus during his first two years as principal and that this allowed him "to shape the staff in alignment with my vision and values which are the school's as well."

Question 3: Considerations for Internal and External Conditions

This research question focuses on how the principal takes into consideration internal conditions and external environments, what internal and external factors they consider, and what internal and external factors they prioritize. During the interviews, it rapidly became apparent that Mr. Williams accounted for both internal and external factors and that he did not distinguish between internal and external influences in his view of school, learning and growth, school environment, and relationships. The themes already described in the findings provide ample examples of his priorities for internal and external environments, while also emphasizing the alignment of his priorities, vision, role, and practices. For example, Mr. Williams prioritized a loving, safe, and rigorous school environment, a belief in continuous improvement and growth, hiring and retaining staff aligned with his goals, and equity. He also considers the many spheres

of the external world and how it impacts the functioning of the school and the growth of the students, teachers, and staff. He put in place systems, environments, and staff to help support students who may be negatively affected by external environments or trauma and connects families who may be experiencing homelessness or food insecurity with community organizations that can help them. One staff member summed up the connections between vision, practices, and priorities by saying that she understood his priorities from his actions. Another teacher explained his priorities are "communicated to me through just by like the investment in certain areas."

Hilltop Summary

Mr. Williams understood the whole child as a way of approaching school and joined the ALC to help the school align programs. In the process, he came to understand that the whole child is more than a cohesive set of programs, but a mindset and belief that needs to be understood to be successful. The data suggest an alignment of his beliefs, aims, and knowledge (his vision) and between his vision and his practices that is apparent across the socio-ecological spheres of the school. The backbone of his beliefs appears to be his knowledge of brain science and a belief in the connection between physical and mental health and learning. The data suggest that his vision is also anchored in his desire for social justice and equity. The manifestation of his view of the whole child is evident in his caring attitude, his desire for community, and his belief in continuous learning by everyone.

Raven Elementary School

In this section, I describe what was learned from the interviews and the reviewed documents about Raven Elementary School and the people who were interviewed. I then present the findings for each research question. As with Hilltop, the core of the findings is from the interviews with the principal; the documents and the other interviews are used to

triangulate the data and provide more detailed information about the principal's vision and practices. I interviewed five people at Raven Elementary School: Principal Ms. Jones (pseudonym), the assistant principal for STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics) who is one of two assistant principals; the Program Coordinator for Communication Education Support classrooms (CES); the intervention coordinator, math coach and whole child lead; and an officer with the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO). The CES coordinator and the PTO officer were with the school prior to Ms. Jones' arrival, providing them with a unique perspective on the influence of the principal. The documents reviewed include the school's website, the school climate data, and the weekly parent newsletter.

Ms. Jones has been principal of Raven for four years and this is her first principalship. It is also her first time in elementary school, having taught high school Spanish and been an assistant principal in two high schools prior to becoming principal of Raven. Ms. Jones explained that Raven formally joined the district-led Enlightened (pseudonym) initiative two years ago. As discussed in Chapter Three, this pilot project from district leadership provides guidance, technical assistance, and an occasional meeting with a cohort of schools implementing the loosely structured whole child approach promoted by the district. However, Ms. Jones described changes she had made that align with the whole child approach even before Raven joined the Enlightened initiative. In her first year as principal, Ms. Jones changed the behavior programs being used from PBIS and Second Step to a school-developed, more SEL- focused curriculum. After three years she replaced it with a program called the Leader in Me, an SEL program based on Steven Covey's leadership model. In addition, the school established a new wellness suite of professionals, and the tenants of Conscious Discipline, a trauma-informed SEL program, were introduced prior to joining the Enlightened initiative. According to all participants, she also

improved an already positive school environment to one that participants called "happy," "joyful," "friendly," and "very unique and special."

Ms. Jones said that she started at Raven eager to implement a stronger dual-language program, which she later described as a component of the whole child. Raven already had a small dual-language program that served what Ms. Jones described as being "much more heterogeneous in terms of race and socioeconomic status" with achievement "far above what was the achievement of our students in our English-only program." The upcoming school year will be the first year that every PK3 and PK4 student will be in a combined Spanish/English and arts program. The principal has been navigating this change with staff, district leadership, and families for the last year. She has also expanded the after and during school community-connected learning opportunities, such as sporting activities, a school production of a movie and a musical, visits to local cultural establishments and museums, coding, and dancing. In addition, the school has a special education program for students who are diagnosed as autistic, called Communication Education Supports (CES). Students in the program are both in self-contained classrooms and included in the general education classrooms.

Question 1: Defining the Whole Child Approach

Three themes emerged when reviewing Ms. Jones' definition of the whole child: the definition, factors of success, and the main components of the approach. Descriptions of these themes are below.

Definition

Ms. Jones defined the whole child as preparing a child holistically for the future by supporting the whole person through love, support systems, and high expectations. She noted that it is a broader and deeper understanding of education than just academics since it advocates looking at a child's whole story and utilizing that information to help them grow.

Emphasizing themes that are interspersed throughout the interviews, she explained it as

"granting access to all of our kids, exposure for all of our kids, teaching not only their heads, but

also their hearts, preparing them hopefully for lifelong success." She later added, "schools are

mini-societies, right? We need the services [i.e., counseling, social services] to really be able to

serve the whole child." She explained that this should involve providing exposure to new

experiences and services for mental and physical health and basic needs, and identified these

services not only as a part of the whole child approach, but an important purpose of education.

In essence, she described creating the conditions and teaching students the skills and knowledge

to thrive, both now and in their future endeavors.

Furthermore, data from the interviews with Ms. Jones suggest that she viewed the

whole child as the essence of education rather than as something unique or a program. She

explained it as a way of approaching school as well as a "philosophy of education" for enriching

all aspects of a child's development. She said that "not only do we teach minds, we teach hearts,

we teach the whole child, right?" She continued, "So I fundamentally just believe in that

approach." In addition, she maintained that this wasn't a unique perspective. She described

public education as having "evolved" and said that she believed most educators considered

education through a whole child lens. She reinforced this view by explaining that public school

no longer consisted of rote academics and rigor and that there was a general understanding

among educators that school encompassed such areas as well-being and family engagement and

providing students with the supports they needed to grow. Her belief that the whole child is the

essence of education is further reinforced by her reasons for joining the Enlightened initiative.

She explained that she decided to join the district's whole child initiative because it aligned with

her "personal philosophy of education" and her "mindset," and she wanted the additional

"feedback" and guidance from the district. This also suggests that she understood that they

needed help with implementing the various components of the whole child, rather than help in adopting the mindset.

Her descriptions of the school also suggest Ms. Jones believed that support for the whole child was embedded in the school and that she believed that everyone adhered – or should adhere – to a similar vision and similar practices. Ms. Jones consistently used the terms, "we" or "our" when describing the definition of the whole child and the work they are doing to support the whole child. She stated that "I'm a whole child educator and my colleagues are whole child educators." Examples provided by the staff and PTO officer reinforced the view that she expected all staff to behave in ways that supported the whole child. One staff member described how the principles of the whole child experience are continually stressed in the school and how Ms. Jones stayed committed to the whole child approach even when other priorities take precedence. He cited the example of how during testing season she still makes time to weave SEL and equity into the day.

However, interviews with staff and the PTO officer also suggest that not everyone in the school had the buy-in for the whole child that Ms. Jones described. While those interviewed made comments that implied they believed in the approach, they didn't think this was true for all of their colleagues. One staff member said that there had been challenges with "our experienced teachers." He elaborated, "a lot of times they are set in their ways and they are used to dealing with children a certain way. And so changing that mindset, that has been a challenge from the start." He added that they sometimes have a teacher visit another school that is doing a great job with whole child development, they coach them, or they model some of the practices for them. The other two staff members agreed and mentioned the positive changes they had seen in the last year in teacher attitudes and growth.

Components

 While Ms. Jones clearly defined the whole child as the whole person, her explanation of

the various elements encompassed by this definition continued to expand throughout the

interviews, supporting her perspective that the whole child was not a specific program but a

philosophy, and suggesting that she was still in the process of identifying the various programs

and components that can enact the approach. For example, when initially asked for her

definition, she said, "my thoughts about whole child is that it's really whole person," but she

then described how this involved supporting the adults in the building so that staff and teachers

could better support the students. There were several times she even described the whole child

as the whole adult since she viewed it as so important to the success of the approach. A little bit

later, she equated the whole child with social emotional learning, stating, "I think a lot about

social emotional learning. And I think about not just in the moment what our children need, but

also like, again, the, the long term, right?" One of her early explanations for the whole child was

social emotional learning, and she returned to it several times, at one point stating that she

paired SEL with the whole child. As we spoke more, she added that she considered mental

health counseling and a safe, caring environment as part of the approach. She explained that

the whole child experience should teach both children's minds and their hearts and that

understanding and supporting a child's background and experience was an aspect of the whole

child.

 As we continued to discuss Raven and the programs offered by the school, Ms. Jones

said that the whole child also included exposure to new ideas and experiences, provided

rigorous learning experiences, cultivated a joy of learning, and involved family and community

engagement. She described how the many extracurricular activities available at the school,

which include producing plays and a movie, as well as introductions to art and different cultures,

expose students to activities they might not otherwise experience and therefore support the whole child. She also suggested that the dual-language arts program and a class that she created and taught to 5th graders on financial management were part of the whole child approach. She described both of these programs as expanding a student's learning beyond the basics and providing a more holistic education. As she explained it, "learning about other cultures also helps to strengthen our own sense of self and efficacy and identity," as well as supports academic outcomes. Later in the conversation, Ms. Jones recognized family engagement as an aspect of the whole child. She also explained that creating a "home-school partnership" and having relationships with the families helps to provide for all aspects of the student.

Being new to the Enlightened program, data from the interviews with Ms. Jones suggest that she was still learning all that the whole child model encompassed beyond the philosophy. And yet she described the major components and concepts of the approach by the end of the interviews. While she continued to view caring for the whole adult and SEL as the cornerstones of the whole child, she also recognized other elements that provide a holistic vision of school and student development and learning. The many components that she ultimately described as elements of the whole child reinforce her understanding that the whole child is a way of viewing school and not a specific program or programs. Although identified as one of the most successful schools at implementing the approach, staff at Raven were continuing to understand the whole child components and implement Ms. Jones' vision.

Factors of Success

The interviews with Ms. Jones suggest that she viewed the main factors of their success to be the positive culture and climate for students and adults, and the strong relationships. She said that relationships at the school were their "secret sauce" and described the school's loving, caring, yet rigorous environment as an important aspect of the whole child. She explained that

part of building that culture involved a shared language, which was provided by their SEL

programs and suggested that creating the shared language doesn't need to be through a

purchased program. The program Raven implemented in her first year as principal was created

by a school team that included their newly hired school counselor. The team reviewed the areas

they wanted to teach and then developed monthly themes, such as friendship or community.

Ms. Jones said they purchased the Leader in Me curriculum three years later because they

wanted something more "robust" and integrated into their "school dynamic." The Leader in Me

curriculum provides resources for families, students, and staff and is in a shared language that

the students understand. Elaborating on the theme of SEL, she explained that principals should

understand the elements of SEL and internalize the lessons. She said, "I think leaders have to be

connected to their source and connected to their why." In addition, she explained that principals

should tend to teacher well-being since how they are feeling impacts the way they work with

the students.

Question 2: Defining the Principal's Role

In this section, I will present the findings on how the principal defines her role in relation

to the whole child, her vision (defined as her beliefs, aims, and knowledge), and her practices. A

major finding from the case study of Raven is the alignment between Ms. Jones' beliefs, aims,

and knowledge (her vision), and between her vision and practices, thus creating and

communicating a coherent and consistent vision for the whole child through her actions to

students, staff, families, and the local community. Ms. Jones responded to many of the

interview questions with a story. The stories and examples she offered further illustrate this

connection and highlight how intertwined the identified themes are with each other. To better

illustrate this alignment, I combined the findings of her vision and practices and present them in

four main themes: view of school, view of growth and development, view of school environment, and valuing people as a foundation of vision and practices.

Her belief in people and the value she has of people and relationships are evident throughout the interviews and the documents. She said that the cornerstone of her leadership is her love and this is a theme that runs through all of the areas described in the sections below. I purposefully placed her belief in people last because it is foundational and it is easier to perceive its influence by starting from the bigger perspective of her vision for school rather than the granularity of how she establishes positive relationships. I therefore organized the sections from big picture to details, starting with her vision of school, followed by her vision of growth and development, school environment, and interpersonal interactions. At the end of each of these sections, I summarize the beliefs, aims, knowledge, and practices demonstrated in the section. I also decided to describe her vision and practices before the findings on how she views her role, because they exemplify her role in carrying forward that vision.

View of School

As suggested by her equating her education philosophy with the components of the whole child, interviews with Ms. Jones indicate that her concept of school is multi-faceted. They suggest that she views school as a place to provide students with the tools and supports they need for all aspects of their success, an institution that fights poverty and promotes equity, and a place of joy and love that fosters a love of learning and teaches both a child's heart and their head. Her vision of school as an institution that provides for the enrichment and success of all students is inherently connected with her definition of the whole child. It also illustrates the intersections between her vision and her practices and her systems orientation. Her perceptions of school as a mechanism for social justice, as embedded in the community, and as a foundation for life-long success are described in the next sections.

Social Justice. Data from the interviews with Ms. Jones suggest that she envisions school as a place to fight poverty and improve equity by providing students with the tools and supports they need so that outcomes for all students improve. This perspective is aligned with her belief in the whole child. Greater equity is also one of the chief reasons that Ms. Jones pursued the dual-language and arts program for the whole school. She said that she found it "unjust and unfair" that not all students received the advantages of dual-language education. She explained that "learning a language is a fortifying measure to all areas of success" and that the students in the program had better academic outcomes and more exposure to new experiences. Elaborating on this idea, she said that she believed that as an anti-racist district, Raven should "promote equity." She stated, "That means we promote access to all levels of exposure." She viewed the dual-language arts program as providing that access, as well as supporting the whole child. She was also extremely proud of Raven's CES program and their efforts to include students with an autistic diagnosis in the general education environment, and to "really bring our students together" in both the self-contained setting and the general education setting.

Staff and the PTO officer agreed that the principal had a goal of equity and preparing students for success. One staff member explicitly said that the principal's main aim was equity and another wanted to join the school because of the focus on equity and improving the lives of racially and economically disadvantaged students. Moreover, when asked if she thought she had a strong social justice lens, Ms. Jones said "absolutely…. I think that's what keeps me going. Knowing that doing all that we can to give kids coming from disadvantage backgrounds the opportunity to, again, reach the high levels of success that we know they're able to achieve."

Her desire for equity was particularly evident when she discussed a class she created and taught on financial decisions to fifth graders at the school. The class also represents a good example of how she translates her vision into actions. She said that she "abhorred" poverty and

so was determined to teach children about money and about financial management. Among other activities, Ms. Jones taught them about mortgages and the stock market. She said she calls them "future millionaires" and brought in different professionals so they could start envisioning a future career. She strongly believed that these lessons were vital for the future success of her students and saw her job as providing them exposure to the knowledge and belief in themselves to succeed. She said,

> And, I, we, haven't served them well and especially for children living in poverty, to not tell, teach them about this. They may not get it at home. And we, we haven't done our job and I refuse. I'm going to do my job. I'm going to at least explain some of the basics…but I fundamentally believe that if we expose our kids to these lessons and concepts earlier in life, it's going to propel them, you know, forward and faster and farther.

Foundation for Life-Long Success. The financial class described above also illustrates her belief that school should support a student's life-long success. Demonstrating a big picture perspective of school, the interviews with Ms. Jones suggest that she envisions school as a place to provide students with the tools and supports they need for all aspects of their future. She said that she viewed school as "planting the seeds" for children to be global thinkers, creative, and independent, and described elementary school as setting the foundation for future success. This view was reinforced when she said that part of her vision is for her students to do amazing things after they leave the school. She also explained that she was interested in the whole child approach because it would teach students the skills they would need to be successful in middle school, high school, college, and life. She said that she thinks "a lot about the long term and lifelong experiences of our children."

One staff member described one of the principal's aims as "having students leave the school empowered to be leaders, to take ownership over their own learning and their own lives and make their own decisions." Indeed, one of the reasons Ms. Jones said she selected the Leader in Me curriculum was because it strengthened student self-confidence as well as taught SEL and leadership skills. The PTO officer described one of the goals of the school as being for students to see themselves as bigger than their surroundings. The PTO officer and a staff member also spoke about Ms. Jones' desire for students to advocate for themselves. Ms. Jones described one of her aims was to expand students' learning and knowledge about themselves and the world, and that SEL curriculum was part of that vision.

Embedded in the Community. Her belief that school should cultivate the foundations for the life-long success of students, expose them to cultural and global experiences, and be a force for equity reflect her view that school is integrated with society. Data from the interviews indicate that Ms. Jones has a systems orientation and her descriptions of the school suggest a belief in a fluidity between the community and the school. For example, at one point in the interviews, she expressed excitement about a potential teacher from the neighborhood who was looking for a position specifically at Raven because she wanted to give back to the community. In another example, Ms. Jones was thrilled when a former student embraced their elementary school teacher when she was out in the neighborhood. She said that part of her vision is for students to continue to be part of the community and described how happy she was that former students continue to return to the school to say hello.

Furthermore, the interaction with the community was two-way; she instituted a practice for the students to give back to neighborhood organizations, either through donations to a local art therapy organization or by delivering thank you cards to local businesses. One of the activities in the dual-language program was writing and producing a movie in Spanish which

was shown at the local movie theater, and she described how the school Parent Teacher

Organization (PTO) was leading an initiative to change the name of the school from that of a

former President who enslaved people and that all of the community – students, families, staff,

and the surrounding neighborhood – was voting on the new name. She also established

partnerships with national organizations to provide students with a global perspective and with

community organizations such as local businesses, summer camps, the local low-incoming house

organization, and cultural venues. She said that "we want our kids to continually be curious and

open-minded to learning about the world around them."

Ms. Jones' systems orientation was also prominent in her descriptions of the

connections she established across the spheres of the school community. As will be described in

future sections, she interacted with students, families, all staff, the community and the district,

as well as having the global orientation noted above. Her big picture perspective is also evident

in her view of growth and learning and the effect all experiences have on a child's capacity to

learn, which will be described in the next section. She explained the principal's role as having "a

more broad and deep approach to looking at things." She also observed that it was critical to see

"the big picture of things. And to also … get on the dance floor from time to time." All of the

participants described being fluid enough to move between both mindsets.

In summary of the findings on her view of school, Ms. Jones envisions school as

providing the means for students to overcome poverty, expand their perspective, and gain the

skills to be successful in life. She has a systems orientation and sees the school as integral to

both its surroundings and to the broader society. She aimed to expose students to new ideas

and a wider view of their world and what they can accomplish. She did this by making

connections and building relationships with community, district, and national groups and by

implementing lessons outside of the basic academic subjects, and added SEL, dual-language, financial management, and art curriculum to the schedule.

View of Growth and Development

Connected to Ms. Jones' desire to expand student perspective and to provide students with the tools to overcome poverty and racial discrimination is her vision of growth and development. The data from the interviews suggest that this desire was grounded in a belief that everyone can learn, the knowledge that people are impacted negatively and positively by their experiences and environments, and an understanding that learning occurs everywhere and throughout one's life. Ms. Jones' own love of learning and continuous self-improvement, and her desire to spread that joy of learning to others, was evident throughout the interviews. These areas illuminate both her view of the whole child as enriching all aspects of a child's life and the alignment between her practices and vision. As will be described in the next sections, she recognized the effect of trauma on learning, believed in personal growth and that everyone can learn, and provided for growth and development of staff.

Impact of Experiences. As already described, Ms. Jones perceived school as embedded into the external community. In addition, her responses to the interview questions indicate that she viewed school and learning as taking place in all environments and not just in a school. Recognizing that learning occurred everywhere in a child's life, she explained that all experiences, good and bad, and in and out of school, are learning experiences. She described life as a "classroom" and understood that students learn at the "bus stop," "walking down the street," and "on vacation." Moreover, she saw parents as a child's first teacher. She explained that students have "already had the informal schooling of what they've experienced in their homes and their communities and their neighborhoods." She said that students bring their whole selves to school and that educators need to look at a student's "whole story" to best help

them grow and learn since students bring those experiences, both good and bad, to school with them.

There are also examples that Ms. Jones understood that students experience trauma and the impact this can have on their development. She spoke about Maslow's hierarchy and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and described schools needing to provide for all aspects of a child's growth. She explained that when children are "stressed," they can't "really focus." She also described the need for a connection with and acceptance by others as a driving force of child development and said that schools should meet that need. She shared a story of how early in her career she did an ethnographic interview of one of her students who was from El Salvador. The student spoke about her experiences with the civil war in the country and the impact that it had on her. Ms. Jones described it as one of the most "impactful experiences for me as an educator." She said it was "eye-opening" and helped her connect with the student and support her needs.

To accommodate this belief, Ms. Jones put in place several practices. Every fall she takes staff who are interested on a walking tour of the neighborhood so that they have a feel for the area and the environment where students live. She said,

> So we do that every year during preservice week as a way to help folks, especially those newer to the community or new staff and new hires, to have an idea of where our students live and where they're coming from. I think that it does, you need to have that level of awareness, right?

She also instituted a practice of the leadership team greeting students and families every morning. Although this was already happening when she started at Raven, she systematized the practice and made it intentional. She created a schedule for the team and a staff member noted that she finds a substitute if someone can't be there. Another staff member described how they

use that time to learn which children may not have eaten that morning or were living in a shelter. They then passed that information to the social worker who reaches out to the child and/or the parent to provide assistance.

Her knowledge of the effect experiences have on a child also led her to create a wellness team of a school counselor, a social worker, and two behavioral technicians who she retitled "success coaches." The success coaches work with the children to help them understand their actions and how they can improve rather than pull them out of class and take disciplinary actions. Ms. Jones offered that two of her first actions when starting as principal were to implement a restorative disciplinary program and to hire the school counselor so that students were supported rather than punished. The counselor provides grief counseling for those who experience loss and trauma, services that the principal describes as having to be "a part of what happens in schools." The services are provided for families and staff as well. Ms. Jones elaborated by stating, "when the adults are not well, then that trickles over to the students," further illustrating her understanding of how environment can affect a child. She explained that if the conditions are not right for teachers and staff to be their best selves, then the whole child will suffer. As a principal, she feels she must "remember the way you treat Ms. Johnson will have an impact on her day, you know, and how she treats her 20 scholars."

Continual Personal Growth and Learning. Ms. Jones' understanding that experiences can have both a negative and positive impact on learning and that learning occurs everywhere demonstrates her belief in continuous growth and learning. The interviews suggest that Ms. Jones wanted to instill students with a joy and desire to learn. Three of the four interviewees noted the principal's growth mindset. One of them said that the principal "is a believer that everyone can grow and learn" and that she frequently references this belief. The PTO officer described one of the goals of the school as being for students to see themselves as bigger than

their surroundings and for them to challenge themselves and continuously grow and learn. The

PTO officer and a staff member also spoke about Ms. Jones' belief that all children can change

through understanding, explanation, and communication.

