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## Leading Character: An Investigation Into the Characteristics and Effective Practices of Character Education Leaders

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LEADING CHARACTER:  
AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE CHARACTERISTICS AND  
EFFECTIVE PRACTICES OF CHARACTER EDUCATION LEADERS

A COLLABORATIVE DISSERTATION IN PRACTICE

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### Abstract

In this collaborative Dissertation of Practice we examined the leadership frameworks, leader characteristics, and effective character education practices that can help foster students' intellectual, moral, performance, and civic character development (Shields, 2011). The project used a mixed-methods approach to study the relationships among: (a) three frameworks of character education leadership, (b) effective character education practices, and (c) school and student outcomes. Three members of the team focused on a specific set of leadership characteristics: (a) a newly created framework called Vulnerable Leadership, (b) the existing model of Transformational Leadership, and (c) a newly created framework called Professional Growth Leadership. The fourth member examined effective character education practices using a new measure called the Effective Character Education Score (ECES). The team measured outcomes to include performance data (academic, behavior, attendance), climate data (parent, student, staff), and character education recognitions or awards. Significant correlations were found between each of the leadership frameworks and the ECES, among the three leadership frameworks, and between ECES and the outcomes. Ultimately, this work proposes a taxonomy of effective character education practices and a paradigm shift for effective school leadership; the suggested new model is called The Connected Leader. The Connected Leader includes three components: personal growth, positive school culture, and caring relationships. This new model stresses that an effective character education leader should connect with self, staff, students, and stakeholders of a school community.

*Keywords:* Character Education, Leadership Characteristics, Vulnerable Leader, Transformational Leader, Professional Growth Leader, Effective Character Education Practices, Connected Leader

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### **Prologue**

We are a four-person research team who are all school leaders in different roles and environments. We come from private, charter, and public schools; from preschools, elementary, middle, and high schools, and from higher education; from early in our leadership careers to retired; and each with our various cultural, religious, and political backgrounds. However, what unites us as educational practitioners far outweighs what may separate us. We all believe schools are places to promote individual growth; we all believe learning cannot happen without authentic relationships and communities; we all believe a healthy and dynamic adult culture can cultivate better student learning; and we all believe that schools should be a place to propagate the culture and values of our democratic nation. More significantly, we all believe in the ideals, philosophies, and practices of character education, where schools help students become virtuous, kind, empathetic, hard working people. We know that character education is not a program, a curriculum, or a set of posters with a character word of the month. Rather, we know that character education is a way of living, a way of thinking, and a way of teaching, learning, and leading—a culture—that makes schools better by helping all community members, but mostly students, grow in character, as well as academically.

For the first two years of our doctoral program at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, our thirteen-person cohort studied numerous aspects of character education and democratic school governance. Each of our four-person mentor team were present for weekly classes as we all grappled together to better understand the concepts and practices of character education and democratic school governance. Towards the end of the second year, it was time to decide on our areas of investigation for our collaborative Dissertation

in Practice (DiP) work. Each of the thirteen members of our cohort saw character education with a different lens. There were school principals, a counselor, a Marine veteran turned lawyer turned school superintendent, a “collaborative-game” business owner, a young, brilliant teacher who hadn’t completed his masters yet, a business executive, and two higher education senior administrators, among others. Through reflection, discussion, and guidance, we each narrowed our area of focus. Eventually, four of us were drawn to wanting to know and understand more about the leader’s role in cultivating, promoting, and protecting the type of character education in which we all believed. We began preliminary discussions until each of us was committed to working together to better understand what makes effective character education leaders and what are the effective character education practices they utilize.

Before we present our research, we will introduce ourselves. As practioners, we are the ones in the field who are working each day to make schools better places and nurture strong character in our students. This research is intimately important to us.

### **Julie Frugo**

Julie is both a founding member of Premier Charter School and the current Head of School. Premier Charter School opened in 2000 and is a diverse school serving 930 students speaking 17 different languages in grades K-8. As the only charter school in the St. Louis area designated as both a State and National School of Character, Julie, who is a Leadership Academy of Character Education (LACE) graduate, has been an integral part of the character education journey at the school. She has helped lead and develop the 125 faculty and staff in deep work around creating a character-driven culture. Both as a teacher and a school leader, relationship building is most important to Julie. For this DiP,

Julie was most interested in how leaders support, empower, and cultivate professional capacity, learning, and growth in faculty and staff. Engaging through a lens of professional development, Julie eventually created a new framework of leadership called Professional Growth Leader.

### **Amy Johnston**

Amy Johnston is a retired principal from Francis Howell Middle School, which became a State and National School of Character under her leadership. A graduate of LACE and a presenter and consultant for Character.org, Amy has seen first hand the power of reforming a school with character education practices and beliefs at the core. Most important to Amy as a school leader is the pivotal role a leader can play in school transformation. For this DiP Amy was most interested in why some leaders “got it” and some didn’t. This led her to a study of leadership characteristics and to eventually applying and comparing the existing model of Transformational Leadership to effective character education leadership.

### **Brian McCauley**

Brian is currently the Assistant Head of School for Admissions and Marketing at Wasatch Academy in central Utah. Wasatch Academy is a college preparatory, boarding school with 340 students from 40 countries and 30 states with a strong character education focus. Before that he was Dean of Enrollment Management at Principia College in Elsah, Illinois. Principia College is a denominational school where character is infused into all aspects of the College, including academics, student life, and athletics. Brian taught a character education course to college students each semester that focused on the theories and practices of character education. Prior to that Brian was an

entrepreneur who started several communications businesses, was the publisher of an international, Pulitzer Prize winning newspaper, and was an assistant to the Governor of his home state of Washington. All of these lead Brian to think about how people lead organizations where character is vital to their success. Brian's interest in this DiP is to better understand which character education practices are most effective and most widely used by successful school leaders.

### **Kevin Navarro**

Kevin is currently the Assistant Head of School at The College School, a Preschool through Eighth Grade independent school that focuses on experiential, project-based, and adventure-based education. Kevin served as a middle school teacher for nine years before turning his focus to administration for the past nine years. Kevin is relatively new to the formal field of character education study, but, unbeknownst to him, he has been practicing it for the past twenty years. His work at The College School with child-centered and constructivist pedagogy, his leading backpacking and climbing expeditions that focused on academic and personal development, and his experience with thematically integrating academic and character skills into authentic learning projects all aligned seamlessly with the tenets of character and democratic education. The formal study only deepened his understanding and his own practice and leadership. For this DiP, Kevin was most interested in the idea of leaders being humble and confident enough to say when they don't know an answer and confident enough to share the leadership of a school. Inspired by Brené Brown's work on vulnerability, he eventually wove his way to creating a new leadership framework which he calls the Vulnerable Leader.

Once we each had a preliminary idea for our research focus and had come together as a four-person team, we began to narrow our areas of inquiry, articulate research questions, and see how our four different areas of investigation could fit together. After much discussion it became clear that the effective character education practices played a significant role in the research and the methodology chapter will explain how the study of effective character education practices as measured by the Effective Character Education Score (ECES) essentially became a dependent variable for our three leadership frameworks.

The Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED) guided our DiP process (CPED, n.d.). Over 80 colleges and schools of education are currently utilizing the CPED across the nation. Our cohort was the first-ever CPED, cohort-style DiP at the University of Missouri-St. Louis' College of Education. CPED believes in preparing school leaders to become scholarly practitioners who can meet the educational challenges of the 21st century. The CPED framework is used by schools of education to design/redesign, evaluate, and improve existing Doctor of Education programs.

The framework includes developing scholarly practitioners, practicing signature pedagogy, inquiry as practice, laboratories of practice, dissertation in practice, and a problem of practice. DiPs do not have to take the form of traditional dissertations, but can be a book, video, or other way of presenting research and a solution to a persistent, specific issue affecting educational practitioners which can result in improved understanding, experience, and outcomes. And just as practitioners' work always happens in collaboration with other people of a school community, the CPED framework encourages doctoral students to work together in collaborative dissertation groups.

The team came together under the mentorship of Dr. Marvin Berkowitz, the Sanford N. McDonnell Professor of Character Education, the University of Missouri System Thomas Jefferson Fellow, and the co-director of the Center for Character and Citizenship. Some of our research team had worked very closely with Dr. Berkowitz on character education over the past twenty years and some had only more recently come to know him and his work. As leaders in the field of character education, it is important to acknowledge that a great deal of our understanding and appreciation of character education practices and philosophies were inspired by Dr. Berkowitz. Additionally, as will be discussed in the methodology chapter, Dr. Berkowitz helped us gain access to our research participant pool, who are all graduates of LACE. The team also received tremendous support, understanding, and guidance throughout the entire process from Dr. Wolfgang Althof, the Teresa M. Fischer Professor of Citizenship Education, President of the Association of Moral Education (AME), Director of Citizenship Education Clearing House (CECH), and co-director of the Center for Character and Citizenship. Dr. David Light Shields, who is an Associate Professor/Program Coordinator for Associate of Arts in Teaching Program at St. Louis Community College, and Dr. Brenda Light Bredemeier, who is an Associate Professor, Department of Educator Preparation, Innovation and Research at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, also provided invaluable inspiration, instruction, insight and wisdom during classes and with their feedback during the defense phases of our research. The research team would like to thank all four members of our mentor team who helped guide us intellectually, emotionally, and logistically through this process.

Towards the end of the process, when the team had a clear understanding of how our work would function together, we were able to select our DiP title. Our research was about character and how leaders can inspire a school community to create a culture that will cultivate character education within a school. It is with pleasure that we present our DiP: Leading Character: An Investigation Into The Characteristics And Effective Practices Of Character Education Leaders.

### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

There is need of a sound body, and even more of a sound mind. But above mind and above body stands character - the sum of those qualities, which we mean when we speak of a man's force and courage, of his good faith and sense of honor.

Theodore Roosevelt (Roosevelt, n.d.)

Theodore Roosevelt, along with the Founding Fathers of our country, believed that it was the job of schools to teach not only academic and trade skills, but also good character and good democratic citizenship. They believed that this was how our country should propagate its shared national character including its values and morals. However, through our country's history, there has often been political and ideological tension regarding where and how character should be taught.

For some, teaching about character belongs only with the family and/or in church. Layer in strong political and religious beliefs, concerned parents, and state and federal regulations and funds and the argument intensifies. However, a key premise of this dissertation is that leaders must be other-oriented, wise, and have a strong moral compass, along with other necessary skills, to advance character education in schools. This is foundational for our research. This research supports that good education includes character and citizenship education and that the most effective schools are led by principals who work to develop intellectual, moral, civic and performance character in every student (Shields, 2011).

If good character education is to succeed, there must be leaders who can effectively implement character education practices and values. These schools must be championed by effective leaders who create a culture of excellence, who use effective



character education practices, and who possess blended characteristics of the three leadership frameworks that this DiP is investigating: Vulnerable Leadership, Transformational Leadership, and Professional Growth Leadership.

Our research examined effective character education practices and the leadership characteristics and practices of school leaders who effectively implement character education. Using both quantitative and qualitative research, the team worked to identify important characteristics and practices of successful leaders in effective character education schools. First, the problem of practice and the purpose statement were developed. Then a review of the literature about effective character education practices and school leadership characteristics and models was conducted. This led to the identification of a paradigm shift in school leadership priorities and three broad components indicative of that shift. Based on that paradigm shift, the conceptual frameworks of Vulnerable Leader, Transformational Leader, and Professional Growth Leader were studied and discussed. Finally effective character education practices were considered and prioritized creating a new taxonomy. Ultimately, a framework for effective character education leaders who integrate character education into the school's mainstream is suggested.

### **Problem of Practice**

The problem of practice is that school districts are not seeking or developing, nor are colleges of education effectively producing, leaders who understand the importance of fostering both good and smart students (Lickona & Davidson, 2005), i.e. students who will be productive citizens and who will have the intellectual, social, and emotional skills and knowledge to be successful in college, career and life. Administrative programs for

future administrators could use more focus on leaders who understand the importance of and power in shared decision making, collaboration, and relationships and their positive impact on school culture. Before that can happen, local, state, and federal education leaders and policy makers need to understand that excellence in schools can no longer be achieved by a singular academic focus through mandated tests and standards. Rather, a shared vision, collaborative staff, and a supportive leader are all needed. To effectively implement character education practices, and in doing so improve school culture, a specific type of school leader is needed. We present a framework of a school leader who is able to effectively lead a school with a focus on excellence in character. The leadership frameworks and character education practices discussed for the rest of this dissertation all exist within this fundamental belief.

We are not pioneers in believing this notion; it has been present since Aristotle and Confucius, the Founding Fathers, and with other leaders throughout our country's history. President Roosevelt understood content without character and citizenship does not develop moral people who are good citizens. Educational philosophers have also known this: "First Horace Mann and later John Dewey emphasized that schools needed to become more democratic themselves if they were going to contribute to the further democratization of American society" (Shields, 2011, p. 51), yet the 1957 launching of Sputnik propelled policy makers to require an emphasis on math and science leaving character and citizenship education in the wake. For the last few decades, national concern over the academic success of our students has led to today's state-mandated tests, No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top, and Common Core legislation, all driving school leaders to emphasize curriculum over character. Many schools leaders continue to ignore

those who warn that education is more than just academic rigor. Fortunately, there are others who heed Dr. Martin Luther King's words when he said, “we must remember that intelligence is not enough – intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education” (King, 1947).

While government officials continue to force curriculum and standards they believe will lead our nation to higher international test scores, some appear to have forgotten that schools were never designed just to teach facts:

Since their inception, public schools have had a civic mission. Just as our economy has depended on schools for the creation of a knowledgeable and skilled workforce, our democratic institutions have relied on schools to build a citizenry with the knowledge, dispositions and skills necessary to sustain the health of our political system. (Shields & Bredemeier, 2011, p. 25)

Schools were designed to teach students how to be productive citizens with enough integrity and insight to carry our nation forward. “The broad goal of citizenship education is to not only teach students about society and how it works, but to equip them with the skills and motivate them to want to use those skills and knowledge to effectively engage in public efforts to promote the common good” (Althof & Berkowitz, 2006, p. 501).

Before schools can embrace educating students in both mind and morals, adults, and especially school leaders, must understand the value and need for character education in schools. “American schools tend to be authoritarian and hierarchical” (Berkowitz & Puka, 2009, p. 111). A top down, adult-centered framework can often be an ineffective and hypocritical way to teach about democracy and to prepare our students to be effective citizens.

While many education leaders may be cognizant of the fact that current frameworks leave far too many children behind in both academics and character, demands for accountability are still at an all-time high for schools. Many leaders seem to fear shifting the focus from developing proficient test takers to developing good people who are proficient citizens. Instead many school leaders, driven by fear of losing their jobs, continue to pressure teachers and students to do more, to perform better, and to achieve better test results. This serves to perpetuate school climates that are not conducive to effective learning or teaching; in fact, it can contribute to adverse climates in schools. “Higher standards and greater accountability have contributed to conditions of distrust and blame” (Tschannen-Moran, 2009, p. 253). Competition, within and among schools, has helped erode the true purpose of schools; this incessant competition has created schools where performance outweighs integrity. “Whenever people seek to best each other, you find poignant examples of human frailty” (Shields & Bredemeier, 2005, p. 63).

Fostering character in children can be the perfect antidote to this human frailty. However, this takes much more effort than simply putting a few words in a slogan, writing a character mission statement, or hanging posters in the halls and classrooms. It takes confident, committed leaders who understand what to do and who will make this a priority and stay the course. If schools are going to return to their foundational purpose they must be transformed by leaders who have the knowledge, skills, courage, and vision to lead that change. Open, authentic, humble leaders who can develop a strong, shared vision and share leadership with teachers and students will be unafraid of moving schools away from being mediocre academic factories to becoming places where students’

character is more important than their grade point average and excellence in both is the goal. School leaders must be prepared to help build dynamic, professional learning cultures where all voices are honored, continuous learning and growth are the norm, and providing children with authentic learning experiences that develop good and smart students are the ultimate goals.

Leaders who are grounded in character education and understand its role in school reform are necessary for real and sustainable changes to our current system. “Putting character education in the driver’s seat of school reform and seeing the principal actively engaged in this is one way to demonstrate its importance” (Berkowitz, 2011b, p. 104). More than ever, schools are in dire need of leaders with the characteristics and practices to effectively implement character education in their schools.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this DiP is to develop a new character education leadership framework that supports effective character education practices and their effects on schools and students. We will examine three leadership frameworks and the respective characteristics unique to each. We will also examine which character education practices are effective in schools. Ultimately, we will examine which leadership characteristics lend themselves to the effective implementation of research-based character education practices and school improvement.

In order to present this new leadership framework, character education, organizational leadership theory, and school leader theory were considered, followed by the study of three leadership frameworks: Vulnerable Leader, Transformational Leader, and Professional Growth Leader. Finally character education effective practices were

considered. A methods section follows that includes the four individual research topics. The following chapter presents the research results, and the final chapter is a discussion about findings, both as they apply to each of the four research topics and to a new leadership framework that is collectively supported by the four individual research topics.

The four research topics are:

1. Vulnerable Leader: analysis of a new framework of leadership that focuses on a leader who is vulnerable, Humble, Open, and Authentic, and who is committed to character education (Kevin Navarro);
2. Transformational Leader: analysis of how Transformational Leadership connects to effective character education leadership (Amy Johnston);
3. Professional Growth Leader: analysis of an approach for cultivating a professional learning culture committed to dynamic teacher growth and character education principles (Julie Frugo);
4. Effective character education practices: identification, analysis and prioritization of multiple strategies to identify which research-based practices are most effective in character education schools (Brian McCauley).

## Chapter 2: Character Education Overview

Humankind has been concerned about how to develop people of good character and citizenship for thousands of years. Philosophers, theologians, educators, political leaders, parents, and others have all engaged in this quest. Many religious teachings are filled with adages about how to raise children to be good, moral people, as well as how adults should live a life of good character. Philosophers, including Aristotle, Plato, and Confucius, have written on how to raise children of good character and how to lead a life of good character. Many philosophers and religious leaders have recommended that good character habits be instilled in youth, to practice moderation in all things, and to lead a life of *eudaimonia*, or human flourishing and happiness based on moral excellence (Aristotle, trans. 2009). For much of Western history, a primary purpose of education was to develop children as moral people; it is only in the last 100 years that Western countries have strayed from that focus in varying degrees (Hunter, 2001).

The English word character comes from the Greek word *charassein*, which means to engrave or to leave a distinctive mark on something. One's character is their distinctive mark on the world. Berkowitz says character is "The set of psychological characteristics that motivate and enable the individual to function as a competent moral agent, that is, to do 'good' in the world" (Berkowitz, 2011b, p. 153). The word education means "developing the dispositions to seek and use knowledge in effective and ethical ways" (Shields, 2011, p. 49). Education at one level is essentially about school culture, curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment (Wagner & Dintersmith, 2015). On another level it is about preparing youth to have the dispositions, knowledge, and skills to lead a good

life; a life of virtue, kindness, empathy, perseverance, and much more (Aristotle, trans. 2009; Davidson, Lickona, & Khmelkov, 2008).

When combining character and education into the single concept of character education there are a variety of definitions. One of the most comprehensive definitions includes four aspects of character education: intellectual, moral, performance and civic (Shields, 2011). Berkowitz defines it as “those educational practices that foster the development of student character” (2011b, p. 153). Ryan and Bohlin’s (1998) definition aligns with the head, heart, and hands approach: “Know the good, love the good, do the good” (p. 5). Lickona (1999) defines character education as, “the deliberate effort to cultivate virtue” (p. 8). Our definition of character education is the intentional and unintentional activities and actions of school leaders, faculty, staff, and students to create a school-wide culture grounded in effective character education practices aimed at developing citizens who not only know the good, but do the good (Berkowitz, 2011b; Lickona & Davidson 2005; Ryan & Bohlin, 1998; Shields, 2011).

Some educators, parents, governments, and religious leaders today want schools to play a significant role in developing children of good character and a strong sense of citizenship, but how and where this should happen remains a political and ideological debate among many (Hunter, 2001; Ryan & Bohlin, 1998) There is a tension that exists with some believing character education belongs only in church and family, while others believe teaching character is a foundational part of a school, no different than core subjects like math or English. Our interest in character education parallels a renewed interest over the last several decades in having schools play a role in developing students to have good character (Berkowitz, 1985, 2002, 2008, 2011b; Berkowitz & Bier, 2005,



2012; Character.org, 2014; Davidson, Lickona & Khmelkov, 2008; Kilpatrick, 1992; Lickona, 1997, 1999).

Ideally, all educational leaders desire excellence for their students in curricular and co-curricular activities. However, excellence for many only includes academics. “We have too often equated excellence with the quantity of the content learned, rather than with the quality of character the person develops” (Shields, 2011, p. 49). Character education emphasizes trust-building relationships that are foundational to school improvement. “In virtually every domain of human endeavor, there is mounting evidence that a network of supportive relationships facilitates an individual’s motivation, self-reliance, and relative achievement” (Ryan, Stiller, & Lynch, 1994, p. 226). Character education is about not only enriching the minds of our children, but their moral, performance and civic character as well. It moves beyond just teaching students facts to giving them opportunities to consider right from wrong, weigh good and bad, work hard, persevere, learn the importance of empathy, and how to be active, contributing citizens.

Additionally, even within the community of those who believe that character does belong in schools, there is debate about just what that means and how character education should be applied. For example, some schools rely on external rewards to drive behavior, while others believe in developing intrinsic motivation in students (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Deci & Ryan, 2001; Harter, 1981). Some schools like to use established character education programs involving a word of the month and posters in the hallways, while others think character education is a way of living, leading, and being on a daily basis that is embedded in the school’s culture (Berkowitz, 2011b; Character.org, 2014; Elbot & Fulton, 2008). Some schools emphasize *values* while others emphasize *virtues* (Ryan &

Bolin, 1999). Some schools focus on performance character, which are characteristics such as working hard, persevering, and responsibility and others on moral character with characteristics such as virtue, kindness, and honesty (Lickona & Davidson, 2005). Some schools advocate four types of character—intellectual, performance, moral, and civic (Shields, 2011).

One highly recognized guide for character education is the *11 Principles for Effective Character Education* (2014), created by Character.org, formerly known as the Character Education Partnership. “Character.org, founded in 1993, is a nonprofit organization that strives to ensure every young person is educated, inspired, and empowered to be ethical and engaged citizens through the character transformation of schools” (Character.org, 2014, p. 24). Lickona, Schaps, and Lewis developed the 11 Principles in 1995. These principles are considered to be the cornerstone of Character.org’s philosophy on effective character education and they are widely used and well respected by many educators worldwide.

These Eleven Principles include intentionally fostering moral and performance character through every phase of school life, developing a caring school community, creating an engaging academic curriculum, promoting shared school leadership, and involving families and the community as partners. Together, these principles constitute a holistic approach to developing a positive school culture. (Character.org, 2010, p. 3)

The 11 Principles are not a program, but, as their name states, principles for schools to use to create and implement their own character education based on their own

mission, vision, values, and culture. For those who insist schools must continue to focus on academics and leave character building to the home and church, Character.org stated:

Character education does more than teach students about character; it improves behavior and academic scores. As evidenced by the more than 342 National Schools of Character recipients over a 12-year period, when schools implement these 11 Principles well, test scores typically go up and behavior problems go down—often dramatically. (Character.org, 2010, p. 2)

According to the 2015 Character.org Annual Report, National School Of Character schools had a 97% graduation rate vs. 81% nationwide, and 93% of their graduates attended a two or four year college or university vs. 66% nationwide (Character.org, 2015). Although they do not claim the 11 Principals cause better attendance or higher graduation rates, there does appear to be some correlation.

Educators should include the intentional integration of character education into schools to best serve students. If character education is to be effectively implemented, there must be leaders who have the understanding and skills to help build a positive school culture, develop staff, and collectively create a school vision and mission that places character education at the heart of the school. The next chapter is a review of organizational and key leadership philosophies and research. It explores changing leadership styles and approaches and reveals a shifting paradigm for effective leadership. Once that paradigm is established, three specific leadership frameworks are considered in the three following chapters: Vulnerable Leaders, Transformational Leaders, and Professional Growth Leaders.

### **Chapter 3: Leadership**

Scholars and many others have long studied leadership and what makes effective leaders. “Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth” (Burns, 1978, p. 2). “There are few more important questions than, ‘What makes a leader great?’ Attempts to answer this question can be traced to the earliest discussions of the concept of leadership” (Judge & Bono, 2000, p. 751). Because leadership is critical to the success of businesses, governments, community organizations, and schools, many seek the answer to that question, yet there is not any one single answer. “There is no one prescription for leadership; it cannot be reduced to a simple algorithm” (Gini & Green, 2014, p. 437).

There are multiple definitions of a good leader. One is from LeMarc (2015) who writes that leaders are “visionaries, communicators, strategic thinkers who build culture, control and monitor performance” (p. 96). There is discussion about which leadership characteristics or traits are most important. “Leadership trait theory suggested that successful leaders rely on a set of psychological traits, yet over 300 studies have failed to produce a definitive list of agreed-on traits common to all effective leaders” (Gilley, McMillan, & Gilley, 2009, p. 40). There appears to be no universal list or widely-agreed upon set of effective leadership characteristics. Whatever the definition, it can be argued that leadership styles, strategies, and characteristics vary to some degree from one situation to the next.

In recent years, many concepts of successful leaders have evolved that include moving from being managerial and authoritarian, often called command and control, to focusing more on motivating, coaching, and inspiring others. “For a half century,

leadership theory and research have centered on such questions as autocratic versus democratic leadership, directive versus participative decision making, task versus relationship focus, an initiation versus consideration behavior” (Avolio & Bass, 2004, p. 19). The decisive supervisor from the 1970s, whose primary goal was results, seems to be giving way to leaders who display enthusiasm, integrity, warmth, courage, judgment, and being tough, but fair (Adair, 2003; Hess, 2013). The 1970s practice of top-down leadership has moved to more of a shared leadership that can transform the workplace.

This paradigm shift has been seen across both the business and nonprofit sectors (Collins, 2001; Greenleaf, 1977). This new paradigm includes leaders who articulate the importance of creating a collective vision, who are in command of the skills of their particular field, who motivate employees, and who are able to share ownership in difficult decisions made in the best interests of the organization. The shift away from the autocratic leader towards the leader whose personal characteristics and strategies focus on connecting to the people of their organization develops trust by empowering those people (Tschannen-Moran, 2004).