Ms. Jones shared that she also believed in continually improving herself. She said that

she considers herself a "lifelong learner," is "curious about the world," and loves to learn and

have new experiences. She said, "My educational philosophy really is my life philosophy, and

that is to love and to learn, right? And so to be curious about the world in which we live and to

become my best self, and also just self-actualize." She explained that she doesn't want to stop

growing and improving and described "geeking out" when reading leadership books and

learning new theories and practices. She described a number of books that she was reading or

had read and how she pulled out ideas from them to try in her own practice. A staff member

and the PTO officer also provided stories that indicate her desire for self-improvement. The staff

member described how Ms. Jones would "submerse" herself in the literature before bringing a

new idea to the leadership team and the PTO officer observed that she was always asking for

feedback.

Her desire for self-knowledge was also evident in the interviews. She said that

understanding yourself, doing the hard work of self-exploration, and knowing your biases are

important for a principal. She claimed that she had grown a lot as a leader and a person since

undertaking the role of principal and described how one needed "emotional intelligence" and to

continually learn. Ms. Jones said, "that's my goal just to continue evolving in this role as a

principal. Not with perfection, but with understanding and grace for myself and for others." She

thought that this was particularly important when taking a whole child approach and that those

looking to implement the approach should know who they are as a person and leader, and that

they should recognize and work on areas that should be improved. She said,

I would encourage folks to really get to know themselves … so that self work, if that

makes any sense. Like who are you as a person, as a leader? How, you know, what are

your biases? What are your stereotypes? What are your areas for improvement? What

are your strengths? You know, all the beauty. So I would encourage them to do that

work.

She also thought that continual improvement was important for the school as a whole.

She said that change is one of the few things consistent in life and therefore everyone needed to

be prepared to change and adapt to current circumstances. Even if Raven accomplished their

goals, she said that she does not want them to sit back and rest on their laurels; there was

always something new they could try, difficult topics they could approach, or ways they could

improve.

Staff Growth and Development. The way the other participants spoke about Ms. Jones

demonstrated that she cares about the staffs' deeper learning and personal growth as well.

They said that rather than enforcing a practice, she would talk with people about their

understanding of a situation and help them to understand a better way of handling it. The PTO

officer gave an example of how a staff member did something upsetting and the principal did

not reprimand them. Instead, she spoke to them about the situation and helped them

understand how their words could have been interpreted and potentially distressing. According

to the PTO officer, Ms. Jones, encouraged the person to think about how their statement could

have been said in a different, less upsetting manner. A staff member also commented on how

the principal asks how they can help a staff member grow and change rather than discipline

them. These two examples also show how she models the behavior that she wants staff to use

in their own interactions. Two of the staff members described using a similar technique. They

spoke about working closely with teachers who weren't accepting or using the precepts of

restorative justice they were expected to take when dealing with student behavior issues. They described developing creative ways for the teacher to understand the harm they could be doing, such as recoding a teacher's interaction with students so they could see how their behavior impacts students.

According to staff, the principal also took an interest in and supported the staffs' personal and professional growth. This is demonstrated in the example provided above, but all of the staff interviewed described how the principal encouraged them to try new ideas and expand their knowledge of different subjects. One example is the staff member who is the whole child lead. The principal knew that the staff member had an interest in this area and asked if they would be interested in leading the project. Another interviewee described how the principal asked all staff members to read a selected book each summer. They then discussed it during preservice and spent 15 minutes during each staff meeting discussing how it could impact their teaching and interactions.

To conclude this section on Ms. Jones' view of growth and learning, learning and the joy of learning are a part of Ms. Jones' philosophy of life and this is observable in her actions and beliefs. She also has knowledge of ACEs and the impact of trauma on behavior and learning. To counter the effects of trauma, she is working to instill a culture of teaching and compassion for students and staff rather than punishment, as well as creating a wellness team, systematizing morning greetings, hiring a school counselor, and connecting students and families to external social services. Not only does she spend time on her own learning and self-improvement, she supports staff growth and models positive behaviors. She believes that everyone can learn and that everyone should practice continuous growth and improvement. She considers self-discovery an important aspect of being a whole child leader.

View of School Environment

To support her view that student and staff learning and continuous development is affected by environment and experiences, interviews with Ms. Jones indicate that she aimed for a loving, caring, school climate that projected rigor, a sense of community, collaboration, and family and community engagement. In this section, each of these areas will be reviewed in more detail.

Caring Environment. Ms. Jones prioritized creating a positive climate where love, joy, and learning flourish according to all of the staff and the PTO officer. As described in the last section, she believed that students need to feel loved, safe, and cared for to do their best. The data from the interviews suggest that because of this belief, she purposefully sought to provide a loving atmosphere. She described school as a child's "second home," and in some cases their first home, and explained that students needed to be embraced with love. The school website is filled with hearts on every page, and Ms. Jones spoke effusively about her love, using the word "love" nine times in one interview. As she told me, "one of the points of my leadership, and especially as it relates to the whole child, is my love." She explained how wonderful it was to see students run to school, happy to start their day. She said that it affirms that they are doing their job and are "on the right track."

All of the participants described the joyful, loving environment and the principal's goal to expand it. For example, the CES Coordinator, who also manages the social media account, said that at the end of the year nearly everyone mentioned that the school was a loving space. She said that one family described entering the school as "coming into a big hug," a description that she was proud of and that she thought epitomized the school environment. The PTO officer especially found it a joyful, happy place and staff described the principal as greeting students with love every morning and said that the school had "a family friendly vibe."

In addition, all three staff members and the PTO officer described Ms. Jones as focusing on the students first and making sure that they felt safe and cared for. They also said that this was an expectation for the whole school. One staff member described how all staff, including maintenance, security, and food service, attend school meetings and are asked to treat students and families with love and kindness. Another said that "she makes it very clear that she, she's there for the kids and we are there for the kids." One of the staff noted that the leadership team cares about creating a welcoming, caring community and sets an expectation for teachers to prioritize it as well.

While the principal said that the friendly atmosphere was already in place when she became principal, the caregiver and staff member who had been in the school when the former principal was still there disagreed. Both of them described the school as friendly during the previous principal's tenure but noted that there had been tension and cliques. The staff member described how she could hear the teacher in the room next to her use a tone that made her "cringe" and said that you could tell when teachers were having a bad day. However, within 6 months of Ms. Jones starting that type of behavior stopped and now she never sees it. Both the PTO officer and the staff member ascribe the positive change in atmosphere to Ms. Jones.

Although the principal did not claim recognition for the friendly atmosphere, she does say that she made it more consistent, as well as made it an expectation of staff. All the staff agreed. They said that she modeled friendliness, cooperation, and encouragement to succeed. Ms. Jones also described establishing practices that demonstrated her commitment to her vision. For example, the ritual of greeting students in the morning provides not only a time to learn about the student, but to connect. Ms. Jones said that the Leader in Me curriculum that the school is implementing also matches her vision of the school and brings consistency to the lessons. The staff particularly emphasized her commitment to her beliefs. One staff member

described how she has the same expectation of kindness and community for everyone, including office staff, assistants, and custodial staff.

Rigor. Although Raven was described as having a warm and loving atmosphere, Ms. Jones was emphatic that empathy and high expectations go together. She expected and encouraged everyone to be their best selves and described herself as a "warm demander." She explained this as letting students know that "we love you, but also we want what's best for you and we're also going to tell you what you did wrong and when you can improve." She wanted the students to understand that they were held accountable for their actions because they were cared for and that she wants to see them "achieve and excel." Describing that her personal perspective was to "love and learn," every weekly family newsletter reviewed starts with the phrase, "It's a great day to love, learn, and lead at Raven." One staff member said that "I think she wants students to leave [Raven] feeling loved, ready to leave, but also academically prepared to succeed in middle school and high school." Another saw the principal's main aim as providing students with a strong academic background and a global mindset.

Data from the interviews suggest that Ms. Jones also held everyone accountable to doing their best and sought to provide the resources so that they could be their best selves. She and several staff explained that she aimed to create an atmosphere where students and staff are treated as individuals with their own needs and desires and given the space and safety to achieve them. She said that "we're a friendly environment, feels like a family. And that means that we don't always see eye to eye, but we can agree to respect, we can respectfully agree to disagree. And I love that." The AP interviewed described her wanting "a climate of discourse where people can actually talk out their differences no matter who you are." He continued, "You could be a pre-K student all the way up to our 20-year veteran teacher, just talk out your differences." He said that this was modeled by the principal and saw it occur in meetings and

with students. All of the five participants described an ethos of openness and expectation for self-advocacy and self-awareness, thoughtful discourse and discussion around difficult topics, safety to fail, and awareness that basic needs should be supported to enhance learning.

Sense of Community. According to staff and the PTO officer, Ms. Jones' commitment to a friendly, supportive environment helped to create a sense of community. Through her stories and comments, it was clear that she valued the bonds in a community and appreciated the connections felt between staff, families, and students. For example, she said that she was proud of the work the community was doing to change the name of the school. She explained, "it's very gratifying to see the community come together for a common purpose, a common mission that is aligned to shared values." She also described how greeting families and students every morning "embodies that sense of community and being together working together." She said that it was something she would suggest all principals do. Furthermore, according to staff, she put in place practices that encourage camaraderie, such as classroom morning meetings, community meetings, and buddies between CES students and fourth and fifth graders. The weekly emails reviewed all contain news that showcase pictures of joyful community, share stories about classrooms and students, and announce activities.

All of the staff members and the PTO officer named community as one of the principal's main aims. A staff member and the PTO officer, both of whom were at the school under the former principal, explained that while there was a strong community before Ms. Jones started, it has grown even stronger and attribute this to the joy, the respect, the relationships, and the support that the principal has brought to the school. They both described how the community comes together to support each other, be it by providing grocery money for a needy family or clothing for a family who lost their house in a fire. Two staff members noted that it was not just teachers, families, and students who Ms. Jones envisioned as part of the community, but office

staff, teacher assistance, and custodians. One said that she helps make them feel "like they are part of something and that they have a role in the development of children."

Collaboration. The sense of community was bolstered by her collaboration, according to interviews with staff. All of the staff provided examples that suggest that Ms. Jones is a collaborative leader who gathers input from the community, delegates responsibility to staff, and supports teamwork. Ms. Jones spoke about many of the decisions made as being by "we" or said they were "our" decisions and described the various teams she worked with. One staff member described Ms. Jones as wanting "a collaborative atmosphere." Ms. Jones explained how much she appreciates the bond teachers have with each other and creates opportunities to support their connection. In an example of her collaboration, Ms. Jones explained that the district recently provided Raven with additional funding and that she would be gathering input from staff on how to best spend the additional funds. She also said that she had held roundtables with families and teachers to hear recommendations for the budgeting process and described creating a collaborative team to develop the SEL program they used before they switched to the Leader in Me curriculum.

Ms. Jones and the staff also described a strong leadership team that made many decisions together and checked in with each other on progress and their assigned leadership roles. For example, the whole child lead explained that he oversaw a number of initiatives, including helping to build the schedule, leading morning meetings and community meetings, and leading a planned culture and climate classroom walk-through where they assessed a variety of whole child tenets. He said that "one of the great things about our principal is I think she gives a lot of autonomy." The two other staff agreed. Ms. Jones was also lauded by staff members for developing collaborative teams at various levels. One staff member explained that

Ms. Jones models collaboration both with staff in the school and with district leadership, citing ways that she bounces ideas off of their assistant superintendent.

Family and Community Engagement. Data from the interviews also point to the importance Ms. Jones placed in developing ongoing relationships with families and the surrounding community. Through her stories, it was evident that Ms. Jones both interacted with the local community and knew about the community, the surrounding demographics, and the undercurrents of the neighborhood atmosphere. She described working with a local church, visiting the local public housing complex, going door-to-door to introduce herself, and creating the [Raven] Elementary Safety Hub. The story Ms. Jones told of how the [Raven] Elementary Safety Hub was established is indicative of the principal's belief in community engagement and her active pursuit of building those relationships. According to Ms. Jones, she had a conversation at a students' football game with a parent who ran a non-profit organization and they discussed how sad and helpless they felt about the students and staff members who had lost loved ones to neighborhood gun violence. They realized that between them, they had the means to set up meetings with people in the community to be both proactive and reactive to neighborhood violence or potential threats of violence. The meetings take place in the school and are attended by concerned neighbors, the local housing authority, police, and representatives from the local governing board. At the monthly meetings, they talk about the "pulse of the community" and what actions they can take. She described their goal as "really simple, to embrace our community with love." She also wants to get more involved in the neighborhood. She said that developing neighborhood partnerships is one of the activities that she would recommend to other principals who want to implement a whole child approach.

The community engagement and civic duty was spread to the students and the staff as well. In what she called a "passion" of hers, Ms. Jones initiated a service day the Friday before

the Martin Luther King holiday. All students participate in two activities: They raise money for an organization that provides art therapy for students impacted by gun violence and every class picks a service project to do. In addition, a staff member described the students going to different neighborhood businesses to give them thank you cards during Halloween. Ms. Jones described having students and staff expand the "the spirit of generosity and kindness to others beyond our four walls" and helping others "within our own community" as "beautiful."

In summary, Ms. Jones' view of the school environment is one of love and caring, rigor, sense of community, collaboration, and family and community engagement. Ms. Jones demonstrates her belief in these areas and her aim to create them through a variety of means. She makes expectations consistent, expects everyone to do their best, partners with the community and family, models behaviors, establishes routines, and practices distributed leadership.

The Intersection of Vision and Practices: Valuing People and Building Interpersonal Relationships

To create the loving environment described above, data from the interviews indicate that Ms. Jones valued people and recognized that the main business of school was people and relationships. This belief is the foundation of her view of school, growth and learning, and the school environment already described, and aspects of positive relationships and caring have already been evident in the findings for those themes. In addition, the practices she uses to embody this belief highlight the alignment between her vision and practices and her vision of the whole child as caring for the child holistically. This section also showcases her systems orientation as her behavior and interactions with people were consistent across the socio-ecological spheres of students, staff, families, and community.

During the interviews Ms. Jones emphasized many of her points by telling a story that usually involved her interactions with people. Many of them illustrate the connection between her beliefs, aims, knowledge, and practices and the themes described above. One in particular stands out in respect to her building relationships. I had asked her to describe the school culture and the factors that contribute to it. After telling me about the friendly environment and how affirming it is, she switched to describing one girl that she "couldn't reach" who was a fourth grader and in her first year at the school. Ms. Jones told me that she did all sorts of things to make the student comfortable, such as having a special lunch with her and involving her in basketball. She said that she and the girl's mother laughed about it, but no matter what she did, the girl wasn't thriving. While she didn't say it, it obviously still bothered her. The story demonstrates her caring attitude, her regard for relationships and people, her desire to continually self- improve and for students to find the joy in learning, her openness and availability, and her family engagement. By describing this story in response to a question about school climate, it also demonstrates the connection between her inter-personal relationships and the school environment. In this section, I will describe her view of relationships and the practices she uses to enact her view. As will be discussed, her belief in positive relationships and the skills she uses to create them portray *how* she demonstrates her love, her belief in learning, and desire for social justice. The main themes in this section are valuing people and relationships, love and caring, authenticity and openness, listening, and availability.

Valuing People and Relationships. The interviews with Ms. Jones suggest that she believed that people and their interactions are the fundamental drivers of school. She explained that "people fuel this industry, people. We're not automated. We're not artificial intelligence. We're not robotic" and that students are "more than data points." Reinforcing this point, she said that students had stories, backgrounds, and experiences that staff should learn and account

for in lessons and interactions. She continued, "I think at the crux of it, for me, it is really just about working with other humans, you know? And our desire for connection, our desire for a sense of belonging and wanting to meet that need." The interviews with her were populated with descriptions of the people in the school and her interactions with them.

According to all participants, Ms. Jones intentionally built relationships and expected everyone who worked in the school to do the same. Ms. Jones said that they "invest a lot of time and energy" into creating and sustaining the connections with students, families, teachers, and the community. She described the school-based relationships as being one of the main reasons parents would want their children to attend Raven and explained that the most important factors in a child's development are "the people in their lives." She said that "relationships are just so important" and that that "translates from the youngest to the oldest." She added that the relationships are the enabling conditions that create the "friendly environment." Her valuing of people is also reflected in her vision of growth and learning and school. In essence, she pursued a web of positive relationships amongst all people within the school community to support her vision of growth and learning and desire for equity.

Ms. Jones explained that to encourage positive interactions throughout the school, she modeled the behaviors she wanted people to use. She recognized that she was watched and that her actions would have an influence on the staff and on students. She described this by saying that she talks to all students the same way and knows it will encourage other people to do the same. She said, "so it's that consistency and in that approach, and because people are always watching the leader, people are always watching the leader and listening and that translates into things." All of the respondents explained that the principal modeled behavior that supported the whole child and positive relationships. One staff member said that "modeling is a huge" practice used by Ms. Jones. In the following sections, the findings on *how*

she developed positive relationships and *what* she modeled will be described. These sections

particularly highlight the alignment between her vision and practices. As will be seen, she used a

number of practices to model positive relationships and demonstrate her respect for people,

including love and care, authenticity and openness, being available for students, families, and

the community, and being a good listener.

Love and Care. As already described, Ms. Jones desires a loving, caring environment

where all members of the school community—students, families, staff, and community

members—feel welcome and connected to Raven. Interviews with all of the participants

highlight how she demonstrates and models the loving relationships that undergird this positive

environment. Ms. Jones described treating all people the same with "her love" and said that it

was one of the main aspects of her leadership. Her stories were riddled with examples of her

love and kindness. She told me about speaking kindly to families and staff when they were

upset, writing to students during the summer "to show she cares," and reaching out to a

student's grandmother who was worried about her granddaughter. She has a corner in her

office with pillows and books where she reads to students who were having a difficult day.

When we spoke, she had recently visited a local summer camp that was attended by many

Raven students. She said that she went to say hello, let the students know she was thinking of

them, and to bring them snacks. She also instigated the leadership team making calls or visits to

families over the summer to check on students who teachers thought could use assistance over

the break. She called them "summer wellness checks," and said it was a practice that started

during remote learning during the pandemic that she decided to continue and systemize.

Depending on how you count them, the interviews contain a conservatively determined dozen

stories that demonstrate her caring attitude towards students, adults, and community

members.

All of the other participants described Ms. Jones as caring. The PTO officer found that she always seemed "very genuinely concerned," and described her as "very empathetic and very concerned about the social conditions of every student and family at [Raven]. Very, very, very very much so." One staff member noted that her caring demeanor was not "just like a show thing," but that she really cares. Another observed that if Ms. Jones sees that a teacher or staff member is having a tough time, she will talk to them and try to support them. She said that Ms. Jones frequently checks in with staff to see how they are doing on a personal level and not just an instructional level. Two of the staff members explained that creating loving, caring relationships was one of Ms. Jones' aims.

Authenticity and Openness. In addition to practicing care for others, the staff and PTO officer described ways that Ms. Jones is authentic and open. Ms. Jones agreed, stating that the relationships need to be "authentic" and "honest" with both students and adults. She commented several times that she has "honest relationships" and "honest conversations" with families and staff. She said that relationships can get "gritty" and according to one staff member, she "calls it like it is." Ms. Jones said she modeled authenticity by addressing difficult topics, listening, encouraging questions and discussions, and talking about disagreements. She said that you need to be willing to "meet with a parent who's in tears and concerned about their child" and have challenging and difficult conversations about such topics as race and discipline. She describes it as "emotional work," but "the right work." She said that, "I'm affirming them and I'm doing it because I definitely care." She continued, "And they see that and they feel that. Yeah. It's, it's very special. It's also, it's been a beautiful experience." This quote illustrates her aim to be both honest and caring. She demonstrates empathy and concern for the parent, but also recognizes that being truthful and having a difficult conversation is important.

She also commented that she doesn't shy away from unwelcome information. She said that "I want us to continue to lean into tough topics, and questions that families have as best we can." The PTO officer described how Ms. Jones publicly acknowledged that there are issues and said that while she can't make everyone happy, anything can be solved with open honest dialogue and by working together towards the same goal. She said that Ms. Jones doesn't "throw anybody under the bus," accepts feedback and criticism from staff members, and "takes ownership" if things don't go well. Two staff members agreed and said Ms. Jones' approach was that while not everything can be fixed, she would gather people's views and opinions to determine the best solution. While Ms. Jones didn't mention trust except when asked about it, the caregiver and one staff member noted that these actions help to build a trusting relationship.

Listener. According to all of the participants, another of the practices Ms. Jones uses to develop positive relationships is being a good listener. They all described Ms. Jones taking the time to listen and understand their perspective. Ms. Jones explained how she initiated conversations about differences so that people feel "heard." She said that everyone is "entitled" to their view and demonstrated respect for their opinions even when she didn't agree. She described how she had a recent conversation with a staff member who wanted to add another program to their already full schedule and how she had to act as a gatekeeper and tell her she was already doing enough. She explained that she said, "I hear you, but isn't sometimes less is more. So we had a nice little philosophical kind of conversation around that. And not that we reached any resolution, but we heard both of each other's perspectives." The PTO officer also described her as "fair," saying that she sees various perspectives and tries to understand the story behind an issue. Furthermore, she said that the principal was always talking to people and asking them questions.

Availability. Another relationship building practice Ms. Jones demonstrated was availability. According to all of the participants, Ms. Jones was very present and available for staff, students, caregivers, and the community. For example, she greeted families and students every morning. She went to the local subsidized housing community to talk to families about the school and attended an aftercare program they hosted. She said that she's "very visible at arrival, dismissal, gone around just done some door knocking." She said that most people would recognize her. Furthermore, she said, "the increased visibility is so important I think for school leaders. You just have to really be there." According to three of the four participants, Ms. Jones knows the name of all 500 students, and one staff member mentioned that she knew something about every student's family.

The staff and PTO officer provided other details on how available she is. According to the two participants, she had an open-door policy and a staff member said that Ms. Jones was always willing to take five or ten minutes to check in or respond to a question. She said that Ms. Jones also floats around the building and stops in classrooms to see if a teacher needs a five-minute break. Another staff member said, "I've worked with a lot of principals. This is the only principal that I've seen lead classes, is in lunch duty, recess duty, cleaning the hallways, like models, everything that she expects." He explained it as one way she shows her support for the whole child. The PTO officer concurred and spoke about how available she was to families in addition to the students. She specified how quickly Ms. Jones responds to emails or a text and described her as "approachable." She also explained that Ms. Jones has office hours for students who want to speak with her and that she frequently sees Ms. Jones "sitting and talking with students." She said that she tells other family members who have concerns to reach out to the principal because she always responds. Illustrating how committed and present Ms. Jones is, the PTO officer also described how Ms. Jones came in on a weekend to help her and another family

member paint the set for the play. She said that the principal "doesn't ask anything of her staff or others that she's working with that she's not willing to do herself."

In summary of this section on valuing people and positive relationships, Ms. Jones used a number of relationship-building practices to enact the respect for people that underlies her aim for a positive, loving environment, her view of growth and development, and her view of school. These practices showcase the alignment of her vision and practices by creating positive relationships and a respectful, loving, and supportive environment for all. Ms. Jones' belief in people, her aim to demonstrate her love to all, and her understanding of the importance of loving relationships for positive growth and development are a cornerstone of her vision and practices. She demonstrates this vision through consistency in her interactions and by modeling the practices she wants everyone in the school to employ: caring, authenticity, openness, listening, and availability.

Summary of Vision and Practices. As presented in this section, Ms. Jones prioritizes creating the conditions to support student learning and implementing her belief that schools should educate the whole child. Reports of her practices from Ms. Jones and other interviewees demonstrated a close alignment with her aims, beliefs, and knowledge. They illustrate the cohesion between her belief and understanding in the importance of a loving, accountable environment, a supportive community, attending to student basic needs as well as their higher-level learning, and continuous growth with her actions in modeling positive, trusting relationships and interactions and putting in place administrative processes. A summary of the specific elements of her vision and practices identified in the interviews is available in Appendix G.

Defining the Principal's Role

Subquestion one of the second research question seeks to understand how the principal defined their role in supporting the whole child. I decided to place the findings for this question after the findings from her vision and practices since her description of her role encapsulates the themes described in her vision and practices. While Ms. Jones primarily spoke about her role as being an administrator who ensures teachers have what they need to be successful, responses from a range of interviews indicate her role also supports her vision of the whole child and demonstrates the connection of her beliefs and practices and her engagement across the socio-ecological spheres encircling the school. As the following findings elaborate, Ms. Jones also spoke about the multiple roles she has as a principal and as an educator, although she understood her main role to be an administrator. The findings identified in her vision and practices also suggest that she cultivated the whole child initiative, built relationships and community, and created conditions and systems that helped spread her vision of school. In this section, three emerging themes will be discussed: 1) directing the whole child initiative; 2) her role as administrator; 3) her multi-faceted approach.

Directing the Whole Child Initiative. Even though interviews with staff suggest that Ms. Jones practiced distributed leadership in support of the whole child initiative, staff and the PTO officer agreed that she was the pulse behind the effort and that she demonstrated her support by prioritizing actions that benefited the whole child. As already described, Ms. Jones believed in the approach; she said that her personal philosophy aligned with the whole child. Furthermore, the alignment of her vision and actions, the consistency of her practices, and her specific practices all demonstrated to staff, families, and the community that she prioritized the whole child. This is particularly illustrated in to the important she placed on building relationships, creating a positive culture and community, and instituting supports for students that addressed

the internal and external impacts on student health and well-being, as discussed in the findings

on vision and practices.

Her Role as Administrator. One of the ways Ms. Jones said she led the whole child

initiative was through administrative practices. When asked about her role in supporting the

whole child, Ms. Jones mainly spoke about being an administrator, particularly in creating

conditions to keep teachers happy and at their best. Ms. Jones explained that since her role was

not interacting with the students, her primary job was to facilitate the work of teachers and to

support them. When initially asked about her role in supporting the whole child, she replied that

she was an administrator who obtained and delivered resources for teachers. She described

such administrative tasks as making sure that teachers had substitutes when they needed them

and that they got their pay on time. She said that "I find my role as principal is to be more of a

supporter of the whole adult to facilitate their work to, for them to be able to do their work

well." She believed that a healthy teacher led to a healthy student, and that keeping teachers

happy and well was her main role in supporting the whole child.

However, as Ms. Jones continued to describe her role, it expanded into other areas that

create and maintain systems that support her vision of school. She provided the example of

developing systems and connecting administrative pieces to develop consistency. Other

participants confirmed this view with descriptions they provided of systems she implemented

that codify her vision. Ms. Jones said that "you have to set the enabling conditions, I would say is

probably like a, a really, that's what I feel like my job is mostly my job is to, to administrate, to

put things together." For example, Ms. Jones emphasized the importance of strong-community

partnerships and said that she was responsible for creating them. She created several systems

to support this goal, such as open office hours for families, a procedure for administration to

greet families at all of the doors every morning, and home visits. In addition, while the school

already had a reputation for having a friendly atmosphere, Ms. Jones wanted to strengthen it.

She said that she helped do that through "consistency," "clarity," and "kind of formalizing it."

She further explained that she saw her role as "to continue to make it consistent" by putting in

place "those administrative pieces that keep everything running." Other examples indicate Ms.

Jones promoted her vision of social justice and inclusivity by creating a system of buddy

classrooms with the CES classes, formalizing summer wellness checks with students, creating a

financial literacy class for 4th and 5th grade students, and, pursuing the expansion of Raven's

bilingual program.

Her Multi-faceted Approach. Although Ms. Jones initially described her role as an

administrator, a review of the interviews indicated that she expanded her initial description into

other areas, leaving the impression of complexity. Many of the roles she described are

frequently considered part of the caring professions. While she consistently described her main

role as that of administrator, at various times during the conversation she portrayed herself as

being "a coach," "a gatekeeper," "a teacher," "a mentor," a relationship builder, a community

builder, and a caregiver. At one point, she described taking off her "teacher hat" and putting on

her "principal hat." She said that she feels "like I am the lead teacher" and "this whole school is

my classroom." She also described times when she was a caregiver. She talked about her role

with families and that when "supporting the whole child, there has to be a strong partnership

between home and school." At one point in the conversation, she noted more roles that she and

other educators hold: that of nurse, social worker, doctor, and counselor. At one point, she

described the work of educators as "vast" and stated, "it means that we in schools wear many

different hats and titles and just do whatever is needed to get the job done."

Because of the variety of roles that principals play, she said that it is "a lot to keep up

with." She explained that because schools are people-oriented, they are dynamic and that, as a

principal, she needs to be prepared for whatever happens each day. She described her job as being active and reactive to whatever is presented. As she said, "I think leaders have to be incredibly flexible and adaptable" in order to respond to immediate challenges, but also to be actively planning for future challenges.

Question 3: Prioritization and Factors for Success

The third research question explores the internal climate and external environments the principal prioritizes in order to understand the extent of their systems thinking and understanding of how experiences outside of school influence a students' learning. Based on the findings described in question two above, it is apparent that Ms. Jones understands and prioritizes both internal conditions and external environments. As a few examples from the findings in question two, she created a safe, welcoming, and caring school climate by focusing on building positive relationships; implementing SEL and restorative disciplinary programs that involved students, staff, and families; and creating conditions and systems to support both students and staff health and well-being. She also understood that external environments impact a child in both positive and negative ways and prioritized strong family–school partnerships and reached out to the surrounding neighborhoods to develop connections.

Summary of Raven

The data from Raven suggest that Ms. Jones equates the whole child with a "philosophy of education" that supports all aspects of a child's growth, development, and long-term success. She believed that most educators already hold this mindset. However, she is still in the process of understanding the programs and components that are needed to implement this vision. A range of data from the interviews and documents indicate an alignment between her beliefs, aims, and knowledge (her vision), as well as alignment between her vision and her practices and that this alignment is apparent across the socio-ecological spheres of the school community and

beyond. The data also suggest that she values people and relationships and that this value is a foundation for her vision of school as a means to empower and support students and families and provide them with the skills, supports, and mindsets necessary for success. Her belief in people appears in her vision of learning, her vision of school, and her vision for a positive and rigorous school environment. She also demonstrates a systems orientation and interacts with and is concerned with the many socio-ecological spheres of the school. While Ms. Jones views herself mainly as an administrator, it is apparent that she has many roles, including as the main force behind the whole child approach in the school.

As described in the findings for question two, Ms. Jones both modeled the behaviors that she wanted in place as well as put systems in place to create consistency. She treated people kindly and honestly, she was available and visible, she had open door policies, and she had difficult conversations. Among the systems she put in place were including relevant staff in hiring decisions, procedures to greeting students at the door, an SEL curriculum that aligns with their values, teams, formalizing expectations, and staffing.

Cross-Case Comparison

In the following section, the findings from the two schools are compared and contrasted in order to identify overarching themes and unique features in the role of the two principals in schools that are successfully using a whole child approach to education. I will first provide overall findings about the principals, followed by overall findings for each question. To facilitate the comparison, I created the table in Appendix G. This table provides a side-by-side comparison of the main findings from the individual case studies by research question. The vision and practices presented in the columns are taken from the summaries at the end of each the vision and practices sections in the individual case studies; the findings presented for the other questions are summaries of the information presented in each case study. I have aligned similar

findings so that similarities and differences can be easily identified. As can be seen, there are many similarities and some differences. It should be noted however, that the information provided is based on interviews with the principals and triangulated by interviews with staff, a PTO officer, and relevant documents. If one principal did not mention a factor or practice, it does not necessarily mean that it does not occur at the school, it only indicates that the principal did not mention it during the interview. At the same time, it could suggest that the information provided during the interviews is indicative of the factor being a higher priority by the principal or that the principal more closely identifies that factor with the whole child approach. This caveat speaks to the limitations of conducting a case study, as described in Chapter Three. I also want to note that I am using the term program to describe a particular curriculum or specific set of rules and practices that focuses on a specific area of growth, such as and SEL curriculum or a disciplinary program. I am using practice to mean an action or tactic taken by the principal or someone else in the school. Vision is used to mean the principal's beliefs, aims, and knowledge.

As a preview, a significant finding from this study are the similarities between the vision, practices, and roles of the two principals even though they are part of two different whole child initiatives and approached the whole child from different perspectives as will be described below. Similarities include the principal as the backbone of the initiative and the whole child as a "mindset" that should permeate the whole school environment. One of the main differences between the two principals centers on the latter similarity, for Ms. Jones believed that most educators already considered the whole child while Mr. Williams believed that a shift in mindset needs to take place for most educators. This difference leads to differences in implementation strategies and is particularly pronounced in how they described the whole child and its components.

I start this section with the cross-case findings for each of the research questions and then provide three overarching themes: Similarities despite different initiatives, principal as the leader of the whole child, and alignment between beliefs, knowledge, and aims (their vision) and between vision and practices.

Question 1: Defining the Whole Child and Identifying Conditions for Success

Both principals defined the whole child in a similar fashion, although there were differences. They both offered a holistic view of the whole child and believed that school should positively impact a child's learning, growth, and development. Moreover, they both identified similar components of the whole child, such as social and emotional learning; support of student, staff, and family wellness; family engagement; providing for family and student basic needs; a caring, safe environment where students feel empowered and can be their best selves; and high expectations and challenges. Mr. Williams also indicated that the key features were aligned and cohesive. While Ms. Jones did not mention cohesiveness as a goal in the whole child approach, her practices and the systems she put in place were aligned, consistent, and supported her vision, suggesting that although she may not have mentioned cohesion as a goal, she was working towards a cohesive set of practices and programs.

In addition, both principals perceive the whole child as a "mindset" or "philosophy of education" that permeates the school environment, and where vision and practices are aligned and embedded in programs and practices. To paraphrase Mr. Williams, it is a way of doing school. Ms. Jones offered a similar perspective when she said that she equated education with the concept of the whole child. However, when they joined their whole child initiatives, they held two different concepts of the whole child and their perception of the movement within education differed. Ms. Jones viewed the approach as a "philosophy of education" and something all educators should already believe. Although the whole child undergirds her vision

of school, she is still processing the actualization of the vision's definition and components. On the other hand, Mr. Williams was more focused on the components of the whole child. He did not start with the philosophy perspective that Ms. Jones had, but came to what was described as a "change in mindset", or a "paradigm shift," over time. He came to the whole child through the ALC which has relatively well-defined components and action steps for the whole child and is well grounded in these features. In addition to the differences in the two initiatives, the difference in their original orientation towards the whole child may explain why the implementation of a cohesive whole child approach at Hilltop appears to be more systematic than the implementation at Raven. Implementation at Raven has been a more organic process and guided by Ms. Jones' beliefs about school. These two different perspectives could help explain most of the differences between the two principals.

Their views on the factors for success is one area where the different perspectives have an impact. Mr. Williams appears to believe that for a whole child initiative to be successful, educators need to be trained to understand and buy into the concepts since the whole child is different from how school has been viewed in the past. In particular, he noted that understanding brain science was important to the success of the initiative as a way of obtaining buy-in. Ms. Jones mentioned neither of these items. However, this does not mean that she doesn't find them important. By her own account, she already believed in the whole child and viewed it as inextricably linked to school. She did not need the change in mindset to believe in the whole child. She also did not mention the need for training on brain science. However, it was apparent that she understood the connection between health and learning, and ensured that her staff knew the neighborhood and understood the impact of trauma.

Other areas where their different perspectives could be impacting their view of the factors of success are in the emphasis they placed on the influence of district or external

support and in the allocation of resources towards the initiative. Interview data from staff at Hilltop suggest that district support and the support of the ALC was beneficial to the success of the approach. In addition, data from the interviews with staff indicated that Mr. Williams allocated resources towards the successful implementation of the approach in the form of funding and time. While staff at Raven also had district support for their whole child efforts, no one at Raven mentioned the Enlightened movement as a factor of success. Similarly, no one at Raven explicitly mentioned resource allocation as a factor of success even though it can be inferred from Ms. Jones' actions that she also used resources to sustain her vision. One reason could be that Ms. Jones already believed in the whole child and therefore didn't recognize the resource allocation as extraordinary or the district support as essential to the success of the approach.

While there were definitely differences in their perception of the factors for success, they also had substantial overlap. They both agreed that understanding oneself and your "why" is important to the success of the whole child as well as developing a caring, supportive, encouraging environment across socio-ecological spheres. They also both viewed the manifestation of their value of people as a factor of success, be it the relationships that they fostered or the barriers that they removed so teachers could focus on student learning.

Question 2: Role of the Principal

To understand the role of the principal in a school that supports the whole child, I explored the principals' vision (defined as their beliefs, aims, and knowledge), their practices, and their perception of their role. I will start the cross-case comparison by comparing and contrasting their vision, then their practices, and finally their perception of their role. To assist with the comparison, I created the table in Appendix G. As described, it provides a summary of each principal's beliefs, aims, knowledge, and practices as identified in the individual case

studies and summaries at the end of each thematic area. As with the definition of the whole

child, there are many similarities and some nuanced differences.

As can be seen in the Table in Appendix G, the two principals' vision and outlook of

school is very similar and consists of many of the same components. In some cases, they even

used similar phrases or concepts to explain their vision. For instance, Ms. Jones described the

school environment as a mini-society and Mr. Williams described it as a small town. Ms. Jones

described herself as the "teacher" for the whole school community and Mr. Williams described

himself as a "mayor." They also both described the school as a "family." They explained that

students and staff should be able to argue and disagree knowing that they are in a loving,

accepting environment, just like in a family. They even both spoke about needing to be on the

"dance floor" and having a big picture view of things to gain perspective.

Additional examples of their similarities are provided in the table in Appendix G, but a

few highlights include their comparable view of school as a mechanism for social justice and

greater equity for students who have been historically underserved, their expectation for

themselves to continuously grow and learn and self-reflect, and their belief in creating a

supportive, loving, yet challenging environment where students, staff, and families feel safe to

express themselves and feel empowered. They also both believe in and aim to establish a sense

of community within and across the spheres of students, staff, families, and neighborhood,

thereby demonstrating a big-picture, systems orientation of the societal influence of school.

Moreover, they both understand that external environments influence student development

and learning, although Mr. Williams explained it from a more scientific perspective and Ms.

Jones from a more experiential perspective. Most significantly, they both value people. Their

analogous belief in people is a foundation of many of their other beliefs and practices. Ms. Jones

in particular views education and school as being fueled by people and sees strong relationships as the cornerstone of Raven's success.

The relatively few differences in their vision may be due to their different programs and contexts, and their different personalities. For example, Mr. Williams emphasized the importance of a knowledge of brain science, as did the teachers interviewed, demonstrating the training they received on the subject. On the other hand, Ms. Jones takes a more personal approach to ensuring teachers understood the impact of experiences. While Ms. Jones understands how trauma and ACEs can impact a child's development, she takes teachers on a tour of the neighborhood so they can better understand their students' stories. In another example, while both principals were described as loving and organized, discussions of love and caring were more pervasive in interviews with Ms. Jones than in those with Mr. Williams. Moreover, Ms. Jones spoke extensively about relationships, caring, and community. She starts every newsletter with the phrase, "It's a great day to love and learn at Raven" and the codes for caring and relationships were the top two codes in the interviews at Raven. Mr. Williams also spoke about love and caring but not as effusively. On the other hand, Mr. Williams spoke about organization and connections and systems. A teacher described him as "Type A." Ms. Jones was also described as providing consistency and organization, and spoke about providing structure to practices, but this quality was not as prevalent in the interviews with participants at Raven. I left the interviews with the impression that Ms. Jones effuses love and excitement combined with direction and Mr. Williams effuses direction and organization combined with love and support.

Other differences are also nuanced. Mr. Williams explicitly identified relational trust as a condition he is trying to instill at the school and described the practices he uses to embed it. Ms. Jones described using similar practices but didn't mention trust until she was asked about it.

Similarly, Mr. Williams' goal is for all students to "thrive," which he defined as filling their

potential in all aspects of life, academically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually. While not using

this term, Ms. Jones spoke about teaching a child's heart and head and providing students with

the social, emotional, and academic skills they need to succeed. These characteristics are very

similar to Mr. William's goal of "thriving," even though she never used the term. However, she

did emphasize that she wanted to prepare students for long-term success and saw elementary

school as a foundation for future endeavors and an opportunity for students to be exposed to

new experiences. This was especially visible in her class on financial management, but also in

her desire for students to obtain a global perspective, a desire that a staff member confirmed.

Ms. Jones also noted that having worked in middle and high schools, she has a long-term

perspective that she found beneficial and something that other principals may not have. This

sense of providing students with the skills they could use throughout their lives was not as

apparent in the data for Hilltop.

Not only are many of the principals' beliefs similar, but as can be seen in the table in

Appendix G, their tactics and practices are nearly identical. In both cases, their practices can be

categorized into two overarching areas: developing positive, respectful relationships with

students, staff, families, and community, and putting in place systems and programs to enact

their vision. Within these areas, their tactics were similar. For example, they both reported

practicing authenticity, caring, competence, transparency, and honesty, claims that were

reinforced by other participants. They also both explained that they have difficult conversations,

encourage discussions over disagreements, and desire feedback. Staff and PTO officers in both

schools described their principal as an excellent listener. Both principals were also described as

being remarkably present and available, having open door policies, greeting students every

morning, knowing every student's name and the name of most family members, and wandering

the halls and playground to see if anyone needed support. Moreover, they both demonstrate these skills with families, students, teachers, and the surrounding community. They explained that they were modeling this behavior for staff, families, and students, and purposefully acted in ways that would engender community and build relationships. They also put systems in place to implement their values and to establish consistency. Some of these systems are the same, such as including grade level team members on hiring committees, creating a wellness team, distributing leadership and encouraging collaboration, and supporting teacher and staff interests through professional development opportunities and providing structured autonomy.

Differences between the practices reported by the two principals were mostly minor and mainly consisted of how they described their actions. For example, as described, Mr. Williams purposefully acts in ways that he believes would develop relational trust throughout the school community and developing trust was a significant aspect of his practice. Ms. Jones uses similar tactics in her practice, but did not note a purpose of developing trust, even though the PTO officer stated that "she really worked to win the trust" of parents. When asked if she was developing relational trust through her actions, Ms. Jones agreed that she was, but did not explain it as part of her vision.

A few differences were probably due to their different contexts. For example, Hilltop was a turnaround school according to Mr. Williams, and within two years of starting there he had put in place nearly all new staff. Mr. Williams purposefully hired and mentored staff who were excited by his vision and encouraged those who were not interested to leave or used district procedures to move them to another school. While Ms. Jones also replaced staff who chose to leave for another position with those who already had a similar mindset, particularly around a dual-language program, Ms. Jones also put systems in place that encouraged the necessary changes in behavior among staff who stayed. Ms. Jones models behaviors and

coaches students, staff, and families to help them understand her vision and meet her expectations. Furthermore, staff and the PTO Officer noted that she coaches all staff, including custodians and security officers, to enact her relationship and communication practices. Her leadership team also coaches teachers and other staff in practices that supported her vision. The result will be similar to that at Hilltop, with a majority of staff holding similar values and practices, but the method may take longer. However, according to staff at both schools, there is still work to do.

As may be inferred given their similar beliefs and practices, both principals viewed their role in supporting the whole child in similar ways. Even though they both were lauded for their interactions with students, families, and staff, and for being the impetus behind the welcoming, safe, and caring environment for all, both principals said that they viewed their main role as caring for the staff and making sure they were happy. They both explained their main role as facilitating the work of the teachers and removing any barriers that would make it difficult for them to do their job. In addition, they both described systems they initiated that upheld and communicated their vision.

However, they both undertook other roles, many of which are frequently considered part of the helping or caring professions. While neither described it as their role, both principals are connectors and community builders through their actions and modeling of behaviors. Ms. Jones described herself as undertaking different types of roles, such as explaining that she has her "teacher role" when meeting with the students, and her "principal role" when doing administrative work, as well being a nurse, therapist, and social worker. She explained that she needs to be flexible to meet any circumstance and challenge that arises. Mr. Williams did not provide this kind of detailed definition of his role, but his relationship-driven practices and vision depict a similar responsibility. In both cases, their interpersonal relationships and prioritization

of all the people they work with, including students, staff, families, and the community, communicates their vision and commitment to the whole child approach. They are both the driver behind the approach and its lead promoter.

Question 3: Considering and Prioritizing Internal School Conditions and External Environments

Both principals consider internal school conditions and external environments as discussed in the individual case studies. They both view the school as part of the larger society and take into consideration how external factors impact learning by creating an internal environment that is supportive and provides services that may not be available to students, families, and staff. Furthermore, with their common vision of social justice, they view education as part of the larger ecosystem and see it as a tool to improve student long-term outcomes. Ms. Jones is particularly invested in the broader perspective and sought to provide students with a "global mindset" according to one staff member and to instill a sense of civic duty and community into students. They also both take a systems view of the school and look at both the big-picture and the details in running the operation.

Moreover, to enact their vision, Mr. Williams and Ms. Jones prioritize community, relationships, and a safe, welcoming, and challenging environment for students, staff, and families. They also prioritize staff happiness and well-being and providing students and staff with the resources they need to be successful. This is consistent with their belief, aims, knowledge, and practices and the priorities they place on internal school conditions.

In addition to the findings for each question, three overarching themes emerged from the cross-case comparison: their similarities despite different whole child initiatives, the alignment between their vision and practices, and the principal as the driver behind the whole child approach.