As Wong and Davey (2007) write, “The focus of leadership needs to be shifted from process and outcome to people and the future” (p. 1). A related idea comes from Spears (2004):

In countless for-profit and nonprofit organizations today, we are seeing traditional, autocratic, and hierarchical modes of leadership leading to a different way of working – one based on teamwork and community, one that seeks to involve others in decision making, one strongly based in ethical and caring

behavior, and one that is attempting to enhance the personal growth of people while improving the caring quality of our many institutions. (p. 7)

The results-at-all-costs leader has proven unsuccessful for organizations and large companies. This type of leader has caused many public and costly failures in recent decades, whether corporate scandal at Enron or the many CEO's who received seven figure bonuses even when their companies lost money (Morris, Brotheridge, & Urbanski, 2005). Lee Iacocca's leadership of Chrysler is one specific example. After impressively turning Chrysler around, the second half of his tenure at Chrysler focused more on himself than his company; he made millions, he considered a run for president, and he starred in more than 80 television commercials, all while Chrysler's stock fell 31 percent (Collins, 2001).

Collins (2001) researched nearly 1,500 companies and found "in more than two-thirds of the comparison companies, we noted the presence of a gargantuan ego that contributed to the demise or continued mediocrity of the company" (p. 11). Often leaders with large egos have some degree of charisma, which may cause more harm than good. Fullan (2001) writes: "Charismatic leaders inadvertently often do more harm than good because, at best, they provide episodic improvement followed by frustrated or despondent dependency" (p. 5).

If a charismatic leader's success creates an inflated ego, this can lead to a narcissistic leader. The narcissistic leader's worldview flows from a distorted image of the "rugged individual" who is unencumbered by rules and regulations based on the social norms. This aberration departs from classical portraits of leadership as more holistic and balanced. Aristotle believed people are, should be, and need to be connected

to other people. He knew leadership, or simply being, is complex in and of itself.

Kristjansson (2007) writes, “The Aristotelian insistence is that we must balance and synthesize the demands of heart and head if ours is to be a well-rounded life, a life truly worth living. More needs to be said about the overarching notion of moral personhood” (p. 3). Leaders must be good, moral people who are committed to the well being of other people. Perhaps the time has come for these ideas to be applied to a new face of leadership in our country and in our schools.

These sorts of leaders are the ones who focus on connecting with the people of the organization while at the same time generating profits and results. These are leaders who are both human beings and effective leaders, leaders who want to serve their organizations rather than themselves.

This dissertation does not argue the merits or deficits of any one particular leadership model but indicates there is a paradigm shift in the concept of how an effective leader acts in both the for-profit and non-profit sectors. This paradigm shift is considered here as it applies to school leaders. We examined relevant literature regarding the broad components of effective school leaders within this new paradigm. Recurring themes are leaders who: (a) demonstrate and continually seek wisdom, (b) are other-oriented, and (c) are guided by a moral compass. These three components form the foundation upon which a proposed character education leadership framework will be constructed.

### **Effective School Leadership**

Effective school leaders create thriving character education cultures. “Without the support of an effective leader, school policies, procedures, and school climate will fall short of its true potential” (Frontera & Jackson, 2012, p. 35). These schools can be

recognized by caring relationships, positive and collegial students and staff and places where democratic values are a priority. In today's culture of complex and demanding school expectations and accountability, school leaders face significant pressures for higher academic achievement, improved student behavior and attendance, teacher retention, and many other key issues (Hattie, 2009). Schools of the 21st century are facing ever-more complex challenges, and the leaders who direct them need to possess an increasingly sophisticated and effective set of leadership qualities, characteristics, skills, and strategies.

Developing school leaders with these complex sets of leadership skills, strategies, and characteristics has been an important focus area for organizational and school leadership research. As discussed above, within the field of school leadership and the broader field of organizational leadership, research has notably shifted away from a hyper-focus on the charismatic and omniscient leader towards a leader who is more focused on people, collaboration, and empowerment.

School leadership is critical to the success of any school; some studies on school efficacy highlight leadership as one of several defining characteristics of successful schools (Fullan 1998, 2001, 2003). Bryk (2010) discusses how the principal is key to building trust in a school in order to drive or facilitate any change. Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) write that the adults and students in a school are deeply impacted by the personality of their leaders. The character and moral compass of the leader, their skills, as well as their particular strategies and tactics, are very important to the overall health of a school. Berkowitz (2011a) writes: "No school reform initiative can thrive without the principal as its champion" (p. 104). Bryk and Schneider (2011) also studied the



principal's key role in developing and sustaining relational trust in successful school cultures. Fullan (2003) comments on the critical nature of the school principal:

The 1990's was a dismal decade for the principalship. Expectations for schools piled up, policies became more prescriptive but lacked coherence, implementation strategies were neglected, leadership training and development were missing, and few noticed the exodus of principals through normal and early retirements. Above all, the principalship was becoming increasingly unattractive, even to, or one could say especially to, those who wanted to make a difference. (p. xiii)

Considering the mounting external assessment pressures on schools today, the importance of great principals who can protect and sustain positive cultures and effective practices could not be more critical.

The exact combination of personal characteristics that make a school leader effective are difficult to identify and the characteristics thought to be necessary for effective leaders have changed with time (Judge & Bono, 2000). Senge, Cambron-McCabe, Lucas, Smith, Dutton, J, and Kleiner (2000) put it this way:

The 'old school' model encouraged leaders to advocate, clarify the problem, and take a position. Don't back down. Be strong. Be rational. Be convincing. Be right. This 'Principal Do-Right' model, in itself, is a burden that many of our public educators are saddled with. It leads directly to the kinds of behavior that make it difficult to inquire and reflect at length, or to draw people together to a common purpose. (p. 413)

According to Gilley, Dixon, and Gilley (2009), in 1971, several traits were identified as significant to effective school leadership. They included the ability to supervise,

intelligence, the desire for achievement, decisiveness, self-assurance, and initiative. More recent research in line with the changing paradigm has identified additional traits including coaching, communicating, involving others, motivating, rewarding, and building teams (Bass, 1996; Senge et al., 2000; Wiles & Bondi, 2004). Focusing on people and building trusting communities is part of this new leader's job.

School leaders who have earned the trust of their followers and proven themselves to be competent must also possess “a clear sense of direction; the ability to engage staff in the understanding and pursuit of shared beliefs and profound knowledge; and the willingness to share opportunity and power” (Champlin & Desmond, n.d., p. 216). The emerging model for new school leaders is one in which principals are able to help develop schools that are not only conducive to learning subject matter, but are also places where students and staff learn the importance of cooperation, relationships, and character. School leadership in the 21st century should be focused on the ability to build relationships and empower others so that, together, all staff can teach students not only how to take tests but how to pass life's tests.

In the effort to be a strong and competitive nation in the 21st century, we must focus not only on how smart our youth can be, but also on how good they can be. In our work with thousands of educators around the country, we find that those who link smart and good are those who build up, not just smarter youth, but those who are ethical and engaged citizens. (Character.org, 2014)

Effective school leaders must do more than just transact business with teachers to improve test scores. Leaders must facilitate culture transformation within the school and empower others to create and sustain appropriate change. This may be

accomplished most effectively when school leaders embrace character education. School leaders in Ohio participated in a study to test the impact character education could have on their schools:

In a four year study Ohio Partners in Character Education partnered with the Ohio Department of Education to implement the Creating Smart & Good Schools project, based on the work of Drs. Thomas Lickona and Matthew Davidson in the Smart & Good High Schools Report (2005). Ten pairs of middle and high schools throughout Ohio participated. The five implementation schools saw improvements and many changes were evident at the end of the project. Implementation schools had higher test scores, more positive attitudes, and a better school climate than the non-intervention schools. (Frontera & Jackson, 2012, p. ix)

These schools improved because they had leaders who deeply understood the importance of character education. “Good character education is good education, and good character education leadership is good school leadership” (Berkowitz, 2011b, p. 98). Fortunately, for the young people in our schools, and especially for schools that are struggling, a new paradigm of excellence in school leadership is emerging.

It is important to note that this emerging model will take time to evolve in our historically hierarchical system. Most educational systems have been top down, adult controlled, mini societies since students sat in one-room schoolhouses. The move towards schools where students learn how to be productive members of a democratic society through meaningful practice and role modeling will be a slow one, but one worth the wait.

### **Paradigm Shift for School Leadership**

This sort of excellence in school leadership has both widespread and nuanced characteristics and strategies connected to it. To make general sense of this image of an effective school leader, we have established three broad components or criteria of leadership that are all supported by current research and literature within the field: (a) demonstrate and continually seek wisdom, (b) be other-oriented, and (c) have a moral compass. Much of the literature that supports this paradigm shift is educational commentary and analysis rather than scholarly research studies. That point alone is one of the reasons more research like this DiP is needed to further understand and defend this type of leadership. Each of the three components of this paradigm shift is now discussed.

**Wisdom.** First, an important component of an effective school leader is demonstrating and continually seeking wisdom and the skills to apply that wisdom. “Wisdom may be an attribute of outstanding leaders who contribute to the personal development and well-being of their followers and who facilitate positive relationships at work” (Zacher, Pearce, Rooney, & McKenna, 2014, p. 171). Wisdom is more than IQ; it involves a cognitive component, which includes the desire to comprehend both intra and interpersonal events, a reflective component which refers to the ability to be self-aware and perceive events from multiple perspectives, and an affective component, which captures an individual's consideration for others (Zacher et. al, 2014). Seeking continual personal growth and wisdom is the mark of a leader who understands their quest to be better never ends.

This is important because an effective leader needs to be nimble – ready to apply a variety of strategies and tactics to a variety of different situations. Walters, Marzano,

and McNulty's (2003) empirical research into schools over a 30-year period calls this "balanced leadership." Part of their work included this conclusion:

Effective school leaders understand how to balance pushing for change while at the same time, protecting aspects of culture, values, and norms worth preserving. They know which policies, practices, resources, and incentives to align and how to align them with organizational priorities. They know how to gauge the magnitude of change they are calling for and how to tailor their leadership strategies accordingly. Finally, they understand the value of people in the organization. They know when, how, and why to create learning environments that support people, connect them with one another and provide the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to succeed. (Walters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003, p. 2)

This sort of practical and flexible wisdom underscores that, within more complex organizations, there is rarely, if ever, one single right answer. More likely, there are multiple leadership practices or principles that could be successfully applied to each situation. No longer does one solution, one principle, or one silver bullet provide the answer. Searching for that one solution is futile. Some researchers call this "the endless search for the big tool" (Bunker, 1997, p. 128).

Similar to the lack of any one silver bullet to solve situation-specific problems, Fullan (1998) writes about a new mindset and the guidelines needed for effective leadership in schools. Principals need to become facilitators of solutions for their particular situations. This particularly applies to how leaders cultivate an authentic professional learning community within their school. Depending on the make-up and the

needs of a particular school, the principal will need to be wise as to how that professional learning community is cultivated and encourage others to continually seek personal growth and wisdom as well. This may be messy and may create an organizational or intellectual disturbance. However, this can be a healthy part of the process.

**Other-oriented.** In addition to seeking and demonstrating wisdom, having an other-oriented focus is another important component of our concept of an effective school leader. Being other-oriented prioritizes relationships over results. Many of the roots of this other-oriented concept parallel the theories of democratic school governance. With this theory, just as teachers want students to be empowered as active citizens within their classroom, school leaders should also want their teachers and staff to be active citizens of their school community. To accomplish this, leaders must think first of others before they think of themselves and this role modeling can encourage them to be other oriented as well. For example, in their work examining moral and character education in relationship to citizenship education, Althof and Berkowitz (2006) write: “A key aspect of democratic citizenship is the capacity to ‘move beyond one’s individual self-interest and to be committed to the well-being of some larger group of which one is a member’” (Sherrod, Flannagan, & Youniss, 2002, p. 265 quoted in Althof & Berkowitz, 2006, p. 501). The other-oriented part of this paradigm shift encourages leaders, as well as those they serve, to focus on culture, empowering people, and building strong relationships as the way to improve overall organizational success.

These school leaders don't neglect academic improvement; they just realize good relationships lead to good results, including improved test scores and other academic measures (Character.org, 2014). Relationships are foundational to this potential success.

“The social relationships at work in school communities comprise a fundamental feature of their operations. The nature of these social exchanges, and the local cultural features that shape them, condition a school’s capacity to improve” (Bryk & Schneider, 2003, p. 5). It is all about the “relationships, relationships, relationships” (Berkowitz, 2003, p. 51) among the many constituents of a school.

Tschannen-Moran (2001) studied how principal trustworthiness can help cultivate a healthy and effective adult culture within a school. Leaders being other-oriented and focusing on people can help build trustworthiness. Her research emphasizes that school leaders need to focus on people, which allows for the potential of receiving greater input and getting better decisions. “The problems facing schools are larger than any one person or group can solve alone, and finding solutions will require cooperation and collaboration. Collaboration holds the possibility of higher quality decisions” (Tschannen-Moran, 2001, p. 327). However, to develop a staff that is truly collaborative, leaders must be able to focus on the needs of others before their own and encourage those they serve to do the same.

A school leader who makes relationship building and trust a priority will develop a school community willing to take risks. “Effective leaders know how to build the trust necessary for effective change through healthy relationships between, and ongoing development of, all members and levels of the organization” (Fullan, 2001, p. 100). Results from a study conducted by Hanford and Leithwood (2013) indicated, "teacher trust in principals is most influenced by leadership practices which teachers interpret as indicators of competence, consistency, reliability, openness, respect and integrity" (p. 194). Focusing on others has been shown to be part of the recipe for a leader’s success.

There must be an inherent desire to develop the capacity of others and a foundational belief that developing others should be a primary goal of an effective leader.

Another important part of being other-oriented is being open to input and sharing leadership, a democratic leadership value that is also a key part of Lambert's research (1998, 2002, 2003). Lambert believes that leaders should cultivate a high learning capacity within a school, where many faculty, staff, students, and parents are empowered to have actual agency and a willingness to share the leadership of the school. Crafting a dynamic and constructive adult culture in a school is a primary focus of this concept of an effective leader. School leaders must prioritize developing a professional learning culture. The culture must be accountable to the students, the staff, and the vision of the school and not to the loudest or squeakiest voice at the table.

Another important aspect of leaders being other-oriented is consideration of the styles and methods by which leaders motivate others within an organization. Many people in the field of education place high value on intrinsic motivation as opposed to extrinsic motivation (Berkowitz & Bier, 2012). This motivation can apply to both students and staff. In general, a reliance on extrinsic motivation of students can have an undermining effect on learning due to the absence of an internally seated desire to perform (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 2001; Ryan & Deci, 2002). Even though there are advocates on both sides of the debate considering intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation, and even though the majority of schools actually use extrinsic reward systems, the new model of leadership works to cultivate intrinsic motivation among self, students, and staff.



An important theoretical underpinning of this other-oriented focus of leadership is self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2002). Self-determination theory involves individuals self-constructing to make meaning of oneself and the relationship between oneself and others. “Self-determination theory begins by embracing the assumption that all individuals have natural, innate, and constructive tendencies to develop an ever more elaborated and unified sense of self” (Ryan & Deci, 2002, p. 5). Althof and Berkowitz (2013) connected self-determination theory to school culture when they wrote “self-constructive tendency can and should be enhanced, including in schools by promoting autonomy supportive schools and classrooms” (p. 573). Once the leader embraces the focus on self and people within the organization, it lays the groundwork for empowerment, shared leadership, and effective interpersonal culture.

In order to be other-oriented and to motivate the people in an organization, leaders also must have high emotional intelligence. Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2008) define emotional intelligence as:

The ability to engage in sophisticated information processing about one’s own and others’ emotions and the ability to use this information as a guide to thinking and behavior. That is, individuals who score high on an emotional intelligence scale pay attention to, use, understand, and manage emotions, and these skills serve adaptive functions that potentially benefit themselves and others. (p. 503)

A significant strength of emotionally intelligent leaders is their ability to connect to their own emotions and other people within and beyond an organization in constructive ways. “The emotionally intelligent leader also helps teachers, students, parents, and others create an environment of support, one in which people see problems not as weaknesses

but as issues to be solved” (Fullan, 1998, p. 8). This approach to leading should be integrated into all facets of leadership and decision-making processes.

When healthy interpersonal relationships and dynamics exist within an organization, leaders are able to encourage people to feel safe taking risks in order to innovate, change the status quo, and look for better ways to conduct their business. This is not possible unless there is a priority value placed on human capital (Fullan, 1998). An other-oriented approach is vital to effective leadership.

**Moral compass.** A final and important facet of this new paradigm of a school leader is a willingness to continually work to ensure a moral compass guides them. Leaders must be willing to continually develop their own moral compass. While this is not a focus of our research, we do believe that part of this paradigm shift must involve leaders being guided by their own pro-social moral compass and being motivated to do good to others and be good themselves. For the purposes of this study, the concept of having a moral compass is both understanding and adhering to ethical behavior and employing one’s leadership acumen for the benefit, growth, and health of all the constituent groups of a school. This is done both to foster the development of staff and students and to ensure they act consistent with their moral compass. Effective school leaders are committed to the positive, moral development of the students and adults in their school. This may prove challenging for leaders who have neglected their own moral compass.

An important part of this focus on moral development is the adults in the school community acknowledging their role in, and significant influence on, children’s moral development. “That level of influence makes being an adult in a school a profound moral

challenge” (Weissbourd, 2003, p. 7). To ensure the healthy development of students, all staff must make it a priority to focus on the moral development of students.

A positive, healthy, and pro-social moral identity is an important part of an effective school leader. A person’s moral identity and understanding of self regulates the moral actions of that individual. Various researchers debate to what degree identity influences action, as well as what other forces or contextual situations influence action. Moral identity has certain socio-cultural impacts. “This does not mean that moral identity is a personality characteristic. Like other social identities that make up a person’s social self-schema, it can be activated or suppressed by contextual, situational, or even individual-differences variables” (Aquino & Reed, 2002, p. 1425). For this research, it is important that a leader’s moral identity, and most importantly moral behavior, have pro-social intentions. These beliefs and intentions should be evident in the role modeling the leader provides for staff and students. In the field of organizational research, Fullan (2001) calls this moral purpose: “Moral purpose means acting with the intention of making a positive difference in the lives of employees, customers, and society as a whole” (p. 3). The salient point is that modeling morality and pro-social actions are increasingly becoming a part of this emerging model of school leadership.

If schools are to have a pro-social focus for student outcomes, school leaders with a pro-social mindset are needed. Berkowitz (2011b) says, “For schools to become the kinds of moral and democratic institutions that promote the development of students, they need leaders who understand, prioritize, and have the leadership competencies to nurture such institutional growth” (p. 96). Having a moral compass is an important part of being an effective leader.

Leaders must model the importance of personal growth by demonstrating and continually seeking wisdom, being other-oriented, and being guided by a moral compass. These things will not only make the leader more effective, it may encourage those they serve to seek continuous personal growth as well. This shift is where our research into effective character education practices and the frameworks of Vulnerable Leader, Transformational Leader, and Professional Growth Leader begins. While all three frameworks fit into this paradigm shift and share some similarities, each has a unique focus. The Vulnerable Leader focuses on introspection. The Transformational Leader focuses on developing others within an organization. The Professional Growth Leader focuses on cultivating a thriving learning community.

### **Chapter 4: Vulnerable Leader**

The first leadership framework to be considered is called the Vulnerable Leader. The framework of Vulnerable Leader looks closely at specific leadership characteristics that all revolve around a leader showing vulnerability, with vulnerability being presented as a positive characteristic rather than the typical connotation of a negative characteristic. The concept of Vulnerable Leadership fits very well in the overall leadership paradigm shift discussed in Chapter 3 that focuses on leaders who: (a) demonstrate wisdom, (b) are other-oriented, and (c) are guided by a moral compass. Within the field of character and citizenship education, this new framework of Vulnerable Leadership brings existing characteristics together in a new conceptual structure.

In this framework, the idea of vulnerability is not presented with its standard definition of weakness and being susceptible to attack. Vulnerable, according to Merriam-Webster, means “easily hurt or harmed physically, mentally, or emotionally; open to attack, harm, or damage” (Vulnerable, 2016). With this commonly understood definition, vulnerability is not typically considered a positive characteristic for leaders to possess. In more autocratic and traditional leadership frameworks, vulnerability is probably more seen as the antithesis of an effective leader. In contrast, vulnerability is presented here as a positive and beneficial approach. A person who is vulnerable can have the insight to deeply understand oneself and also have the courage to express their ideas and feelings authentically. In this framework, being vulnerable can be a valuable asset to a leader, which is an under-theorized area of research in current literature.

The Vulnerable Leader seeks to connect with the organizational stakeholders by having the courage to both understand and express one's self in an authentic way. Figure 1 shows the framework of the Vulnerable Leader.

### Vulnerable Leader

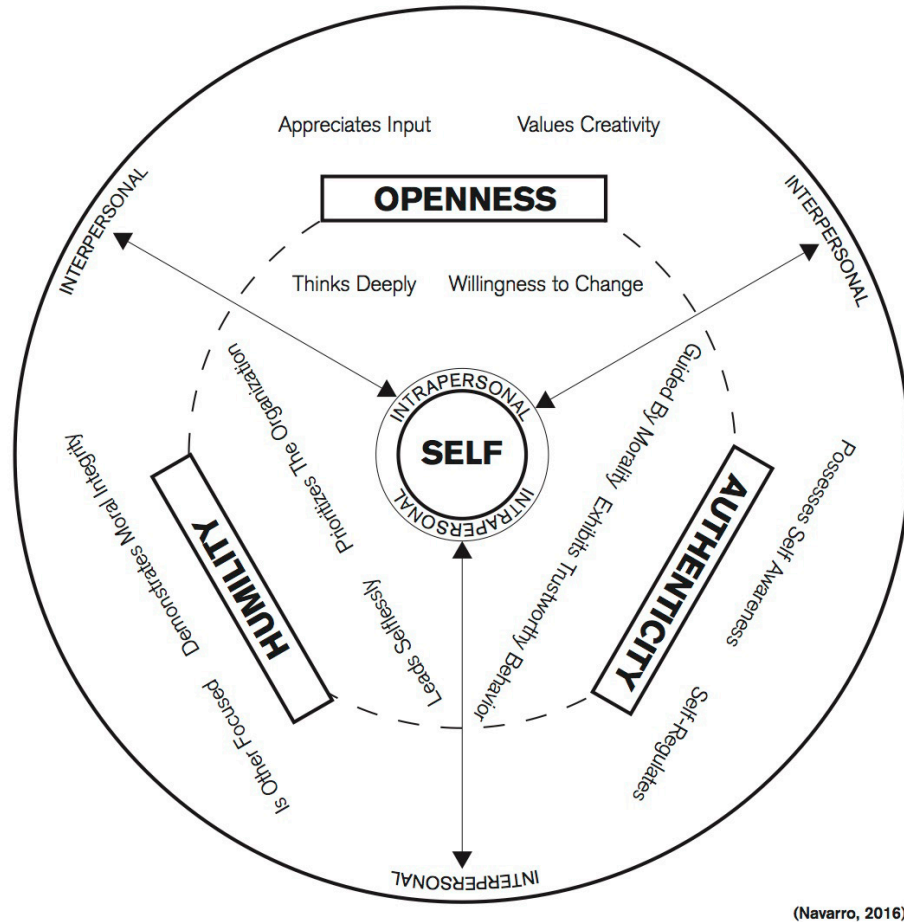


Figure 1. Vulnerable Leader Framework

There is considerable overlap among the three components. In Figure 1, each of the three components of the framework is visible: Openness, Authenticity, and Humility.

1. Vulnerable Leaders are open to new ideas and experiences, and they creatively and mindfully seek input from others within and beyond the organization.

2. Vulnerable Leaders authentically know their own strengths and challenges, as well as those of the organization, and they possess the courage to be guided by that knowledge.
3. Vulnerable Leaders embody humility in the spirit of a servant leader who puts the welfare of the group first and morally pursues the common good by modeling good character.

Figure 1 also shows that each component is further broken down into four subcomponents (see Appendix A).

These three components of the Vulnerable Leader all have long histories. The etymologies of the words are all fascinating as they speak to the timeless nature of being a good human and the spirit of the Vulnerable Leader:

- Openness: from German origins and the word *offen*, the root of the word “up.” The Vulnerable Leader is always looking upward and outward.
- Authenticity: from Greek origins and the word *authentikos*, the root of the word “principal” or “genuine.” The Vulnerable Leader is both genuine and knows the vision of the school.
- Humility: from Latin origins and the word *humilitas*, the root of the phrase “the earth beneath us.” The Vulnerable Leader keeps their feet and life grounded.

Also visible in Figure 1 are the multi-directional arrows between self or intrapersonal (center of circle) and others (interpersonal on outside of circle). These arrows represent an important implication for the leader’s own characteristics and ways of being (*intrapersonal*), as well as how the leader connects to others within the organization (*interpersonal*). Central to this framework is this dynamic interaction

between the self and the group; i.e. intrapersonal work can positively affect interpersonal work, just as interpersonal work can positively affect intrapersonal work. This dynamic interaction will be explored with each of components of the framework.

The Vulnerable Leader framework fills a specific gap in school leadership literature. That gap involves research that focuses deeply on the intrapersonal and inward characteristics of the leader. As discussed in Chapter 3, most leadership models focus on a leader's outward accomplishments and present a leader as aspiring towards personal greatness. There is not as much literature about leaders who focus their intention inward to better understand themselves in authentic ways. This gap complements the current trends of leadership being more about relationships and more about a leader's interpersonal characteristics and processes (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Berkowitz, 2011b; Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Fullan, 2003; Greenleaf, 1991; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Tschannen-Moran, 2014). While there are a significant number of research articles and books about leadership styles and characteristics, there is less research on the individual components of the Vulnerable Leader.

This framework suggests that an effective way to successfully lead an organization is for the leader to engage in a process of knowing themselves well and translating that knowledge into developing strong relationships and effective operations for the organization. This duality between the intrapersonal dimensions of the leader and the interpersonal dimensions of how they lead is at the heart of the Vulnerable Leader. For example, Openness in leadership inspires innovation; for a leader to employ openness effectively, they must first be open to the idea they may need to change (intrapersonal) and then have the courage to be open to input and empower shared leadership with the



people of the organization (interpersonal). As shown by the multi-directional arrows in Figure 1, these two dimensions are both important and directly connected.

The Vulnerable Leader represents a way of being and leading that can be foundational to effective leadership. It is not a replacement for good management techniques or other important leadership practices. Rather, it is a way of being that can be foundational for effective leadership. The Vulnerable Leader also assumes a pro-social perspective; the human connection they seek is with good and moral intentions. This moral, pro-social identity guides their moral actions and becomes an important part of their identity as a school leader. Aquino and Reed (2002) suggest that “like other social identities people embrace, moral identity can be a basis for social identification that people use to construct their self-definitions” (p. 1423).