Similarities Despite Different Whole Child Initiatives

Even though the schools are involved in two different whole child initiatives and joined their respective initiatives for different reasons, many of the principals' beliefs, aims, knowledge, and practices are very similar. As described in the methods section, the two schools are part of two different whole child initiatives in the same district. Hilltop is part of the Affective Learning Coalition (ALC), a district sanctioned initiative organized by a non-profit organization that developed their well-defined program by codifying the methods and actions used by a district school that was highly successful in creating a whole child environment. The initiative is structured, program-based, and promotes specific practices, classroom organization, SEL curriculum, and disciplinary practices. Raven is part of the less-structured whole child approach organized by the district, that provides general guidelines and guidance for the types of programs that can initiated, such as restorative practices and SEL curriculum, but the schools involved select what programs they plan to implement and how. The two principals also differed in their reasons for joining the whole child initiatives. Mr. Williams said that he joined the ALC to redefine school, and to establish more cohesion among systems and better align practices and programs with their beliefs and values. Ms. Jones said that she joined the district whole child network to get more support in implementing her vision of school and to learn from other schools in the network.

However, as described above, even with these differences in the two principals' vision, their understanding of the approach, practices, and priorities are remarkably similar. An analysis of Appendix G indicates that more than 76% of the general findings are similar. The differences in their perception of their roles, vision, and practices mainly involve how they described their practices and strategies and may reflect the different initiatives they are a part of.

Alignment of Beliefs, Knowledge, and Aims (Vision) and of Vision and Practices

As described in the individual case studies, there was a cohesiveness and alignment between the principals' beliefs, aims, and knowledge (their vision), and between their vision and their practices. These elements were intertwined and frequently difficult to differentiate in the interviews with both principals. The alignment suggests a cohesion of actions and vision. It also reinforces the view that the whole child is a mindset or framework rather than a program since it encompasses many aspects of the how the principal leads the school.

Principal as Leader of the Whole Child Initiative

Both principals also appear to be the main motivating source behind the approach. Both have a vision for what school should be that they work to implement. Mr. Williams started as principal with a goal of creating school "like we haven't seen it before," as one of the teachers explained. Ms. Jones quickly put into place practices that changed the environment of the school within her first six months as principal, as noted by the PTO Officer and one administrator. Furthermore, both principals communicate a caring and joyful energy and model the way they want the school to operate by being kind, respectful, caring, authentic, available, community-driven, and yet demanding and organized. In both cases, the principals credited this behavior to the increased buy-in from everyone interacting with the school and the principal. Even as they both delegate responsibility for implementing pieces of the approach to appropriate staff members and give them authority to pursue practices that expand the approach within the school, interviews with the staff and family members suggest that staff and families perceive the principal as the inspiration behind the approach and the vision for the school.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the findings from the interviews and document review from both schools were presented. First, the two case studies and key themes from the data were reviewed. The case studies were followed by a cross-case comparison that provided a comparison of the findings by research question and three overarching themes. The three themes include, their similarities despite different whole child initiatives, the principal as the leader of the initiative, and the alignment between beliefs, knowledge, and aims (their vision), and between their vision and their practices.

Based on this analysis of the data from interviews with two principals from elementary schools who are successfully implementing whole child approaches, there are many similarities between the beliefs, aims, knowledge, and practices of the principals as well as differences. The similarities include viewing the whole child as a way of thinking about school and not as a program. They both see it as an understanding that school guides child growth, development, and learning by aligning practices with beliefs, knowledge, and aims. Therefore, they established systems and practices that create a caring, supportive and rigorous environment and they engage with all people across the socio-ecological spheres of the school community in a similar, respectful manner. They also understand the positive and negative impact that experiences and environments have on the health and well-being of students, staff, and families and seek to mitigate the effects of the negative influences so that students can be at their best to learn. The differences mainly revolved around their different approaches to the whole child and their manner in implementing a similar environment and beliefs. These themes will be further explored in Chapter Five where I will compare the findings to the literature described in Chapter Two and start to outline a preliminary model for whole child leadership and how programs such as the ALC can further enrich principal learning to support the whole child.

Chapter Five - Discussion

In an initial step to fill the gap in the literature on how a school principal supports a whole child approach to education, the overarching research question for this capstone explores the role of elementary school principals who successfully lead a school that experts perceive as exemplary at implementing a whole child approach. Subquestions focus on the principal's definition of the whole child, as well as their vision (defined as their beliefs, aims, and knowledge), practices, and which internal and external influences they prioritize. The findings from this study were presented in Chapter Four; in this chapter, I discuss those findings in relation to the literature and highlight key themes and implications for practice. I first focus on five overarching themes: the similarities between the practices and the vision of the two principals in the case studies; the whole child as a mindset; the alignment of the principals' beliefs, aims, knowledge, and practices; the principals' systems orientation; and the principals' person-centeredness. Then I compare the findings to my conceptual framework for the role of the principal and propose a revision that offers a potential framework that outlines and clarifies the role of a whole child principal. I also compare the findings to my proposed unified framework for the whole child and recommend a revised version. The unified whole child framework was created to address the ambiguity in the term "whole child" and the variety of different programs that support student health and well-being. As described in Chapter Three, the unified framework synthesizes the most prevalent whole child models and offers an overarching framework for future research on the whole child and the principal's relationship to it. I end the chapter with a discussion of limitations and recommendations for further research and for the practical application of the findings.

Theme 1: Potential Implications of Similarities

One of the major findings from the two case studies is the similarities in the beliefs, aims, and knowledge (referred to as the vision), and practices of the two principals. While some parallels were expected, the number and their substantive nature were unforeseen. As described in the findings, nearly all aspects of the principals' vision and practices are the same. The similarities are apparent across many fronts, from their understanding of the whole child, to their systems perspective, to their people-orientation and desire for community, to their understanding of the impact health, well-being, and environments have on the growth and performance of everyone in the school. As described in Chapter Two, there is literature on the positive influence each of these areas has on various aspects of the school (e.g., Basch, 2011; Berkowitz et al., 2017; Fullan, 2015; Michael et al., 2015; Sandilos et al., 2017; Senge, 2012; Smylie et al., 2020). However, the two case studies suggest not only that all of these areas might be critical in a principal interested in implementing the whole child, but their integration and alignment could be essential.

Furthermore, the comparable practices and vision were found in principals participating in two different whole child initiatives. Hilltop was part of a cohort implementing a whole child model devised by an exemplary district school and codified and scaled by a non-profit organization. Raven was part of a cohort led by district leadership that was supporting improved whole child approaches. While they are in a district that has some district-wide supports for the whole child and may attract innovative and like-minded educators, the depth and breadth of the similarities could also suggest that the vision and practices shared by the two principals could have the potential for more universal application across different whole child-type initiatives. This finding could also indicate several other possibilities: 1) that there are features and factors that principals should know about and beliefs they should hold that will help make the change

to a whole child approach more successful no matter the process or program they decide to

follow; 2) that the unified framework may be useful in thinking about the various whole child

frameworks and their commonalities; and 3) that there are common areas where a principal can

receive training that cut across the different frameworks.

Theme 2: Whole Child as Goal and Philosophy of Education

The first research question asked how the principals define the whole child and was

intended to explore if their understanding is similar to the definition in the literature. Overall,

Mr. Williams' and Ms. Jones' definitions and characterizations of the whole child are very similar

to the definitions identified in Chapter Two. They both understand the whole child to be a

holistic view of a student that entails supporting or overcoming the many positive and negative

factors that influence a student's learning and behavior (Darling-Hammond et al., 2021;

Lewallen et al., 2015; Mahoney et al., 2020). Table 10 in the section on the conceptual

framework below provides a comparison of the principals' definitions and those found in the

literature. While nearly every category is the same, there are some subtle differences as will be

discussed in the section on the whole child framework. However, an unexpected outcome that

the chart does not capture is the belief in the whole child that both principals hold and their

perspective of the whole child as not only a cohesive set of programs, but an attitude and

understanding that permeates the school. Even though they approached the whole child from

different models and contexts, they ultimately shared a similar view that the whole child is a

philosophy of, or mindset about, education and child development, and that this same

philosophy should be held by all people involved in the school.

Ms. Jones equated her "philosophy of education" with the whole child and both she and

Mr. Williams described the whole child as being a "mindset." Moreover, their descriptions of the

whole child intimate that they view it as a lens through which they think about and understand

school and the actions they take to enact that understanding. Their depictions of this "mindset" are very similar in identifying the whole child as the sum of their beliefs, aims, knowledge, and practices, and view of school as a whole. Following Smylie et al. (2020) and their description of the antecedents for caring leadership, I originally used the term mindset synonymously with belief, but the findings indicate that Mr. Williams and Ms. Jones mean more than a belief. They imply it is a way of doing and thinking about school. I will therefore use the term mindset to mean the combination of the principals' vision and their practices, with vision defined as the combination of beliefs, aims, and knowledge, as previously described. This is different from the literature, where whole child is mostly described as a series of interconnected programs or practices (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018; Lewallen et al., 2015; Oberle et al., 2016). In equating the whole child with their view of school, the findings also suggest that the principals perceive school as a foundation for success and the whole child philosophy of education as a pillar towards success.

However, how they arrived at this shared perspective differed and this may explain some of the differences in their definitions of the whole child. As noted in the findings, not only were the two principals implementing two different whole child initiatives, their reasons for joining the initiatives differed, potentially due to their contexts. Mr. Williams was looking for a whole school framework that would integrate with his belief in social justice and help him turn around an underperforming school. Ms. Jones wanted additional support for implementing her "philosophy of education" as a place where students are exposed to new experiences, have a joyful learning experience, and are provided the social, emotional, academic, and physical supports they need to create a strong foundation for the future. As described in the findings, both of these goals were held by both principals at the time of this study; it is their motivation for joining the whole child initiative and their subsequent journey that differs.

Mr. Williams originally saw the whole child as a means to reach the goal of improving a turnaround school and redesigning school, and Ms. Jones saw it as embracing education itself. Her "philosophy of education" was already aligned to the whole child and she wanted support in enacting her philosophy. During his time with the ALC, Mr. Williams had a shift in mindset and reached the same perspective as Ms. Jones, that the whole child is the focus of education. The difference in their original purpose and view of education might explain why Mr. Williams thought that enacting the whole child involved a change in mindset while Ms. Jones thought all educators already had the mindset even if they did not display behaviors that upheld it. It could also explain the subtle differences in their practices. For example, as described in Chapter Four, Mr. Williams hired staff who had his same vision and decided to implement a relatively prescribed model. Ms. Jones worked with staff to help them see how different behaviors could better project this shared philosophy and implemented programs that aligned with what she viewed as their mutual understanding of education. Mr. Williams joined the ALC as a way to create cohesiveness among their disciplinary and SEL practices, but has come to understand the whole child as a way of viewing education that few educators hold and therefore need to have a change in mindset. Ms. Jones already had the mindset and joined the Enlightened initiative to better understand how to implement her philosophy.

And yet, even coming from these different perspectives and being involved in initiatives that used different models, they both not only believed that the whole child is a mindset, but they had similar beliefs, aims, and knowledge (their vision) about the whole child, which will be discussed below. As described in the literature review, even while there is evidence that the principal is an important aspect of whole child implementation and sustainability (Mahoney et al., 2020; Valois et al., 2015), there is little literature on the beliefs, aims, and knowledge of principals who support the whole child. Most of the literature focuses on implementation

methods, classroom programs, or policies (Bailey et al., 2019; Darling-Hammond et al., 2021; Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Lewallen et al., 2015; Mahoney et al., 2020). However, there is some indication that the beliefs, aims, and knowledge of the principal are an important aspect of the success of a whole child initiative. In their study of Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) initiatives, Valois et al. (2011) found that the principal's beliefs and knowledge are important to its success and that principals who led a WSCC initiative and embedded the concepts of the WSCC model in the school culture had more success. While this capstone research does not look at the connection between the principals' beliefs, aims, and knowledge and the success of the whole child initiative, it does suggest a possible new addition to the literature: that for the implementation of the whole child to be successful, there should be an understanding that it is not only a framework , organizational structure, or program, but a way of thinking, implying that there may be different methods of enacting the mindset that supports the whole child.

By exploring the principals' beliefs, aims, and knowledge which Smylie et al. (2020) identify as the antecedents for caring leadership, it is easier to see how this change in mindset can be taught and is not a matter of innate character or a compassionate disposition. That a mindset can be learned is also supported by the literature (Bauer & Brazer, 2019; Flaspohler et al., 2008; Swenson et al., 2013). Moreover, both principals suggested that the mindset could be learned. They both thought that one of the most important aspects of implementing a whole child approach was to believe in it, have self-knowledge, and understand the passion that undergirds the belief. They also said that knowledge of the approach's success strengthens its acceptance. These findings suggest that the comparable vision and practices described in the findings can may be a key to enacting the whole child mindset.

Theme 3: Integration of Vision Elements and of Vision and Practices

Ms. Jones' and Mr. Williams' understanding of the whole child as being a philosophy of education or mindset (respectively) is particularly apparent in the integration of their beliefs, aims, knowledge, and practices. As highlighted in the findings, it was frequently difficult to distinguish between their beliefs, aims, and knowledge (their vision) and to tease out their vision from their practices. There is overlap between these areas that generates consistency across their actions and vision and reinforces the mindset that supports the whole child as an aim of education. This intersection could indicate that vision and practices together are the embodiment of the whole child mindset and the tactics used to implement it. However, it is not clear if the mindset supports the practices and vision or the practices and vision support the mindset. Mr. Williams and Ms. Jones appear to have arrived at this cohesion from different directions, Ms. Jones from having the mindset first and then implementing the practices and vision, and Mr. Williams implementing the practices and vision and then developing the mindset.

The alignment of these areas is not described in the literature for the whole child, though there is indication that the principal's beliefs, knowledge, and practices are important to the implementation of the approach (Anyon et al., 2016; Bailey et al., 2019; Valois et al., 2015). Most of the literature on the various whole child models described in the literature review don't mention this aspect of principal leadership at all (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018; Lewallen et al., 2015; Mahoney et al., 2020; Oberle et al., 2016). The research on the models mainly focuses on the importance of the principal modeling programmatic aspects of their frameworks and supporting a goal for the program, such as SEL, but notes little about the beliefs or aims of the principal, and nothing about education philosophy and mindset as described by the principals in this capstone. Valois et al. (2011) come closest to describing this integration of

vision, practices, and priorities when they suggested that the principals most effective at

implementing the WSCC model require a change in culture. The two case studies described in

this study suggest a cohesion of beliefs, aims, knowledge and practices that is not in the whole

child literature I reviewed and that may be useful in designing training for districts and principals

desiring to implement a whole child approach in their schools. The findings from the case

studies acknowledge a link between the vision and practices that could support what is often

described in the literature as missing: "buy-in" (Anyon et al., 2016; Jones & Bouffard, 2012).

In addition, most of the affective leadership literature that was reviewed focuses on

practices (Kennedy, 2019; Khalifa et al., 2016; Sun & Leithwood, 2015), but not the vision behind

them. There are two exceptions, caring leadership and Fullan's understanding of education

change. In the model for caring leadership that is used in the conceptual framework for this

capstone, Smylie et al. (2020) speak about aims, beliefs, and knowledge as an "antecedent" to

caring behavior and suggest that actions alone do not necessarily imply caring. To a certain

extent, this describes the connection between the vision and practices observed in the two

principals studied for this capstone. However, while Smylie et al. (2020) refer to aims, mindset

and competencies as "a related system" (p. 18), the authors imply that these elements are easy

to distinguish. Smylie et al. (2020) don't describe the integration of the three areas, an

integration that is prevalent in the two case studies. In addition, there is no indication that the

vision precedes the actions of the principals in this study. The principals' vision and actions are

intertwined and together enact the mindset for the whole child described by both principals.

These connections are apparent in the table in Appendix H, which shows the alignment between

the vision and practices categorized by the main themes of valuing people and relationships,

community, systems perspective, the link between health, well-being, and learning, and school

as a foundation for success.

In *The New Meaning of Education Change*, Fullan (2015) describes the essential

dimensions of change as changes in beliefs, materials, and practices, recognizing the multi-

dimensional characters of change as social, psychological, and practical. Aspects of his essential

dimensions of change are evident in the findings. For example, the findings from this study delve

into the beliefs and psychological aspects of the vision of the whole child. Moreover, in addition

to describing the need for common beliefs as well as practices for change to occur, Fullan (2015)

includes coherence of programs and policies across the socio-ecological spheres of classroom,

school, district, and state. However, he discusses education change in general, be it a new

program or whole school reform, making it difficult to compare aspects of his theory to the

findings. Fullan (2015) describes beliefs as the "pedagogical assumptions and theories

underlying particular new policies or programs" (p. 28), as opposed to the mindsets described in

this capstone study. In a way, the findings from this research place Fullan's theory of change in

context. These two case studies, while limited in scope, add nuance to his description of beliefs

and extends it to mindsets, while also including the relationship of beliefs, aims, and knowledge,

or vision. The two case studies also provide a granular understanding of the vision in relation to

the whole and offer potential beliefs, aims, knowledge, and practices that are necessary for

implementing a whole child school.

Theme 4: Systems Thinking

Another emerging theme is the principals' systems orientation. Their attention to the

various spheres of the socio-ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) is supported by the

literature on the whole child and the use of Bronfenbrenner's sphere in the framework for the

unified whole child model. It also reinforces the possibility that a whole child mindset is a

reflection of the proposed unified whole child model. The systems orientation appears in several

ways in the findings: in the principals' perspective of school as a component of a broader social

system; in their view of school as an open system that should integrate with the families and

surrounding communities; and in their understanding that interior and exterior environments

and interactions have an impact on the school environment, the staff, and students that needs

to be addressed. These aspects of their vision and practices are described in the findings, and

the latter two areas are further discussed in the section on being person-centered.

One aspect of the findings that differs from the whole child literature is how the

principals enact their vision and practices across the different socio-ecological spheres and their

expectations that everyone in those spheres share their mindset. While sharing a vision for the

school is not new to the educational leadership literature (Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Leithwood &

Seashore-Louis, 2011), the enactment of whole child practices across the socio-ecological

spheres offers a new dimension. The expectation that everyone shares the same beliefs is

similar to Fullan's (2015) concept of systems change and cohesion, where all people in the

school environment share the same belief and programs are cohesive throughout the

environment. However, Fullan's focus is on school reform and he describes the need for these

components for system change. Raven and Hilltop may have undergone a system change, but

they are two schools that were deemed the most successful in leading the whole child. Shaked

and Schecter (2020) build on Fullan's work and find that systems thinking is useful in many

situations and not just school change. The findings from this study support this understanding of

systems thinking and its value to all school leaders.

However, the principals' similar interaction across all of the socio-ecological spheres is

not described in the literature I reviewed on systems (Fullan, 2015; Senge, 2012) or the whole

child (Darling-Hammond et al., 2021; Mahoney et al., 2020; Valois et al., 2015). As already

described, there is a gap in the literature on a whole child leader so this absence is not

surprising. In the systems literature, Fullan (2015) states that the principal "plays a crucial role

internally and externally to the school" (p. 137) and describes the importance of relationships,

supporting the findings from this study that the principal works across multiple socio-ecological

spheres. However, Fullan does not describe the breadth of the interactions suggested by the

two principals nor how the principal interacts with the people in each of the spheres in similar

ways. The principals in this research do not just interact with teachers, or school staff, or

parents, or the community. They strive to work with everyone, including students. Moreover,

they use the same practices across spheres. There is a consistency in the principals' interactions

and beliefs across the various spheres and that is not articulated in the systems literature I

reviewed (Fullan, 2015; Senge, 2012; Shaked & Schechter, 2020), which mostly points out that

principals view the school within a system and recognize all the different influences. Similar to

the finding on the consistency and alignment between beliefs, aims, knowledge, practices, and

understanding of the whole child as missing from the literature, the consistency and alignment

of the principal's vision and practices across the varying spheres may also be missing based on

the results from this limited case study. Nonetheless, these two cases highlight the ways in

which having a systems lens, defined as understanding the interrelationships between

interconnecting areas (Senge, 2012), is an important aspect of whole child leadership.

Theme 5: Person-Centeredness

Both principals are also person-centered and many of their beliefs, actions, and aims are

centered on people. They both value people and understand that education is about people.

Their person centeredness can be seen in their interactions, their sense of community, their

belief that everyone is a learner, and their understanding of the impact that health, well-being,

and environments have on learning and growth. Each of these elements is referenced in the

literature and has been studied separately (Basch, 2011; Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano,

2018; Fullan, 2015; Michael et al., 2015; Smylie et al., 2020). What is unique in these two case

studies is the connections between these areas and how they demonstrate the integration of

the principals' vision and practices across the socio-ecological spheres of the school ecosystem.

As in transformational leadership, the principals focused on creating a supportive environment

for the development and growth of the people in the school (Leithwood & Sun, 2012). However,

while the transformational leadership literature focuses on the practices utilized by

transformational leaders in relation to teachers (Leithwood & Sun, 2012; Sun & Leithwood,

2012), the focus of the principals in both case studies was on everyone involved in the school

system: teachers, support staff, students, families, and community members.

Person-centeredness is also an area that reflects the integration of the principals' vision

(beliefs, aims, and knowledge) and their practices. As described in the section on integration, it

was frequently difficult to differentiate between the principals' beliefs, aims, mindsets and

practices since they were so intertwined. This is particularly true in their people-centeredness.

The interconnection between the areas of their vision and their practices will become clearer as

their relationships, community-orientation, growth mindset, and understanding of the link

between health and caring are discussed in the next paragraphs.

Relationships

One of the key findings from this study is the emphasis on relationships, both dyadic

relationships and the interweaving of those relationships to create community across the

various spheres of the whole child framework. While relationships and connecting with the

community are identified in both the whole child and the leadership literature (Darling-

Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018; Fullan, 2015; Leithwood & Sun, 2012; Valois et al., 2015), the

emphasis on relationships and the display of strong practices that enacted authentic, caring, and

trusting connections across the multiple spheres of Bronfenbrenner's socio-ecological model

(Bronfenbrenner, 2005) was unexpected. Indeed, nine of the thirteen identified practices involved relationships.

Building positive relationships was both an aim and a practice for the two principals and is aligned with their belief and knowledge that people who feel supported have an easier time doing their job, be it learning, teaching, or parenting. Data from the case studies also identifies some of the principals' specific practices that create positive relationships, such as being available, authentic, caring, honest, transparent, listening and accepting feedback, and holding difficult conversations. Valois et al. (2015) identified similar practices in their study of the WSCC model implementation, where they found that the most effective principals were good communicators, held difficult conversations, were visible, and built and sustained relationships within and outside of the school community. In an article written with Senge on the training principals should receive for SEL implementation, Patti et al. (2015) describe generative relationships and having meaningful conversations, two actions that are very similar to the interactions modeled by the two principals in this study. Patti et al. (2015) describe building generative relationships as creating positive relationships with and among others, skills that both Ms. Jones and Mr. Williams discussed and, according to other participants, modeled. The authors explain enabling meaningful conversations as sharing ideas, deep listening, encouraging differing opinions, having difficult conversations, and being adept at resolution strategies, all practices identified in the findings. The authors describe these as being important when dealing with staff and families. However, the principals in these case studies also modeled the behavior in their interactions with students, encouraging students to advocate for themselves and their ideas and demanding their best. Similarly, Patti et al. (2014) include systemic thinking as a fourth pillar for training principals in SEL, but they describe it as mainly being with the adults. The findings from this capstone suggest that the principals practice it with everyone. The principals'

interpersonal actions are aligned with their beliefs and consistent with every interaction, creating a cohesiveness across interactions. This cohesiveness supported community in both schools, an area that will be further discussed in the next section.