Being a Vulnerable Leader is not an easy task. Significant courage, resilience, and perseverance are all required, especially in difficult situations. Too often, authentic or moral leadership disappears in difficult situations. Palmer (2000) reflects on our culture’s long relationship with that fact: “We capitalists have a long and crippling legacy of believing in the power of external realities much more deeply than we believe in the power of the inner life. How many times have you heard, or said, ‘Those are inspiring notions, but the hard reality is...’?” (p. 2). Palmer (2000) calls the journey to deal with the intrapersonal issues inherent in leadership “inner work” (p. 8). Having the courage to authentically engage in this inner work is an important part of the Vulnerable Leader. With this focus on self, it is also important to note that there is no room for feigning, vanity, or grandstanding. A leader cannot just go through the motions and apply the strategies or tactics of being a Vulnerable Leader. The framework is all about the leader

honestly, deeply, and authentically doing the inner work that Palmer references and looking outward for trusting connections with the people of the organization. It takes courage to establish and sustain all three components of being a Vulnerable Leader.

Before considering the three specific components of a Vulnerable Leader, it is important to take a more thorough look at existing research about the characteristics and concept of vulnerability.

### **Vulnerability**

For many, vulnerable implies weakness, however, the present concept of vulnerability presents it as a strength. By embracing vulnerability, a leader is able to cultivate authentic interpersonal relationships, which are critical to organizational success.

This concept of vulnerability is in its infancy in empirical and peer-reviewed research. In recent years, some research has emerged in academic literature, much of it in pastoral and nursing care periodicals. Attention to the idea of vulnerability in leadership has emerged mostly in popular media such as op-ed pieces, professional coaching blogs, leadership editorials, or even in pastoral leadership publications. Below is a sampling of those pieces:

- From “Learning Forward,” an *Educational Week* teacher blog: “Practicing vulnerability requires us to put away the masks we wear and name the truth with good intention. The most powerful thing we can do to create a culture of authenticity is to model it” (Moussavi-Bock, 2011, p. 61).
- From *The Water Cooler*, an online newsletter about business strategies: “A vulnerable leader is one who checks his or her ego at the door, is comfortable with

not having all the answers, and is ready to wholeheartedly embrace the perspectives, opinions, and thoughts of his or her people” (Haudan & Lind, n.d., p. 2).

- From *Christianity Today*, in an interview with author Chuck DeGroat (2014): “When we invest our leaders with authority and omnipotence that only Christ deserves, we’re probably naïve. Healthy leaders don’t demand respect or allegiance. They invite it. They don’t need you to agree with everything. They empower you, and they’ve succeeded if you’ve grown — even grown beyond them” (p. 71).
- From an editorial in *Leader to Leader*, Chip Bell (2005) writes: “Leaders too often associate their mantle of authority with a requirement for detachment... real leaders own their mistakes... don’t wear rank... care about spirit... and hunt for genuine encounters” (p. 19).
- From the NPR program, *Invisibilia*, Angus Chen (2016) reports on Holocaust survivor and leadership consultant Claire Nuer’s work with Shell Oil to help increase safety during construction and operation of a new deep-sea oil rig: "Part of safety in an environment like that is being able to admit mistakes and being open to learning — to say, 'I need help, I can't lift this thing by myself, I'm not sure how to read this meter,' " she says. "That alone is about being vulnerable." By allowing the oil workers to become vulnerable to one another they contributed to a 84% accident rate decline, and when they became open with their feelings, other communication was starting to flow more freely (para. 24).

- From “Profit Builders,” a business coaching firm: “The type of vulnerability I’m suggesting encompasses what you do to cultivate a safe environment to earn trust, to build trust, to reinforce trust and to demonstrate trust within your company and amongst your team” (Rosen, 2007, p. 20).
- From the “Todd Neilson Leadership Blog:” “A leader needs to be confident to show their vulnerable side—this includes self-awareness that shows the leader can be multi-faceted and certainly focused at the same time” (Crestan, n.d., p. 1).

Although not in scholarly publications, these notions of vulnerability as a positive attribute of leadership align with the Vulnerable Leader framework. One of the few peer-reviewed and relevant articles on the topic is from the Center for Creative Leadership and was published in the *Consulting Psychology Journal*. It discusses leader vulnerability as an asset in recovering and coping with stress and organizational crisis. The author concluded “expressing vulnerability becomes a leadership tool when it opens the door to connecting with others at the basic level of humanness” (Bunker, 1997, p. 134). This notion of using vulnerability as a repairing tool also parallels much theological research about the notion of humans being fundamentally flawed compared to the image of their supreme deity and then spending their lives working to repair that flaw through good works and prayer; it represents being open to ideas and forces larger than oneself.

Although tangential, this research does connect to the concept of the Vulnerable Leader, and it is one of the few research articles on the topic that is published about vulnerability and leadership. The largest body of empirical research on vulnerability has emerged from Brené Brown in the field of social work at the University of Houston.

**Brené Brown**

*Daring Greatly* is a phrase developed by Brown about having the courage to dare to be vulnerable, with Brown's definition of vulnerability paralleling our positive definition of vulnerability in many ways. Brown's work also emphasizes this concept of a vulnerable leader is a direct contradiction to the antiquated authoritarian style leader.

Brown (2012b) writes:

Contrary to the myth of the 'all knowing and all powerful' leader, inspired leadership requires vulnerability. *Do we have the courage to show up, be seen, take risks, ask for help, own our mistakes, learn from failure, lean into joy, and can we support the people around us in doing the same* [emphasis in original]. (p. 2)

Brown began her research journey in the field of social work with her basic belief about the necessity of human connection. "Connection is why we're here; it is what gives purpose and meaning to our lives" (Brown, 2012a, p. 253). Her dissertation explored assessing relevance in professional helping (e.g., pastoral care, psychologists, educators, or organizational leaders). Over six years, she interviewed 1,280 professionals to develop her theory of accompaniment, or *Accompanar*, as she titled the theory. Of these 1,280 interviews, 750 were female (median age 41) and 530 were male (median age 46). Brown's trained graduate, social work students conducted 215 interviews whose lengths ranged from 45 minutes to 3 hours with a median length of 60 minutes; about half of the interviews were conducted individually and half were conducted in dyads or triads (Brown, 2016). The title, *Accompanar*, was inspired by Latin theologians' work and

means “the commitment to be with people and share their journey with little reward beyond the journey itself” (Brown, 2002, p. ii).

Through asking her participants about human connection, she ended up developing the related ideas of shame and shame resilience. Asked about human connection, participants invariably talked about instances of heartbreak, betrayal and shame, which Brown defined and coded as the fear of not being worthy of real connection. That emerging pattern led her to return to her data to investigate why and how some were resilient to this shame, heartbreak, and betrayal. She eventually developed a model of shame, which revolved around empathy, courage, compassion, and connection (Brown, 2006, 2007). Brown was then led to investigate the converse of shame; that is what characteristics or patterns made the participants resilient to shame. The coding patterns pointed to wholeheartedness, which Brown developed into what she called wholehearted living. Wholehearted living was developed into ten guideposts for wholehearted, and also shame-resilient and constructive-vulnerable living (Brown, 2010a). And from her study of wholehearted living, Brown then focused her research attention on the power of vulnerability.

Brown (2012a) wrote, “Vulnerability is the core, the heart, the center, of meaningful human experiences” (p. 12). Vulnerability directly connects to a person’s ability to honestly know their self and their limitations. Brown’s research was mostly about individuals in general, but she fully acknowledges that the concepts and conclusions also apply to leaders in particular.

To be comfortable with their personal vulnerability, Brown writes that people must first have a strong sense of love and belonging; they must believe they are worthy of

that love and belonging (2010a). That sense of worthiness is a foundational path for them and their organization to find greatness. Conversely, when leaders cannot be real and honest, i.e. vulnerable, they block great ideas and innovation. Brown (2012a) identifies a lack of vulnerability as the “most significant barrier to creativity and innovation” (p. 187). This lack of vulnerability fosters a fear of change and close-minded leadership. Entrepreneurship and growth and new ideas cannot thrive in that sort of leadership environment. One participant in an interview with Brown (2012a) said, “When you shut down vulnerability, you shut down opportunity. By definition, entrepreneurship is vulnerable. It’s all about the ability to handle and manage uncertainty” (p. 208).

A leader must first have the courage and wisdom to intentionally be vulnerable. Vulnerability in leadership allows for followers to feel comfortable: it empowers followers to feel safe while taking their own risks and giving input, and it fosters authentic relationships. This connection and relationship is critical: “Leadership is all about relationships and to be in a relationship (with anyone) is to be vulnerable” (Brown, 2012b, p. 3). Vulnerability helps build those relationships. Another participant in Brown’s (2012a) research explained it as a shift from “having the best idea or problem solving to being the best leader of people” (p. 209). In Brown’s (2012a) *Daring Greatly Manifesto*, she explores what followers crave in their leaders; she concludes that vulnerability is one important tool for successfully leading an organization.

However, Brown is not naïve to the challenges a leader faces from significant pressures, deadlines, profit margins, and societal expectations to be truly vulnerable. It is hard work. “Re-humanizing work and education requires courageous leadership. Honest conversations about vulnerability and shame are disruptive” (Brown, 2012a, p. 188). This

connects to the courage to lead discussed by Palmer (2000). The inner work requires heavy internal lifting. Brown (2012b) also believes in the importance of that inner work: “It requires leaders who are willing to take risks, embrace vulnerabilities, and show up as imperfect, real people” (p. 4).

Having the courage to be vulnerable and having the wisdom to lead in a relational, interpersonal, and vulnerable fashion are exceptionally important tools in cultivating connection and a true learning culture. A final comment from Brown (2012b) clarifies a need for vulnerability in leadership models:

Across the private and public sector, in schools and in our communities, we are hungry for authentic leadership – we want to show up, we want to learn, and we want to inspire and be inspired... When leaders choose self-protection over transparency, and when self-worth is attached to what we produce, learning and work becomes dehumanized... Re-humanizing work and education requires courageous leadership. It requires leaders who are willing to take risks, embrace vulnerabilities, and show up as imperfect, real people. (p. 5)

Brown’s notions about the power of vulnerability form a foundation for the positive definition of vulnerability and the conceptual foundation of the Vulnerable Leadership framework. The Vulnerable Leader’s three subcomponents of Openness, Authenticity, and Humility will now be explored.

### **Vulnerable Leader: Openness**

Openness in leadership is often seen as leaders who are open to input, feedback, and new ideas, but when connected to the idea of Vulnerable Leadership, it becomes more complex. An area of research about openness is in the field of personality research.



Openness to experience is one of the factors in the Five-Factor Model of Personality, a widely supported taxonomic structure to categorize personality. Tupes and Christal (1961) are commonly credited with discovering the Big Five, as they are commonly called, which are (a) extraversion, (b) agreeableness, (c) conscientiousness, (d) emotional adjustment, and (e) openness to experience (as cited in Judge & Bono, 2000). Factor five of the Big Five, openness to experience, is of interest to this research, as it “represents the tendency to be creative, imaginative, perceptive, and thoughtful” (Judge & Bono, 2000, p. 752). Open people tend to have creative and innovative personalities.

While there are not a large number of empirical studies linking openness to experience to aspects of leadership (Judge & Bono, 2000), there are some studies that claim a link. For example, Zopiatis and Constanti (2012) found that openness to experience positively associated with Transformational Leadership in their study of the hotel industry in Cyprus. Klecker and Loadman (2000) identified two studies about the positive impact openness can have on effective leadership. Short & Jones (1991) found openness to change was one of the essential characteristics of the outstanding principals in their study. Faidley and Musser (1989) found openness to change was one of their elements of what they called visionary leadership. Klecker and Loadman (2000) empirically studied principals’ openness as an effective characteristic, and they organized their conceptual model into: (a) affective reaction, (b) cognitive reaction, and (c) behavioral reaction to change. Judge and Bono (2000) argue openness to experience complements this new paradigm of more relationship-focused leadership.

To define openness, subcomponents were considered and identified. Research associated with the Big Five, the Big Five Inventory (BFI) (John, Naumann, & Soto,

2008), the Five Factor Model of Personality (NEO-FFI) (McCrae and Costa, 1989), and a study about principal openness (Klecker & Loadman, 2000), as well as the overall concept of the Vulnerable Leader, were all reviewed in order to identify the best-fit subcomponents. In crosschecking theories, prioritizing characteristics, and considering the premise of the Vulnerable Leader, four subcomponents were eventually identified: (a) willingness to change, (b) thinks deeply, (c) values creativity, and (d) appreciates input.

Table 1 charts the four subcomponents alongside the relevant important conceptual models.

Table 1  
*Openness Subcomponents and Connected Conceptual Models*

<u>Vulnerable Leader</u>	<u>5 Factor Model of Personality</u>	<u>Principal Openness</u>	<u>Big Five Inventory</u>	<u>Shared Leadership</u>
	(McCrae & Costa, 1989, 2002, 2004)	(Klecker & Loadman 2000)	(John et al, 2008)	(Lambert 1998, 2002, 2003)
Willingness to Change	Feelings	Affective reaction to change	Is inventive; is curious about many things	
Thinks Deeply	Ideas	Cognitive reaction to change	Reflects / plays with ideas; ingenious	
Values Creativity	Aesthetics		Active imagination; sophisticated in the arts	
Appreciates Input	Actions	Behavioral reaction to change		Distributive leadership; open to staff input
	Fantasy			
	Values			

The Vulnerable Leader, with strong intrapersonal awareness, is open to change, reflects deeply, and values creativity, all of which lead to space and comfort with change, risk, innovation, and better ways of doing things. Leaders who are open create a culture of shared leadership, and the leader is open to hearing and welcoming that input.

Openness requires a high level of emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is an important tool a leader needs to form relationships, and relationships have been shown to be important to effective leadership (Berkowitz, 2003; Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Brown, 2012b). In their research into emotional intelligence, Mayer et al. (2008) stress that emotional intelligence is an interrelated set of mental abilities. “Emotional intelligence (EQ) is your ability to recognize and understand emotions in yourself and others, and your ability to use this awareness to manage your behavior and relationships” (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009, p. 335). The main ability involves the leader being able “to engage in sophisticated information processing about one’s own and other’s emotions and the ability to use this information as a guide to thinking and behavior” (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009, p. 503). Rosete and Ciarrochi’s (2005) research confirms “managers higher in emotional intelligence are better able to cultivate productive working relationships with others and to demonstrate great personal integrity” (as cited in Mayer et al., 2008, p. 512).

This sense of openness and need for high emotional intelligence contrasts with autocratic leaders who think they alone have the best answers and know all. That type of leader is closed to input, which closes them to others’ ideas, to collaborative innovation, and perhaps a better way of doing something. In contrast, the Vulnerable Leader is

confident and courageous enough to know they do not always know the answer or have the best solution.

### **Willingness to Change**

The first subcomponent of Vulnerable Leadership is having the willingness to change. The Vulnerable Leader is open to the fact that other people on the team might have better answers and better and different ways of doing things. Embracing change allows different ideas to develop. It is important to note this sort of openness to change is not an impulsive desire to change for change's sake but rather being open when a change might benefit the organization. It is being open to new perspectives, new ideas, and the understanding that group deliberation is a process that can potentially produce better ideas than the leader can produce alone.

### **Thinks Deeply**

The second subcomponent of Openness, thinks deeply, lies in the reflective ability and intellect of the leader. A leader who is capable of being Open to change must be reflective in their thinking with balanced processing and consideration of ideas. The Vulnerable Leader thinks deeply by being intellectually adventurous and carefully considering many perspectives. This concept also maps closely to the Intellectual Stimulation component of Transformational Leadership (Bass, 1998; Judge & Bono, 2000; Stewart, 2006). The Vulnerable Leader's deep thinking inspires followers to be creative in order to perform more effectively. These leaders surround themselves with people holding diverse ideas and perspectives regarding professional development, staying current with new trends, or many other issues. With these diverse points of input,

a Vulnerable Leader knows how to think deeply with practical and flexible wisdom in order to carefully weigh the many angles of any situation.

### **Values Creativity**

The third subcomponent is about valuing originality and diverse ways of looking at things. Connected to thinking deeply, they know the best idea might come from an unlikely source or avenue of thinking. This includes diverse and out-of-the-box ways of approaching things. The NEO-FFI and BFI both measure creativity, in part, through measuring a subject's appreciation of aesthetic and artistic experiences, with their research showing that these measures map directly onto valuing creativity.

### **Appreciates Input**

The final subcomponent of Openness is valuing input from others. Appreciating input manifests as shared leadership, openness to ideas, and a belief in empowering staff to share ideas. Too often, leaders are fearful of being open to input from others. As Berkowitz (2011b) reflects, "One of the biggest wastes of resources in schools is the disuse of the minds of students and teachers" (p. 117). There are structures that help facilitate an openness to input. In her research, Lambert (1998, 2002, 2003) wrote about shared leadership. Lambert sees the imperative need to share leadership of a school system and the interpersonal relationships that facilitate that sharing. "Instead of looking to the principal alone for instructional leadership, we need to develop leadership capacity among all members of the school community" (Lambert, 2002, p. 37). This connects to the new image of leadership's other-oriented focus discussed earlier. Appreciating openness also helps build a culture of professionalism and adult learning. Fullan (1998) also wrote about the importance of adult culture in schools, citing research that clearly

finds “that student achievement increases substantially in schools with collaborative work cultures that foster a professional learning community among teachers and others” (p. 8).

A leader’s openness to input very much helps craft this dynamic adult culture of learning.

In conclusion, Vulnerable Leaders are open to new ideas and experiences, and they creatively and mindfully seek input from others within and beyond the organization. Openness requires the leader’s intrapersonal work and having the confidence and wisdom to understand that they do not and cannot know everything; this intrapersonal work, in turn, fosters interpersonal connections. The Vulnerable Leader’s Openness lays the groundwork for finding the best decision and path forward for an organization and ultimately for effective leadership. An organization led with openness has people actively trying new things, sharing new ideas, and asking what is best for themselves, their peers, and the shared vision of their organization.

### **Vulnerable Leader: Authenticity**

Along with being Open, the Vulnerable Leader is honest, aware, and realistic about who they are and who they are not; i.e., a Vulnerable Leader is Authentic.

Authenticity is another foundational aspect for the Vulnerable Leader. The concept of authenticity correlates with words such as genuine, reliable, trustworthy, real, and veritable (May, Hodges, Chan, & Avolio, 2003). A Vulnerable Leader authentically knows and admits their own strengths and challenges, as well as those of the organization.

Research into the field of authentic leadership is relatively young. However, in the past few decades there have been many studies, measures, and corresponding conceptual models and definitions of authenticity and authentic leadership (Avolio & Bass, 2004;

Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, & Walumbwa, 2005; Ilies, Morgeson, & Nahrgang, 2005; Kernis, 2003; May, Hodges, Chan, & Avolio, 2003; Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008). A few of those models will be reviewed before establishing the subcomponents of Authenticity for the Vulnerable Leader.

In order for a school leader to be effective, they have to know themselves in an authentic way; they must be honest about their own abilities, intentions, and limitations as a person and as a leader. “Authenticity involves both *owning* [emphasis in original] one’s personal experiences (values, thoughts, emotions, and beliefs) and *acting* [emphasis in original] in accordance with one’s true self (expressing what you really think and believe” (Gardner et al., 2005, p. 345). Being authentic requires personal vulnerability and openness. Hiding from shame, conflict, and ignorance is not part of being authentic. Rather, an authentic person is comfortable with self-doubt, realistic about limitations, and knows where true strengths, assets, and intentions lie. “Leaders must know what is important to them – they must be totally immersed in their core beliefs and values” (May et al., 2003, p. 249). May et al. (2003) define authentic leadership this way: “It is ultimately about the leader knowing him or herself, and being transparent in linking inner desires, expectations, and values to the way the leader behaves every day, in each and every interaction” (p. 248). Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson (2008) provide a more refined and focused definition they developed in reviewing past definitions:

Authentic Leadership is a pattern of leader behavior that draws upon and promotes both positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate, to

foster greater self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and relational transparency on the part of leaders working with followers, fostering positive self-development. (Walumbwa et al., 2008, p. 94)

The moral decisions, actions, and behaviors of the Vulnerable Leader need to be grounded in authenticity because that serves as a base for creating solid, trusting relationships within a school or organization, which is foundational to character development. As discussed earlier, leading with character and moral integrity also require a high degree of courage and strength (Palmer, 2000).

In addition to the conceptual models above, Kernis (2003) in his research into self-esteem, identifies four components of authentic leadership: (a) awareness, (b) unbiased processing, (c) action, and (d) relational. Ilies, Morgeson, & Nahrgang (2005) identify four similar components: (a) self-awareness, (b) unbiased processing, (c) authentic behavior, and (d) authentic relational orientation. Walumbwa et al. (2008) build on Kernis' (2005) work to establish their five components: (a) self-awareness, (b) relational transparency, (c) internalized regulation, (d) balanced processing, and (e) positive moral perspective. Finally, Gardner et al. (2005) also built on Kernis' (2005) work to establish their four components: (a) positive psychological capital and history, (b) leader self-awareness (includes high emotional intelligence), (c) leader self-regulation (includes balanced processing and relational transparency), and (d) role modeling.

Authentic leadership forms a basis or foundation on which other leadership strategies can be built; it is both a foundation and a platform. To establish the subcomponents of Authenticity, these conceptual models and research were studied,



prioritized, and analyzed. The four subcomponents were identified as: (a) possesses self-awareness, (b) guided by internalized moral perspective, (c) self-regulates behavior and decisions, and (d) exhibits trustworthy behavior. Table 2 charts the four subcomponents alongside the relevant important conceptual models.

Table 2  
*Authenticity Subcomponents and Connected Conceptual Models*

<u>Vulnerable Leader</u>	<u>Self-Esteem: Authenticity</u>	<u>Authentic Leadership Measures</u>	<u>Authentic Leadership Development</u>	<u>Authentic Leadership</u>	<u>Authentic Leadership</u>
	Kernis (2003)	Walumbwa et al. (2008)	Avolio & Gardner (2005)	Ilies et al. (2005)	Gardner et al. (2005)
Possesses Self-awareness	Awareness	Self-awareness	Self-awareness	Self-awareness	Self-awareness
Guided by internalized moral perspective		Positive moral perspective	Positive moral perspective		
Self-regulates behavior / decisions		Internalized regulation	Self-regulation		Self-regulation
Exhibits trustworthy behaviors***					
	Unbiased processing*	Balanced processing*	Positive psychological capital	Unbiased processing *	Personal history
	Authentic behavior	Relational transparency **	Leadership processes / behaviors	Authentic behavior	Positive modeling
	Relational authenticity **			Authentic relational orientation **	

*Note.* \* “Unbiased Processing” is not a subcomponent of Humility in the Vulnerable Leader model because the ideas are already addressed in the Openness subcomponent of “Thinks Deeply”  
 \*\* “Relational Transparency” is not a subcomponent of Humility in the Vulnerable Leader model because the ideas are already addressed Covered in the Humility subcomponents of “Prioritizes Organization” & “Is Other-Focused”  
 \*\*\* Though not specifically part of most conceptual models of Authenticity, “Exhibits Trustworthy Behaviors” is critical to the Vulnerable Leader’s concept of authenticity and it is very much indirectly covered in the other Authenticity models as both (a) a bi-product of being authentic and (b) parallel reality to authenticity.

**Possesses Self-Awareness**

To be Authentic, a leader must be self-aware—aware of strengths, limitations, intentions, and morals (Kernis, 2003). A high degree of self-clarity is key. Vulnerable Leaders are realistic about skills, knowledge, and limitations in both. That knowledge must be regularly compared to the leader’s leadership standard for both their own vision and the broader vision of an organization. Mindfulness is one practice to help achieve this self-awareness. “Mindfulness starts with self-awareness: knowing yourself enables you to make choices about how you respond to people and situations. Deep knowledge about yourself enables you to be consistent, to present yourself authentically” (McKee, Johnston, & Massimilian, 2006, p. 3). Gardner et al. (2005) write about self-clarity of values, emotions, and identity being important parts of self-awareness. “While values are learned through socialization processes and serve to benefit groups and larger social units, once internalized, they become integral components of the self. Hence, when speaking of authenticity, we mean that one is true to the self, and one’s core values in particular” (Gardner et al., 2005, p. 350). Once self-awareness of values, identity, and emotions are attained, the leader must also be guided by their morals and values.

**Guided by Internalized Moral Perspective**

The Vulnerable Leader also needs to be guided by moral perspective. For much of the research on Authenticity, and definitely the framework of the Vulnerable Leader, the model encompasses an “inherent ethical/moral component” (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 324). May et al. (2003) provide a thorough conceptual look at the moral component of authentic leadership, including moral development, resilience, capacity, and decision-making. Through a positive approach to ethics, they discuss how authentic leaders go

through a three-step process for decision-making: (a) recognize a moral dilemma, (b) transparently evaluate courses of action, and (c) develop action plans consistent with the leader's morals. As with many parts of the Vulnerable Leader, May et al. also discuss how difficult it can be for a leader to be guided by their internal moral perspective. It takes a high degree of moral courage, which they define as "the leader's fortitude to convert moral intentions into actions despite pressures from either inside or outside of the organization to do otherwise" (May et al., 2003, p. 255). The Vulnerable Leader is not only aware of their moral compass, but also has the courage and strength to be guided by it. This is another example where the intrapersonal and interpersonal realities dynamically interact. Just being self-aware and having a moral compass is not enough; they must guide behaviors.

### **Self-Regulates Behaviors and Decisions**

The Authentic leader needs to be transparently self-regulated. This means that their behavior and decision-making must reflect their self-awareness and internal moral perspectives. Gardner et al. (2005) identified three important steps in self-regulation and self-control of behavior and decision-making: (a) set internal standards, (b) evaluate discrepancies between those standards and potential outcomes, and (c) identify intended actions for resolving the discrepancies. The authors go on to discuss internal and external motivation and stress that authentic leaders are mostly driven by "internalized regulatory processes and their identities to be self-concordant as they pursue an integrated set of goals that reflect personal standards of conduct" (Gardner et al., 2005, p. 355). Regulating thinking and decision-making also involves leaders showing their self and working to achieve openness and truthfulness in relationships.

Another concept associated with self-regulation is positive role modeling, which is also an important part of being a Vulnerable Leader and the top ranked effective character education practice. The leader must walk the talk, or perhaps more specifically, walk their thoughts. Role modeling is a very important part of leader authenticity. Berkowitz (2011b) writes, “An equally important task of the effective leader is to walk the talk, i.e., to be a role model. We must be the character we want to see in others and for principals, we must be the character educator that we want to see in our staff” (p. 109). This combination of self-awareness and a balanced, informed, and regulated set of decision-making and behaviors govern the authentic leader’s relationships with all stakeholders of the organization.

#### **Exhibits Trustworthy Behaviors**

Being self-aware, being guided by internal moral perspectives, and transparently regulating thinking and decision-making are all interconnected with the fourth subcomponent of an authentic leader: exhibiting trustworthy behavior. All authenticity subcomponents help build trustworthy behaviors, but this final element is such an important part of the Vulnerable Leader that it is necessary for it to be its own subcomponent.

Leadership trustworthiness is a very important part of a school’s adult culture and the ultimate success of the school and students. In their research about school reform and a trusting culture within the school, Bryk and Schneider (2004) wrote: “The social relationships at work in school communities comprise a fundamental feature of their operations. The nature of these social exchanges, and the local cultural features that shape them, condition a school’s capacity to improve” (p. 5). People matter. Culture matters.

Leadership matters. Trust matters. Tschannen-Moran (2014) has done extensive research into cultivating trust within an organization and how leaders develop trustworthy practices and characteristics. She writes that, in the absence of real trust, schools are “likely to flounder in their attempts to provide constructive educational environments and meet the lofty goals that our society has set for them” (Tschannen-Moran, 2014, p. 13).

It is the principal’s job to cultivate a trusting school culture. An important part of cultivating that culture is for the principal to be trustworthy. Bryk and Schneider’s (2003) work explores the principal’s role in developing relational trust; they conclude that effective principals couple their trustworthy behaviors with a compelling school vision. Tschannen-Moran (2014) expresses a similar sentiment as a major theme in her work: “Trustworthy leaders form the heart of productive schools. Trustworthy leadership gets everyone on the same team, pulling in the same direction” (p. 264). Staff trust in a principal is related to the existence of a climate of open and authentic culture created by the principal (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998).

In their research into trust in schools, Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999) identify five specific facets of trust: (a) benevolence, (b) reliability, (c) competence, (d) honesty, and (e) openness. Each of these five facets has connections to the Vulnerable Leader. For example, Tschannen-Moran and Hoy’s (1998) empirical research identifies Openness and Authenticity as two important facets of principal trustworthiness, while additionally Tschannen-Moran (2014) identifies Humility as another important facet of principal trustworthiness. This research supports that the three components of the Vulnerable Leader all help cultivate trustworthiness.

In conclusion, Vulnerable Leaders authentically own their strengths and challenges, as well as those of the organization, and they possess the courage to be guided by that knowledge. The four sub-components all interconnect in underscoring that a Vulnerable Leader must authentically know who they are, what they can do, and why they are motivated to do something, and that is demonstrated as trustworthy behaviors. Authentic leadership provides a role model for what is expected, and it provides an inspiration for staff to feel empowered to be themselves in authentic ways.

### **Vulnerable Leader: Humility**

Vulnerable leaders embody Humility in the spirit of a servant leader who puts the welfare of the group first and morally pursues the common good by modeling good character. Morris, Brotheridge, and Urbanski (2005) define humility as “a personal orientation founded on a willingness to see the self accurately and a propensity to put oneself in perspective” (p. 1328). Humility is an important concept in self-help, spiritual development, and other similar fields. When looking at most leadership models, humility is not often ranked high as an important virtue in the business world. “A humble person has a sufficiently complete and balanced degree of self-knowledge, which leads ... to value, appreciate and request the help of others; to count on their cooperation and not vaunt her own capabilities and successes nor play down her mistakes or limitations” (Argandona, 2014, p. 4). A Vulnerable Leader who is humble knows their place and how to embrace others within the organization.

A significant theme for the Vulnerable Leader is the importance of other-enhancing and being other-oriented (Morris et al., 2005). Another central detail about

humility as a component of the Vulnerable Leader is understanding that it is all about letting the interpersonal nature of humility influence the social setting of the organization.

Argandona (2014) theorized a conceptual model of how humility can positively impact a manager's leadership in the development of an organization's team. Argandona identifies five components of humility within leadership: (a) self-knowledge, (b) character stability, (c) focus on other's capabilities, (d) pro-social behaviors, and (e) focus on teamwork. All five of these interconnect with the new leadership paradigm shift discussed in Chapter 3.

From another body of research, Morris et al. (2005) identify a different three dimensions of humility: (a) self-awareness (understanding one's strengths and weaknesses), (b) openness (knowing one's weaknesses), and (c) transcendence (connection to larger goals). There are similarities though between their list and the other lists. Although there is not an abundance of research about humility and leadership, several conceptual models come from various bodies of research. Two prominent places where the concepts of humility and leadership have emerged are Collins' Level Five leadership and the field of servant leadership.

### **Level 5 Leadership**

Collins researched what it takes to make a good company into a great company for his bestselling book, *From Good to Great* (2005). The book laid out several now-famous and popular leadership strategies and tactics to take an organization from good to great. His follow-up research focused on the CEOs of the companies as he tried to discern if there was any pattern that made the companies more likely to move from good to great. He found there was a pattern. There was clear empirical evidence within the data of why



companies moved from good to great; it was the leader. Collins (2005) writes that all the great leaders shared a commitment to being humble. He and his team developed the phrase Level 5 leader to describe these leaders. A Level 5 leader is “an executive in whom genuine personal humility blends with intense professional will” (Collins, 2005, p. 2). Of all the companies they studied, they only found 11 that fully met the team’s criteria of going from good to great, and every single one of those 11 companies had a Level 5 leader.

For Level 5 leaders, humility and intense professional will, which Collins (2005) often calls fierce resolve, do not intuitively seem to go hand in hand. During the interviews with CEOs who ended up being Level 5 leaders, Collins’ team was struck by how they talked about themselves, “or rather, didn’t talk about themselves. They’d go on and on about the company and contributions of other executives, but they would instinctively deflect discussion about their own role.” The leaders continued, “I don’t think I can take much credit for what happened” (Collins, 2005, p. 10). Level 5 leaders shun public adulation and funnel their energy and ambition instead into the organization. Level 5 leaders are not afraid to look in the mirror when there are struggles and to own their part in those struggles; conversely, when there are successes, they would rather look outside the window to celebrate the role others played in that success than to self-aggrandize their own role in the success (Collins, 2005). This does not mean they are not with their own strengths. And Level 5 leaders are not meek; their resolve is fierce and they have unwavering focus on the good of the company. They model the path for the company and will settle for nothing but that vision. They chase the vision quietly, but doggedly and persistently.

Another pattern Collins' team noticed about Level 5 leaders is that without fail they appointed superb successors. "Level 5 leaders want to see their companies become even more successful in the next generation and are comfortable with the idea that most people won't even know the roots of that success trace back to them" (Collins, 2005, p. 13). Similar to Ryan and Deci's (2002) concepts of internal motivation, the Level 5 leaders also believe in empowering the people within their organizations and developing internal motivation in people.

Level 5 leaders have many similarities to the Vulnerable Leader. While they both have unique components, it is definitely plausible for a Level 5 leader to be a Vulnerable Leader, and it is also plausible for a Vulnerable Leader to be a Level 5 leader. The importance of humility is the key similarity between the two.

### **Servant Leadership**

Another concept of leadership that has many similarities to the Vulnerable Leader, and specifically shares the concept of Humility, is the concept of the servant leader. Some researchers even claim that the type of humility in servant leadership shares the exact structure and characteristics as the humility of a Level 5 leader. The same measures are even used for both (Reid, West, Winston, & Wood, 2014). They are not the same though. One key difference is that the personal will or fierce resolve of a Level 5 leader is not represented in the servant leader.

Robert Greenleaf first developed the model of a servant leader in 1970. Part of Greenleaf's inspiration to develop the model was to counter-act the developing idolization of CEO's as omnipotent and omniscient. "Leaders began to be treated as heroes not necessarily because of anything that they did, but simply because they were

leaders” (Morris et al., 2005, p. 1325). A concise definition of a servant leader is not readily agreed-upon. In fact, many scholars have attempted to distill the key characteristics of the model and there are many varying lists attempting to articulate those characteristics. Greenleaf explains how servant leadership is more than a leadership model; it is an entire way of thinking, being, and living—not just leading (Greenleaf, 1991). Larry Spears (2004), the long-time director of the Robert K. Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership, wrote about what he thinks is the most salient part of the model: “True leadership emerges from those whose primary motivation is a deep desire to help others” (p. 8).

Spears (2004) also wrote about how Greenleaf’s initial thinking, which developed into the servant leadership model, paralleled the shift the country was witnessing with the image of leadership:

In countless for-profit and nonprofit organizations today we are seeing traditional, autocratic, and hierarchical modes of leadership yielding to a different way of working – one based on teamwork and community, one that seeks to involve others in decision making, one strongly based in ethical and caring behavior, and one that is attempting to enhance the personal growth of people while improving the caring and quality of our many institutions. (p. 7)

The servant leader is called to serve first. And in serving, servant leaders are humble by definition. “Rather than bringing attention to themselves and having glory reflected on them, servant leaders choose to remain in the background and have credit given to followers” (Morris et al., 2005, p. 1333).

Over time, scholars have created many iterations of the key components of the servant leader model. For example, Greenleaf's follower, Spears, along with others, identified 10 characteristics (Wong & Davey, 2007), while Wong and Page (2003) identified the seven factors of a Servant Leadership Profile, and later Wong and Davey (2007) identified five factors of a revised Servant Leadership Profile. For this dissertation, Wong and Davey's (2007) five factors are most useful:

- Factor 1: a servant's heart (humility & selflessness) – Who we are (Self-identity)
- Factor 2: serving and developing others – Why we want to lead (Motive)
- Factor 3: consulting and involving others – How we lead (Method)
- Factor 4: inspiring and influencing others – What effect we have (Impact)
- Factor 5: modeling integrity and authenticity – How others see us (Character)

These five factors have crossover and resonance with the leadership ideas and models discussed throughout the Vulnerable Leader framework. Humility is a foundational characteristic of both the servant leader and the Vulnerable Leader. The research and behaviors discussed about humility all apply to servant leaders. In their study into humility and leadership, Morris et al. (2005) identify humility as perhaps the key characteristic for servant leadership. "These behaviors are consistent with what we would expect from individuals who possess high levels of self-awareness, openness, and transcendence. Indeed, it would appear that humility might be the operating mechanism through which servant leaders function" (p. 1333). Along with identifying humility as an important part of servant leadership, those authors also demonstrate the similar nature of the servant leader and the Vulnerable Leader. Another analysis of the servant leader profile identifies these connections: "Servant leadership is demonstrated by empowering

and developing people; by expressing humility, authenticity, interpersonal acceptance, and stewardship; and by providing direction” (Dierendonck, 2011, p. 1254).

Additionally, there are several connections between Greenleaf’s initial conception of the servant leader (1991) and the Vulnerable Leader. To identify a few:

- The servant leader inspires trust, just as the Vulnerable Leader does by embracing their vulnerability in order to cultivate trust;
- The servant leader listens intently, just as the Vulnerable Leader does by being open to input;
- The servant leader has high self-awareness, just as the Vulnerable Leader does by being vulnerable and having the courage to both understand and express their real self;
- The servant leader shares leadership, just as the Vulnerable Leader does by being open to input;
- The servant leader is creative and open to change, just as the Vulnerable Leader is by being open to experience.

To establish the subcomponents of Humility for the proposed Vulnerable Leader framework, many existing theoretical constructs about Humility were reviewed, prioritized, and analyzed, and four subcomponents were identified: (a) leads selflessly, (b) prioritizes the organization, (c) is other-focused, and (d) models moral integrity. Table 3 charts the four subcomponents alongside the relevant important conceptual models.

Table 3  
*Humility Subcomponents and Connected Conceptual Models*

<u>Vulnerable Leader</u>	<u>Level 5 Leadership</u>	<u>Executive Servant Leadership</u>	<u>Measure Servant Leadership</u>	<u>Servant Leadership</u>	<u>Humility in Management</u>
	Reid et al (2014)	Wong & Davey (2007)	Reed et al (2011)	Wong & Page (2003)	Argandona (2014)
Leads Selflessly	Humble Doesn't seek spotlight	Servant heart: humble / selfless	Altruism	Vulnerability and humility	
Prioritizes The Organization	Team player		Builds community		Prioritizes teamwork
Is Other-Focused	Servant attitude	Serving / developing others Inspiring others	Interpersonal Support	Empowers others Serves others	Fosters others' capabilities
Models Moral Integrity		Models integrity and authenticity	Moral integrity	Visionary leadership - integrity and authenticity	Pro-social behaviors
	Genuine	Consulting / involving others*	Egalitarianism	Open, participatory leadership*	Self-knowledge
				Visionary leadership	Character stability

*Note.* \* These notions of humility are addressed in the subcomponents of Openness

### **Leads Selflessly**

Leading selflessly is a key component of both the Vulnerable Leader and servant leadership. While there are many leaders within businesses and schools all around us who lead selflessly, it is the most famous ones who often get the attention of being a servant leader. For example, Abraham Lincoln, Mother Teresa, and Martin Luther King, Jr. are also heralded for being servant leaders; not only because they possess the qualities of a

servant leader, but also because they dedicated their entire livelihoods (and sometimes even their lives) in a servant pursuit of their visions. Another such servant leader is South African President Nelson Mandela. A quote of his captures the spirit of the servant leader: “It is better to lead from behind and to put others in front, especially when you celebrate victory when nice things occur” (Stewardship Central, n.d.). Even though a selfless leader has their own skill and abilities, they lead not for their own glory, but for the glory of others similar to President Mandela. Their ego is not what drives their leadership.

### **Prioritizes the Organization**

A second subcomponent of Humility is a leader who prioritizes their organization, similar to a Level 5 leader and a servant leader. Greenleaf (1991) stresses this idea in his definition of servant leadership. The leader should be “seen as servant first” (Greenleaf, 1991, p. 19) before being seen as a leader. In all that the Vulnerable Leader does, they should humbly be able to prioritize what the organization needs. Personal needs should also be secondary to the needs of the organization.

### **Is Other-Focused**

Collins’ (2005) narrative about Level 5 leaders looking out the window (i.e. towards the staff, towards the team, towards others) when the organization is successful, and in the window (i.e. towards self) when the organization is in trouble, is a clear example of a Humble leader being other-focused. This isn’t to say that a leader doesn’t also share in the celebration of a success; rather, that they focus on giving credit to others where credit is due. Just like the servant leader, a Humble leader does not lead to seek praise but leads for the organization and focuses on developing others and empowering

them to their highest level of success. Reed, Vildaver-Cohen, and Colwell (2005) also stress this focus on others where the leader builds “internal community involving valuing individual differences, encouraging a spirit of cooperation, and inspiring organizational commitment” (p. 425).

### **Models Moral Integrity**

The Vulnerable Leader is lead by a sense of morality. Modeling the moral choice and possible path forward, rather than exhorting it, is a primary way Vulnerable Leaders convey their message.

Vulnerable Leaders with Humility put the welfare of the group first and pursue the common moral good. In the intrapersonal realm, the Vulnerable Leader must have the courage and insight to develop self-awareness and to be comfortable with both the skills and limitations discovered. In the interpersonal realm, the Vulnerable Leader puts the needs and goals of the people of the organization and the organization itself as a top priority.

The four subcomponents of Humility—(a) leads selflessly, (b) prioritizes the organization, (c) is other-focused, and (d) models moral integrity—interconnect to add important dimensions to the Vulnerable Leader; the Vulnerable Leader is motivated to serve the organization and those within the organization.

### **Vulnerable Leader Conclusion**

A new and important paradigm of school leadership in schools is emerging. No longer are authoritarian, omniscient, or omnipotent leaders the only leadership models for school leaders to follow. School leaders who display practical and flexible wisdom, who



are other-oriented, and who are grounded in goodness are occurring more frequently. The Vulnerable Leader framework showcases leaders who are three things:

1. Vulnerable Leaders are open to new ideas and experiences, and they creatively and mindfully seek input from others within and beyond the organization.
2. Vulnerable Leaders authentically know their own strengths and challenges, as well as those of the organization, and they possess the courage to be guided by that knowledge.
3. Vulnerable Leaders embody humility in the spirit of a servant leader who puts the welfare of the group first and morally pursues the common good by modeling good character.

Ultimately, Vulnerable Leaders seek to connect to organizational stakeholders by having the courage to both understand and express themselves in Open, Authentic, and Humble ways. They know there is challenging inner work to be done that helps them connect with the people of their school or organization. That connection, in turn, can then positively impact the inner work; it is a multi-directional process. Finding the power of vulnerability can be an important path towards effective leadership and a critical part of the ultimate success of any school or organization.

### **Vulnerable Leader Research Question**

With the Vulnerable Leader framework established, the specific research question connected to this part of the project is: are leaders who score higher in Vulnerable Leadership (characterized by Openness, Authenticity, and Humility) more likely to report using effective character education practices?

### **Chapter 5: Transformational Leader**

As leaders consider the importance of being Open, Authentic, and Humble and practice the inner work required to be a Vulnerable Leader, they may better understand and carry out the components of a Transformational Leader. Transformational Leadership was introduced by James MacGregor Burns' more than a quarter of a century ago. Inspired by this and by Robert House's 1976 theory of Charismatic Leadership, Bernard Bass and his colleagues developed the model of Transformational Leadership and the means to measure it (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Prior to the emergence of this theory, the best many employees could hope for in a traditional boss was a fair transaction for good work. "Leadership theory, research, education, and development concentrated on leadership as a transactional exchange between leader and followers. Then, a new paradigm of Transformational/Transactional Leadership was introduced which better reflected the practices of the best leaders" (Bass, 1996, p. xiii). In their work on Transformational Leadership, Bass and Riggio (2006) indicate leaders who transform their organizations with a blend of personality, skill, and style may create more sustainable change than those who merely transact business with their employees. This evolved into Full Range Leadership, which places the individual components of Transactional Leadership and Transformational Leadership on a continuum.

Bass and Riggio (2006) outline the specific components of Transactional Leadership: (a) contingent reward, (b) management-by-exception, and (c) laissez-faire leadership. The most ineffective, passive type of leadership within this model is laissez-faire followed by management by exception and then contingent reward. Laissez-faire is more of a non-leadership style and is practiced by leaders who avoid their responsibilities

as a leader. Management-by-exception leaders actively monitor their followers to ensure things are being done right and take corrective action when they are not. Leaders who utilize contingent reward are specific in what they want from their employees and reward them with a material reward such as a raise or promotion if the job done meets their satisfaction. Transformational Leadership involves four distinct components: (a) Idealized Influence, (b) Inspirational Motivation, (c) Intellectual Stimulation, and (d) Individualized Consideration. The combination of these four components, known as the four I's, are what make Transformational Leadership the most effective type of leadership on the Full Range Leadership model (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Transformational Leadership describes leaders who focus on the development of employees, not just their ability to complete a task. Because of the emphasis on the importance of relationships with people instead of an emphasis on the bottom line, Transformational Leadership is effective when leading a character education initiative, which is relationship based. "Transformational Leadership's emphasis on intrinsic motivation and the positive development of followers, represents a more appealing view of leadership compared to the seemingly 'cold,' social exchange process of Transactional Leadership" (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. xi). Because of their ability and desire to build authentic relationships with their followers, Transformational Leaders influence, inspire, and motivate followers (Avolio & Bass, 2004). "Transformational Leadership has rapidly become the approach of choice for much of the research and application of leadership theory" (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. xi). This type of leadership is particularly effective for leaders who believe relationships are the key to improvement. According to Judge and Piccolo (2004), Transformational Leadership theory has been widely studied and has

garnered important support in the literature. The model dates back to 1985 and work done by Bass. "Superior leadership performance—Transformational Leadership—occurs when leaders broaden and elevate the interests of their employees, when they generate awareness and acceptance of the purposes and mission of the group, and when they stir their employees to look beyond their own self-interest for the good of the group" (Bass, 1990, p. 20).

Within the four I's of Transformational Leadership, Idealized Influence involves a certain degree of charisma; Inspirational Motivation includes the capacity to clearly articulate a vision and inspire others to follow; Intellectual Stimulation requires the ability to challenge others to think creatively and challenge the status quo; and Individual Consideration enables leaders to demonstrate care for the needs of those who follow them (Bass, 1990; Judge & Bono, 2000). By developing these components, leaders become effective and capable of transforming schools because their focus is on transforming the people within those schools.

Those who desire to study and implement the skills of a Transformational Leader may also benefit from a study of Emotional Intelligence (EQ). Unlike a person's IQ, a person's EQ can develop over time. "By understanding what emotional intelligence really is and how we can manage it in our lives, we can begin to leverage all of that intelligence, education and experience we've been storing up for all these years" (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009, p. 171). According to Bradberry and Greaves (2009) there are four components of Emotional Intelligence: (a) self-awareness, (b) self-management, (c) social awareness, and (d) relationship management. All are important in developing characteristics of both Transformational and Vulnerable Leaders. They also tie well into

the three overarching components of effective leadership: demonstrating wisdom, being open, and having a moral compass. Understanding the role EQ plays in leadership will help develop leaders who are not intimidated to do the meaningful inner work of the Vulnerable Leader which is important to the complex relationship work required of effective Transformational Leaders.

It is important for leaders to be willing to improve their EQ, to be open, and to protect their moral compass. A principal who desires to transform their school must not only have skills, patience, and tenacity; they must also understand the importance of modeling trusting relationships and kindness. "In a study regarding personality traits and Transformational Leadership, agreeableness, the tendencies to be kind, gentle, trusting, trustworthy, and warm, emerged as the strongest most consistent predictor of a Transformational Leader's behavior" (Judge & Bono, 2000, p. 752). Clark and Payne (2006) confirmed that agreeableness is critical to building relationships. Transforming a traditional school into a school of character requires all stakeholders to think bigger, interact differently, and change the way they have always operated. These risks are more palatable when following a leader who has the trait of agreeableness as opposed to one who does not. The focus for Transformational Leaders is to involve others, seek opinions, and see beyond simple exchanges or agreements. They empower staff through collaboration, goal setting, and shared leadership (Bass, 1996; Wiles & Bondi, 2004).

Along with being agreeable and having an understanding of relationships, productive Transformational Leaders are self-aware, which is a component of wisdom. "People high in self-awareness are remarkably clear in their understanding of what they do well, what motivates and satisfies them, and which people and situations push their

buttons" (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009, p. 409). For any leader to effectively mentor, inspire, coach, and develop a culture of professionalism, empowerment, and change, they should be willing to explore the ongoing practice of self-awareness. "They must know the impact they are having on people and the system and how that impact has changed over time. Knowing one's strengths, personal vision and values, and where your personal 'lines in the sands' are drawn, will build a base of self-awareness" (Senge et al., 2000, p. 418). Self-awareness may enable leaders to understand a higher calling or moral purpose and how working to benefit the lives of others is part of that. The concept of moral purpose ties back to Vulnerable Leadership and having a moral compass. This concept is fundamental to Transformational Leadership as well.

A critical facet of effective leadership includes understanding how successful mentoring strengthens individuals and the overall power of the team. When leaders can engage the untapped potential within each employee, change happens. Having the EQ skill of social awareness is critical to mentoring others. "Social awareness is the ability to accurately pick up on emotions in other people and understand what is really going on with them" (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009, p. 532). Before someone can be mentored well, they must believe the leader understands them, values them, and believes in their ability to grow. "Transformational Leaders get people to want to change, improve, and be led. It involves assessing associates' motives, satisfying their needs, and valuing them" (Balyer, 2012, p. 581). This form of leadership works because it encourages shared leadership and collective accomplishment. "Instead of empowering selected individuals, the school becomes empowered as a collective unit. The school becomes less bureaucratic and it functions as its own transforming agent" (Balyer, 2012, p. 582). When people feel valued

and empowered they tend to want to give their best. “Transformational Leadership is associated with motivating associates to do more than they originally thought possible” (Avolio & Bass, 2004, p. 28). Leaders who can influence, inspire, stimulate, and support followers have the necessary components to create sustainable change. Bass and Riggio (2006) write, "Leadership can occur at all levels and by any individual. In fact, we see that it is important for leaders to develop leadership in those below them. This notion is at the heart of the paradigm of Transformational Leadership" (p. 2). We will now examine the four I's of Transformational Leadership.

### **Idealized Influence**

The first dimension of Transformational Leadership, and the first "I," is Idealized Influence, which has also been referred to as Charismatic Leadership. The Transformational Leader with a high degree of Idealized Influence can influence followers to support their ideals. These leaders are recognized as ethical role models who demonstrate a strong work ethic and are admired by their followers. Leaders who act in a manner consistent with Idealized Influence are often charismatic role models who inspire their followers to achieve challenging goals.

While charisma is often a common trait of effective leaders, it is important to note charisma has both negative and positive implications. In a study by Bono and Judge (2004), “extraversion was the strongest and most consistent correlate of Transformational Leadership” (p. 901), yet extraverted personalities and charisma alone are not enough to sustain leadership. While many successful leaders have a charismatic personality, “modern leaders must not rely on their personal skills or charisma to produce change” (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 19), because effective change must be rooted deeper than just

the personality of the leader. According to research conducted by Sosik, Chun, and Zhu (2014), “leaders who use their charisma to form a personalized relationship with dependent followers advance their own self-interests and often produce destructive organizational outcomes, whereas leaders who use their charisma to empower followers often achieve constructive organizational outcomes” (p. 65). Charismatic leaders who lack a strong moral compass can use their charm to persuade followers to do the wrong thing and they can manipulate followers for personal gain (Fullan, 2001; Zacher et al., 2014). Charismatic leaders who are not ethical may have enough power and influence over their followers to lead them into unethical situations.

Charismatic leaders who are ethical and have the best interests of the organization in mind must ensure that followers are becoming empowered by identifying with the collective work of the organization instead of becoming dependent on the strength of the leader (Kark, Chen, & Shamir, 2003).

Charismatic leaders who lack a strong moral compass can use their charm to persuade followers to do the wrong thing and they can manipulate followers for personal gain (Fullan, 2001; Zacher et al., 2014). Idealized Influence is considered to be the ethical component of Transformational Leadership because these leaders consistently demonstrate high standards of ethical and moral conduct and do not lead others into unethical situations. How leaders conduct themselves and how others perceive leader behavior are key in understanding Idealized Influence. “There are two aspects to Idealized Influence: the leader's behavior and the elements that are attributed to the leader by followers and other associates” (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 6). Their behaviors should be consistent with their philosophies and they are respected as leaders who walk their talk.



Ethical behavior can be seen in leaders who put the needs of others before their own, behave in ways that are useful for organizations, avoid acting solely on self-interest, and rarely, if ever, use their power for personal gain (Balyer, 2012; Barling, 2014). These leaders operate with integrity and humility and because of this they are respected and admired by those they lead.