Sense of Community

In addition to the broader vision of dyadic relationships and community engagement described above, data from the two case studies suggest that the principals understood the interconnection between individual relationships and a sense of community rather than viewing them as separate features. By encouraging positive relationships across socio-ecological spheres, they strengthened connections and enhanced the sense of community. This understanding is undergirded by the belief in the value of people and an understanding that education is focused on people. It is also highlighted in their mutual belief that school is a mini-society and that development of community is an important factor in a school. These connections suggest that the principals recognized and fostered a web of influence between relationships, interpersonal skills, climate, and external environments and neighborhoods to create a sense of community across the socio-ecological spheres.

Similar to Bryk and Schneider's (2002) view of relational trust, Smylie et al.'s (2020) view of community, and Senge's (2012) view of systems thinking, the consistent behavior of the principals created an interconnected web of positive interactions that fed each other and led to a culture of caring and acceptance among teachers, students, families, and the people in the surrounding area. The feedback loops of positive dyadic interactions supporting a strong climate and a strong climate supporting positive dyadic interactions is described in both caring leadership (Smylie et al., 2020) and in Senge (2012). With the principal modeling and encouraging these behaviors, the principal becomes the keystone in generating the positive climate that supports the conditions for learning and development. This interaction is described

by Fullan (2015), Smylie et al. (2020), Bryk and Schneider (2002), and Senge (2012), though for

different aspects: Smylie et al. (2020) for caring, Bryk and Schneider (2002) for relational trust,

Senge (2012) and Fullan (2015) for change. Data from these two case studies suggests that is

also occurs for support for the whole child.

The principals also suggested a connection between students and staff practicing SEL

skills and a positive environment that enhances the sense of community that is discussed in the

literature. Mahoney et al. (2020), Oberle et al. (2016), and Jones and Bouffard (2012) describe

how SEL should be reinforced by a whole school focus on a positive school environment, which

in turn reinforces SEL in the school. However, they don't place it across different spheres or

connect it to a sense of interconnecting community and community development that was

suggested in the case studies.

Growth and Learning

A key aspect of the person-centeredness of both principals was not just their love and

compassion, but their belief in growth and learning. They weren't solely focused on creating a

caring environment, with positive relationships, but one that had high expectations for growth

and being one's personal best. As described in the findings, the belief in learning was multi-

faceted and involved personal learning and curiosity about both self and various topics, and a

belief in the ability of every person to learn, as well as a desire for everyone to be a life-long

learner.

The literature on school change includes several theories that involve collaborative

learning and growth, but none of the theories fully captures all of the aspects of the principals'

vision. For example, Fullan (2015) describes the concept of "lead learner" in which the principal

both creates an environment that encourages learning as well as learns themselves about the

area of change. Fullan suggests that this is a collaborative culture in which all the staff, including

the principal, are learners in an environment where it is safe to try new ideas and fail and to admit that you don't know something. He offers the view of a lead learner as a way to engage in programmatic change and not necessarily the mindset expected by the two principals in the case studies. Senge et al. (2012) describe a similar learning collaborative in their discussion of learning organizations. Drago-Severson and Blum-DeStefano (2018) come closer to describing this aspect of the principals' vision and actions. While also a theory for school change, they envision creating the conditions for change through personal growth, a positive culture, collaboration, feedback, and sustaining the changes through the continuation and recognition of the virtues of these practices. The authors mention that to create a culture that supports growth, a leader should model their own internal growth by practicing authenticity, vulnerability transparency, and courage, and model these behaviors as well as care, appreciation, and inclusiveness. These are all behaviors that the two principals demonstrate. It is interesting that the authors are discussing change and creating the conditions for educational change and reform, just like Fullan (2015) and Senge et al. (2012), rather than sustained leading. The findings from these two exploratory case studies introduce a possible nuance to a belief in growth and learning to the literature on school change by supporting the idea that the conditions required for change are also necessary for the continuous improvement and growth described by the two principals. While rigor and academics are included in the whole child models (Darling-Hammond et al., 2021; Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018; Lewallen et al., 2015), this perspective of growth and learning is not.

As described in the findings, these case studies reinforce the theory that the principal creates a learning environment even when a programmatic change is not required. However, the findings also indicate that the principals held a belief that everyone can learn and grow and that this belief encompassed all staff, students, and families. Furthermore, the growth belief

wasn't necessarily in action for change, but was the foundation for a belief that one should and could continually grow and improve rather than be stagnant; it was a factor of life and living and was an element that they wanted their students to embody.

Another factor in the growth orientation held by the principals in this study concerned learning about oneself and understanding one's own motivations. Fullan (2015) does not describe this aspect in his description of the lead learner, but personal growth and self-reflection are one of the six pillars that Drago-Severson and Blum-DeStefano (2018) suggest are necessary to create change conditions. Senge et al. (2012) also allude to personal growth and Senge is a co-author of a chapter in an SEL handbook that addresses SEL and school leadership. In this article, Patti et al. (2015) state that there are four "soft skills" missing from principal training programs: actionable self-reflection, building generative relationships, enabling meaningful conversations, and thinking systemically. Per the definition Patti et al. (2015) provide for actionable self-reflection, Ms. Jones and Mr. Williams have this skill for they describe reflecting on their motivation, how they make sense of the world, and their emotions. These are all of the elements Patti et al. (2015) provide for actionable self-reflection. Moreover, as already discussed, Ms. Jones and Mr. Williams practice the other three areas that Patti et al. (2015) believe are the "missing link" in principal training programs: building generative relationships, enabling meaningful conversations, and thinking systemically.

The Link Between Health and Learning

Furthermore, both principals understood the link between social-emotional and physical health and learning, and paid attention to the impact that circumstances, environments, and interactions had on all people in the school system—teachers, support staff, students, families, and the surrounding community. While their aim was to remove barriers from learning and teaching, including emotional barriers, their knowledge of the link between health and learning,

their systems perspective, and their actions were interconnected. Understanding the science

behind these beliefs and the available curriculum and structures to address them is mentioned

in both relation to the WSCC and systemic SEL (Mahoney et al., 2020; Valois et al., 2011).

Principal's Role

The five themes described above are present throughout the findings. I now turn to the

conceptual framework that guided this research and offer an overarching assessment of the

principal's role. The findings from the two case studies suggest that the principal has a key role

in leading a whole child approach. Leithwood and Seashore-Louis (2011) define leadership as

"*providing direction* and *exercising influence*" (p. 4, italics in original). While the findings support

this definition, they suggest a broader view of leadership, for the two principals' roles

encompass that of thought leader for continually learning, adjusting, and pursuing a vision and

direction, similar to the lead learner as discussed by Fullan (2015). The principals in the two case

studies have a direction, but appear to continually evaluate and adjust how to reach their

mutual goal of creating a space where children thrive, as described above in the discussion on

their belief in growth and learning. In addition, they are connectors, thought-leaders,

relationship and community-builders, administrators, and teachers. This suggests that the role

of the principal in a whole child school is multi-pronged, as suggested about all principals by

Leithwood and Duke (1999). More than anything, the principals in this study believe in the

approach and align their vision and practices to their belief in the whole child.

Furthermore, based on literature that the principal's influence on students is indirect

(Liebowitz & Porter, 2019; Robinson & Gray, 2019; Tan et al., 2021; Wu & Shen, 2022), the

conceptual framework focused on the identified conditions that the principal may influence and

hypothesizes that these conditions support student and staff well-being. The conditions

identified in the literature and that formed a basis for the conceptual framework are whole

school change, student centered, systems-orientation, caring school climate for students and

staff, coordination and collaboration, and cultural responsiveness and family/community

connections. The relationship between these conditions and the findings will be discussed in the

section on the unified whole school, whole child framework; however, for this discussion on the

role of the principal, it should be noted that the principal appeared to not only impact the

school conditions, but had a direct influence on well-being of at least some of the students and

staff. Both principals described working directly with students, staff, and families to create a

caring and rigorous learning environment. The individual relationship building was spread

throughout the school and in turn helped to create the positive learning conditions. Interviews

with the other participants confirmed their direct influence on families, students, staff, and the

community. While this study was designed to explore the principal's vision and actions in a

whole child school and did not directly examine the relationship between the principals' vision

and actions and the conditions and student and staff outcomes, it does provide preliminary

evidence that there is more of a direct line between the principal and student and staff well-

being then was originally assumed in the conceptual framework.

The conceptual framework for the principal's vision and actions that guided this

research combined aspects of Fullan's (2015) theory of systems change, caring leadership

(Smylie et al., 2020), and transformational leadership (Sun & Leithwood, 2012). Based on the

literature of the whole child (Valois et al., 2011) and Smylie et al.'s (2020) conception of caring

leadership, the conceptual framework included the aims, beliefs, and knowledge of the principal

as well as the practices. The ideas included in each of these areas were based on a cross-walk

between leadership models and the whole child literature (Appendix B). In this section, the

elements of the vision (beliefs, knowledge, and aims) and practices in the conceptual framework

are compared to the findings. Rather than combining the vision and practices as I did in the

findings, I have separated them to underscore the areas that are important, while also acknowledging the connection between the principals' vision and their actions. A revised conceptual framework is presented at the end of this section.

Vision

In this section, I review the specific beliefs, aims, and knowledge (vision) that were identified in the literature and utilized in the conceptual framework to see how they relate to the findings. As already described, one of the key discoveries emerging from this study is the alignment across beliefs, actions, and knowledge and the cohesion of these beliefs across the school and the surrounding environment—or rather how the principal enacts a cohesive vision across all of the various spheres that influence the student and their learning. Because of the alignment, I have decided not to break this area into beliefs, aims, and knowledge but want to recognize that they are interconnected so that all three should be considered unless noted otherwise. Vision in this section refers to the principal's knowledge, aims, and beliefs. School vision refers to the goal and purpose of the school that the principal is helping to spread.

Table 6 lists the aspects of the vision from the conceptual framework and compares it to the findings. An uppercase X indicates a strong similarity and a lowercase x indicates a similar, but not identical concept. Words in italic are new from the findings. As can be seen, the principals describe all of the elements of the vision in the conceptual framework. However, there are some areas where the findings add more breadth or depth to the vision. For example, the principals believed that everyone in the school should have the same school vision rather than desiring whole school change. Therefore, I added "whole school vision" to the area of "whole school change." Another example is knowledge of the importance of physical and emotional health to academic success which I originally had as separate from knowledge of brain science. The findings suggest that they have a similar impact, so I have combined them as

one factor. I also grouped social justice with the conviction that values will have an impact.

While social justice is a more granular concept, it implies a belief that actions will be for the

benefit of people. As already discussed, people, relationships, and community had an

unexpected importance to the principals in the two case studies that wasn't reflected in the

conceptual framework. In addition, the findings suggest a more extensive definition of school

climate that combines high expectations with a caring climate as discussed in section on growth

and learning. I added this nuance into the conceptual framework. There were also elements of

the vision that were unexpected, such as a growth mindset, the school as a mini-society, and a

strong belief in community and in valuing people, as described in the section on vision. The

chart has been changed to reflect these additions and changes.

Table 6

Comparison Between Vision in the Conceptual Framework and the Findings

Aspects of vision	Conceptual framework	Ms. Jones	Mr. Williams
Question2b: vision			
Positive climate for students and staff	X	X	X
Connect with families	X	X	X
Connect with community	X	X	X
Whole school change/*whole school vision*	X	x	x
Importance of relationships	X	X	X
Collaboration	X	X	X
Conviction that values will have impact/*social justice*	X	X	X
Systems orientation	X	X	X
Child at the center of actions and beliefs	X	x	x
Knowledge that physical and emotional health are important for academic success/ understanding of brain science	X	x	X
Curriculum to support emotional and social growth	X	X	X
Growth mindset		X	X
Climate also involved high expectations		X	X
School as mini-society and therefore provide services and more		X	X
Community		X	X
Value people		X	X
School as a foundation for life-long success		X	x

Knowledge that a child's learning is influenced by many internal and external factors		X	X

In light of the systemic and alignment aspects of the findings, I have changed the vision

pillar of my revised conceptual framework to emphasize the systemic areas of their vision while

recognizing that the vision involves beliefs, mindsets, and knowledge. Under this new

conceptual framework for vision, five areas highlight the principal's vision across the socio-

ecological spheres and have been titled vision of school, vision of the individual, vision of

relationships, and vision of the school environment. Table 7 provides the main elements in each

of these areas.

Table 7

Summary of the Vision Based on the Findings

VISION (beliefs, aims, and knowledge)			
Vision of school	**Vision of school environment**	**Vision of relationships**	**Vision of individual**
School as a mini-society	Loving, caring, supportive, safe, healthy, and relational trust	Positive, caring, loving, safe, authentic relationships	Everyone can and should continually learn and grow because learning is fun and joyful
School as embedded in society and connected to Bronfenbrenner (2005)	Providing services to support academics, health, and well-being for students, families, and staff	Setting expectations and being consistent while being flexible and recognizing external influences	Experiences and environments impact an individual's growth and development in positive and negative ways
Understanding of the impact external environments have on school environment, staff, and students	A web of community and mutual support and respect across community		Valuing people
School as a means for improved equity and life-long success	The expectation that everyone shares the same vision		

Practices

In this section, I will discuss the findings on the principals' practices in relation to the literature and my conceptual framework. Table 8 provides the list of practices from the conceptual framework and compares it to the findings. An uppercase X indicates strong similarities, a lowercase x indicates that the practice was demonstrated, but not strongly, or that there were some differences between the descriptions of the practice from the literature and the findings. Practices that were not included in the conceptual framework are in italics.

As already discussed in the findings, overall, both principals' actions focus on creating conditions to support the whole child across individual relationships, internal communities, and external communities through consistency and coherence with the vision. Moreover, their actions aligned with their vision and their understanding of the whole child. While there were some differences, nearly all of the practices identified in the literature were apparent in the two case studies as can be seen in Table 8. These include modeling behavior, strengthening school culture, and engaging with the community and the families of children in the school. Two areas that were not evident in the case studies revolved around building a shared school vision and goals. In both of the schools in this capstone, there was little to no indication that the principals developed the vision in a collaborative manner or that they built goal consensus. These two areas are mostly indicative of change leadership, where there is a desire to enact change throughout the school. In these two schools, the school vision was already established. Rather than work with others to develop this vision, the principals already expected their staff to share it. Therefore, in the revised conceptual framework I combine developing a shared vision and building goal consensus to "developing or holding a shared vision and goals." One of the areas that I did not include in the original conceptual framework, but that is in the literature and was

visible in the two schools, was clear communication of the school vision. I include this area in

the revised conceptual framework.

Table 8

Comparison Between Practices in the Conceptual Framework and the Findings

Practices	Conceptual framework	Ms. Jones	Mr. Williams
Question 2C: Practices/priorities			
Developing a shared school vision/*holding a shared school* vision	X	x	x
Building goal consensus	X		
Modeling behavior	X	X	X
Building collaborative structures	X	x	x
Strengthening school culture	X	X	X
Engaging parents	X	X	X
Engaging community	X	X	X
Relationship building		X	X
Engaging students		X	X
Putting systems and staff in place to support consistent/cohesive vision		X	X
Clear communication about vision and expectations		X	X
Relational trust		x	X
Allocation of time and funding		x	X

Another area where there were differences was in the more administrative practices of

the principals, such as building collaborative structures, the allocation of time and funding

resources, and putting systems and staff in place to support a consistent vision. While the

principals put in place collaborative structures such as creating a variety of teams and including

staff in decisions, they also modeled collaboration by asking for ideas, active listening, and

providing the culture for positive discussions and interactions. In addition, as already discussed,

they set an expectation for community and mutual support through their actions and

interactions and their communication of their vision. Again, they were consistent and cohesive

in their actions, beliefs, and administrative structures. The allocation of resources and putting

systems and staff in place to support a consistent vision were not included in my original

conceptual framework. While both of these areas were mentioned in Valois (2012), they were

not emphasized as strongly and were not described in other literature. I have included them in

the revised conceptual framework.

As with the vision, my conceptual framework did not convey the breadth or depth of the

principals' practices. The reorganized framework for practices (Table 9) provides a more detailed

representation of the practices used by the principals.

Table 9

Summary of the Practices Based on the Findings

PRACTICES			
Shared vision and goals	**Modeling positive engagements and growth with students, families, and community**	**Creating community**	**Putting systems in place to support vision**
Staffing	Present and available	Community engagement	Clear communication of the vision
Communication	Kindness/caring	Collaboration and distributed leadership	Providing services through staffing and programs
Consistency	Authenticity	Family engagement	Removing barriers for work to occur
Supportive, caring, and rigorous environment for students, staff, and families	Listener/feedback/ open to change and learning	Relational trust	Allocation of funding and time

Revised Conceptual Frameworks

As described in the literature review, there are many gaps in the literature for the

emerging field of the whole child. As this area gains in prominence and continues to grow, an

understanding of the role of the principal in a whole child school will continue to gain in

importance. This capstone study provides exploratory research on frameworks that can be used

to better understand the complex role of the principal when implementing and sustaining a whole child approach to education. It opens the door to future research in the many areas that are involved by providing a potential overarching and cohesive framework from which to better understand all of the working parts and how they interact. Both the literature (Bailey et al., 2019; Mahoney et al., 2020; Rooney et al., 2015; Valois et al., 2015) and this capstone research suggest that the principal has a key role in successful adherence of the approach through leading, modeling, and prioritizing their vision of the whole child. Based on this analysis, I offer the revised conceptual framework below as a starting point for future research and practice in this area.

The revised framework accounts for the alignment between the elements of the principal's vision and their practices, as well as the consistent interactions with all constituents in the school community and how these interactions create the conditions that support the health and well-being of students, staff, and families and ultimately improve outcomes. It acknowledges the principal's mindset as their combined vision and practices and as an overarching aspect of the principal's role. It continues to illustrate the impact that external forces have on the school and how the principal accounts for these forces in their practices. It also includes the changes already discussed in the vision and the practices to reflect the findings, and addresses the direct line of the principal's interactions with the school conditions. Figure 10 is the revised conceptual framework and Figure 11 is the original conceptual framework for comparison.
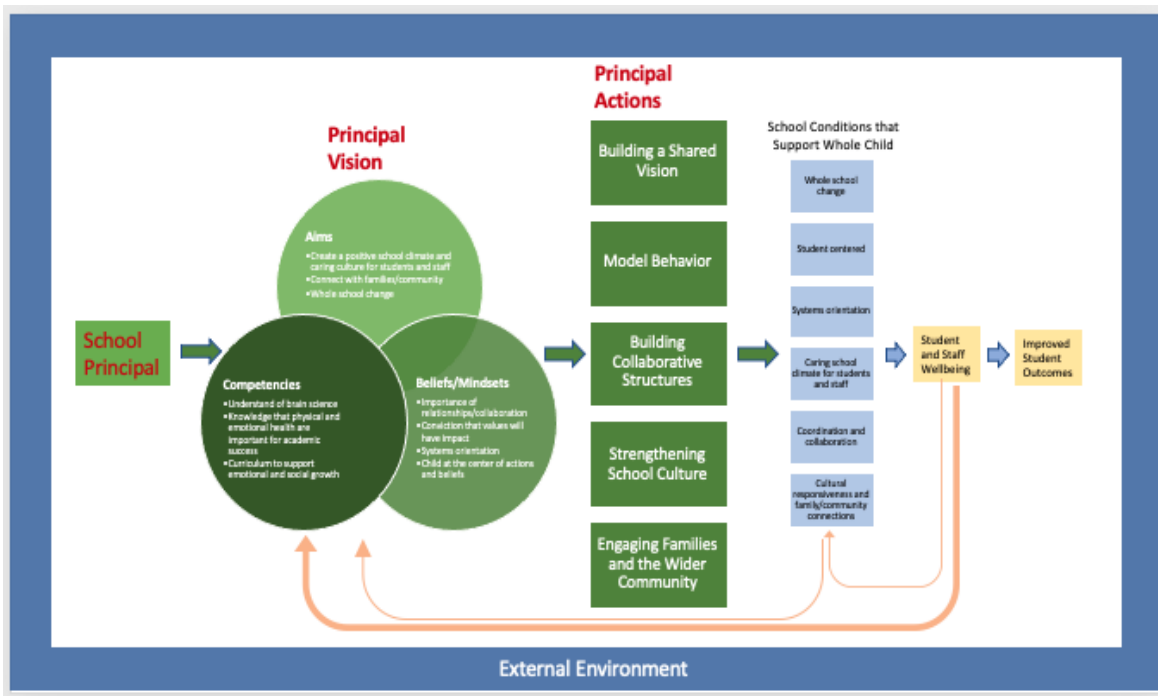
Figure 10

Revised Conceptual Framework for the Principal in the Unified Whole School, Whole Child
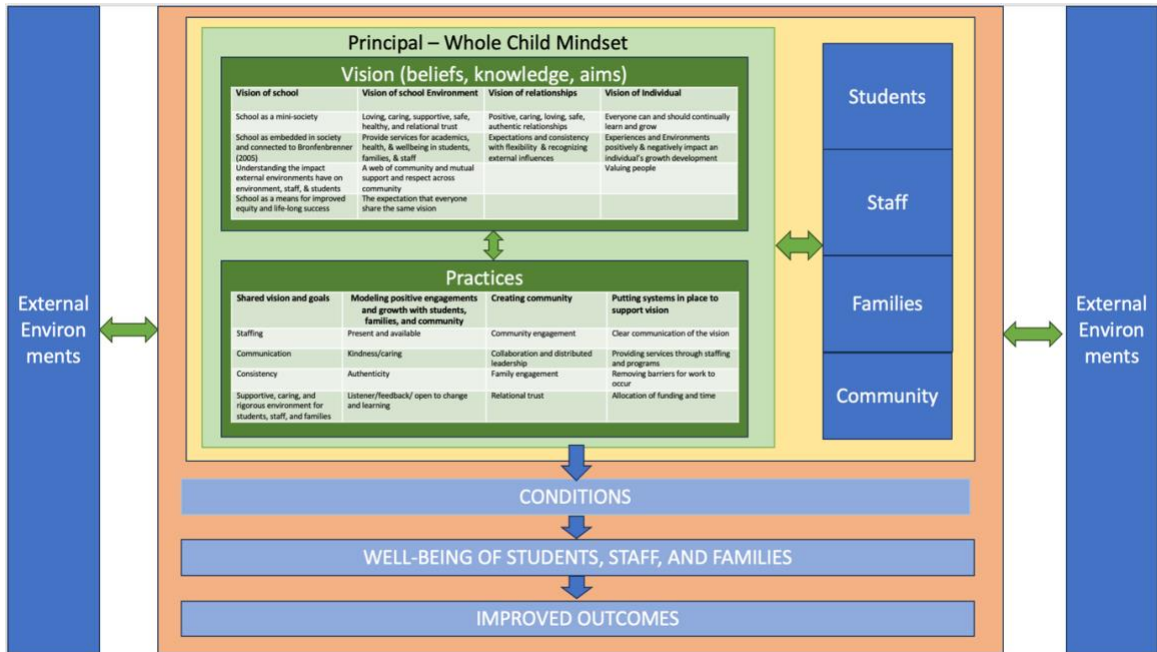
Framework

Figure 11

Original Conceptual Framework for the Principal in the Unified Whole School, Whole Child

Framework

Unified Framework for the Whole Child

One of the first actions I needed to take when conducting this research was to create a unified framework and definition of the whole child since there are so many models available. To explore the usefulness of this framework, my first research question concerns the principals' definition of the whole child. Table 10 provides the definition and conditions in the unified whole child framework in the left-hand column as well as any new areas identified in the findings. An uppercase X indicates a strong similarity, a lowercase x indicates that there are some differences. Phrases in italic indicate additions to the original concept based on the findings. All of the elements of the whole child model were discussed by the principals, with some slight variations. For example, the principals engaged with students, not just placing them

at the center of their beliefs, an important distinction given the role relationships have in the

principals' vision and practices. Another important distinction is the elements in the

environment. The environment was not just caring, but more finely defined. It was caring,

demanding, and authentic, with demanding defined as the expectation that everyone be their

best selves and push themselves to do their best. These qualities of the environment were

engrained in and inseparable from the principal's expectations for the whole child. Smylie et al.