Leaders who are admired and respected often serve as role models, which is another characteristic of Idealized Influence. Leaders who have not allowed the negative aspects of charisma to nullify their leadership capabilities may be “characterized by modeling behavior through exemplary personal achievements, character, and behavior” (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 14). If Transformational Leaders are role models, the evidence of character, which was cited by Gini and Green (2014) as a critical characteristic of leadership, must be evident. “Assuming the leadership of an organization is a daunting and dangerous task, and without a solid understanding of who you are (your character), and without a clear sense of what you are willing and unwilling to do (your integrity and conscience) is a formula for public failure and personal tragedy” (Gini & Green, 2014, p. 438). Berkowitz (2011a) stated effective leaders who can be true role models must walk their talk and “must be the kind of person (have the character) that she wants her staff and students (and all other stakeholders) to be” (p. 109).

In addition to modeling good character, it is important to model a strong work ethic. “Effective leaders are strong champions of the mission of the organization and pursue their responsibility to the organization with energy and passion. They are undeviatingly committed to hard work” (Goertz, 2000, p. 160). “Leaders develop sustainability by the way in which they approach, commit to, and protect deep learning in

their schools; by the way they sustain others in their effort to promote and support that learning; by the way they sustain themselves in their work, so that they can persist with their vision and avoid burning out” (Hargreaves & Fink, 2003, p. 695).

"Transformational Leaders are held in high personal regard by their followers and engender loyalty” (Bono & Judge, 2004, p. 901). This type of admiration comes from much more than a leader's outgoing personality; it may be developed when leaders demonstrate persistence, confidence, and competence. Persistence is critical because change is difficult and some followers may be reluctant. Confidence in a leader is important and often engenders confidence and courage in followers. Competence is vital to creating and sustaining effective change because people are unlikely to listen to or depend upon someone whose abilities they do not respect. “Employees need to believe that the leader has the skills and abilities to carry out what he or she says they will do” (Handford & Leithwood, 2013, p. 195). There are two types of competence that leaders require to be effective: functional competence and interpersonal competence. “Functional competence is defined as setting an example, working hard, pressing for results, setting standards, buffering teachers. Interpersonal competence is engaging in problem solving, fostering conflict resolution (rather than avoidance), handling difficult situations, being flexible” (Tschannen-Moran, 2004, p. 34).

Leaders who practice Idealized Influence can also be identified by their willingness to take appropriate risks when necessary. Effective leadership involves challenging the status quo, taking risks, and making changes (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991; Lencioni, 2002; Marzano et al., 2005; Reeves, 2002). “Highly effective leaders are not only unafraid of change, they yearn for it. They know that disruptive innovations are

necessary to changing the status quo” (Krames, 2015, p. 271). Taking risks and permitting risk are important for leaders who desire change.

Idealized Influence describes outgoing leaders who serve as ethical role models who take risks and work hard to improve their organizations. Berkowitz (2012) wrote, “having the moral courage of one’s convictions, along with the ability to socially and emotionally implement such courageous courses of actions, are critical to effectively leading a school to excellence” (p. 138). This may very well describe someone skilled in Idealized Influence. They also “behave in ways that allow them to serve as role models for their followers. The leaders are admired, respected, and trusted. Followers identify with the leaders and want to emulate them” (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 6). These leaders often demonstrate the wisdom, openness, and moral compass necessary to effectively lead a school where character education is, or certainly could be, the priority.

### **Inspirational Motivation**

The second component and second “I” of Transformational Leadership is Inspirational Motivation. Inspiring followers and motivating them to envision their organization as better is the cornerstone of Inspirational Motivation. Often, a clearly articulated vision stimulates enthusiasm among followers and motivates them to want more. This dimension is similar to Idealized Influence and together they can “form a combined single factor of charismatic-inspirational leadership. The charismatic-inspirational factor is similar to the behaviors described in charismatic leadership theory” (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 6). Inspirational Motivation will be discussed separately from Idealized Influence because the element of charisma alone can lead to both negative and positive results. Charismatic, extraverted leaders may have an advantage in the area of

Inspirational Motivation, but charismatic leaders may have a tendency to talk more than they listen. It is often difficult for confident, gregarious leaders to listen to alternative ideas while keeping a group focused. According to Reeves (2002), “There is an inherent tension between the need of the leader to be open-minded to a variety of points of view and the need for focus” (p. 108). Leaders are often considered to be extraverts and they often “experience and express positive emotions thus it is likely that extraverts will tend to exhibit inspirational leadership (e.g. having an optimistic view of the future). Because they are positive, ambitious, and influential, they are likely to generate confidence and enthusiasm among followers” (Bono & Judge, 2004, p. 902). While charisma may appear to be an important trait for leaders, there appears to be a delicate balance regarding the appropriate and effective use of charisma.

Leaders skilled in Inspirational Motivation can articulate “a strong vision for the future based on values and ideals. Leader behaviors falling into this dimension include stimulating enthusiasm, building confidence, and inspiring followers” (Bono & Judge, 2004, p. 901). Inspirational motivators may or may not be charismatic, but they must have a strong vision for the future. Drive, the ability to motivate, integrity, self-confidence, intelligence, and knowledge of the school help the leader formulate, pursue, and implement vision (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991). If leaders are charismatic, they may be aware of their ability to influence others. Acting with integrity and doing what is best for the school may help these confident leaders share in the development of a vision. Effective, inspirational motivators understand the job of the leader is to inspire others to see their vision, but also to open the door for others to include their vision and seek to work together to develop the clearest vision for all. There is a difference between a

confident, driven leader who may force a vision on others and a Transformational Leader who is skilled in Inspirational Motivation. There is often an expectation of school leaders to have a strong vision for their school, but for that vision to develop into real improvement, all who carry it out must embrace it. Often, leaders who fall short have no vision. “For most leaders, developing and articulating a mission, vision, educational philosophy or long-term strategic plan is an unrealized but critical leadership task” (Berkowitz, 2011a, p. 102). Having a vision and being able to articulate that vision in a way that excites followers is critical to effectiveness because ultimately “leadership is a byproduct of the leader’s vision” (Wiles & Bondi, 2004, p. 44). Clarity of vision allows followers to understand what is important to the leader, which is critical to building trust, improving communication, and creating effective, sustainable change. “When a leader understands that his primary role is to serve his school and its stakeholders, then he is open to a path of success” (Berkowitz, 2011a, p. 109).

Inspirational leaders motivate followers to do great work by generating enthusiasm and support around shared goals, vision, and mission (Gilley et al., 2008; Stewart, 2006; Wiles & Bondi, 2004). Before staff can truly believe in a vision for the school, they must believe in themselves and their ability to help the school to become better. “Inspirational Motivation involves leadership behaviors that help employees perform beyond expectations—both beyond the expectations that employees hold for themselves and those that others hold for them” (Barling, 2014, p. 7). Effective leaders help their followers to believe in themselves because they can see the best in each of them and articulate the what ifs instead of just lamenting about what isn’t. The inspirational leader nurtures resilience and self-efficacy (Barling, 2014; LeMarc, 2015).

This resilience enables those who experience the inevitable challenges of change to remain focused on the vision and together work through the tough times (Fullan, 2001).

Enthusiastic, optimistic leaders pull followers in by clearly communicating high expectations and demonstrating personal commitment to the goals. “Many great principals understand...that they cannot ask their staff to do things they themselves are not willing to do” (Berkowitz, 2011a, p. 111). They envision something better, clearly articulate that vision, and roll up their sleeves and work together with their staff to see it come to fruition. Fullan (2001) claims “Energetic, enthusiastic, and hopeful leaders cause greater moral purpose in themselves, bury themselves in change, naturally build relationships and knowledge, and seek coherence to consolidate moral purpose” (p. 5).

Inspirational motivators understand the importance of focused, collaborative work among the staff on the school’s goals and vision (Gilley et al., 2008; Marzano et al., 2005). They not only inspire individuals, but they motivate the staff and help them see the power of their community and relationships. “By drawing people into talking about the way they want to live, you help them realize how much they are capable of together” (Senge et al., 2000, p. 393), and this is the essence of relationships and community.

“Findings from research suggest Transformational Leaders have significant, direct, and indirect influences on teachers’ commitment to change and their performance” (Balyer, 2012, p. 585). Leaders skilled in Inspirational Motivation have a clear vision for their school and inspire others to help achieve that vision. They motivate followers by building their self-confidence and by investing in people instead of projects, demonstrating they are both wise and other-oriented. They consistently work to stimulate enthusiasm and inspire followers to work collaboratively around a shared vision. “It

might be said that human beings are at their best when they operate from a set of strong ideals and beliefs” (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 51), and clearly articulated ideals and beliefs are foundational to successful leaders with skill in Inspirational Motivation.

### **Intellectual Stimulation**

The third element of Transformational Leadership, Intellectual Stimulation, the third "I" “involves stimulating follower creativity by questioning assumptions and challenging the status quo” (Judge & Bono, 2000, p. 751). Older, top-down models of leadership give power and authority to the one in charge and input from followers is ignored and even unwelcome. Challenging authority may be perceived as disrespectful or threatening by authoritarian leaders, but Transformational Leaders who are adept in Intellectual Stimulation welcome challenges and ideas from followers. These leaders are comfortable with dissent and encourage ideas and different opinions. Intellectually stimulating leaders encourage followers to think for themselves, develop new strategies, challenge long-held assumptions, and question norms (Barling, 2014; Bono & Judge, 2004). These other-oriented leaders seek opinions and new ideas and believe that good advice often comes from a diverse group. “Successful leaders not only encourage like-minded innovators; they deliberately build in differences” (Fullan, 2001, p. 53). They are “satisfied only with original solutions that encourage new and different ways to get things done and frequently seek out people who come up with new ways to get things done” (Goertz, 2000, p. 161). Encouraging others to think creatively, express opinions, and challenge the way things have always been done creates an environment where taking risks is encouraged because employees know they are valued, supported, and they will not be publicly corrected or criticized (Gilley et al., 2008; Stewart, 2006).

This dimension of Transformational Leadership requires wisdom and is key in building trust among the staff and critical to leading a team versus a group of individuals. “Catalyzing people’s aspirations doesn’t happen by accident; it requires time, care, and strategy. To support this creative process, people need to know that they have real freedom to say what they want about purpose, meaning, and vision with no limits, encumbrances or reprisals” (Senge et al., 2000, p. 72). A leader skilled in Intellectual Stimulation understands their role in providing the staff with intellectually stimulating topics about their practice. They find things that are current, relevant, and interesting for their staff. “The school leader ensures that faculty and staff are aware of the most current theories and practices regarding effective schooling and makes discussions of those theories and practices a regular aspect of the school’s culture” (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 52). Providing the time to have rich conversations about theories, strategies, and best practices can happen in a meaningful way when there are honest relationships among the staff and the leader makes meaningful conversation a priority.

Discussing relevant educational theory and practice will happen when leaders are open, flexible and confident. A professional learning environment conducive to respectful, honest staff dialogue is the cornerstone of Intellectual Stimulation. According to Marzano (2005), flexibility is critical to Intellectual Stimulation and is evident when a leader is comfortable with dissent. “Flexibility in problem solving generates a range of ideas suggesting variety rather than quantity” (Goertz, 2000, p. 161). Openness demonstrates actions or attitudes that “make an individual vulnerable to the actions and attitudes of the others through the sharing of information, influence and control”



(Handford & Leithwood, 2013, p. 195). Leaders who demonstrate openness to opinions and dissent develop people who generate more ideas and solutions.

As leaders initiate change it will become uncomfortable for many, but it is key that “leaders demonstrate restraint when their people engage in conflict, and allow resolution to occur naturally, as messy as it can sometimes be” (Lencioni, 2002, p. 206). By allowing the staff to wrestle with problems and offer solutions, their thinking is stimulated and their investment in the school is deepened. “The most powerful coherence is a result of having worked through the ambiguities and complexities of hard-to-solve problems” (Fullan, 2001, p. 167). It is the collective struggles and accomplishments that bring people together in meaningful and memorable ways.

School leaders who have the ability to generate Intellectual Simulation are confident in expressing their opinions, but careful to listen to the views of others as well. They never allow ego to interfere with progress. Successful Transformational Leaders “do not operate independently but engage in person-to-person relationships with other individuals for the purpose of achieving mutual goals and objectives. The leader initiates action and encourages necessary change using their personality to influentially make a difference” (Greasley & Bocarnea, 2014, p. 12). These leaders encourage followers to think, challenge, and create. They realize that the group has the biggest impact on the organization if they are given the permission to investigate, initiate, and implement change.

**Individual Consideration**

The fourth and final component of Transformational Leadership is Individual Consideration, the fourth "I." Transformational Leaders attend to and support the needs of their followers, pay close attention to the differences among their employees, and act as mentors (Bass, 1996; Judge & Bono, 2000). Other skills evident in leaders with Individual Consideration are creating a supportive climate for each employee, providing new learning opportunities, developing others, and building relationships (Bass, 1996).

The essence of Individual Consideration may be best explained by the concept of servant leadership because those skilled in this approach see those whom they lead as people they serve. Leaders who put themselves second to those they lead do so because they understand effective leadership is a form of stewardship. "It is about what you can give, not what you can get. Stewardship, like leadership, is always about others" (Gini & Green, 2014, p. 439). Greenleaf (1977), in his work on servant leadership, said the "servant-leader is servant first" (p. 15). His work indicated that when leaders endeavor to bring out the best in others, those served by that leader would collectively bring out the best in the school or organization. Leaders who value their employees and demonstrate this through acts of service understand that the more power they give away, the more power they get back (Champlin & Desmond, n.d.). The act of serving others builds authentic relationships and trust. Berkowitz (2011a) wrote:

Fundamentally, leaders who can build strong relationships are adept at putting the 'self' on hold. This is a highly complex skill that takes years to perfect. Allowing oneself to be the conduit that seeks and elicits more and more trust from the other,

without inserting your own agenda, gives the other persons the space to fill, while giving him or her the needed social permission to do so. (p. 117)

Leaders who are adept at Individual Consideration and practice servant leadership are often perceived to be wise, which as stated earlier "may be an attribute of outstanding leaders who contribute to the personal development and well-being of their followers and who facilitate positive relationships at work" (Zacher et al., 2014, p. 171). At its root, Individual Consideration is about developing others. Seeing something in an employee that they have not yet recognized in themselves may require wisdom. "Due to their high levels of understanding, reflection, and unconditional sympathy for others, wise leaders should also be capable of providing their followers with informational and emotional support when they cope with changes and challenges in their lives" (Zacher et al., 2014, p. 175).

Leaders often initiate changes and challenge others to be their best, but Transformational Leaders see these challenges as opportunities for growth. Within the dimension of Individual Consideration "followers and colleagues are developed to successively higher levels of potential" (Bass, 1996, p. 6). The point of delegating responsibilities to followers is to develop more leaders throughout the school and together achieve more accomplishments with more perspective. The most productive leaders do not seek to lead alone, but seek to empower others to build their skills, and to prepare future leaders because "the main mark of effective leaders is how many effective leaders they leave behind" (Fullan, 2001, p. 185). Developing future leaders would be unlikely without a deliberate and consistent effort to invest in others and help them realize their potential. "Good principals look for leadership potential in others and

proactively cultivate it” (Berkowitz, 2011a, p. 105). Transformational Leaders skilled in Individual Consideration recognize the unique growth and developmental needs of followers and coach and consult with them to push them to higher levels (Bono & Judge, 2004).

There are benefits to the individuals being mentored as well as to the school where individual development occurs. Leaders who transform their schools by focusing on the individual growth of its members realize "schools are places in which principals, teachers, students, and parents should all lead. They must come to see leadership as a culture of integrated qualities rather than as merely an aggregate of common characteristics" (Hargreaves & Fink, 2003, p. 698). In addition, when leaders coach their employees, they "improve their renewal capacity and resilience, which positively influences organizational success" (Gilley et al., 2008, p. 157).

If the leaders' concern for followers is genuine, and trusting relationships have been established, the hard work of school improvement has a better chance of being successful. Gordon and Patterson (2008) indicated leaders who empower staff create a culture where change and reform are possible. "A case can be made that effective professional relationships are central to the effective execution of many of the other responsibilities" (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 58). The emotional infrastructure of a community is the power of relationships and without them there can be no true sense of community. "Most people assume that there is a causal relationship between good relationships and knowledge sharing: you build relationships first and then information will flow" (Fullan, 2001, p. 124). "It is the interactions and relationships among people, not the people themselves that make the difference in organizational success" (Fullan,

2001, p. 80), and leaders who are adept at the many components of Individual Consideration often effectively transform their schools.

Leaders with strong skills in Individual Consideration are devoted to people. They work to better their organizations by bringing out the best in the people they lead. Through an intentional focus on relationships and a supportive climate, leaders who focus on Individual Consideration develop others by providing new learning opportunities and experiences and mentoring followers through the growth process.

Transformational Leaders who are adept in the four "I's" of Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individual Consideration know how to harness the strength in others. Their strong sense of moral purpose, clearly articulated vision, and willingness to take necessary risks to improve the organization create devoted followers who want to emulate them (Barling, 2014; Stewart, 2006). Transformational Leaders are first and foremost ethical role models who work hard and are confident enough to take risks that will lead to growth and improvement. They are capable of clearly articulating a vision for improvement and rallying support to see that vision transformed into reality. Their support of and belief in people create a synergy that propels the organization and sustains the culture through the hard work involved with change. Table 4 offers a summary of the main characteristics of each component of Transformational Leadership.

Table 4  
*Transformational Leadership Components*

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<u>Idealized Influence</u>	<u>Inspirational Motivation</u>	<u>Intellectual Stimulation</u>	<u>Individual Consideration</u>
- Charismatic	- Frequently charismatic	- Encourages creativity	- Creates supportive climate
- Ethical	- Strong vision	- Welcomes challenge	- Provides new learning
- Role model	- Values/ideas articulated	- Seeks diverse opinions	- Accepts differences
- Strong work ethic	- Stimulates enthusiasm	- Encourages risk	- Develops others
- Admired	- Builds confidence	- Flexible	- Serves as mentor/coach
- Risk taker	- Communicates clearly	- Open	- Builds relationships

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### **Transformational Leadership and Character Education**

Bass and Riggio (2006) wrote “Although a great deal of recent research has investigated both predictors of Transformational Leadership and the circumstances under which Transformational Leadership may be more or less effective, additional research is still called for” (p. 233). There is little published research about transformational leaders who have developed successful schools of character, but the attributes of Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration are worthy of further study regarding how they may relate to effective character education leaders. According to Character.org (2015), “educators have successfully used character education to transform their schools, improve school culture, increase achievement for all learners, develop global citizens, restore civility, prevent anti-social and unhealthy behaviors, and improve job satisfaction and retention among teachers” (p. i).

Before concluding, an analysis of possible connections between Transformational Leaders and effective character education leaders is warranted. The skill of Idealized

Influence stresses the importance of leaders who are role models with a strong work ethic and the confidence to take risks, which may be important components for transforming schools and improving school culture. Inspirational Motivation is evident in leaders who can articulate a strong vision and inspire others to pursue that vision. This may prove helpful when working to improve character education in our schools. Intellectual Stimulation may prove essential to developing schools of character because all stakeholders must know that their opinions are valued and that challenging others is an avenue to growth. Individual Consideration is grounded in relationship building between the leader and those led, and relationships are the foundation of all character education work. “A school committed to character strives to become a microcosm of a civil, caring, and just society. It does this by creating a community that helps all its members form respectful relationships that lead to caring attachments to and responsibility for one another” (Character.org, 2014, p. 8).

### **Transformational Leadership Conclusion**

Transformational Leaders are “inspirational, intellectually stimulating, challenging, visionary, development oriented, and determined to maximize performance” (Avolio & Bass, 2004, p. 4). Woven throughout the four components of Transformational Leadership are the understanding of relationships and the power of collective work. There is also a thread of collective, collegial work that ties these four components together. Leaders who are strong in Idealized Influence often earn the title of role model. “Among the things the leader does to earn this credit is considering the needs of others over his or her own personal needs” (Bass, 1996, p. 5). Those who are skilled at Inspirational Motivation create environments where “team spirit is aroused and

enthusiasm and optimism are displayed” (Bass, 1996, p. 5). Intellectual Stimulation is evident when creativity is encouraged and there is no public criticism of an individual’s mistakes, and Individual Consideration is obvious when members of the school or organization are developed to higher levels of potential (Bass, 1996). Transformational Leaders appear to be grounded in kindness and character. They are often driven by a strong moral compass, demonstrate wisdom, and are other-oriented. Their concern for others takes precedence over the concern for the outcome. Reeves (2002) wrote, “applying the human equation to leadership challenges conveys respect for the fundamental principle that individual needs have value and personal fears deserve consideration” (p. 27). There is little doubt that Transformational Leadership factors into this human equation. There is also little doubt that skilled Transformational Leaders have a great deal of emotional intelligence. “EQ is so critical to success that it accounts for 58% of performance in all types of jobs. It is the single biggest predictor of performance in the workplace and the strongest driver of leadership and personal excellence” (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009, p. 360).

The shift from autocratic management to Transformational Leadership may have evolved through failure. “We have paid the price for our preoccupation with power and we must now see power and leadership not as things but as relationships” (Stewart, 2006, p. 9). A Transformational Leader is wise, self-aware, and understands the power of building authentic relationships with others. These leaders can see and confidently articulate a future that excites and invites others to follow. They are open, actively seeking opinions, and are willing to listen. They are truly vested in those they lead. Simply put, they bring out the best in others by giving the best of themselves and the



synergy created leads to desired outcomes. “Changing cultures is the principal’s hardest job” (Hess, 2013, p. 419). Leaders who are deeply concerned about those they lead and are open to sharing leadership of the school help create a culture where the authentically created and shared vision cements stakeholders together.

Development of the four components of Transformational Leadership may become important for educational leaders who realize the impact principals have on teachers and students in their journey to an improved school climate and increased student learning (Tajasom & Ariffin, 2011). “It is clear that motivation, communication, and team-building skills are interrelated and complementary, which emphasizes the need for leadership development in these areas” (Gilley et al., 2009, p. 44).

This chapter explored the components of Transformational Leaders and how each may apply to effective leadership in the area of character development in schools. Leaders who model and expect ethical, respectful behavior have laid the groundwork to engender character development in their schools. An increased emphasis on Transformational Leadership for emerging principals may develop a cadre of leaders who can transform educational institutions into places where trust, mutual respect, relationships, and character make up the foundation on which the school rests.

### **Transformational Leadership Research Question**

For this area of study, the specific research question is: are leaders who score higher in Transformational Leadership (characterized by Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, Individual Consideration) more likely to report using effective character education practices?

### **Chapter 6: Professional Growth Leader**

In addition to the Vulnerable Leader framework and the Transformational Leader framework, a third important leadership framework is the Professional Growth Leader. Professional Growth Leader fits within the same context of the overall leadership paradigm shift discussed earlier, and combined with the Vulnerable Leader and Transformational leader, will help contribute to the effective leadership framework presented in this dissertation. Professional Growth Leader framework is committed to cultivating professional learning cultures and supporting the learning capacity of the members of school communities.

An important part of this dissertation is investigating how leaders create a positive school culture where transformation occurs and the four facets of character education - intellectual, moral, civic and performance - are seamlessly integrated into the day-to-day life of the school and leaders intentionally focus on professional learning. Approaching the professional growth of each team member as a way to define and develop the culture of the school may look different from school to school or building to building, but by including several components found by research to be effective, school leaders can guide themselves and others to new levels of success.

#### **Professional Development**

Professional development refers to a variety of experiences related to an individual's work. It is a process of learning, with a goal of building a professional base of knowledge and skills. It can be a formal process such as a series of conferences, workshops, or classes, as well as an informal process such as independent reading, an observation of a peer, or discussions with colleagues. People in a wide variety of

professions participate in professional development in order to learn and apply new knowledge that will positively impact or improve job performance (Campbell, McNamara, & Gilroy, 2004). Much of the growing body of school reform literature highlights that teachers want, and ultimately need, support to develop their craft so their students can succeed and flourish. In most educational settings, that support falls under the umbrella of professional development. According to a study sponsored by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which engaged more than 1,300 stakeholders, \$18 billion dollars is spent annually on professional development. A typical teacher spends anywhere from 68 to 89 hours a year on professional development activities, and yet this study shows multiple measures in which the time and financial resources are simply not working for most teachers (Boston Consulting Group [BCG], 2014). According to a 2015 study put out by The New Teacher Project (TNTP), a teacher training and research organization, despite the current time and money efforts, most teachers do not appear to improve substantially from year to year. “Even when teachers do improve, we were unable to link their growth to any particular development strategy” (TNTP, 2015, p. 2). Some worry that this means too many resources are currently put towards professional development and suggest schools should scale back. “Instead, we believe districts should take a radical step toward upending their approach to helping teachers improve—from redefining what ‘helping teachers’ really means, to taking stock of current development efforts and rethinking broader systems for ensuring great teaching for all students” (TNTP, 2015, p. 3).

The National Staff Development Council (NSDC) in its Standards for Staff Development, *Learning Forward*, advocates that a minimum of 10% of the schools

budget be put towards professional development. Additionally, it is suggested that at least 25% of an educator's work time be devoted to learning and collaborating with colleagues (NSDC, 2001). A particular target for criticism is the prevalence of single-shot, one-day workshops that often make teacher professional development “intellectually superficial, disconnected from deep issues of curriculum and learning, fragmented, and noncumulative” (Ball & Cohen, 1999, p. 3). Teachers report often on being dissatisfied with the traditional “sit and get” professional development. They suggest that the “ideal professional learning experience should focus less on presentations and lectures and more on opportunities to apply learning through demonstrations, modeling and practice” (BCG, 2014, p. 4). The results of professional development that use best practices should show that educators learn new knowledge and skills and they use what they learn to improve teaching. Furthermore, high quality professional development should result in better teaching, improved school leadership, and higher student performance (Guskey, 2000).

A considerable body of research containing both small and large-scale studies has emerged on professional development, teacher learning, and teacher change. However, relatively little systematic research has been done on the effects of professional development on improvements in teaching or on student outcomes (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman & Yoon, 2001). What do we really know about the relationship between professional development and improved outcomes for the school? What is the evidence, how trustworthy is it, and what does it tell us about effective professional development activities? These kinds of questions guided one of the largest and most inclusive syntheses of research on effective professional development conducted to date. “Scholars from the American Institutes for Research analyzed findings from over 1,300

studies that potentially address the effect of professional development on student learning outcomes” (Guskey & Yoon, 2009, p. 495). Showing that professional development translates into gains in student achievement poses tremendous challenges, despite an intuitive and logical connection (Borko, 2004).

A main finding in the American Institutes for Research project was that professional development affects student achievement through three steps. First, professional development enhances teacher knowledge and skills. Second, better knowledge and skills improve classroom teaching. Finally, improved teaching raises student achievement (Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007). A second body of research, which examined teacher professional development and learning through a meta-analysis of 97 studies, provides important implications. This meta-analysis looked at the relationship between teacher professional development and student outcomes. Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, and Fung (2008) point out four important understandings: (a) student learning is influenced by what and how teachers teach, (b) teaching is a complex activity, (c) it is imperative to set up conditions that are responsive to the ways teachers learn, and (d) professional learning is strongly shaped by what takes place in the classroom.

The Standards for Staff Development point to specific practices that those organizing and providing professional development can implement in order to produce stronger learning. Organized into three sets of standards—context, process, and content—they reflect components of professional development that can be used to guide schools in providing meaningful learning opportunities. The NSDC, in partnership with seventeen other professional organizations, developed these standards and they have been adopted, adapted, or endorsed by forty different states nationwide (NSDC, 2001). Table 5 shows

standards for professional learning.

Table 5  
*Standards for Professional Learning (NSDC, 2001)*

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Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students:

<u>Learning Designs</u>	<u>Skillful Leadership</u>	<u>Resources</u>	<u>Use Data</u>
- integrates teacher voice	- develop capacity	- help prioritizing	- to plan
- research based	- advocate	- monitoring and follow up	- to assess
	- create support systems for learning	- coordinating materials and time	- to evaluate professional learning
<u>Learning Communities</u>	<u>Implementation</u>	<u>Outcomes</u>	
- continuous improvement	- applies research on change	- aligned with educator performance	
- collective responsibility	- support for long-term change	- aligned curriculum standards	
- goal alignment			

The research on effective professional development has started to create a consensus about key principles in the design of learning experiences that can positively impact teachers' knowledge as well as practices (Hawley & Valli, 2011). As research deepens our understanding of how teachers learn, scholars are continuing to put emphasis on the idea of job embedded and collaborative learning as effective practices. This kind of joint work can take several forms that result in changes in teaching practices and ultimately student outcomes (Vescio, 2008). Peer observations of practice, analyzing student work, and developing study groups are all examples of the joint work that is reflected in the literature. Saxe, Gearheart, and Nasir (2001) compared three types of support for teacher learning which included traditional professional development workshops, a professional community-based activity, and an integrated approach including a teacher leadership component. According to the researchers, this integrated approach to teacher learning directly engaged the teachers in understanding the new

curriculum as well as in facilitating pedagogical discussions about how to teach that curriculum. The findings of the study illustrate the “importance of sustained, content-focused professional development for changing practice that improve student learning” (Saxe et al., 2001, p. 70). The next section will look at professional development specifically through the lens of character education.

### **Character Education Professional Development**

Leaders and teachers have to study and understand character education deeply in order to seamlessly integrate it into the school culture. With the exception of a few organizations such as Character.org, CharacterPlus, and the Center for the Collaborative Classroom (formerly Developmental Studies Center), character education professional development often looks at training programs specific to implementing boxed programs, as opposed to integrating character education into the school culture.

Thought leaders and experts in the field of character education explain that if the school community’s shared purpose is related to character education then the integration of character education into the culture must be done in an authentic way and must include character education professional development in the plans (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). In their research guide to what works in character education, these experts make note that “all the effective programs studied had professional development for teachers” (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005, p. 7). Making an explicit effort to integrate character education into the fabric of the curriculum and into extracurricular activities is critical. In order to make a real commitment to formal character education, professional development for teachers in character education, both pre-service and in-service, have to exist (Benninga, Berkowitz, Kuehn, & Smith, 2006).

Providing professional development to school leaders about specific and general character education strategies, practices, and philosophies is important if character education is to be successful in more schools. Unfortunately, the current, formal, educational process for administrators devotes little time to help potential leaders understand character education and how it can help improve, or even transform, schools. Programs that certify educators to lead schools most often focus on improved academics, teacher supervision and evaluation, legal matters, and school budgets. However, one specific character education leadership development program does devote focused time to this area and has been doing so since 1998.

In St. Louis, Missouri approximately 700 school leaders have completed LACE. LACE is a yearlong program in which participants learn about character education as well as how to infuse character education in their schools. This academy is offered by the Center for Character and Citizenship at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. Each month school leaders delve into concepts that deepen their understanding of themselves, character education, and leadership in the 21st century. Dr. Marvin W. Berkowitz, designer and leader of LACE, believes, “effective school-based character education starts with the principal” (Berkowitz, 2011a, p. 100). LACE works to ground participants deeply in the importance of relationships and how relationships enable leaders to guide, influence, motivate, and intellectually stimulate staff and embed character into schools. LACE develops leaders through rich lessons that augment and hone those skills. LACE aims to give each participant a strong vision of the excellence in learning and character growth that schools can demonstrate.

The methods and practices of teaching are what educators refer to as pedagogy, and



understanding and practicing excellent pedagogy is critical to being a good teacher. Professional development is essential for the practice of effective pedagogy. LACE is a unique, yearlong professional development experience that examines the importance of integrating character education into a school's pedagogical practices. The workshop model includes four elements that connect to what research highlights as important in professional development: shared vision, collaborative culture, shared leadership, and supportive and trusting conditions (Hord, 2009). Participants are given structured time to learn from experts in the field and then given assignments that guide deep thinking. They are given intentional time to collaborate with the other leaders in the cohort in order to grapple with the concepts. The leaders are then encouraged to take back their new ideas to their schools and involve the teachers and staff in that same kind of collaborative learning. Each year the LACE community is constructed to become part of an ethical learning community. The modeling that goes on within the group becomes practice so that each leader can go back to their school with knowledge on creating inclusive learning communities. "The Ethical Learning Community is an ecological system comprised of all the stakeholder groups that affect the culture of the school and the character development of its members" (Davidson et al., 2008, p. 15). LACE is an exemplary professional development opportunity; however, some leaders thrive throughout the program, while others do not. Some go on to create meaningful professional development experiences in character education that ultimately change their school's culture, while others never transfer that knowledge. Leading schools in character education is complicated and layered. School leaders need to value character education, but they also need to understand deeply what it means, as well as have the competency to

be a character education instructional leader (Berkowitz, 2012).

In addition to LACE, one organization previously mentioned, Character.org, helps schools and individuals learn about and practice character education. Character.org has studied schools for more than twenty-five years trying to learn what works in character education at the school level. They offer an individualized approach to professional development to help schools achieve improved character education outcomes. Workshops and institutes are grounded in the 11 principles they have created, which state that character education: (1) promotes core values, (2) defines “character” to include thinking, feeling, and doing, (3) uses a comprehensive approach, (4) creates a caring community, (5) provides students with opportunities for moral action, (6) offers a meaningful and challenging academic curriculum, (7) fosters students’ self-motivation, (8) engages staff as a learning community, (9) fosters shared leadership, (10) engages families and community members as partners, and (11) assesses the culture and climate of the school.

The 11 Principles aim to help schools build their character education processes and serve as a framework or a guide for schools to develop their own character education program that is best for them given their mission, vision, values, culture, etc. There are institutes, workshops, and assessment resources that help individual schools intentionally plan collaborative, site-based, training modules. The collaborative models of learning emphasize the importance of trying new ideas, reflection, and authentic activity (Woods, 2002).

CharacterPlus is another organization that exists with the sole purpose of partnering with schools to help them integrate character education into how the school functions. The mission of the organization is “to develop positive character traits in young people

by providing high-quality character education processes and resources to schools, homes and communities” (CharacterPlus, 2014, p. 4). They offer continuous professional development in character education that takes the shape of workshops and classes that result in character education certifications. The organization has developed a framework called the CharacterPlus Way, which is a three-year process to help integrate character development into the school-wide setting. In 2013 The CharacterPlus Way was put on the National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices and serves as a quality resource for schools to leverage.

The Center for the Collaborative Classroom is a non-profit organization that prioritizes professional development in character education. Through continuous professional development work, the center partners with a school to make individualized plans. They use programs intended to deepen teacher practice around reading and writing, and integrate them with social and emotional learning (Center for the Collaborative Classroom, 2015). Additionally, The Center for Responsive Schools Inc. puts out a social and emotional learning program called Responsive Classroom. The main component of the Responsive Classroom revolves around professional development through workshops, courses, and online support. Responsive Classroom has been recognized by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) as a well-designed, evidence-based model that is distinguished for its professional development opportunities (Responsive Classroom, 2015). Researching the opportunities for professional development that are directly linked to character education reveals some high quality resources, however it also reveals that schools are underutilizing these resources (Aguilar, 2013).

“If professional development is one of the main strategies school-systems have to improve the professional’s performance, it is critical that researchers and practitioners alike pursue greater rigor in the study of professional development” (Guskey & Yoon, 2009, p. 499). It is not enough to merely have a professional development schedule, but rather it needs to be embedded and tied to the school’s vision if it is going to be meaningful. Having an environment rich in academic and social and emotional learning “begins with teachers who are deeply knowledgeable about their discipline area, about how children learn, and about which pedagogical strategies best support student learning” (Phillips, 2003, p. 243). Schlechty (2009) in his work on ways to transform schools into learning organizations provides a thoughtful assessment of a framework for professional learning. The main purpose is to move the school culture to one that operates as a true learning organization. He points out that if schools are to be transformed, those leading the transformation must have a clear image and good understanding of what is actually going on in the school. As schools are complex social places, it is not always easy to assess what occurs at various levels. By showing the importance of mental models, discussion around how to move from bureaucratic images of schools to schools operating as learning organizations can more easily occur (Schlechty, 2009).

There are critical components to understand when planning the best approach to professional development. Through the work of many scholars and thought leaders, the review suggests that there is a need to move from professional development planning and implementation that is top down with broad-range topics to professional learning that is more teacher directed and job embedded in order to improve. This review has served as a catalyst for the development of a new framework that moves professional development

towards that improvement which can result in creating a culture of professional learning. This new framework called Professional Growth Leadership aims to merge academic learning with character education learning and ultimately improve the overall academic, social, and emotional outcomes in schools.

### **Professional Growth Leadership**

In order to initiate and maintain intentional learning in a systemic way, a deep commitment to continuous professional learning must occur (Shaw, 2012). The model of Professional Growth Leadership focuses on creating a professional learning culture where the leader is a partner in the learning that takes place in the school. It is a norm that learning is happening daily and the leader is modeling that as a priority. As they work on creating this culture, leaders make their learning visible and they learn in collaboration with others. “The people around them aren’t told, but rather witness learning as a professional priority” (Hirsch, 2015, p. 72). In the profession of education, a leader cannot rest on what they know about the field and still be effectively helping others develop. The needs of teachers and students will always present new challenges, and therefore a mindset of continuous improvement is essential. According to the director of the professional learning association, Learning Forward, effective leaders succeed because they are always learning and they make a commitment to their own learning. A leader is also more approachable when teachers see that they too are still working on increasing their knowledge and improving their skills (Hirsch, 2015).

There are three components of Professional Growth Leaders: (a) Builds Learning Capacity, (b) Teacher Empowerment, and (c) Positive Adult Culture, which are derived from the inclusion of best practices in character education and professional development.

As the leader develops each area, they can move from simply building awareness to actually implementing change. Ultimately a professional learning culture that is inclusive of best practices in character education can take shape.

### **Builds Learning Capacity**

The first component of a Professional Growth Leader is developing an intentional plan to build learning capacity in others. Currently many schools use the professional learning community (PLC) model as a springboard to building capacity. Unfortunately, not all professional learning communities function well. DuFour (2004b) cautions, “the term has been used so ubiquitously that it is in danger of losing all meaning” (p. 4). He further recommends that it is imperative that educators continually reflect on the ways they are including student learning and teacher collaboration into the culture of the school. At its core the PLC model involves social and structural elements making it a complex best practice for professional learning. A review of eleven studies that focused on PLCs’ impact indicated that well developed PLCs could positively improve teachers’ practices as well as students’ learning (Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2008). An important observation from Pancucci (2008) is that an effective PLC improves teachers’ personal, interpersonal, and organizational capacities, as well as their commitment to professional learning. Shulman and Shulman (2004) suggest a model of learning communities that consists of these key features: (a) vision, (b) motivation, (c) understanding, (d) practice, (e) reflection, and (f) community. These features require both opportunity and time for adults to network with others and wrestle with new concepts.

According to DuFour (2004a), people use the idea of the school’s structure and culture interchangeably, but they are extremely different. The structure of the school is

found in policies, programs, rules and procedures, while the culture of the school is found in the assumptions, beliefs, values, expectations, and habits that constitute the norm. In a professional learning community the school's mission becomes the anchor for how all decisions are made. A school cannot function as a PLC until the staff has grappled with the questions that provide direction both for the school as an organization and for the individuals within it (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). The goal of work related to building a school-wide vision based on the mission of the school is complicated. Fullan (2001) states "there can be no blueprints for change that transfer from one school to the next" (p. 92). Each school and their respective leaders must have a process to discover their own beliefs and core ethical values. During this process it is critical to remember that educating other people's children is a moral and ethical task. Fullan (2001) tells us that uncovering the moral purpose in education is needed in order to improve the life chances of students.

It is critical that the plan for Building Learning Capacity has intentional and meaningful time scheduled in order to do the work needed to progress. Providing sufficient time for extended opportunities for staff to learn and to use that time effectively is imperative. On average it takes teachers one to two years to critically analyze pedagogical content and practice (Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung, 2008). If the learning is going to help teachers deeply understand, they need time to grapple with the concepts. This time must be well organized, carefully structured, purposefully directed, and focused. There also is a need for regular follow-up. All of the studies that showed positive improvements in student learning included significant amounts of structured and sustained follow-up from the teacher learning activities (Guskey & Yoon, 2009).

To build learning capacity in others, leaders need to provide opportunities for relationships with experts. The goal is that the teachers are becoming the experts, so it is important that they are learning from experts. Bringing in expertise from the outside is needed in order to challenge existing assumptions and push thinking. It is critical when arranging for this outside expertise that a shared vision exists. Some professional developers treat teachers as technicians that can be taught a new set of behaviors and then be expected to implement those behaviors (Timperley et al., 2008). External experts who just promote their preferred methods are less effective than those who engage teachers to make meaning from challenging and problematic discourse (Shaw, 2012).

Any professional development needs to have an element of coaching as “the coach helps build the capacity of others by facilitating their learning” (Aguilar, 2013, p. 19). Additionally, teachers need to develop a good working knowledge of their students “including their developmental progressions in relation to curriculum and culture as well as their linguistic and cultural backgrounds” (Shaw, 2012, p. 108). When the entire focus of teacher learning is connected to the idea that knowing your students well and responding to them individually is of the highest value, the impact on learning makes a huge shift. When designing professional learning opportunities, it is important to consider teachers’ prior knowledge and how they view existing practice. This takes teacher diversity into account just as it is expected that teachers take student diversity into account (Marzano, 2003).

### **Teacher Empowerment**

The second element of a Professional Growth Leader is prioritizing Teacher Empowerment. The term empowerment for this framework means a multi-dimensional



social process that fosters power in people for use in their own lives, their communities, and in their society, by acting on issues they define as important. Unfortunately, many teachers view professional development as a compliance exercise rather than a meaningful learning activity where they are involved in the process. Teachers want to have voice and choice about their own professional learning. Teachers with more choice report much higher levels of satisfaction and ultimately experience better professional learning (BCG, 2014). When teachers are given a say in the decision-making about what they are learning (voice), and when they are encouraged to do the things that are important to them (choice), then autonomy is greatly enhanced (Watson, 2007; Watson & Ecken, 2003), intrinsic motivation is more likely to occur (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 2001), and teachers will view themselves as responsible (Watson & Benson, 2008).

Additionally, student learning is enhanced through teachers' autonomous decision-making about their needs for professional growth. In a study of teacher-driven professional development Colbert, Brown, Choi, and Thomas (2008) found when teachers were empowered to create their own professional growth plan, their passion for teaching and for improving the lives of their students was greatly elevated. On the other hand, when they were told without any input what professional development activities they needed, they generally were not enthusiastic and felt a disconnect between those activities and what they actually do in the classroom. These studies shed light on the need for an approach to professional learning that is teacher-driven, teacher-led, and that supports the autonomous needs of adults. Although a variety of professional development activities were studied, research does not reveal that any particular activity is of itself more effective than another (Timperley et al., 2008). Instead, researchers emphasize the

importance of teachers engaging in multiple opportunities. In addition, involving teachers in selecting, planning, and implementing the learning will lead to increased teacher empowerment and growth that will positively impact the students (Easton, 2008).

Opportunities that were mentioned time and again in the literature, and that can easily be driven by the teachers themselves, were book studies, action research projects, conference presentations, small group teacher meetings, and peer observations.

Researchers and scholars point to the idea that honoring teachers as leaders and decision makers for their own learning helps to promote engagement in the learning process. Setting up opportunities for continuous review and reflection helps teachers take ownership and responsibility in their learning. Empowering teachers in their own learning leads to teachers developing professional, self-regulatory, inquiry skills. This allows them to collect relevant evidence, use it to think about and question the effectiveness of their teaching, and ultimately allows them to freely make continuing adjustments to their practice. Teachers with these crucial self-regulatory skills are able to provide answers to the vital questions: “Where am I going?” “How am I doing?” and “Where do I go next?” (Timperley et al., 2008). While activities may vary, teachers need multiple opportunities to learn new information and attempt to translate it into practice. If teachers are going to completely engage in the learning activities, supportive relational conditions must be present (Hord, 2009). It is also clear that when teachers are in strong collaborative environments they see significant benefits in their day-to-day work (BCG, 2014). This supports their learning, as well as gives practice to applying the new understandings and skills (Shaw, 2012).

Opportunities to learn must occur in environments characterized by both trust and

challenge because any kind of improvement or change is as much about emotions as it is about knowledge and skills. Learning activities require the twin elements of trust and challenge. “Little professional learning takes place without challenge. Change however involves risk; before teachers take on that risk they need to trust that their honest effort will be supported” (Timperley et al., 2008, p. 16). Opportunities to network with others and wrestle with new concepts takes time if it is going to be meaningful work. Teachers need to apply the learning in order to take it from an idea to implementation. According to a group of teachers who helped develop their school’s professional learning activities, “we were provided with opportunities to share our opinions, the opportunity to work in groups also meant that we were being respected and that our input would influence the way forward” (Bezzina & Testa, 2005, p. 145). Planning sufficient time for meaningful conversations and authentic learning is an important element to creating a supportive learning environment. Learning through engagement in meaningful activities has a greater impact on student outcomes (Geringer, 2003).

### **Positive Adult Culture**

The third and final dimension of a Professional Growth Leader is creating and sustaining a Positive Adult Culture. A key factor in creating a Positive Adult Culture is building relationships. Relationships among teachers and leaders are highlighted as important indicators to school improvement. The U.S. Department of Education’s Comprehensive School Reform Program (CSR) emphasizes that if progress is to be successful over the long term, school leaders need to build a foundation for reform characterized by trust among school members and collegial relationships (Hale, 2000). Building a relationship between teachers and school leaders requires building trust.

Trusted and respected leaders take “a personal interest in the well-being of others” (Bryk, 2010, p. 28) including teachers, students, families, and members of the larger school community. As various studies have shown, school leaders can earn trust from teachers and staff by encouraging open communication, being available to them, and by showing that they care. Giving teachers room to try new things and not being fearful of making mistakes is essential to supporting innovation and risk taking. It also demonstrates respect for teachers as learners as well as people whose judgment can be trusted. “Trusted principals empower teachers and draw out the best in them” (Barlow, 2001, p. 31).

In addition to nurturing teacher and principal relationships, it is important for the school leader to facilitate opportunities for teachers to build relationships with each other. Authentic relationships are fostered by shared work, shared responsibilities, frequent dialogue, and personal conversations (Tschannen-Moran, 2003). Leaders can support this kind of relationship building by creating meaningful opportunities for teachers to work collaboratively. Too often schools are organized in ways that prevent regular teacher collaboration. Principals can support collaboration by making intentional time in the schedule for teachers to work together, as well as provide training on effective team building strategies (Blasé & Blasé, 2001). Additionally, finding ways to improve and/or increase communication is crucial to fostering a Positive Adult Culture. Utilizing technology to share lessons, engage in discussion boards, or simply to exchange information about upcoming school activities requires little time on the teacher’s part and can promote collaboration (Corcoran, 2003). If we expect to make meaningful and lasting change within school communities, prioritizing a Positive Adult Culture developed around trust is of utmost importance. Blasé and Blasé (2001) write, “Without trust a

school cannot improve and grow into the rich, nurturing, micro-society needed by children and adults alike” (p. 23).

### **Professional Growth Leader Conclusion**

Researchers and scholars support the consensus building around a job embedded approach to professional development as an effective way to transform the learning culture of a school. Using an approach that targets the development of a culture of learning can help that transformation. It is clear that educators today need to learn and that is why professional learning is replacing the old framework of professional development. “Developing is not enough, educators must be knowledgeable and wise. They must know enough in order to change. They must change in order to get different results. They must become learners, and they must be self-developing” (Easton, 2008, p. 756).

There is also a need to connect what is known to work in professional development with the best practices that work in character education. If leaders understand character education deeply it may be easier to make it a priority to study character education within the school community. Additionally, leaders must engage in professional development about content (such as character education practices), but also about refining their coaching skills. If a leader is an expert on character education, but knows nothing about how to get a reluctant teacher to try out character education practices, the knowledge becomes less useful (Shows, Scriber, Wahl, & Bloomfield, 2008).

**Professional Growth Leader Research Question**

For this area of study the specific research question is as follows: are leaders who score higher in Professional Growth Leadership (characterized by Building Learning Capacity, Teacher Empowerment, and Positive Adult Culture) more likely to report using effective character education practices?

Ultimately, when professional learning is implemented seamlessly into the life of the school, it is the catalyst for more than just the development of the adults; it improves the learning and developmental opportunities for students. Focusing on the tenants of Professional Growth Leadership will encourage leaders to prioritize the school's culture and to work intentionally on building a supportive and character driven school culture. A school with a positive adult culture, supported by a leader with Vulnerable, Transformational, and Professional Growth Leadership characteristics, is positioned to implement effective character education practices. These research-based practices provide flexible structure to schools that want to deepen character education efforts.

### **Chapter 7: Effective Character Education Practices**

Many schools appear to begin their character education endeavors by attempting to implement a character education program without having a complete understanding of what they hope to accomplish, what practices are effective, the importance of staff buy-in, and the importance of creating a culture driven by character education. Character education practices are effective because the people who implement them understand the "whys" and the "how's" of effective implementation. They believe that certain practices implemented in their school will help students to become better people. "One of the most critical factors in the effectiveness of character education is the faithfulness with which it is implemented" (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004, p. 75).

There are many articles and books on character education, but many are based on opinion, experience, or anecdote rather than scholarly research. This review focuses primarily on sources that are research-based. The primary scholar to look into what is effective in character education is Marvin Berkowitz (1985, 1997, 2002, 2008, 2011a, 2011b, 2012). Some of his research has been done with Melinda Bier (2004, 2005, 2014) and John Grych (1998, 2000). While character education goes by several other names including moral education, social-emotional learning, morality, values education, character development, and others (Berkowitz, 2002), the term character education will be used for this review.

Berkowitz indirectly defines character education practices as "educational attempts to promote the positive, pro-social development of students, regardless of the terms used to compartmentalize them in competing scholarly arenas" (Berkowitz, 2011b, p. 153). Our definition of effective character education practices based on this literature

review, our coursework, and our experience is: specific methods or techniques used by a school community to achieve desired outcomes, goals, or objectives relating to character development. These practices may include the cultural, pedagogical, relational, professional learning, curricular, and assessment actions educators take to help cultivate intellectual, moral, performance, and civic character in students and others in the school community (Shields, 2011). Berkowitz and Bier (2004) state:

For families or schools to influence character development optimally, they need to understand the complex nature of character and to apply effective principles that have been empirically shown to positively impact the development of the many parts of the moral person. (p. 74)

### **Existing Research**

We looked for scholarly research to find which character education practices have been effective in helping students develop good character and become moral people. Ten studies were identified that met high standards of conducting scholarly research to identify effective character education practices or that have had a significant impact on effective character education practices in schools. They were identified through recommendations from authorities and searching scholarly databases. This was not an exhaustive study of all literature as this only focused on effective character education practices and not on related fields such as moral education. Several of the studies were meta-analyses or syntheses of a large number of other studies so this review indirectly examined all of those studies. It also focused on studies or reports specifically about effective character education practices. It could have been more complex, but it would have been massive and beyond the scope of a DiP. Although it was intentionally limited,



the scale developed to measure effective practices held together with empirical support in the research. It is possible that this limitation of focusing on ten character education studies and reports did not negatively impact the research. This is a measure and review that is helpful and achievable.

The ten studies took different approaches to researching the effectiveness of character education practices, and most exhibit the scholarly methodology to make them reliable and valid. Several of the 10 didn't conduct research but relied on previous research, and those studies are discussed below. Berkowitz and Bier (2004) conducted meta-analyses or syntheses that identified a number of character education practices found to be effective by research. They "identified 109 research studies concerning character education outcomes and evaluated each study for the scientific rigor of its research design" (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004, p. 3). They found 78 of the 109 to be scientifically acceptable. This work was fully utilized by Berkowitz in his later work (2011b), so the Berkowitz and Bier study is not directly used in this review.

Davidson, Lickona, and Khmelkov (2008) conducted research using grounded theory. They assembled a database of more than 1,400 books, research studies, reports, and other materials, and they did onsite research at 24 diverse high schools, both public (18) and private (6) spread across the U.S. They got input and feedback from an expert's panel of 32 authorities, and they did a number of supplemental interviews with educators, parents, coaches, and others who work with students.

Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, and Schellinger (2011) did a meta-analysis of 213 school-based social and emotional programs involving over 213,000 students, while Weissberg and Cascarino (2013) are senior officers at CASEL, and have written an

article that reports on CASEL's research findings. So while their report did not do direct research, it is based on other research, which is cited. (These two articles dealing with social-emotional learning are reported together under the heading "CASEL" in Table 6. Hence, this chapter reviews 10 studies/articles but shows nine studies in Table 6).

Lovat, Toomey, Dally, and Clement (2009) surveyed 20 schools in Australia to test and measure the impact of values education (the Australian equivalent of character education) in those schools. They were broken into two groups for the study and a long report was written for the Australian Government. Brannon (2008) surveyed all National Board Certified Teachers in Illinois and then interviewed a number of them to learn how they practiced character education in their classrooms. In the study by Benninga, Berkowitz, Kuehn, and Smith (2003), California elementary schools applying for the California Distinguished Schools Award were randomly selected, evaluated, and scored for character education implementation.