(2020), Mahoney (2020) and others note that academic rigor goes hand-in-hand with their

models of caring and Systemic SEL respectively, but don't necessarily emphasize it to the extent

that the principals did in the interviews reported here. The case studies highlight the connection

between caring and achievement in a way that is lacking in the literature and illustrates a piece

of the change in mindset that underscores an integrated vision of the whole child.

Table 10

Comparison Between Whole Child Definition in the Conceptual Framework and the Findings

Conditions identified in the literature	Literature	Ms. Jones	Mr. Williams
Question 1: definition and conditions			
Holistic view of the student that includes surrounding environments (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019; Valois et al., 2015)	X	X	X
Whole school change/*whole school vision* (Darling-Hammond et al., 2021; Mahoney et al., 2020; Valois et al., 2015)	X	X	X
Student centered/*student engagement* (Darling-Hammond et al., 2021; Lewallen et al., 2015)	X	x	x
Systems orientation (Darling-Hammond et al., 2021; Lewallen et al., 2015; Mahoney et al., 2020)	X	X	X
Caring climate for students and staff/*safe, caring, authentic, fun, loving, challenging environment* (Darling-Hammond et al., 2021; Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Lewallen et al., 2015)	X	X	X
Coordination and collaboration (Darling-Hammond et al., 2021; Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Lewallen et al., 2015)	X	X	X

Cultural responsiveness (Darling-Hammond et al., 2021; Jones & Bouffard, 2012)	X	x	x
Family/community engagement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2021; Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Lewallen et al., 2015; Mahoney et al., 2020)	X	X	X
Cohesive	x	x	X
Supporting student and staff wellness and well-being		X	X
Exposure to new ideas and experiences		X	

While the unified whole child framework was created to help guide this research as a conceptual framework and not to test its applicability, data from this capstone suggests that there are leadership beliefs and practices that are useful no matter the whole child model being used. It also suggests that the unified framework could be helpful for both future research and for determining the components that should be included in a whole child approach. It does not suggest how these elements are implemented or programs that should be used, but the overall areas that should be considered when determining a whole child approach. In essence, it represents the mindset that both principals identified as crucial to the implementation of the whole child and that I have included in the revision of the conceptual framework for the principal's role in Figure 10.

The findings also suggest that the conditions identified in the literature review are relevant, although based on the findings I would make a few adjustments. As with the principal's vision, instead of "whole school change," I have changed this to "whole school vision and continuous learning." This may entail a whole school change but it also reflects the conditions for sustaining the approach. I also changed the "Caring school climate for students and staff" to "Caring and Robust climate for students, staff, families, and community" to highlight the high expectations upheld for everyone and the cyclical nature of the relationships and community. In addition, I added that the principal not only influences the conditions that support the whole

child, but builds positive relationships across the socio-ecological spheres as described in the findings. Figure 12 is the revised Unified Whole School, Whole Child Framework. I have also included the original Unified Whole School, Whole Child Framework (Figure 13) for comparison. Changes to the new framework are noted in blue type in Figure 12.
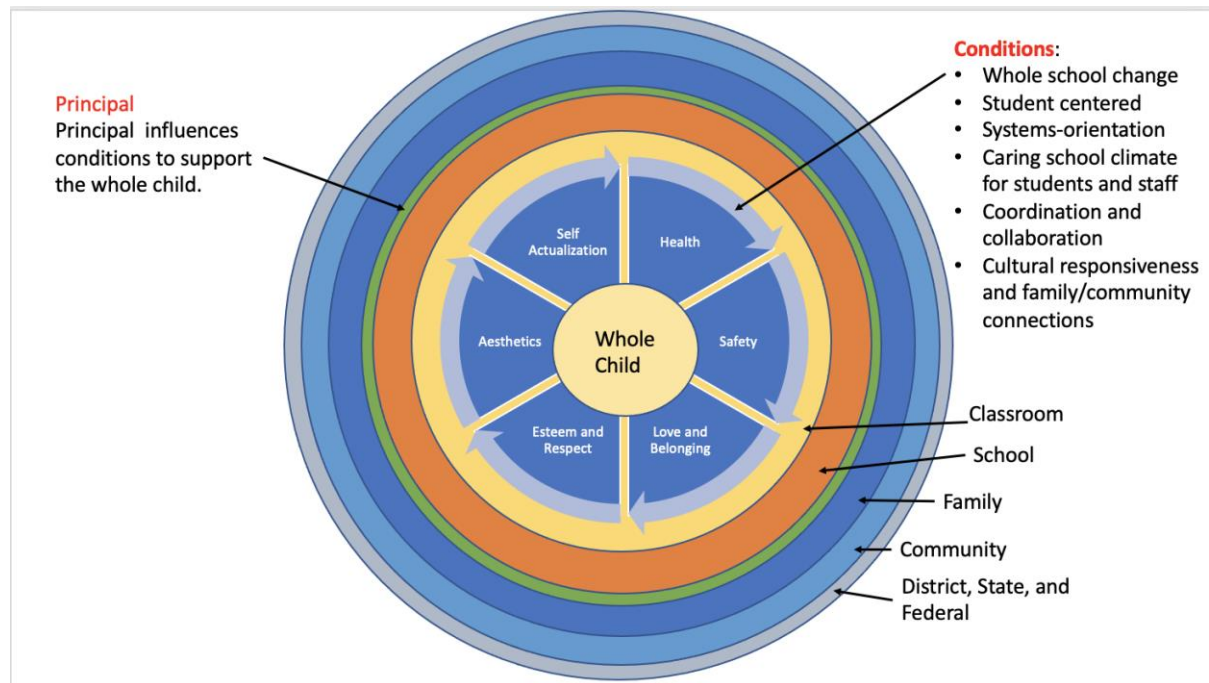
Figure 12

Revised Conceptual Framework for the Unified Whole School, Whole Child Framework
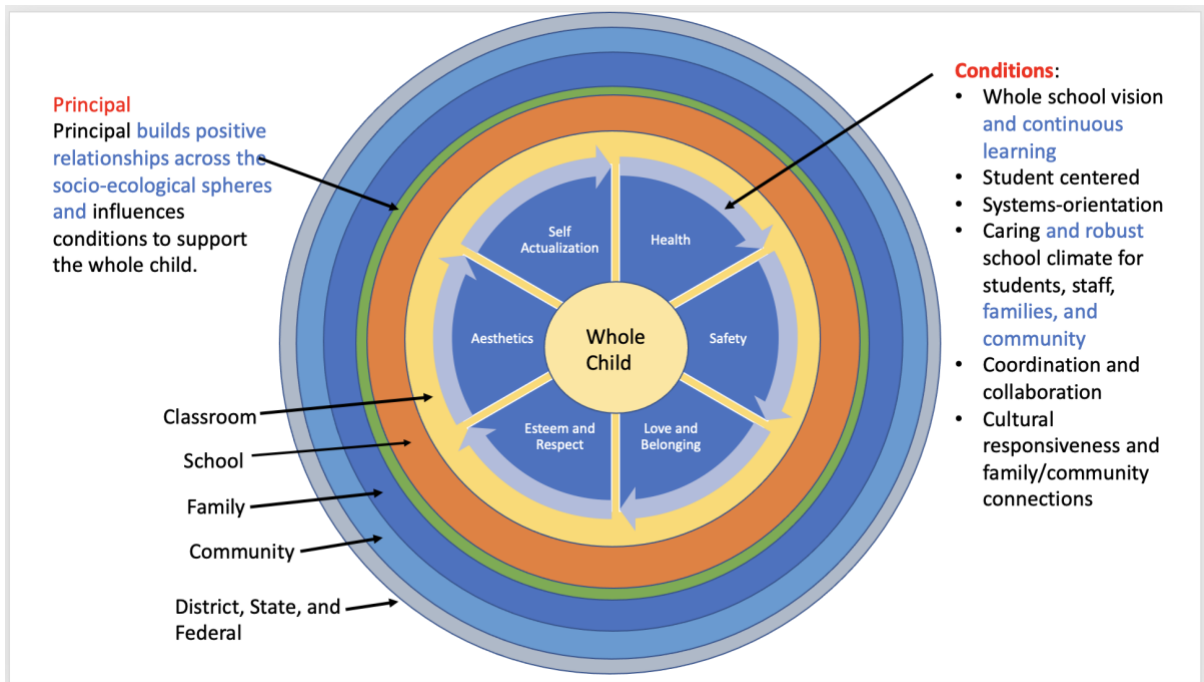
Figure 13

Original Conceptual Framework for the Unified Whole School, Whole Child Framework

Limitations

A number of limitations were described in the introduction to this study, including how new and amorphous the field is (making the proposed unified whole child framework necessary), the difficulty in conducting research on a systems approach as opposed to a specific practice or program, and the use of a case study design which limits the study's generalizability. There is also limited research on the connections being made in the model, such as between the conditions and the principal's influence or whether the conditions have an impact on well-being and outcomes.

Other limitations arose during the course of the research. The sole focus on the principal could be placing unwarranted emphasis on the principal. Similarly, the sole focus on the whole child could overemphasize the principals' vision and actions in relation to the whole child and

underemphasize other aims. In addition, the participants interviewed to triangulate the data from the principal were selected by the principal as those involved in the approach. More in-depth information from others in the school and observations over a longer period of time could provide a more complete view on what is happening in the school. The interviews were also conducted at the very end of the school year so it was difficult to schedule interviews with teachers and family members. If it had been possible to conduct the interviews even a month earlier, other personnel may have been available. For example, I was unable to interview a teacher at Raven since school had already ended for the year. The interviews also took place in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. This may have colored the perspectives of the participants given the challenges most schools in the U.S. experienced with student behavior and safety issues. Finally, even though they were involved in two different whole child initiatives, the two schools in these case studies were in a school district that was actively pursuing a whole child approach. The principals had the support of their superintendent and other education leaders to be implementing a whole child approach. While they were held to high academic standards and expectations by the district, it is not known what influence the district support had on the principals' efforts.

Summary

The purpose of this capstone was to better understand why whole child approaches are being successfully integrated into some schools but not in others and to help school districts and non-profit organizations understand the mechanisms that facilitate the implementation of the whole child approach. The literature led to an exploration of the principal's role in schools that were deemed successful at implementing a whole child approach. Because there are many variations of a whole child approach, it was first necessary to define it. A proposed conceptual framework for the whole child that unified characteristics of the most popular whole child

models was developed for this purpose. Hopefully, it will also provide an overarching framework for whole child models and for future research on the whole child.

A second conceptual framework was created to guide the research on the principal's role in two elementary schools in the same district that were deemed exemplary in representing a whole child approach by education leaders in the district. The findings suggest that a whole child principal will prioritize and model authentic, honest and caring relationships across the socio-ecological spheres of student, staff, family, and community. They put in place staff and structures that support student health and well-being and encourage collaboration and distributed leadership. They find joy in continuous growth and learning and work towards inciting this joy in everyone in the school environment. Their goal is for students to thrive, now and in their future endeavors. Most importantly, they believe in the whole child and want everyone in the school to do the same. The combined conceptual frameworks for the whole child and for the role of the principal provide a potential model for the mindset of a principal who has bought into the approach and the vision and practices they may need to learn to implement it.

Recommendations for Future Research

As described above, the frameworks provided offer a potential organizing framework for future research on the principal's role in schools that support the whole child and for future research on a unified whole child framework. While they provide an overarching structure for future research, they also illuminate the many areas that can be explored. I have organized the recommended research into two main categories of research that can then be broken into several different buckets. One category is research on the whole child framework and other factors besides the principal who may have an impact on its success. The other category is

research on the principal's role, particularly the vision and practices identified in the case

studies. An outline for a potential research agenda is available in the Action Communications.

There are three overarching buckets of research to further understand the whole child

framework. The first is the overall efficacy of the whole child approach as well as the relevance

of the proposed unified framework. While emerging research suggests that the approach could

have an impact on student outcomes, particularly in underserved and racially disadvantaged

communities (Rosas et al., 2009; Storey et al., 2016; The ASCD Whole Child Initiative, 2016),

more research should be conducted on the impact the approach has on both immediate and

long-term academic, health, and well-being outcomes. Research on the proposed unified

framework is also in need. For example, there should be additional studies on whether the

identified conditions are visible in other whole child schools as well as the influence the principal

has on them and whether some of the identified conditions are more important than others. I

also thought about removing the classroom circle and replacing it with one for peers and one for

teachers to reflect personal relationships since the findings suggest their importance, but I did

not collect specific enough data that would recommend this change. However, it does suggest

an additional area that should be investigated. Another bucket in this category concerns the

other areas that influence the school: teachers, other staff, students, families, communities,

district leaders, and district, state, and federal policies. Based on the emerging research, this

capstone only looks at the role of the principal in a whole child school. Studies that explore the

influence of other actors in the system are warranted.

I see two other main buckets of research to further understand the role of the principal

in a whole child school. One involves the interaction of beliefs, knowledge, and mindset and

their alignment with practices. It would be helpful to know if the overlap is an anomaly or if the

alignment is apparent in other elementary schools, districts, middle, and/or high schools. In

addition, more research should be conducted to understand the alignment between the vision

and the practices of the principal. Research should also explore whether there are areas

identified in the vision or practices that is more important than others or if their cohesion is

necessary. The other bucket involves research into each of the practices, beliefs, aims, and

knowledge to better understand their individual impact on outcomes. Among other areas of

study is the influence of relational trust. While not emphasized in the findings from Raven, Mr.

Williams purposefully sought to create an environment of relational trust and Ms. Jones agreed

that relational trust was important when asked explicitly. The two case studies suggest that

relational trust might be a key factor in the whole child approach and studies designed to

explore this component could be helpful for the implementation of the model. Similarly, an area

of school climate that has limited research is the connection between student perception of

school climate and teacher perception of school climate and culture. It would be helpful to know

if there is a relationship and if similar conditions improve the climate and culture of the school

for both students and teachers. A better understanding of this area might offer an efficient way

of combining programmatic areas around teacher and student well-being as well as areas of

study.

Recommendations for Practical Application of the Findings

This research gives rise to a number of recommendations for action. Principals

interested in implementing a whole child approach in their school can try to replicate the vision

and the practices of the principals in the two case studies. I recommend that they review the

consolidated vision and practices of the two principals as outlined in Appendix G and the

alignment of the vision and practices outlined in Appendix H. However, my main audience for

this study is districts and organizations interested in scaling a whole child approach by working

directly with schools and principals. For these organizations, I offer two main themes, each with three recommendations.

Organizational Considerations

Connect with Other Organizations and Highlight Successes. The principals in this study appear to have similar visions and practices even though they were in different whole child initiatives. It could be useful for organizations and districts pursuing a whole child approach to connect with other organizations and districts that are implementing a whole child approach. They could discuss what they have learned about their respective models and compare implementation strategies to garner potential new ideas for training and implementation. Sharing and showcasing stories, case studies, descriptions, tours of schools, and evidence of schools that have been successful could also encourage growth of the approaches described.

Pursue Policies that Support the Whole Child. While this capstone explored the role of the principal in schools that are considered exemplary at supporting the whole child, there are recommendations and research that suggest policies as a key to scaling the whole child approach. As noted in the limitations, the case study schools were in a district that was actively pursuing a whole child approach, so the district climate was amenable to the principals' vision and practices. Organizations and school districts interested in instilling a whole child approach in their school systems would do well to review the policy recommendations provided in these studies.

Training and Support for Principals. Recognize that implementing a whole child approach is a change in mindset and not solely program implementation. The literature suggests that change takes time, especially when it involves a change in mindsets and beliefs. Implement learning sessions and coaching for principals on interpersonal interactions, the science of child development and learning, and systems thinking. Since this is a change in mindset and not just

the implementation of programs, in addition to training sessions, coaching, mentoring, and communities of practice are recommended since they have demonstrated effectiveness in changing mindsets (Delbridge et al., 2018; Marshall & Khalifa, 2018; Woulfin & Rigby, 2017). Training in these areas should also be available for school staff.

For interpersonal interactions, principals should understand the importance of SEL and know how to find and evaluate the myriad available SEL curricula. In addition, they should learn about and practice their own SEL skills and build their own self-knowledge. Both principals in the case studies suggested that these skills were the most important aspect of leading a whole child school. There are two studies that provide guidance on conducting training in these areas. Patti et al. (2015) provide recommendations for how to conduct trainings for the four soft skills that they believe are missing from principal training programs and that support SEL: actionable self-reflection, building generative relationships, enabling meaningful conversations, and thinking systemically. The authors view these skills as necessary for the deep learning necessary to change beliefs and mindsets to occur. The guidelines they offer for teaching these skills include providing a safe learning environment, building vision, setting goals based on the vision, using the social emotional competencies, coaching, practice and reassessment, and peer-to-peer networks. The authors based these suggestions on adult learning theory. The other study is by Drago-Severson and Blum-DeStafano (2018) who take a systems and personal growth perspective in building the capacity of leaders to enact change. I suggest the guidelines from these two sources be used in training principals and staff in the content areas mentioned above.

Based on the case studies, I also recommend that principals learn about the connection between well-being, health and learning; the impact of trauma; and how learning is influenced by many internal and external actors. Both principals in the case studies understood the importance of a positive, supportive school environment and relationships in bolstering positive

experiences and buffering those that are negative. Similarly, principals should receive training in systems thinking.

Practice Considerations

Review the Vision and Practices of the Two Whole Child Principals. Review the table of beliefs, mindsets, and knowledge and the table of practices that both principals share in Appendices G and H. Particular focus should be made to the relationship building practices of being present and available, authenticity, communication, caring, and listening. Other important practices that should be reinforced are family and community engagement, distributed leadership, and school organization and staffing that support staff and student growth and development. This list can be used to guide principal practices and by organizations and principals to see areas where there may be a gap or they find challenging.

Action Communications

Below are three action communications that present the recommendations in more digestible formats. I have included a one-page outline for a research agenda that can be used by those interested in further exploring the topic of whole child leadership. I have also created a one-page outline of the practices and beliefs that can be used by district leaders, non-profit organizations, and principals interested in adopting a whole child framework as a gauge to plan training sessions or to self-assess principal practices. There is also a presentation to the district and non-profit organization in the district I worked with who are very interested in these findings as a way to bolster the implementation of their whole child initiatives.

Potential Research Agenda

Preliminary Research Agenda for Unified Whole Child Framework and Principal's Leadership	
	Specific Problem/Topic

I. Whole Child Framework	Efficacy of the Whole Child Approach
	- Impact on student outcomes
	  - Long-term and short-term health outcomes
	  - Long-term and short-term education outcomes
	  - Demographic differences

	The Unified Whole Child Framework - Identified conditions - Influences on identified conditions - Importance of identified conditions - Relationship between building relationships and conditions - Are all important or are some more important than others? - Are there factors missing? - Is the framework useful to practitioners?
	Other Influences on Success of Whole Child Approach - Teachers - Support staff - Families - Communities - District policies
II. Research on Principal Framework	Alignment of Vision Elements - Does the alignment of vision elements happen in other successful schools? Districts? High Schools? Middle Schools? - Are some elements of the vision more influential than others? Are they all necessary?
	Efficiency of Individual Practices - Relationship between relational trust and the whole child - Relationship of school climate and whole child - Relationship between student perception of school climate and teacher perception of school climate - The relationship between systems thinking and the whole child
	Interaction Between Vision and Practices and Mindset - Was the coherence of vision and practices an anomaly or does it occur in other schools? - Are the elements unique to the whole child?