Leming (1997) examined 10 character education programs, studied their pedagogy, examined the research on the 10 programs' effectiveness, and summarized the results into four common strategies. Lickona (1997) has conducted multiple research studies with schools and teachers and wrote up his findings of what teachers find to be effective in character education in the classroom. (While Lickona is also an author of the Davidson et al. 2008 study, the results of that study and the Lickona 1997 study are not redundant. They reach different findings. See Table 6. The Lickona and Davidson 2005 study cited in this research is not one of the 10 studies but was based on a two-year study of high school character education and influenced the 2008 Davidson et al. study included in this research).

Character.org is arguably the most influential and significant character education organization in the United States. Every year, hundreds of K-12 schools apply to become a National School of Character and dozens win. These schools use Character.org's *11 Principles of Effective Character Education* (2014) to guide them in becoming or excelling as schools of character. While Character.org did not conduct new research to develop their 11 Principles, its original authors, Lickona, Schaps, and Lewis, based their original 1995 report on previous research done by themselves and others, as well as on experience and Character.org's philosophy. It is included because it has had, and still has, a significant influence on character education. All 10 studies used a variety of diverse, and for most of them, scholarly methods to identify and determine the effectiveness of various character education practices. Due to the fact that many of them looked at large numbers of other studies, these 10 indirectly cover the research of a large number of studies.

This review reports what these 10 studies have found. If a study's author(s) calls something an effective practice that someone else may call an outcome, we initially call it a practice, as the study did, for Table 6. We later used our judgment to call some practices outcomes in Table 7. This is a report on what the studies reported, not our opinions. We did use our judgment in reducing the 50 practices as described below. We have not developed our own theories about effective practices, but report what these studies found.

The literature reviewed identified 50 effective character education practices that were found to have a positive effect on character education. Multiple names for practices, including strategies, methods, and techniques, were used in the literature. (Again, two

studies are reported together under CASEL). See Table 6 for a list of the effective practices reported by the studies.

Table 6  
*Effective Character Education Practices In Ten Studies Ordered by Most Identified Practices*

	Strategies	Berkowitz	Davidson et al.	Character.org	Lickona	CASEL	Lovat et al.	Brannon	Benninga et al.	Leming	Total
1	Role Modeling	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	7
2	Opportunities for Moral Action		X	X		X	X		X	X	6
3	Family/Community Involvement	X		X		X	X		X		5
4	Moral Reflection		X		X		X			X	4
5	Peer Interactive -Cooperative/Discussion	X			X			X	X		4
6	School-wide Character Culture and Focus	X				X	X	X			4
7	Service to others/Service learning	X	X					X	X		4
8	Social-Emotional Competencies	X	X			X			X		4
9	Caring Community/Classroom			X	X				X		3
10	CE Taught Across Curriculum				X		X		X		3
11	Core Values			X				X	X		3
12	Developmental Discipline	X			X		X				3
13	Direct teaching about Character	X					X	X			3
14	High Expectations/Excellence	X	X				X				3
15	Professional Development	X				X		X			3
16	Conflict Resolution				X	X					2
17	Contributing Community Member/Citizen		X				X				2
18	Induction/Empathy	X				X					2
19	Learning Community		X	X							2
20	Lifelong Learner		X		X						2
21	Pride in Work				X		X				2
22	Relationship Skills					X	X				2
23	Role Playing							X		X	2
24	Safe Environment-Physical and Mental					X			X		2
25	Self-disciplined		X			X					2
26	Self-Motivation		X	X							2
27	Shared/Strong Leadership			X			X				2
28	Relationships	X									1
29	Academics Meaningful/Challenging			X							1
30	Assess School Culture and Climate			X							1

31	CE Aligned to Real World Learning						X				1
32	CE as Important as Academics							X			1
33	Classroom Discussion									X	1
34	Common Values Language/Vocabulary						X				1
35	Comprehensive Approach to CE			X							1
36	Daily Time for CE							X			1
37	Democratic Classrooms				X						1
38	Diligent		X								1
39	Empowerment	X									1
40	Ethical Thinker		X								1
41	Moral Agent		X								1
42	Nurturance	X									1
43	Other study (Reading about others)		X								1
44	Present to Others		X								1
45	Responsible Decision Making					X					1
46	School Displays and Awards						X				1
47	Schools Work Together						X				1
48	Spiritual Person with Noble Purpose		X								1
49	Teachable Moments							X			1
50	Trust and Trustworthiness	X									1

*Note.* The Durlak et al. and Weissberg and Cascarino studies are both used by CASEL and the two studies findings have been combined under the CASEL heading in this table. Hence there are 10 studies reviewed but nine listed.

The 50 effective practices identified by the studies were examined and we determined that 44 of the 50 were effective practices as they were a method or technique schools and teachers could use directly or indirectly to help improve the character of students. Six of the 50 are better understood as outcomes of effective practices and not effective practices themselves. Outcomes are the desired results from using effective practices, and we excluded them as effective practices. Additionally, a number of the studies found the same practices to be effective. If a practice was identified by different terminology, we used judgment to compile multiple terms into a single category. For example role modeling, setting a good example, and ethical role model were all listed as role modeling.

The number of studies that identified each practice as effective is identified in Table 6 in the far right column. It was determined that many of the effective practices were not stand-alone practices, but sub-practices of other practices. These have been organized into a taxonomy where the sub-practices are grouped under the overarching effective practices and are indicated by indented letters in Table 7. We used the research, our understanding of the literature, logic, and our experience in schools to group these. For example, service learning, which we put as a sub-practice of opportunities for moral action, is a way to practice moral action, instead of being considered a primary practice. The following criteria were used to combine and reduce the 44 practices:

1. Keep the strategies that were identified by three or more studies to be effective and were significant enough, in our judgment, to be a primary practice and not a sub-practice. Some strategies, regardless of how many studies identified them, were determined to be sub-practices if they were corollary to a primary practice.
2. Combine redundant, similar, or sub-practice strategies.
3. Based on the research team's judgment and on our understanding of the research and literature, some practices were determined to be effective and a primary practice even if only identified by one study.

This process brought the number of stand-alone practices to 16. See Table 7 for those 16 effective practices and their sub-practices.

Table 7

*Effective Character Education Practices Taxonomy Showing Combinations*

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1. Role Modeling
2. Family and Community Involvement in School
3. School-wide Character Education Culture and Focus
  - a. Character Education Taught Across the Curriculum
  - b. Character Education as Important as Academics
  - c. Comprehensive Approach to Character Education
  - d. Academic Curriculum Meaningful and Challenging
  - e. Learning Community
  - f. School Displays and Awards
  - g. Schools Work Together
4. Core Values
  - a. Caring Community and Classroom
  - b. High Expectations/Excellence
  - c. Nurturance
  - d. Trust and Trustworthiness
5. Developmental Discipline
6. Safe Environment both Physically and Emotionally
7. Shared Leadership/Strong Leadership
8. Empowerment
  - a. Democratic Classrooms
  - b. Classroom Discussions
9. Assess Culture and Climate Annually
  - a. Present to Others
10. Opportunities for Moral Action
  - a. Service Learning/Service to Others
    - i. Character Education Aligned with Real World Learning
11. Moral Reflection
12. Social Emotional Learning
  - a. Develop Relationship Skills
  - b. Learn Conflict Resolution
  - c. Practice Induction and Empathy
  - d. Possess Self-discipline
  - e. Have Self-motivation
  - f. Be Diligent
  - g. Practice Responsible Decision Making
13. Direct Teaching About Character
  - a. Other Study (reading or hearing about others)
  - b. Common Values Language/Vocabulary
  - c. Daily Time for Character Education
  - d. Role Playing
  - e. Teachable Moments

14. Peer Interactive Strategies
15. Professional Development
16. Relationships

**Outcomes**

1. Contributing Community Member
2. Lifelong Learner
3. Pride in Work
4. Ethical Thinker
5. Moral Agent
6. Spiritual Person with Noble Purpose

---

A school that desires to be an excellent school of character must be intentional about developing all aspects of character in every student. Each school is unique and must develop its own culture and use effective practices that are right for them. A school would be overwhelmed trying to implement 44 effective character education practices. Having 16 primary strategies and knowing the sub-practices that support the primary practice provides schools with a manageable number of effective strategies. Table 8 shows the final taxonomy with 16 strategies:



Table 8  
*Final Effective Character Education Practices Taxonomy*

---

1. Role Modeling
  2. Family and Community Involvement in School
  3. School-wide Character Education Culture and Focus
  4. Core Values
  5. Developmental Discipline
  6. Safe Environment both Physically and Emotionally
  7. Strong/Shared Leadership
  8. Empowerment
  9. Assess Culture and Climate Annually
  10. Opportunities for Moral Action
  11. Moral Reflection
  12. Social Emotional Learning
  13. Direct Teaching about Character
  14. Peer Interactive Strategies
  15. Professional Development
  16. Relationships
- 

### **Effective Practices**

The following list of effective practices, including the terms, comes from the research studied for this literature review. We have not included our own theories about effective practices. The final taxonomy has research validating the effectiveness of each practice. These will be discussed in the same order of the final taxonomy in Table 8.

**Role modeling.** This practice is identified by seven of the ten studies examined to be effective, the most mentions of all the practices identified (Benninga et al., 2003; Berkowitz, 2011b; Brannon, 2008; Durlak et al., 2011; Leming, 1997; Lickona, 1997, 1999; Lovat et al., 2009; Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013)(Durlak et al. and Weissberg & Cascarino count as one study). To model positive character is to set an example for others to follow. Students learn good character in part by watching others who are honest, kind, helpful, diligent, and practice other virtues and positive, pro-social behaviors (Berkowitz,

2011b). “Role models can be adults, older students or community members” (Berkowitz, 2011b, p. 155). Students pay more attention to what people do than what they say.

Berkowitz (2011b) mentions that this practice is supported by research about the power of positive modeling by parents (Berkowitz & Grych, 1998; Lickona, 2008).

Role modeling is important at two levels. First, adults in schools need to model the good character they hope students will emulate. They need to demonstrate what ethical behavior, kindness, responsibility, respect, and integrity, among many other traits, look like and sound like in daily school life. Second, school leaders need to model good leadership that is based on trusting relationships and personal development. Trusting relationships often lead to empowerment, developing others, and learning opportunities for students and staff.

**Family and community involvement in school.** When families and the larger community are involved in character development better results are obtained (Berkowitz, 2011b; Character.org, 2014). This can include mentoring, role-modeling, developmental discipline (discipline that promotes growth and learning rather than punishment), school involvement, etc. (Benninga et al., 2003; Berkowitz, 2011b; Character.org, 2014; Durlak et al., 2011; Lovat, Toomey, Dally, & Clement, 2009; Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013). Berkowitz indicates, “positive parental involvement in their children’s education promotes greater academic achievement” (2011b, p. 156). Active character education programs in schools encourage parents and other community members to be involved in students’ lives and in the schools. Anytime the family and the school work in unison for the betterment of a child there are benefits for all involved, but especially the child.

**School-wide character education culture and focus.** This practice includes four other sub-practices identified by the studies: character education taught across the curriculum, comprehensive approach to character education, character education as important as academics, and learning community (Benninga et al., 2003; Berkowitz, 2011b; Brannon, 2008; Character.org, 2014; Davidson et al., 2008; Durlak et al., 2011; Lickona, 1997, 1999; Lovat et al., 2009; Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013). A school-wide character education focus needs to be part of a school's core values and mission (Character.org, 2014; Elbot & Fulton, 2008). It creates a learning community that is as committed to character education as to academic education (Brannon, 2008). School-wide character education events such as assemblies, service projects, fairs, and events for the community help build a wide commitment to and practice of character education (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005; Character.org, 2014). This includes integrating character education into core academic subjects such as having teachers ask questions about the character of figures while reading a novel that has many character education lessons in it or during a history lesson where there are examples of good or bad character (Lickona, 1997). Creating a school-wide character focus can be considered to be the ultimate goal of all character education initiatives. When character is deeply embedded in a school's culture it cannot be separated from curriculum, discipline, academics, or activities because it is woven into every part of the school day and lived by all members of the school community.

**Core values.** This practice may be considered effective because it helps a school come to consensus on what values will guide decisions, interactions and behaviors. It has two parts: first, the development of the values the school community agrees represent

what are important to all stakeholders, and second, embodying the values in the daily life of the school by students, faculty, staff, and administrators. While it is impossible to fully represent the core values of all stakeholders, the importance of this practice is in creating a common language and understanding of agreed upon values and how these values can improve the culture and outcomes of the school. Kidder (2005) studied core values of the major religions and societies worldwide and found five values that most have in common: responsibility, honesty, respect, compassion, and fairness.

Some schools have core values that significantly influence the school's culture. If the process of developing values was meaningful and inclusive, the faculty, staff, and students will know and live those core values and they will be a priority for everyone (Brannon, 2008; Character.org, 2014). Schools often choose values such as honesty, kindness, responsibility and perseverance. Whichever values they choose should attempt to reflect the consensual values of stakeholders. The values should create a caring, nurturing community based on trust (Berkowitz, 2011b; Tschannen-Moran, 2004; Watson & Ecken, 2003). If schools don't have core values they should start a community-wide process to identify and select core values that represent most stakeholders (Character.org, 2014). Once the core values are agreed upon, regardless of the age of the students in the school, those students should be able to define them and to explain what each core values looks like and sounds like to ensure they comprehend each one. While these studies mostly call these core values, they are consensual values upon which stakeholders are able to agree.

**Developmental discipline.** How students are disciplined has a significant impact on students' character and academic development (Berkowitz, 2011b; Lickona, 1997,

1999; Lovat et al., 2009), as does classroom management. Ideally, discipline deals more with developing long-term good behavior choices than with just getting bad behavior to cease or to punish that behavior (Watson, 2007). It is important to have consequences for poor choices whether behavioral or otherwise. Discipline comes from the word disciple, which means to teach; that should be the spirit of developmental discipline. The consequences should teach the student a lesson and help them grow in character, rather than just being for punishment or to remove a negative influence from a classroom or school (Watson, 2007). All schools deal with multiple age groups and children develop at different rates. It is critical that staff understand that a "one size fits all" discipline approach is detrimental to relationship building between students and staff, which can inhibit academic growth. When staff are trained on the importance of understanding the root of the behavior, they can work with students by helping them to understand why they reacted a certain way instead of just responding to the behavior. This not only teaches the child a valuable lesson, but also often prevents the recurrence of problems.

**Safe environment both physically and emotionally.** CASEL, according to Durlak et al. (2011) and Weissberg and Cascarino (2013), recommends establishing safe, caring, and highly engaging learning environments involving peer and family initiatives, improved classroom management and teaching practices, and school wide community-building activities. They emphasize the need for both physical and emotional safety for students. Benninga et al. (2003) state in their study of California schools that good schools ensure a clean and secure physical environment. It is important for students' and parents' peace of mind to have physically safe schools. Emotional safety comes from students trusting their teachers (Tschannen-Moran, 2004; Watson & Ecken, 2003).

Emotionally safe schools should lead to students who trust their teachers, administrators, and fellow students and who have the comfort to express their voice, to make mistakes, and to push themselves to do their best. Allowing students time to build and nurture relationships with one another also helps create emotionally and physically safe schools.

**Strong/shared leadership.** Lovat et al. (2009), in their review of values education in Australia, found that strong school leadership was vital to developing schools of character. While empowering others is important in schools and leads to better character education (Berkowitz, 2011), without strong leadership from the principal in starting the process of building a culture of character and academic excellence, it is unlikely that character education will flourish in a school. The principal is often the one to introduce character education and initiate professional development in character education and the use of effective practices. Character.org (2014) found that leadership in schools should be shared with students, faculty, and staff rather than have just one strong person leading the school from the top down. Once the staff understands the importance of character education and how to implement effective practices, an effective leader removes barriers and empowers students and staff to take the lead in character education, including developing a strong character education culture. A strong leader is skilled in getting people to want to be part of an inspiring vision. Developing trusting relationships, having honest conversations, and developing lines for clear, two-way communication can help accomplish that.

**Empowerment.** Ripp (2015) defines an empowered school as “one where all voices are heard, dissenting opinions are valued, and staff is trusted... Empowered students know their opinion matters, that they have control over their learning journey,

and that school is worth their time” (p. 4). Bredemeier says the empowerment “removes barriers so people can find their power” (personal conversation, May 2016). There are two types of empowerment in most schools: student empowerment where students influence school policies and practices, and faculty/staff empowerment where they also influence school policies and practices. The adult culture in a school is vital to every school’s success and adult empowerment is vital to creating a good adult culture. When adults know they are valued members of a school community they are more productive and positive. A staff will not be empowered by a leader uncomfortable with sharing leadership and if the staff is not empowered they are unlikely to empower their students.

Berkowitz (2011b) states that student empowerment is one of the central tenets of character education. He ties it to both constructivist education and citizenship education. Empowerment provides students a degree of autonomy, which is a core component of Ryan and Deci’s (2002) self determination theory, which states that autonomous students perform better and autonomous classrooms empower students, which leads to better students. Berkowitz (2011b) cites other studies that support student empowerment. Empowerment includes having democratic classrooms. Lickona (1997, 1999) was the only author to mention that democratic classrooms promote character development in students. In the pursuit of improved test scores, far too many educators forget a key goal of education is to develop productive citizens. Empowering teachers to develop classrooms that empower students is key to developing citizens who know how to make decisions, think critically, and play an active, civic role throughout their lives.

**Assess culture and climate annually.** In their 11th Principle, Character.org (2014) states “the school regularly assesses its culture and climate, the functioning of its

staff as character educators, and the extent to which its students manifest good character” (p. 22). If an organization cares about something they measure it to see if their goals or expectations are being met. If a school cares about things like the effectiveness of their core values, their culture, and how their students are growing in character, they measure these elements. This allows them to see how they are doing against their goals and objectives and to make necessary adjustments. All stakeholders should be assessed regarding the effectiveness of the school's character education efforts throughout the year. Some schools will use established surveys that measure school culture and climate, others may develop shorter assessments that can be given at the end of each quarter, while others use both formal and informal surveys. The key to the effective use of an assessment is how the results of the survey are shared and what is done as a result of the information gleaned. Leaders who empower students and staff ask for this type of feedback and implement suggestions when appropriate.

**Opportunities for moral action.** If one of the overarching missions of public education is to develop good citizens then those future citizens must have authentic opportunities to practice being moral. Opportunities for moral action were identified by six of the ten studies as being effective, making it the second most identified practice: Benninga et al. (2003), Character.org (2014), Davidson et al. (2008), Durlak et al. (2011), Leming (1997), Lovat et al. (2009), and Weissberg and Cascarino (2013). Character.org’s fifth principle of their *11 Principles* (2014) states that students should have opportunities for moral action as they learn best from doing. Providing students with opportunities to demonstrate moral action can include many activities including a number of practices discussed in this review. Examples of moral action include peer interactive strategies,



service learning, community service, student government, cross-age buddying, and democratic classroom activities including class meetings. The more opportunities for moral action a school provides, the more practice students receive. As moral action becomes embedded into student thinking and practice it can become a habitual practice.

**Moral reflection.** Davidson et al. (2008) found that self-study (knowing oneself), including self-reflection on moral issues, was very important in developing character in students. Reflecting on what they did right or wrong helps students learn from their actions and be prepared to do the right thing the next time an occasion comes. Lovat et al. (2009) found schools that implemented character education practices developed students who were more self-reflective which led to them having higher personal standards. Leming (1997) found classroom discussions on moral issues gave students occasion to reflect on their ethics in their personal experience. Blatt and Kohlberg (1975) and Berkowitz and Gibbs (1983) find moral discussions aid in the moral development of children. Others identify using moral dilemmas as important for moral reflection (Berkowitz, 2011b; Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). Moral reflection is also an important part of successful developmental discipline because it helps students understand their actions and the underlying reasons for them. An outcome of effective moral reflection is moral reasoning (Paxton, Ungar, & Greene, 2012).

**Social and emotional learning.** CASEL has been researching and advocating for social and emotional learning (SEL) for several decades. Durlak et al. (2011) and Weissberg and Cascarino (2013) report that CASEL has identified five desired outcomes of SEL:

- **Self-awareness:** the ability to accurately recognize one's emotions and thoughts and their influence on behavior.
- **Self-management:** the ability to manage one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations, and to set and work toward personal and academic goals.
- **Social Awareness:** The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures and to recognize resources and supports.
- **Relationship Skills:** The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups through communicating clearly, listening actively, cooperating, negotiating conflict constructively, and seeking and offering help when needed.
- **Responsible Decision Making:** The ability to make constructive and respectful choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, the realistic evaluation of the consequences that stem from action, and the well-being of self and others.

Durlak et al. (2011) report that “extensive developmental research indicates that effective mastery of social-emotional competencies is associated with greater well-being and better school performance whereas the failure to achieve competence in these areas can lead to a variety of personal, social, and academic difficulties” (p. 406). Over time, mastering SEL competencies leads from being controlled by external factors to acting based on one's internal beliefs and values, being concerned for others, making good decisions, and taking responsibility for one's self (Durlak et al., 2011).

CASEL, according to Durlak et al. (2011) and Weissberg & Cascarino (2013), recommend two sets of educational strategies:

1. Instruction in processing, integrating, and selectively applying social and emotional skills in appropriate ways. This includes systematically teaching, modeling, practicing, and facilitating the application of social and emotional competencies in ways that allow students to apply them as part of their daily repertoire of behaviors.
2. Establishing safe, caring, and highly engaging learning environments involving peer and family initiatives, improved classroom management and teaching practices, and school wide community-building activities.

Berkowitz (2011b), Berkowitz & Bier (2005), and Davidson et al. (2008) also found SEL to be effective in developing character. This umbrella practice includes seven SEL practices that were identified by other studies as effective and that are listed as sub-practices in Table 7. They are very specific and fit with this umbrella practice well.

**Direct teaching about character.** While some studies show that the primary means of developing character in students is by creating an overall culture where character is naturally practiced and nurtured every day, Berkowitz (2011b), Brannon (2008), and Lovat et al. (2009) all report that didactic instruction about character helps develop character in students. Direct instruction is didactic and includes teaching moral, ethical, and philosophical concepts and developing an age-appropriate moral vocabulary. It can include discussing and understanding the character aspects of current events and using student behavioral issues as springboards for character conversations (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005; Character.org, 2014). One of the most successful practices is to integrate

character education into the existing curriculum (Berkowitz, 2011b; Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). Teachers look for opportunities in their existing curriculum and plans to discuss good or bad character in what they are already studying in a novel or an incident in history. Direct instruction ties into the practice identified by Brannon (2008) of making daily time for character education. It also includes the practices of building an ethical vocabulary (Lovat et al., 2009) and studying other people's examples of character through biographies, stories, and by inviting speakers to school whose lives embody character (Davidson et al., 2008).

**Peer interactive strategies.** Peer interactive effective practices (also known as cooperative learning) are activities where students interact with other students, helping one another and setting good examples. Benninga et al. (2003), Berkowitz (2011b), Brannon (2008), and Lickona (1997, 1999), all identified peer interactive strategies as being very effective in developing character in students. Peer interactive strategies include "peer tutoring, cross-age 'buddying,' class meetings, homerooms/advisories" (Berkowitz, 2011b, p. 155). Research shows that two of the most effective peer strategies are cooperative learning where students work in small groups that require collaboration, and moral dilemma discussions where students discuss (usually moderated by the teacher) moral problems and how to resolve them using moral reasoning. Done properly, it promotes cognitive disequilibrium that promotes the development of moral reasoning (Berkowitz, 1985). Schools that make relationship building among students a priority create multiple opportunities for peer interactive strategies. Some of these practices are formal such as creating K-5 families that stay together with the same teacher for the

duration of their elementary experience, while others may be as informal as mixed grade levels at the same lunch.

**Professional development.** While professional development is not a practice used with students, it deeply affects how teachers and others successfully implement effective character education practices. It is usually focused on academic instruction rather than character instruction and the quality of much professional development is poor (BCG, 2014; Berkowitz, 2011b). Good professional development can play a significant role in establishing a culture of character education in a school, as well as effectively training teachers to implement effective practices in their classrooms. Before teachers can teach and implement character education practices in their classrooms, they must be taught how to teach and model character education. Teachers must learn how to integrate good peer interactive strategies, how to directly teach about character, how to provide opportunities for moral action and moral reflection, among other practices. This effective practice is discussed in depth in the Professional Growth Leader section (Chapter 6) of this dissertation and won't be discussed more here other than to note that Berkowitz (2011b), Brannon (2008), Durlak et al. (2011) and Weissberg and Cascarino (2013) all identified it as effective in their studies. Character education is not as successful in a school without good professional development.

**Relationships.** Establishing strong, trusting relationships between adults, between students, and between adults and students in a school is critical to character education (Berkowitz, 2011b; Character.org, 2014; Tschannen-Moran, 2004). Character.org (2014) defines three critical focal areas for relationships: (a) relationships between staff and students, (b) relationships among students, and (c) relationships among adults. Often

schools jump into student-based character education by asking reluctant adults with no real understanding of character to implement effective practices they don't agree with or even understand. The most essential place to begin relationship work is also the most challenging: with adults. Strong leaders who believe in character education will spend time developing staff relationships and building adult culture before asking them to work on their relationships with students and to help students develop relationships with one another. Relationship building is an ongoing endeavor that grounds the school in respectful, caring interactions. Good relationships are also the key to effective role modeling. Relationships are the cornerstone of successful character and academic education (Berkowitz, 2011b; Tschannen-Moran, 2004). It has been said that the three R's of education are reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic. Alternatively, the three R's are relationships, relationships, relationships (Berkowitz, 2003). Without positive adult/adult, adult/student, and student/student relationships, neither character development or academic performance will be as successful as they could be.

### **Most Effective Character Education Practices**

One of the most interesting findings from this compilation is the number of effective practices that were only identified by a few studies. Twenty-three, or 46% of the 50 practices, were identified by only one study. Twelve different practices were identified by only two studies (24%), or almost a quarter of the strategies. The practices identified by only one or two of the studies total 35 effective practices or 70% of the total. The most identified effective practice, role modeling, was identified by seven studies. The second most identified practice, providing opportunities for moral action, was identified by six studies, and the third most identified practice, family and community involvement in

character education, was identified by five studies. There are a significant number of practices that were found to be effective by only one or two of the 10 studies. Table 9 shows the number of practices identified by the number of studies that identified each effective practice.