Proposed Guide for Practices and Source Material

LESSONS LEARNED CHECKLIST

Useful Topics to Know

- SEL and SEL curriculum
- Impact of mental and physical health, trauma, and experiences on learning and development
- Brain science and link between health and learning
- Family partnership best practices

Training on Skills

- Relationship building
- Systems thinking
- Implicit bias
- Self-actualization

Training and Support for Practices

- Communities of Practice
- Mentoring
- Coaching

Relationship Practices to Model

- Love and caring
- Present and available
  - Open Door Policy for students, families, and staff
  - Wander school
  - Morning greeting of students and Families
  - Attend lunch and recess
  - Attend school activities
- Authenticity
  - Clear explanations
  - Hold difficult conversations
  - Openness
  - Honesty
  - Transparentcy
- Communication
  - Listener
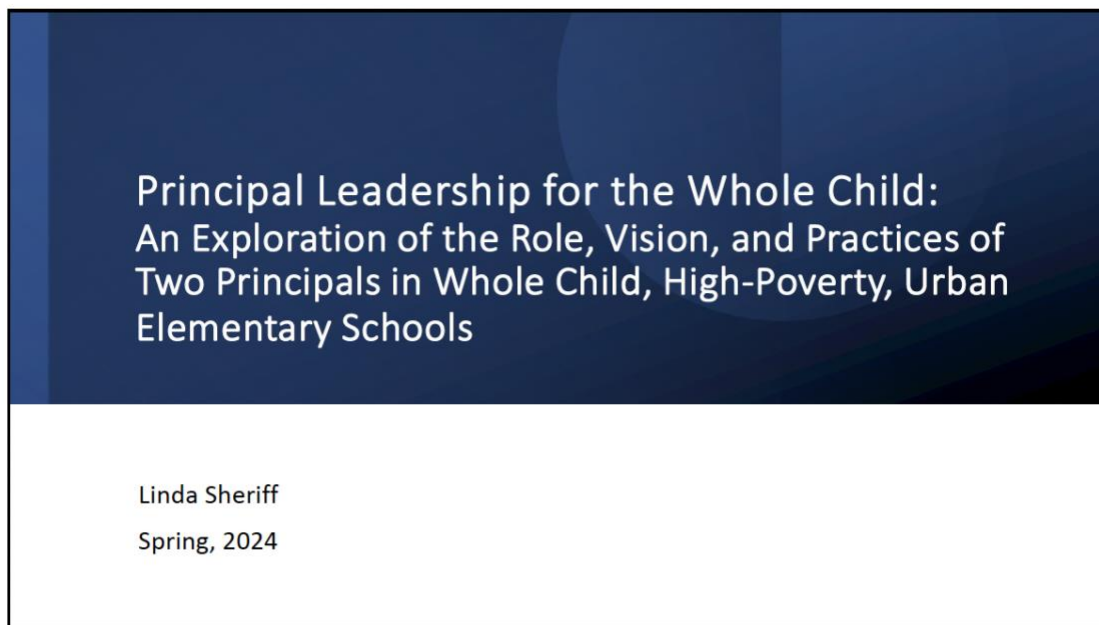 - Accepting feedback
  - Requesting feedback

Community Engagement

Distributed Leadership

Staff Development

- Supporting staff growth and development
- Wellness Team that supports students, staff and families
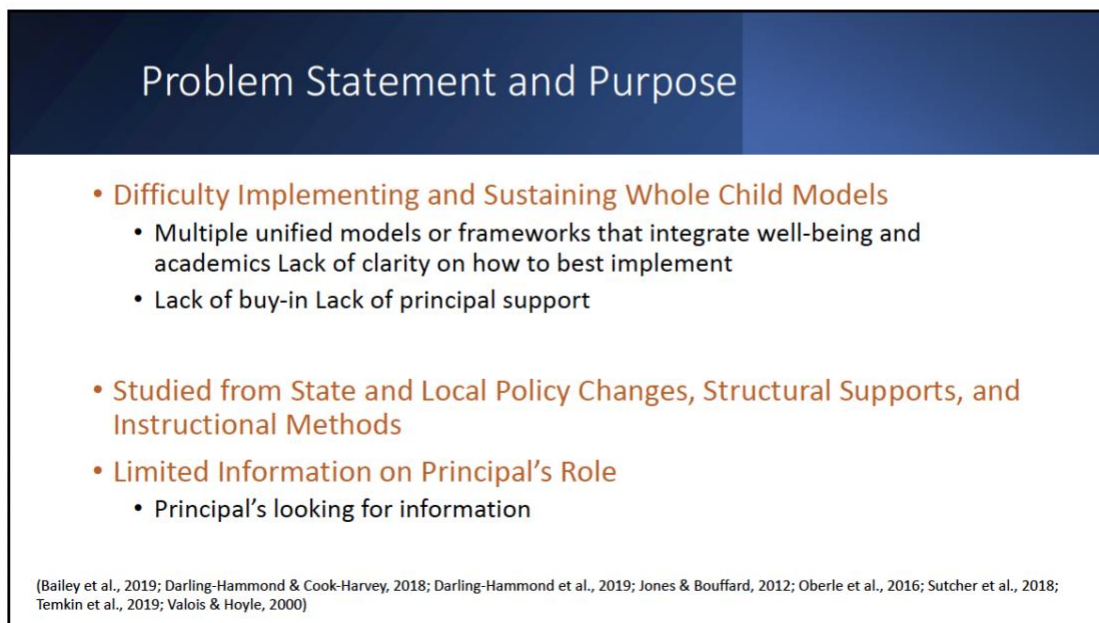- Hire or coach for similar beliefs and behaviors

Presentation to District and Non-Profit Organization

Principal Leadership for the Whole Child:
An Exploration of the Role, Vision, and Practices of Two Principals in Whole Child, High-Poverty, Urban Elementary Schools

Linda Sheriff

Spring, 2024

1

Problem Statement and Purpose

- Difficulty Implementing and Sustaining Whole Child Models
  - Multiple unified models or frameworks that integrate well-being and academics Lack of clarity on how to best implement
  - Lack of buy-in Lack of principal support

- Studied from State and Local Policy Changes, Structural Supports, and Instructional Methods
- Limited Information on Principal's Role
  - Principal's looking for information

(Bailey et al., 2019; Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018; Darling-Hammond et al., 2019; Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Oberle et al., 2016; Sutcher et al., 2018; Temkin et al., 2019; Valois & Hoyle, 2000)

2

Research Questions

- How do school principals who support a whole school approach to the whole child define the approach and what do they identify as its key features and conditions for success?
- What is the role of the school principal in implementing a whole school approach to the whole child?
  - How do they describe and understand their role in supporting the whole child?
  - What is their vision for supporting the whole child?
  - What actions and behaviors do they take to enact their vision?
- In what ways do principals take into consideration internal school conditions and external environments? What facets of school conditions and external environments do they prioritize, if any?

3

Literature Review: Whole Child Themes

Whole Child Movement	Similar Conditions	Principal Vision	Principal Practices

• Different models
• Effectiveness
• Similar conditions
• Implementation – Importance of Principal
• Knowledge of Leadership for the Models
	• Whole School Change
	• Student Centered
	• Systems-Orientation
	• Caring School Climate for Students and Staff
	• Coordination and Collaboration
	• Cultural responsiveness and family/community connections
		• Beliefs
		  • Importance of Relationships
		  • Values have Impact
		  • Systems Orientation
		  • Child-Centered
		• Aims
		  • Positive School Climate
		  • Connect with Families/Community
		  • Whole School Change
		• Knowledge
		  • Brain Science
		  • Link between Health and Academics
		  • Curriculum
			• Shared School Vision
			• Building Goal Consensus
			• Modeling Behavior
			• Building Collaborative Structures
			• Strengthening School Culture
			• Engaging Parents and Community

4

Conceptual Framework for Unified Whole School, Whole Child and Principal's Role
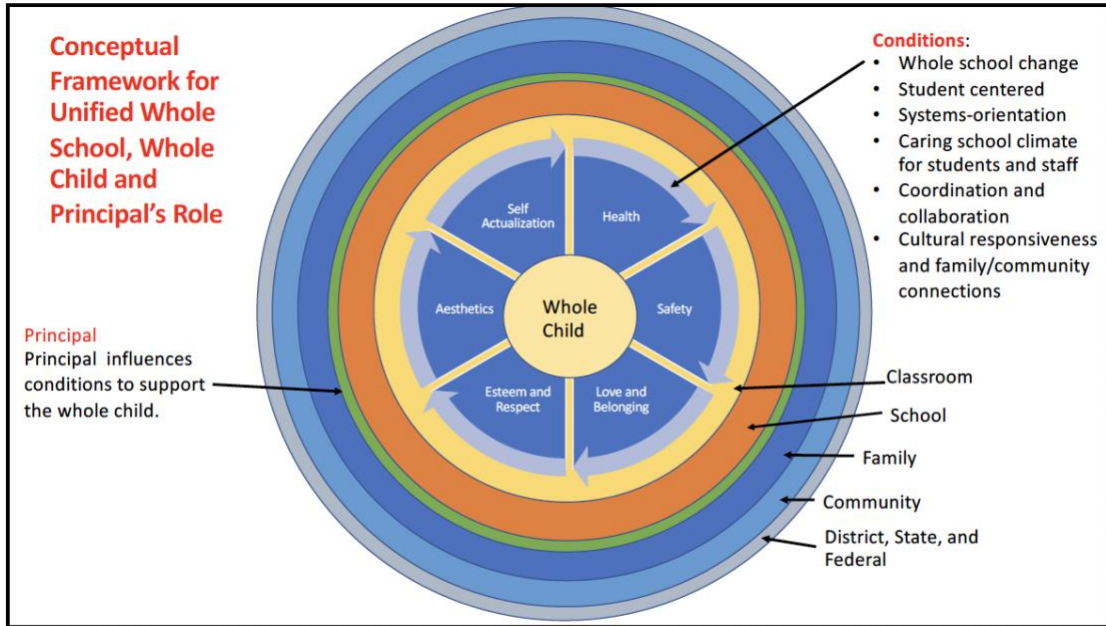
5
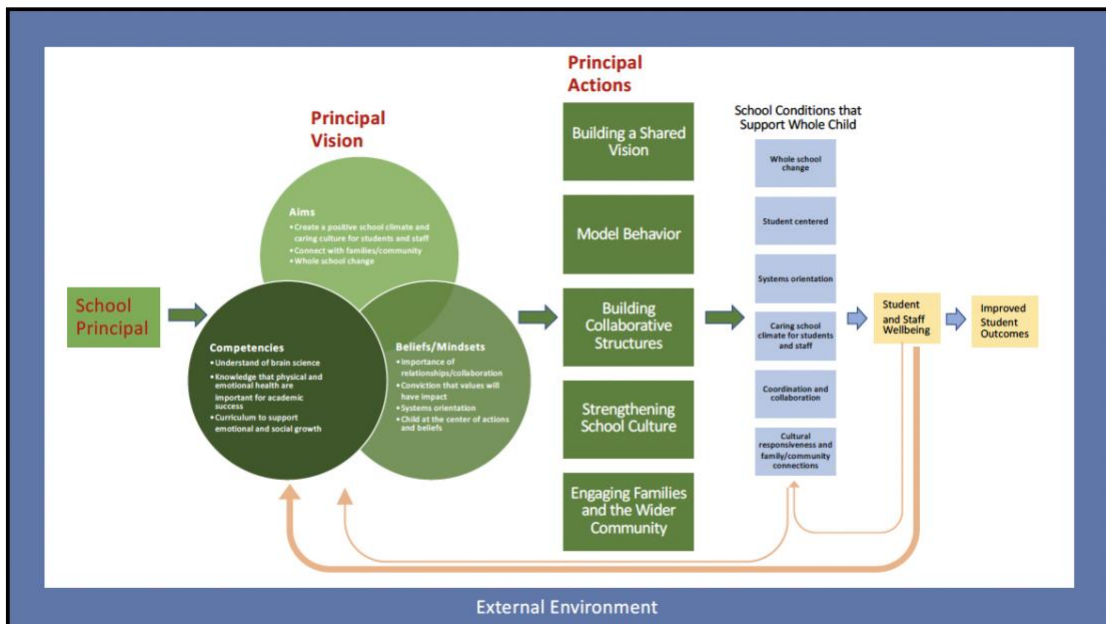
6

Methods: Comparative Case Study of 2 Elementary Schools recommended as among most successful

	Hilltop Elementary School (2022/2023)	Raven Elementary Elementary (2022/2023)
Number of Students (2022-23)	375 PK3 – grade 5 students	510 PK3 – grade 5 students
Demographics	Black: 47% Hispanic/Latino: 20% White: 25% Asian: 5% Native/Alaskan: 0% Multiple races: 3% English Language Learners: 23% At Risk: 37% Special Education: 19%	Black: 62% Hispanic/Latino: 14% White: 19% Asian: 1% Native/Alaskan: 0% Multiple races: 3% English Language Learners: 3% At Risk: 41% Special Education: 13%
Interviewed	Principal (2xs) School Culture 4th Grade Teacher PTO President	Principal (2xs) Assistant Principal for STEAM CES Coordinator Whole Child Lead PTO Officer

7

Findings: Vision

Vision of School	Vision of School Environment	Vision of Relationships	Vision of individual
• A Mini-Society • Embedded in society and spheres of influence (2005) • Understand impact external environments on school environment, staff, and students • Means to improve equity and life-long success	• Loving, caring, supportive, safe, healthy, and relational trust • Provide services to support academics, health, and wellbeing for students, families, and staff • A Web of community • Shared vision	• Positive, caring, loving, safe, authentic relationships • Setting expectations and being consistent while flexible and recognizing external influences	• Everyone can and should continually learn and grow; learning is fun and joyful • Experiences and environments impact individuals' growth and development in positive and negative ways • Valuing people

8

Findings: Practices

Shared Vision and Goals	Modeling Positive Engagements & Growth with Students, Families, & Community	Creating Community	Putting Systems in Place to Support Vision
• Staffing • Communication • Consistency • Supportive, Caring, and Rigorous Environment for Students, Staff, and Families	• Present and Available • Kindness/Caring • Authenticity • Listener/Feedback/ Open to Change and Learning	• Community Engagement • Collaboration and Distributed Leadership • Family Engagement • Relational Trust	• Clear Communication of the Vision • Providing Services Through Staffing and Programs • Removing Barriers for Work to Occur • Allocation of Funding and Time

9

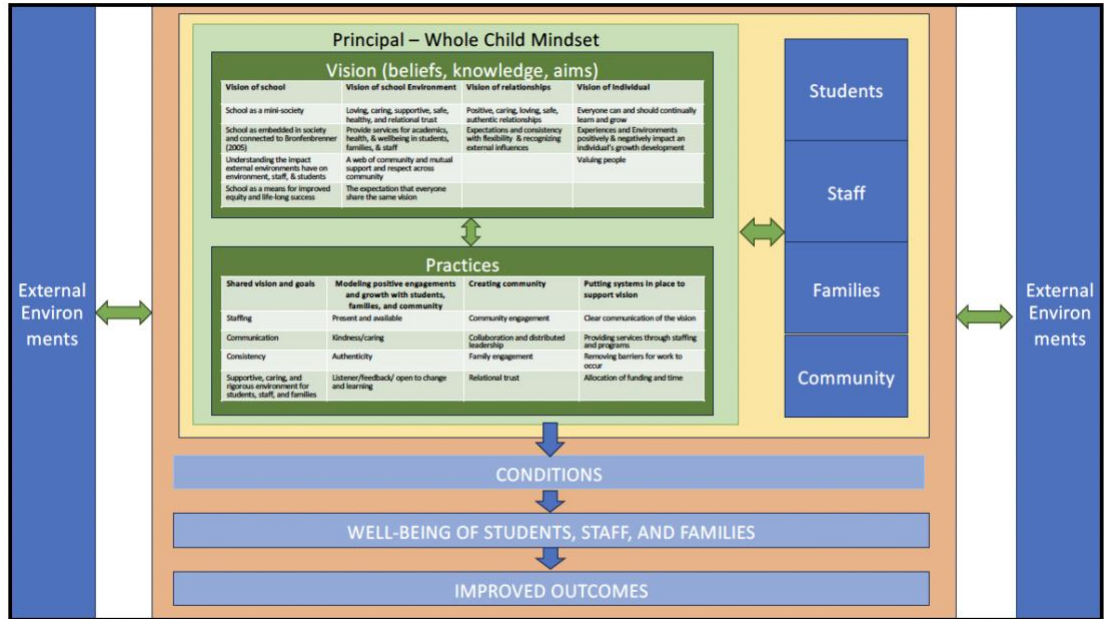## Findings: Role

Relationship Building
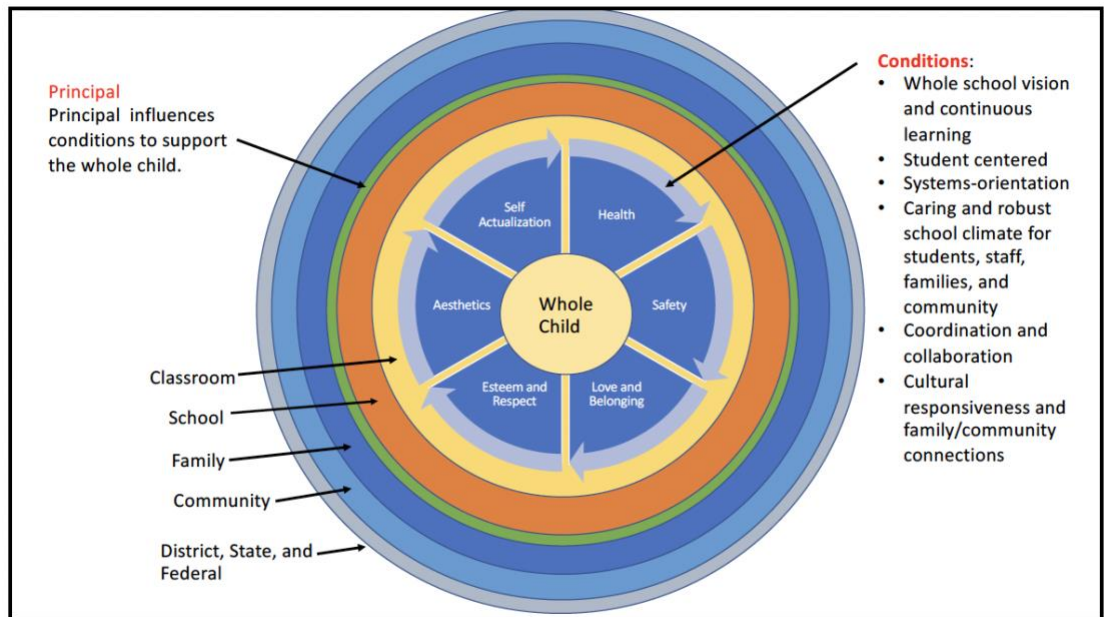
Communicating Vision

Community Builder and Connector

Developing and Maintaining Systems

10

Slide 11

Principal – Whole Child Mindset

Vision (beliefs, knowledge, aims)

Vision of school	Vision of school Environment	Vision of relationships	Vision of individual
School as a mini-society	Loving, caring, supportive, safe, healthy, and relational trust	Positive, caring, loving, safe, authentic relationships	Everyone can and should continually learn and grow
School as embedded in society and connected to Bronfenbrenner (2005)	Provide services for academics, health, & wellbeing in students, families, & staff	Expectations and consistency with flexibility & recognizing external influences	Experiences and Environments positively & negatively impact an individual's growth development
Understanding the impact external environments have on environment, staff, & students	A web of community and mutual support and respect across community		Valuing people
School as a means for improved equity and life-long success	The expectation that everyone share the same vision		

Practices

Shared vision and goals	Modeling positive engagements and growth with students, families, and community	Creating community	Putting systems in place to support vision
Staffing	Present and available	Community engagement	Clear communication of the vision
Communication	Kindness/caring	Collaboration and distributed leadership	Providing services through staffing and programs
Consistency	Authenticity	Family engagement	Removing barriers for work to occur
Supportive, caring, and rigorous environment for students, staff, and families	Listener/feedback/ open to change and learning	Relational trust	Allocation of funding and time

External Environments — Students, Staff, Families, Community — External Environments

CONDITIONS

WELL-BEING OF STUDENTS, STAFF, AND FAMILIES

IMPROVED OUTCOMES

11

Slide 12

Principal
Principal influences conditions to support the whole child.

Conditions:
- Whole school vision and continuous learning
- Student centered
- Systems-orientation
- Caring and robust school climate for students, staff, families, and community
- Coordination and collaboration
- Cultural responsiveness and family/community connections

Whole Child — Self Actualization, Health, Safety, Love and Belonging, Esteem and Respect, Aesthetics

Classroom
School
Family
Community
District, State, and Federal

12

Recommendations: Research

Research on Whole Child Framework	Research on Principal Framework
• Efficacy of Framework • Correct Features in Proposed WC Framework • Other influences outside of Principal	• Alignment of Vision Elements Correct • Efficiency of Individual Practices • Interaction between Vision and Practices and Mindset

13

Recommendations: Practical Applications

Connect with Other Organizations

Training and Support for Vision

- Coaching, mentoring, Communities of Practice
- Knowledge of SEL and SEL Curriculum
- Knowledge of the Impact of Psychological and Physical Health, trauma, and experiences on Learning and Development
- Training and support on Relationship Building, Systems-thinking, and Self-Actualization

Training and Support for Practices

Policies

14

Recommendations: Practices
Consistently Model Positive Interactions

Present and Available
- Open Door Policy
- Wander school
- Morning Greetings with students and families
- Attend Lunch and Recess
- Attend School Activities
- Love and Caring

Authenticity
- Clear explanations
- Difficult conversations
- Openness
- Honesty
- Transparency

Communication
- Listener
- Accepting Feedback
- Requesting Feedback

Love/Caring

Listening

15

Recommendations: Practices

Community Engagement

Distributed Leadership

Staff

Supporting Staff Growth and Development

Wellness Team (Counselor, etc.)

Hire or coach for similar beliefs and behaviors

16

17

18

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Appendix A

Cross-Walk Between Whole Child Model and Maslow's Theory of Motivation

Elements from Maslow's (1943) theory	WSCC (Lewallen et al., 2015)	Systemic SEL (Mahoney et al., 2020; Oberle et al., 2016)	School-wide SEL (Jones & Bouffard, 2012)	Whole child education (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018)	SoLD model (Darling-Hammond et al., 2021)
Physiological needs – food, drink shelter, clothing, heat, sleep	Healthy Health services Nutrition environment and services Physical education and physical activity Employee wellness			Physical development (access to nutritious food, health care, and social supports)	Integrated support systems (physical and mental health; social service community connections)
Safety needs – stability, freedom from fear	Safety Physical environment Employee wellness Family engagement Health education	School climate Reduction in disruptive behavioral Culturally responsive environment	Teacher background, social-emotional competence, and pedagogical skills Classroom management	Restorative behavioral supports Identity-safe classroom learning communities	Integrated support systems Environments filled with safety and belonging
Love and belongingness needs – interpersonal relationships, such as friendship, intimacy, trust, acceptance, love	Supported Social & emotional climate Counseling, psychological, and social services Family engagement	Self-awareness Self-management Social awareness Relationship skills Responsible decision-making Social & emotional climate	Healthy relationships Emotional processes Social/ interpersonal skills	Integration of social-emotional skills Structures for effective caring Trust and connections among staff and families Social and emotional development	Positive developmental relationships Environments filled with safety and belonging Development of skills, habits, and mindsets Self-awareness and ability to engage meaningfully with others

Elements from Maslow's (1943) theory	WSCC (Lewallen et al., 2015)	Systemic SEL (Mahoney et al., 2020; Oberle et al., 2016)	School-wide SEL (Jones & Bouffard, 2012)	Whole child education (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018)	SoLD model (Darling-Hammond et al., 2021)
Esteem needs – dignity, achievement, mastery, independence, status, prestige	Social and emotional climate		Cognitive regulation	Development of positive mindsets	Rich learning experiences and knowledge development Self-awareness and ability to engage meaningfully with others
Cognitive needs – knowledge, understanding, curiosity, exploration, meaning and predictability	Challenged Engaged	Challenging environments	Instructional support	Student-centered instruction Conceptual understanding and motivation Learning -to-learn strategies Education support MTSS Coordinated access to integrated services Extended learning opportunities Individualized supports	Rich learning experiences and knowledge development Critically and creatively solve problems
Self-actualization needs – realizing personal potential, self-fulfillment, personal growth		SEL curriculum	SEL curriculum	SEL curriculum	SEL curriculum

Elements from Maslow's (1943) theory	WSCC (Lewallen et al., 2015)	Systemic SEL (Mahoney et al., 2020; Oberle et al., 2016)	School-wide SEL (Jones & Bouffard, 2012)	Whole child education (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018)	SoLD model (Darling-Hammond et al., 2021)
Other	Whole school change Child-centered Built on socio-ecological model Coordinating with community Interdependence of all areas in the model Developing joint and collaborative school-based policies, practices, and processes Supportive infrastructure Coordination of policy, process, and practice School and community share responsibility for health and education	Whole school change SEL-centered Socio-ecological with proximal and distal settings Family and community partnerships System interconnections between policies and SEL Aligned and coordinated across systems School-wide SEL Classroom curriculum and instruction Trusting, caring school climate Policies, structures, and practices State and federal policies and supports	Whole school culture change Centered on student social-emotional skills and behaviors System interconnections between SEL and school culture Importance of community context Importance of culture and climate Feedback loop between teacher skills, student competency, and school climate District, state and federal policy focus Integration of SEL into teaching and interactive practices in addition to programmatic	Whole child centered Socio-ecological system Connections with district policies and practices Positive school climate and caring, culturally responsive learning community for students and teachers Productive instructional strategies Appropriate structures to provide continuity Aligned and coordinated across systems	Whole school redesign Centered on whole child healthy development Interconnections of structures, policies, and practices Transformative Personalized Empowering Culturally affirming Caring and positive school climate and culture for staff and students

Appendix B

Cross-Walk of Whole Child Leadership Practices with Affective Leadership Theories

Whole Child Leadership	Caring Leadership	Culturally Responsive Leadership	Transform-ational Leadership	Change Leadership
Competencies/ knowledge	(Smylie et al., 2020)		(Sun & Leithwood, 2012)	(Fullan, 2015)
Knowledge that student physical and emotional health are important for academic success/personal convictions (Valois et al., 2015)	(Ryu et al., 2020)	(Khalifa et al., 2016)		
SEL curricula (Darling-Hammond et al., 2021; Oberle et al., 2016)		(Khalifa et al., 2016)		
Beliefs/mindset	(Ryu et al., 2020; Smylie et al., 2020)	(Khalifa et al., 2016)		(Fullan, 2015)
Importance of relationships (Darling-Hammond et al., 2021; Storey et al., 2016)	(Ryu et al., 2020; Smylie et al., 2020)		(Sun & Leithwood, 2012)	(Fullan, 2015)
Systems orientation (Darling-Hammond et al., 2021; Valois et al., 2015)	(Ryu et al., 2020; Smylie et al., 2020)	(Khalifa et al., 2016)		(Fullan, 2015)
Student at the center (Darling-Hammond et al., 2021; Storey et al., 2016)				
Aims/priorities				
Create positive school climate and caring community and culture for students, teachers, and families (Mahoney et al., 2020)	(Ryu et al., 2020; Smylie et al., 2020)	(Khalifa et al., 2016)	(Sun & Leithwood, 2012)	
Connections/involvement with community/families (Mahoney et al., 2020; Storey et al., 2016; Valois et al., 2015)	(Smylie et al., 2020)	(Khalifa et al., 2016)	(Sun & Leithwood, 2012)	
Need for individual and system change (Mahoney et al., 2020; Storey et al., 2016)			(Sun & Leithwood, 2012)	(Fullan, 2015)

Whole Child Leadership	Caring Leadership	Culturally Responsive Leadership	Transform-ational Leadership	Change Leadership
Do				
Maintain visible presence and active leadership (Storey et al., 2016; Valois et al., 2015)			(Sun & Leithwood, 2012)	(Fullan, 2015)
Opportunity to build skills and mindsets of both staff and students (Mahoney et al., 2020; Storey et al., 2016; Valois et al., 2015)	(Smylie et al., 2020)		(Sun & Leithwood, 2012)	(Fullan, 2015)
Integration into school improvement process and alignment with values (Valois et al., 2015)	(Ryu et al., 2020)			
Model behavior (Mahoney et al., 2020; Storey et al., 2016)	(Smylie et al., 2020)		(Sun & Leithwood, 2012)	
Communicate and model vision effectively (Mahoney et al., 2020; Storey et al., 2016; Valois et al., 2015)		(Khalifa et al., 2016)	Setting Direction (Sun & Leithwood, 2012)	
Build collaborative structures that facilitate staff collaboration (Mahoney et al., 2020; Storey et al., 2016; Valois et al., 2015)	(Smylie et al., 2020)		(Sun & Leithwood, 2012)	(Fullan, 2015)
Strengthen school culture (Mahoney et al., 2020)			(Sun & Leithwood, 2012)	
Engage communities and families (Mahoney et al., 2020)			(Sun & Leithwood, 2012)	
Change agent (Valois et al., 2015)				(Fullan, 2015)
Build and sustain relationship (Valois et al., 2015)				(Fullan, 2015)
Resources (time, funding, resource allocation) (Darling-Hammond et al., 2021; Mahoney et al., 2020; Storey et al., 2016)	(Ryu et al., 2020)			

Appendix C

Principal Interview Protocol

Explanation of Purpose

Thank you so much for agreeing to speaking with me about your whole child initiative. As I mentioned, I'm getting my Ed.D. from UVA's School of Human Development and am conducting research for my dissertation on leadership for the whole child. Specifically, I want to understand:

- The beliefs, knowledge, aims, and actions of a school principal in a school that supports the whole child.

- Your understanding of a whole child approach and how the school represents it?

- If and how internal conditions and external environments have influenced your approach.

I have a variety of questions to get a better understand the school's initiative. There are no right or wrong answers; I'm looking for your perspective. If you don't feel comfortable answering any of the questions I pose or want to stop at any time, please let me know and we will end the interview. I also want to assure you that all names used in the final report – including the school and the district - will be pseudonyms if you would like them to be. Does this sound good? Do you have any questions?

I would like to record the interview so that I can focus on you rather than capturing your responses. After having read the Information Sheet, if you feel as though you understand the study and agree to continue with the interview, please give me a verbal agreement and I will start the recording. I might also take some notes. Is that ok with you? Great!

First, I have some simple questions about you.

- How long have you been in this school?

- How long have you been in this position?

- Why did you decide to go into education?

- Would you tell me about the school community? I'd love to learn more about the students and the families – and anything else you'd like to mention about the community.

  - Tell me about your school and your students.

  - Can you tell me something about the neighborhood?

  - Who do you interact with in the neighborhood if anyone?

  - Why would families want to send their children here?

  - How have you engaged families in the whole child initiative? Have there been any that have been particularly engaged?

Now let's talk about the whole child approach you are using.

- Can you tell me about your approach to the whole child?

  - What is your understanding of the term?

    - Would you call your school a whole child school?

    - Why or why not?

  - Why did you decide to pursue a whole child model?

    - Where did you learn about it?

  - What are your hopes and aims for the initiative?

    - How does this initiative impact other areas of the school or other initiatives?

    - How do you communicate this vision?

- o What do you think is most important in leading a school that supports the whole child?

- o What have been the benefits of the approach? Would you recommend the approach to another principal? Why or why not?

Let's talk a bit out your role now

- What do you see as your role in creating a school that supports the whole child?

    - o How do you see your approach differing from that of your peers? What do you think makes your school different from the way your peers lead their schools?

    - o How do you support school staff in integrating the initiative into the school?

- If you were talking to another principal who wanted to take the whole child approach

    - o What are the most important things they should do?

    - o What knowledge would it be important for them to have?

    - o What else would it be important for them to know?

- What do you think has contributed to your success in enacting a whole child approach?

    - o What challenges have you faced?

    - o How did you overcome them?

- Climate/Culture questions

    - o Can you describe the school climate and culture for me?

        - ▪ How do you define climate and culture?

        - ▪ What factors do you think contribute to this climate?

- o What school conditions and supports are necessary for students to do their best?

    - Why do you think those are necessary?

    - Do you do anything to create those conditions? If so, what?

- o What do you think are important factors in a child's development?

    - What is your understanding about child development and brain development?

        - What is your role in supporting it?

- Systems questions

    - o Who is involved in making major decisions at your school?

    - o Who else in the school has been especially engaged in or central to the whole child approach?

    - o Think about a long-term decision that was made around the whole child – either in terms of a specific child or a group of children. Please describe the situation to me: what were your thought processes and actions did you take to reach your decision?

        - What factors influence your decisions?

Is there anything else you think would be useful for me to know?

Let me tell you my next steps. You are the first person in your school that I have interviewed. As you know, I plan to interview at least 2 - 3 staff and an individual who can represent families. I would like to set up another time for us to meet in about six weeks. It

should be a shorter meeting (about a ½ hour) and will be for me to follow-up with any additional

questions. Does that work for you? I will then analyze your responses and share them with you

to make sure that you feel they accurately reflect your responses. I am conducting the same

process with another school and once I've analyzed both schools, I will do a cross analysis. I will

share the final results with you as well.

Do you have any questions?

Thank you so much for your time and contribution to this study and I'll be in touch.

Appendix D

Staff and Caregiver Interview Protocol

Explanation of Purpose

Thank you so much for agreeing to speaking with me about your school's whole child initiative. As I mentioned, I'm getting my EDD from UVA's School of Human Development and am conducting research for my dissertation on leadership for the whole child. Specifically, I want to understand:

- The beliefs, knowledge, aims, and actions of a school principal in a school that supports the whole child.

- Your understanding of a whole child approach and how the school represents it

- The challenges or enablers have been encountered along the way to implementation

I have a variety of questions to better understand the school's initiative. There are no right or wrong answers; I'm looking for your perspective. If you don't feel comfortable answering any of the questions I pose or want to stop at any time, please let me know and we will end the interview. I also want to assure you that all names used in the final report – including the school - will be pseudonyms. Do you have any questions? I would like to record the interview so that I can focus on you rather than capturing your responses. After having read the Information Sheet, if you feel as though you understand the study and you agree to continue with the interview, please give me a verbal agreement and I will start the recording. I might also take some notes. Is that ok with you? Great!

First, I have some simple questions about you.

- What is your role in the school?

- How long have you/your child/ren been in this school?

- (staff only) How long have you been in your current position?

- (staff only) Why did you decide to go into education?

- (caregiver only) Why did you select this school for your child/ren?

- Would you tell me about the school community? I'd love to hear your impressions of the

  school culture and climate – and anything else you'd like to mention about the

  community.

  - Can you tell me something about the neighborhood?

  - (staff only) Who do you interact with in the neighborhood if anyone?

  - (staff only) Why would families want to send their children here?

  - (caregiver only) Do school personnel interact with the neighborhood and with

    the community outside of official meetings?

  This is great! Now I'd like to ask some questions about the school

- What do you see as the vision – or aim – for the school?

  - How was this communicated to you?

- Could you tell me about the school climate and culture? By the climate and culture, I

  mean how safe, caring, welcoming, and supportive it is for you and the students.

  - What do you think the principal would like the climate and culture to be?

  - What are do you see the principal doing to support it?

    - Are there any special curriculum that you use to support it?

- Systems questions

  - How are major decisions made in the school?

- Are you, or could you be involved in the decision-making process?

- What factors do you think influence the decisions made in the school?

This next question gets at the principal's philosophy on education

- What do you understand to be the principal's goal for education and for the school?

  - What do you think are important factors for a child's learning environment?

    o Do you think your colleagues/other families would agree?

  o What do you think are important factors in a child's development?

    - Do you think your colleagues/other families would agree?

Now let's talk about the whole child approach being used.

- What is your understanding of the school's approach to the whole child?

  - Would you call your school a whole child school?

  - Why or why not?

  o What have been the benefits of the approach?

Let's talk a bit about the principal's role

- What do you see the principal as doing to support the whole child?

  o Do you see the school as different from others in the district?

    - Why?

  o How does the principal support your role in supporting the whole child?

  o Who else have been particularly engaged or central to the whole child initiative?

- What has gone well in implementing a whole child approach?

- What challenges have occurred?

- Is there anything else you think it would be useful for me to know?

Thank you so much for your time and contribution to this study.

Let me tell you my next steps. I have interviewed the principal and plan to interview at least 2 staff and a parent. I will then analyze your responses and share them with you to make sure that you feel they accurately reflect your responses. I am conducting the same process with another school and once I've analyzed both schools, I will do a cross analysis. I plan to share the final results with the Principal.

Do you have any questions?

Thank you again and I'll be in touch.

Appendix E

Data Management Plan

In this study, I explored the role of the principal in implementing a whole school, whole child approach. I conducted interviews with principals, teachers, and student caregivers in two elementary schools and collected documents about the initiative.

Data Types and Storage

I conducted 11 interviews and collected their transcripts. I also collected documents relevant to my study and I kept a reflective journal with field notes. Each semi-structured interview lasted 30 – 70 minutes and was recorded. The interviews were transcribed by a professional service, which I checked against the recording. The files were uploaded onto the hard-drive of a lap top that can only be accessed by password and that was backed up nightly on a separate drive.

Data Organization and Documentation

The filing name convention for interviews was:

Participant ID_position_month_date_year_Interviewer initials_Interview type_final

The filing name convention for documents was:

Document category_Document name_year

The filing name convention for the field notes was:

Participant ID_year_month_date_notetaker initiatials_field notes_final

The files were stored in a separate folder on the computer's hard drive and were backed up nightly on a separate hard-drive. The files were organized in a nested filing system which was organized as follows:

- Data

- o Data logs

- o Interviews

    - ▪ Interview Protocol

    - ▪ Audio files

    - ▪ Draft transcriptions

    - ▪ Final transcriptions

    - ▪ Field Notes

- o Documents

Data Sharing, Access, and Preservation

Participants were assigned a unique ID to protect privacy and confidentiality. The ID was assigned when the interview was scheduled and all files from the interview used the unique ID. Prior to dissemination, participants were assigned a pseudonym. The assignment log was kept separate from the data in a locked location that I control. The data log included the participant ID, date of interview, interview location, length of interview, interviewer name, date of transcription request, transcription reviewed and finalized, and reviewer's name. For documents, the data log will include the name of the document, the publication/creation date, the source document, and the context or purpose. No high-security data was collected.

There are no plans to share the data. The transcribed interviews are in Microsoft word files and data will be deleted after 3 – 5 years per UVA protocol.

Appendix F

Initial Codebook

I. DEFINITION OF WHOLE CHILD APPROACH		
Code Label	**Code Name**	**Definition**
DEF	Definition	How do they define whole child and whole Child approach
FEA	Features of success	What is described as the *features* of success
CON	Conditions for success	What is described as the *conditions* for success
II. VISION		
Code Label	**Code Name**	**Definition**
A. Aims		
IIA - CL	Climate	Positive school climate and caring culture
IIA - CCfam	Community connections	Relationships with families
IIA - CCcom		Relationships with community
IIA - change	Whole School Change	
B. Beliefs/Mindsets		
IIB - RELind	Relationships	Importance of individual relationships
IIB - RELcol		Collaboration
IIB - SYS	Systems orientation	
IIB - Child	Child	Child is at the center
C. Competencies/Knowledge		
IIC - BRA	Brain science	
IIC - HEAm	Health	Mental health
IIC - HEAph		Physical health
IIC - HEAcur	Curriculum	Knowledge of curricula that supports mental and physical health
III. PRACTICES		
Code Label	**Code Name**	**Definition**
IIID - VIS	Developing shared vision	
IIIE - MOD	Modeling	
IIIF - COL	Collaborative structures	General collaborative structures
IIIF - COLdis		Distributed leadership
IIIG - CUL	Strengthening school culture	
IIIH - ENG	Engagement	General
IIIH - ENGfam		Families
IIIH - ENGcom		Community
IIIH - ENGorg		Community organizations
IV. PERCEPTION OF PRINCIPAL'S ROLE		

Code Label	Code Name	Definition
Role	Role	How is their role defined
V. INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL CONDITIONS		
Code Label	**Code Name**	**Definition**
A. Internal Conditions		
Intern cond	Internal conditions	How do they consider internal conditions
B. External Conditions		
Extern cond	External conditions	How do they consider external conditions
VI. DESCRIPTIVE LEVEL		
Age	Age range	
School time	Time in school	
Ed time	Time in Education	
Gen	Gender	
Role	Role in School	
Child	Number of children in school	
Background	Background	

Appendix G

Summary of Factors from Hilltop and Raven

Research Question	Raven	Hilltop
Question 1: How do school principals who support a whole school approach to the whole child define the approach and what do they identify as its key features, and conditions for success?	The principal at Raven defined the whole child as supporting children holistically.	The principal of Hilltop had a holistic, child-centered view of the whole child approach
	The principal identified the following as components of the whole child: - Adult health and well-being - Social Emotional Learning - Emotional and mental health - Exposure and learning - Family engagement - Positive environment	The principal perceived key features as aligned and multi-pronged - Support student wellness and well-being - Support family and student basic needs - A loving, fun, safe environment - Family engagement - Relational trust
	She equated her belief in education to supporting the whole child and believed that every educator had the best intentions and desire to support the whole child. She was prepared to help them grow and learn to meet the expectations.	The principal understood the whole child approach as requiring similar values throughout the school and may require a mindset shift for educators.
Question 2: What is the role of the principal in implementing a whole school approach to the whole child?	There was alignment between the principal's aims, beliefs, knowledge, and practices	There was alignment between the principal's aims, beliefs, knowledge, and practices
	Vision	*Vision*
	Foundation for life-long success	Preparing students to be successful as adults
	Exposure to new experiences	
	School as a means towards social justice and to increase equity	School as a mechanism for social justice and to increase equity
	A belief that schools are about providing students with the social, emotional, mental, and academic skills they need to succeed in the long-term	Desire for students to thrive and fill their potential in all aspects of life, academically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually.
	A belief that schools should teach a child's heart and head and grow self-confidence and efficacy.	
	Knowledge of curriculum	Knowledge of curriculum
	Loving, safe, joyful, and rigorous environment where it is safe to	A caring, safe, positive school environment that supports well-being and rigor and where it is safe to

Research Question	Raven	Hilltop
	express self, try new things fail and still feel loved	express ideas and argue but still feel loved.
	Positive, caring, authentic interactions among students, families, teachers, and the community are important to a child's development	Positive, caring environment is important to a child's development.
	Community within and across community spheres	The importance of developing and retaining community within community spheres and across community spheres
	Holistic, big-picture orientation	Big picture, systems orientation of school
	Understanding that a child's learning is influenced by many factors besides teaching and curriculum, and is impacted by trauma.	Knowledge of brain science and environmental impact on learning and behavior
		The importance of trust
	Everyone can learn and grow and look to continuously improve and self-reflect. Change is constant so always look for ways to improve	A growth mindset and belief in continuous learning and improvement for himself, others, and the organization
	People-orientation	Valued people
	Practices	*Practices*
	Modeling authentic positive relationships	Modeling behaviors and relationships
	Present and available	Availability and presence
	Love	Love
	Caring	Caring
	Authenticity	Authenticity
	Clear explanation and teaching of expectations	Communication
		Follow-through
	Transparency	Transparency
	Honesty	
	Listener/feedback	Listener/feedback
	Difficult conversations	Difficult Conversations
	Consistency	
	Family Engagement	Family engagement
	Engagement with students and child-centered	Student engagement
	Engagement with staff and teachers	Staff engagement
	Engagement with community	Community engagement
	Collaboration and distributed leadership	Collaboration and distributed leadership

Research Question	Raven	Hilltop
	Creating systems and practicing ways that provide consistency and that support and communicate beliefs	Creating systems that provide consistency
	Implementing systems to support beliefs	Administrative actions
	Putting in place staffing that support beliefs	Putting in place staffing that support beliefs
	Supporting staff growth and development	
		Installing staff with like-minded values and who mirror the community
	Encouraged civic engagement	
		Allocating time and funding
Subquestion 1 – How do they describe and understand their role in supporting the whole child?	The principal's role is complex, making flexibility and adaptability important	
	The principal saw her role as creating and maintaining conditions and systems that upheld her vision for the school and keeping teachers happy	The principal saw his role as putting systems and people in place to keep staff happy and implement the vision
	The principal was a community builder	The principal was a connector
	The principal communicated the vision	The principal was the visionary
Question 3 – In what ways do principals take into consideration internal school conditions and external environments? What facets of school conditions and external environments do they prioritize, if any? What are the Factors for Success?	The principal was the guiding force behind the whole child approach by prioritizing actions that supported the approach - The principal prioritized relationships and community to create a positive and rigorous culture The principal considered internal and external impacts on student success and well-being and prioritized providing support	The principal's actions communicate his priorities Internal conditions - A loving, safe, and rigorous school environment - Continuous improvement and growth - Retaining and hiring staff that aligned with his vision External Conditions - Providing a haven and buffer for students negatively impacted by external environments
	Relationships, positive school climate, and understanding your why were elements of success	People were a factor of success as was internalizing the knowledge about the whole child so you can teach others.
		The principal allocated funding and time towards the model
		District support was helpful

Appendix H

Summary of Alignment of Beliefs, Aims, and Knowledge, and Practices

Principal Vision (Aims, Beliefs, Mindsets) and Practices		
Themes	**Beliefs, aims and knowledge (Vision)**	**Practices**

Valuing people and relationships	- Caring, loving, supportive, safe, healthy, authentic relationships
	- Expectation that everyone will do and be their best
	- Integrity and respect
	- Connections with students, staff, families, and community
	- All are learners
	- Importance of learning about self
		- Engaging students
		- Engaging families
		- Engaging community
		- Modeling positive interactions/relationships
		  - Caring
		  - Love
		  - Authenticity
		  - Clear communication
		  - Transparency
		  - Honesty
		  - Listener/encourage feedback and advocacy
		  - Holding difficult conversations
		- Availability
		  - Wandering halls to offer assistance
		  - Open-door policy
		  - Greeting students and families
		- Consistency and organization
		- Self-improvement
		- Supporting staff growth and development
		- Continuous improvement in organization

Community	- Collaboration - Collaboration across the school socio-ecological system and a web of support and respect - Whole school vision	- Distributed leadership - Staff teams - Collaboration - Consistency - Community activities
Systems perspective	- Knowledge of community - Partnering with external interests - Knowledge of families - Partnering with families - School as a mini-society	- Partnering with community - Partnering with external interests - Partnering with families - Encouraging collaboration across groups

Principal Vision (Aims, Beliefs, Mindsets) and Practices		
Themes	**Beliefs, aims and knowledge (Vision)**	**Practices**
Link between health and well-being and learning	- Knowledge of the influence of health, well-being, and environments on learning - Knowledge of brain development - Knowledge of curriculum - Knowledge of the impact of trauma and restorative practices - Caring, loving, supportive, physically safe, emotionally safe, healthy climate and culture for students, families, and staff	- Staffing structures (i.e., hiring counselors, school nurse, social worker, wellness team) - Funding decisions that support vision - Allocation of time - Appropriate SEL curriculum and discipline policies/practices
School as a foundation for success	- Conviction that values will have an impact - Equity and the power of learning - Child at the center - Aim for students to thrive in life - Belief in the whole child	- Decisions based on best for students