Table 9  
*Number of Different Character Education Practices Identified in What Number of Studies*

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<u>Number of Different CE Practices</u>	<u>Identified in What Number of Studies</u>
23	1
12	2
7	3
5	4
1	5
1	6
1	7

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There are several possible reasons for so many practices being identified and so few being identified by multiple studies. First, as noted above, most of the studies used different methodology and different types of samples for their studies. Second, some had different focuses such as programs that are primarily social and emotionally focused. Third, they were geographically diverse from Australia to different part of the United States. Fourth, they covered different grades and educators; some studied elementary schools exclusively, others high schools, etc. Fifth, one looked only at NBCT teachers, most looked at school practices, and one only at elementary schools that applied for an award. Sixth, some authors may have certain biases for effective practices that they prefer or dislike.

Having multiple practices that have been shown to be effective provides schools with a comprehensive list of effective practices that can help launch or expand their character education work. Each school, no matter where they are located, can utilize effective practices that will help advance their character education work. In the United States there are urban, suburban, and rural schools. There are public (including charter schools) and independent schools. Within independent schools there are many different types ranging from faith based to secular and from remedial to elite. Due to vast differences in types of students, faculty and staff, purpose, focus, curricula and pedagogies, locations, and needs, it is good that there a number of effective character education practices from which schools may select the practices right for them.

While the combined list of effective character education practices is long, there is one curious omission: stories. Stories have been used to instruct, including moral instruction, since Biblical times, and probably long before. Davidson et al. (2008) touch on the value of stories with their findings on “other-study” such as reading biographies of people with good character. A number of authors have identified stories as a very effective practice in teaching morals (Coles, 1989; 1994; Ryan & Bohlin, 1999; Vitz, 1990). According to these authors, stories can be an effective way to impart moral lessons; therefore it is surprising that stories are not identified as an effective practice. Stories could possibly fit into direct instruction of character education but were not mentioned by any of the studies that found direct instruction to be an effective practice.

Character education has become more important in both public and independent schools over the last several decades. A perusal of some public and private school websites indicated that character education is frequently mentioned as a school goal and



practice. However, there are many different ways that schools approach and implement character education. Organizations such as CharacterPlus or Character Counts! provide helpful direction and materials for schools to use in implementing character education. Character.org's 11 Principles (2014) provides guidance for schools to design and start implementing character education, but it does not give much information about specific practices to use to make the 11 Principles work. The studies referenced in this dissertation provide useful guidance to educational practitioners about which character education practices have been most effective in schools. However, just as Peterson and Seligman (2004) have written a classification and handbook on character strengths and virtues, there is a need for an authoritative guide to all identified character education practices that have been proven to be effective through research. While Peterson and Seligman's book (2004) lists the character virtues and strengths that many would like to see in every student, it is not a taxonomy of character education outcomes and there is a need for that as well.

The 16 effective practices can serve as a resource to help schools become better at character education by implementing many of the practices that are right for them. These practices have been researched extensively and schools and school leaders should benefit from using them to improve their culture and their practices, and in turn, help develop students with better character.

### **Effective Character Education Practices and Character Education Leadership**

The effective character education practices identified above are unlikely to be used in schools or have much of an impact in schools unless there is appropriate leadership to initiate, champion, and sustain character education initiatives. A school-

wide approach supported by a principal who can provide the impetus to transform a school is essential to success. Usually, but not always, it is the leader who initiates character education, but effective leaders seek input and empower others to play significant roles in developing and leading a character education culture and implementing effective practices. According to Fullan (2011) “The problem is that not enough organizations are ‘making’ such leaders; that is, there are not enough resolute, empathetic leaders at the top who see their main job as hiring and cultivating critical masses of other focused leaders (p. 48). Effective leaders in character education not only encourage the use of effective character education practices, but also develop effective, future leaders who are committed to implementing and sustaining character education.

#### **Effective Character Education Strategies Research Questions**

This area of the research asks two research questions:

1. Can a research-based set of character education effective practices be identified and effectively measured?
2. Is a greater use of effective character education practices related to better student and school outcomes?

### **Chapter 8: Methodology**

The purpose of this study was to: (a) examine relationships among Vulnerable Leaders, Transformational Leaders, and Professional Growth Leaders; (b) examine relationships between Vulnerable Leaders, Transformational Leaders, and Professional Growth Leaders and the use of effective character education practices as measured by the Effective Character Education Score; (c) examine relationships between school leaders who implement effective character education practices and school outcomes including: improved attendance, improved academics, improved behavior, and improved climate; (d) examine relationships between Vulnerable Leaders, Transformational Leaders, and Professional Growth Leaders and recognition and/or awards for character education; and (e) examine relationships between use of effective character education practices and character education awards and/or recognitions.

Each specific variable—Vulnerable Leader, Transformational Leader, Professional Growth Leader, and effective character education practices measured by ECES—are operationalized in their own way. Each variable is measured by a series of established and/or newly created measures.

#### **Research Questions**

For this research there were four areas of investigation, each connected to the overarching focus of the DiP. There was one research question for each of the leadership framework focus areas, and two questions for the effective practices or ECES focus:

1. Are leaders who score higher in Vulnerable Leadership (characterized by Openness, Authenticity, and Humility) more likely to report using effective character education practices?

2. Are leaders who score higher in Transformational Leadership (characterized by Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, Individual Consideration) more likely to report using effective character education practices?
3. Are leaders who score higher in Professional Growth Leadership (characterized by Building Learning Capacity, Teacher Empowerment, and Positive Adult Culture) more likely to report using effective character education practices?
4. Can a research-based set of character education effective practices be identified and effectively measured?
5. Is a greater use of effective character education practices related to better student and school outcomes?

From these five research questions, five separate hypotheses were created which together form the structure of the entire study. Table 10 shows those hypotheses.

Table 10

*Research Hypotheses*

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1. There is a positive correlation between Vulnerable Leader (and each of its subcomponents) and ECES.
  2. There is a positive correlation between Transformational Leader (and each of its subcomponents) and ECES.
  3. There is a positive correlation between Professional Growth Leader (and each of its subcomponents) and ECES.
  4. There is a positive correlation among Vulnerable Leader, Transformational Leader, and Professional Growth Leader (and each of their subcomponents).
  5. There is a positive correlation between school outcomes and Vulnerable Leader, Transformational Leader, and Professional Growth Leader (and each of their subcomponents), and ECES.
- 

The first three hypotheses predict that high scores on the particular leadership framework will positively correlate with high scores on the ECES. The fourth hypothesis predicts that there will be positive correlations among scores for the three overall leadership

frameworks as well as each of their subcomponents. The fifth hypothesis predicts that the four primary variables (Vulnerable Leader, Transformational Leader, Professional Growth Leader, and effective character education practices measured by ECES) will each positively correlate with the school outcomes variable. The outcomes variable is made up of academic data, behavior data, attendance data, student climate data, staff climate data, parent/community climate data, and character education recognitions.

### **Research Design**

The design for this project was a concurrent triangulation design (Plano Clark, Creswell, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003). A mixed-methods approach was selected in order to secure two separate data sources: a quantitative survey and qualitative interviews. “Mixed method research provides more evidence for studying a research problem than either quantitative or qualitative research can alone” (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010, p. 13). This implementation approach also allowed multiple ways of seeing and hearing the data connected to all the research questions.

The research was implemented in two parts. Part one entailed a multi-component quantitative survey distributed to 192 subjects who are LACE graduates and who had been school principals for at least three years. Part two entailed follow up interviews with 17 survey respondents.

The research examined relationships among outcome variables (academics, attendance, behavior, climate, awards), the ECES, Vulnerable Leader measures, Transformational Leader measures, and Professional Growth Leader measures. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the research questions were studied through both a quantitative survey and semi-structured qualitative interviews.

The logic model shows the correlations investigated. The research looked for correlations among Vulnerable Leader, Transformational Leader, and Professional Growth Leader. It also studied correlations of all subcomponents among Vulnerable Leaders, Transformational Leaders, and Professional Growth Leaders. Correlations were also examined among Vulnerable Leaders, Transformational Leaders, and Professional Growth Leaders and ECES. Correlations among Vulnerable Leaders, Transformational Leaders, and Professional Growth Leaders and outcomes were studied, as were correlations among ECES and character education awards/recognition. See Figure 2 for our logic model.

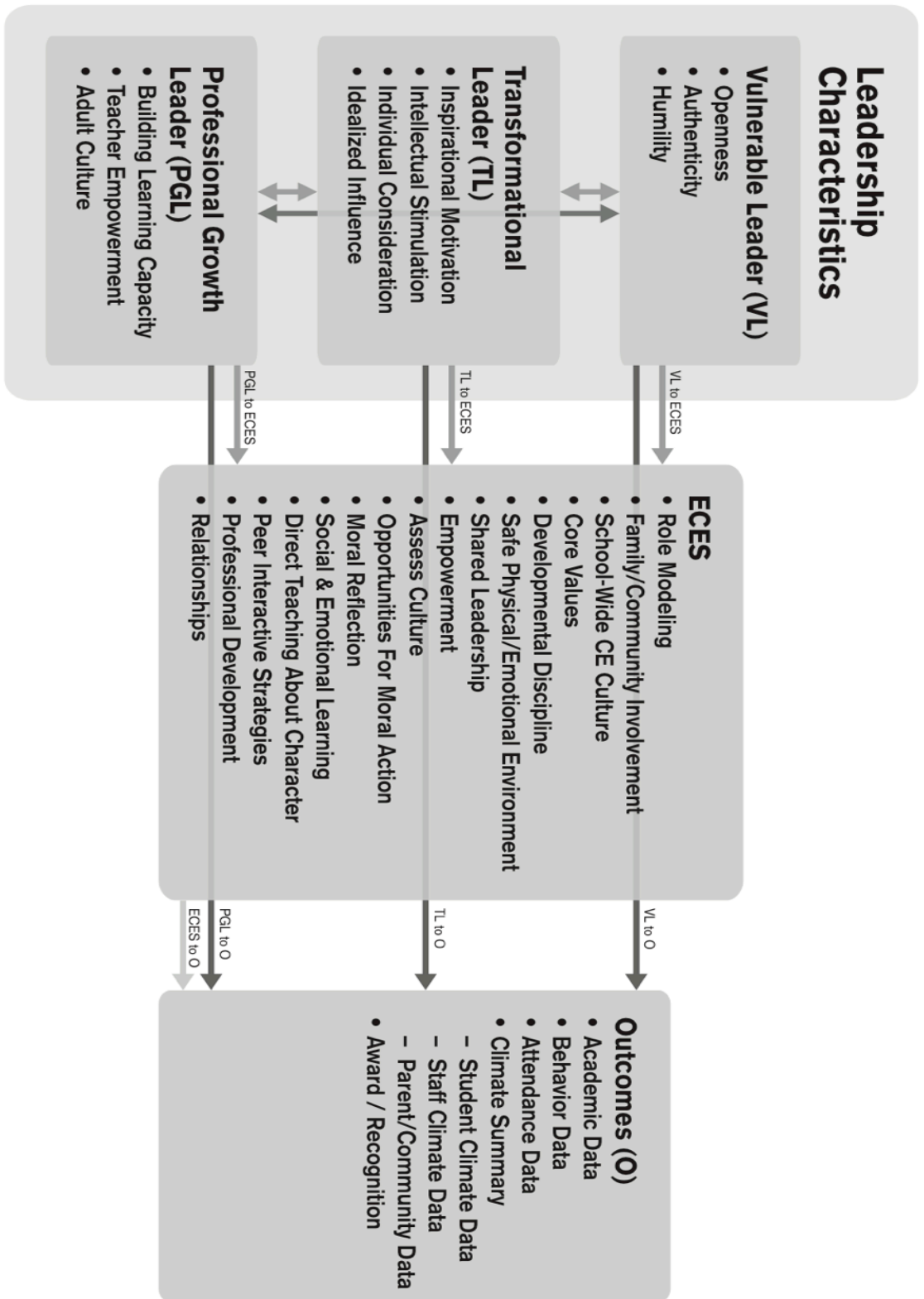


Figure 2. Logic Model

### **Quantitative Measures**

A quantitative survey was designed to measure (a) correlations between and among Vulnerable Leaders, Transformational Leaders, and Professional Growth Leaders and their subcomponents; (b) Vulnerable Leaders, Transformational Leaders, and Professional Growth Leaders and the ECES; (c) Vulnerable Leaders, Transformational Leaders, and Professional Growth Leaders and outcomes; (d) ECES and outcomes; (e) Vulnerable Leaders, Transformational Leaders, and Professional Growth Leaders and awards/recognitions; (f) and ECES and awards/recognitions. Each component of the survey is explained in detail.

**Vulnerable Leader measures.** The Vulnerable Leader Measure is made up of three components: Openness, Authenticity, and Humility. Each component also has four subcomponents. For this measure, some published scales existed and were used and some measures were adopted or created for this research.

***Openness scale.*** Openness is closely connected to the Big Five Model of Personality (Tupes & Christal, 1961). One particular valid and reliable measure, created at the University of California's Personality Lab, is the Big Five Inventory (BFI) (John et al., 2008). The BFI is a self-report inventory designed to be brief in order to increase response rates in surveys. The 44-question inventory has independent sub-scales for each of the five personality traits, but only the trait of openness (which had a validity correlation of .60) applied to this project. Looking at the Vulnerable Leader's four Openness subcomponents: willingness to change, thinks deeply, values creativity, and appreciates input; and reviewing specific items of the BFI's subscale for openness, all but the final subcomponent of appreciates input can be measured by the BFI subscale for



openness. Hence, additional questions were used to measure the final subcomponent of appreciates input. Table 11 shows the survey questions used for the Openness subscales.

Table 11

*Openness: Subcomponent Scale Questions*

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1A Willingness to Change (From Big Five Inventory (John et al., 2008))

- I am someone who is curious about many different things
- I am someone who prefers work that is routine *REVERSE*
- I am someone who is original, comes up with new ideas
- I am someone who is inventive

1B Thinks Deeply (From Big Five Inventory (John et al., 2008))

- I am someone who is ingenious, a deep thinker
- I am someone who likes to reflect, play with ideas
- I am someone who has an active imagination

1C Values Creativity (From Big Five Inventory (John et al., 2008))

- I am someone who values artistic, aesthetic experiences
- I am someone who has few artistic interests *REVERSE*
- I am someone who is sophisticated in art, music, or literature

1D Appreciates Input (Questions Created For This Research)

- I am someone who intentionally creates opportunities for shared decision making with my staff
  - I am someone who regularly solicits input from staff, students, and parents.
- 

*Authenticity scale.* For the second component, Authenticity, Avolio, Gardner, and Walumbwa (2007) developed a measure of authenticity and leadership. This measure shares a very similar conceptual framework to the Vulnerable Leader concept of Authenticity. The measure is called the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ). The four subcomponents of the Vulnerable Leader framework of Authenticity are: possesses self-awareness, guided by internal moral perspective, self regulates behaviors and decisions, and exhibits trustworthy behaviors. In reviewing specific questions of the ALQ and their four subscales of transparency, moral/ethical, balanced processing, and self-awareness, the ALQ was selected as the primary measure for Authenticity of a

Vulnerable Leader. Only 13 of the 16 questions were used, as three questions from the subscale of balanced processing were not a priority in the Vulnerable Leader framework. “The internal consistency reliability for each ALQ measure was as follows: self-awareness, .73; relational transparency, .77; internalized moral perspective, .73; and balanced processing, .70” (Walumbwa et al., 2008, p. 34). The subcomponent, exhibits trustworthy behavior, required additional measures outside the ALQ. One question from the Executive Servant Leadership Model (Reed, Vildaver-Cohen, & Colwell, 2001) was used to measure the Humility component, one question was created for this subscale, and one question was adopted from the Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (1998) trust survey. Table 12 shows the questions used for subscales.

Table 12  
*Authenticity: Subcomponent Scale Questions*

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2A Self awareness (From Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (Avolio et al., 2007))

- As a leader, I seek feedback to improve interactions with others
- As a leader, I accurately describe how others view my capabilities
- As a leader, I know when it is time to reevaluate my position on important issues
- As a leader, I show I understand how specific actions impact others

2B Guided by internal moral perspective (From Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (Avolio et al., 2007))

- As a leader, I demonstrate beliefs that are consistent with actions
- As a leader, I make decisions based on my core values
- As a leader, I ask you to take positions that support your core values
- As a leader, I make difficult decisions based on high standards of ethical conduct

2C Self-regulates behaviors and decisions (From Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (Avolio et al., 2007))

- As a leader, I say exactly what I mean
- As a leader, I admit mistakes when they are made
- As a leader, I encourage everyone to speak their mind
- As a leader, I tell you the hard truth
- As a leader, I display emotions exactly in line with feelings

2D Exhibits trustworthy behaviors (From Executive Servant Leadership Scale (Reed et al., 2001))

- As a leader I Inspire employee trust

2D Exhibits trustworthy behaviors (Adapted From Principal Trust Survey (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998)

- As a leader, faculty and staff feel I can be relied upon

2D Exhibits trustworthy behaviors (Question Created For This Research)

- As a leader, my faculty and staff have confidence in the integrity of my decisions
- 

***Humility scale.*** The third component, Humility, includes these subcomponents:

leads selflessly, prioritizes the organization, is other-focused, and models moral integrity.

These map very closely to executive servant leadership (Wong & Page, 2003). Reed et al.

(2001) developed an empirical measure for executive servant leadership that was used to

measure the Vulnerable Leader component of Humility.

Table 13  
*Humility: Subcomponent Scale Questions*

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- 3A Leads Selflessly (From Executive Servant Leadership Scale (Reed et al., 2001))
- As a leader, I sacrifice personal benefit to meet employee needs
  - As a leader, I serve others willingly with no expectation of reward
  - Place the interests of others before self-interest
  - Prefer serving others to being served by others
- 3B Prioritizes the Organization (From Exec Servant Leadership Scale (Reed et al., 2001))
- As a leader, I consider the effects of organizational decisions on the community
  - As a leader, I encourage a spirit of cooperation among employees
  - As a leader, I inspire organizational commitment
  - As a leader, I believe our organization has a duty to improve the community in which it operates
  - As a leader, I value diversity and individual differences in the organization
- 3C Is Other Focused (From Executive Servant Leadership Scale (Reed et al., 2001))
- As a leader, I recognize when employee morale is low without asking
  - As a leader, I look for ways to make others successful
  - As a leader, I nurture employee leadership potential
  - As a leader, I treat all employees with dignity and respect
  - As a leader, I ensure greatest decision-making control given to employees most affected by decision.
  - As a leader, I listen carefully to others.
- 3D Models Moral Integrity (From Exec Servant Leadership Scale (Reed et al., 2001))
- As a leader, I inspire employee trust.
  - As a leader, I refuse to use manipulation or deceit to achieve his/her goals.
  - As a leader, I freely admit my mistakes.
  - As a leader, I promote transparency and honesty throughout the organization.
  - As a leader, I value integrity more than profit or personal gain.
  - As a leader, I model the behavior I expect from others in the organization.
- 

**Transformational Leadership measure.** Bass and Avolio (2004) developed and published a valid and reliable measure of the Transformational Leader as a subscale of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ). Twenty questions from this questionnaire address the four components of the Transformational Leadership model. The full 45-question survey addresses what Bass and Avolio call Full Range Leadership. “The model was labeled full range to challenge the leadership field to broaden its

thinking about what constitutes a much broader range of leadership styles” (Avolio & Bass, 2004, p. 1).

Full Range Leadership places the individual components of Transactional Leadership and Transformational Leadership on a continuum. The MLQ and each of the components are embedded in the MLQ as separate sub-scales of the overall survey. Since it was not our intent to analyze Full Range Leadership, only the Transformational Leadership subscale of the MLQ was used. Transformational Leadership describes leaders who focus on the transformation of people as well as on how they are treated, not merely how well they complete a task. The overarching goal of a Transformational Leader is to focus on the development of people. These leaders influence, inspire, and motivate followers (Avolio & Bass, 2004). The four components of Transformational Leadership that are measured in the MLQ are: Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individual Consideration. Each component has several subcomponents. Idealized Influence includes: charismatic, ethical, role model, strong work ethic, admired, and risk taker. Inspirational Motivation includes: frequently charismatic, strong vision, values/ideas articulated, stimulates enthusiasm, and builds confidence and communicates clearly. Intellectual Stimulation includes: encourages creativity, welcomes challenge, seeks diverse opinions, and encourages risk, flexibility, and openness. Individual Consideration includes: creates a supportive climate, provides new learning, accepts differences, develops others, serves as a mentor/coach, and builds relationships. Within the MLQ, “reliabilities of the total items and for each leadership factor scale ranged from .74 to .94” (Avolio & Bass, 2004, p. 51).

Idealized Influence is sub-divided into Idealized Attributes and Idealized Behaviors. "These separate sub factors represent the interactional nature of Idealized Influence" (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 6). Table 14 lists the questions on this scale that address leaders' behavior and how followers perceive their behavior. Avolio and Bass (2004) discuss Transformational Leadership scales:

There were high, positive correlations among the five Transformational Leadership scales. The average inter-correlation among the five transformational scales was .46 when leaders rated themselves; .63 when a superior rated leaders' transformational traits; .64 when leaders with the same job description rated one another; and .65 when someone with lesser power rated the leader. Total reliability scores are: Idealized Influence (attributes), .75; Idealized Influence (behaviors), .70; Inspirational Motivation, .83; Intellectual Stimulation, .75; and Individual Consideration, .77. (p. 75)

For this research, only subscales that measure Transformational Leadership were used. Table 14 shows the questions used to measure Transformational Leadership.

Table 14

*Transformational Leader**(From Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (Bass & Avolio, 2004))*

## Idealized Influence: Attributes

- I talk about my most important values and beliefs
- I specify the importance of having a strong sense of purpose
- I consider the moral and ethical consequences of decisions
- I emphasize the importance of having a collective sense of mission

## Idealized Influence: Behaviors

- I go beyond self-interest for the good of the group
- I act in ways that build others' respect for me
- I display a sense of power and confidence
- I instill pride in others for being associated with me

## Inspirational Motivation

- I talk optimistically about the future
- I talk enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished
- I express confidence that goals will be achieved
- I articulate a compelling vision of the future

## Intellectual Stimulation

- I re-examine critical assumptions to question whether they are appropriate
- I seek differing perspectives when solving problems
- I get others to look at problems from many different angles
- I suggest new ways of looking at how to complete assignments

## Individual Consideration

- I spend time teaching and coaching members of my staff
- I treat others as individuals rather than just as a member of a group
- I consider an individual as having different needs, abilities, and aspirations from others
- I help others develop their strengths

---

**Professional Growth Leader measures.** An instrument measuring how leaders approach and implement professional learning and growth had not been created, so new questions were created. “Ideally, every survey question should be deliberate and explicitly linked to answering your research questions” (Butin, 2010, p. 92). Relevant literature, as well as discussion and guidance from experts in the field, helped shape the questions. Eventually 18 questions were created, all connected to the three key areas of

Professional Growth Leadership: (a) Building Learning Capacity, (b) Teacher Empowerment, and (c) Positive Adult Culture.

***Building learning capacity scale.*** Professional learning that increases teacher effectiveness and ultimately improves student outcomes requires skillful leaders who can build capacity in others. “Capacity building can be defined as improving the capabilities and learning of all teachers to respond effectively to student needs” (Shaw, 2012, p. 10). There are six questions that look at building capacity within the teachers and staff, as well as the leaders. Table 15 shows the questions used to measure Building Learning Capacity.

Table 15

*Professional Growth Leader: Building Learning Capacity*  
(Questions Created For Research)

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- I plan activities designed to ensure continuous improvement in my school
  - I create opportunities for teachers to study what they do and how they might improve
  - I encourage teachers to practice applying new skills they have been studying through professional learning activities
  - I provide structured time for teachers to observe each other
  - Teachers serve as peer coaches in professional learning
  - Reflection is a critical part of professional learning
- 

***Teacher empowerment scale.*** Leaders need to think deeply about how they are sharing responsibility in their school. Providing teachers with opportunities to have a role in making decisions about their learning environment is important to achieving a level of empowerment. This includes decisions about their own development as a teacher. These questions helped measure to what level a principal sees an empowering culture as a priority. Table 16 shows the questions used to measure Teacher Empowerment.



Table 16

*Professional Growth Leader: Teacher Empowerment (Questions Created For Research)*

---

- Teachers have the opportunity to plan their own learning activities at my school
  - Norms and structures for professional learning are created with staff
  - Professional learning in my school includes teacher led discussions
  - There is an intentional process in place for teachers to learn from each other
- 

***Positive adult culture scale.*** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and ultimately improves student outcomes requires skillful leaders who help create a caring adult community. The seven questions in the survey regarding Positive Adult Culture highlight strategies that can build a strong adult culture. The questions survey how important a principal thinks adults forming caring attachments with each other is to the school's culture. Table 17 shows questions used to measure Positive Adult Culture.

Table 17

*Professional Growth Leader: Positive Adult Culture (Questions Created For This Research)*

---

- Intentionally plan opportunities for teachers to build relationships with their peers
  - It is important for the principal to participate in honest conversations with staff
  - Staff see the principal as a partner in learning
  - Trust is important when adults are engaged in learning
  - I am open to constructive critique of the professional learning activities at my school
  - I seek professional development opportunities to hone my leadership skills
  - Ongoing assessment of professional learning is important to the success of the school
- 

**Effective Character Education Score measure.** In order to assess the 16 effective character education strategies identified in Chapter 7, a measure was created

to assess participants' use of effective character education practices in their schools, as no such known measures exist. This measure, the ECES, was developed by creating questions that would assess how leaders regard the implementation of 16 effective character education practices in their schools.

Thirty-four questions were created that ask about these 16 effective practices. Some practices had one question while others had up to four questions. These questions were developed based on the literature in Chapter 7, by looking at Character.org's 11 Principles and CharacterPlus' 10 Essentials, and by talking with principals who were not part of the study but who had experience in running schools of character. A mean score was created for each question so they were all weighted equally. The 34 ECES questions are in Table 18.

Table 18

*Effective Character Education Score (ECES) (Questions Created For This Research)*

Role Modeling

- Faculty and staff in my school act as positive role models for students.

Family and Community Involvement in School

- Our students' parents take an active role in our character education activities and efforts.

School-wide Character Education Culture and Focus

- We intentionally work on maintaining a school-wide culture of character education.
- We have a school wide character focus based on our values.

Core Values

- Faculty, staff, and students embody our core values.
- We used a collective process involving multiple stakeholders (e.g., parents, staff, students) in creating our core values.
- Our school has clearly defined core values.
- All faculty, staff and students know the definitions of our core values.

Developmental Discipline

- Our disciplinary practices are designed for long-term character development.
- The overall discipline procedures involve discussions about our core values.

#### Safe Environment both Physically and Emotionally

- We intentionally create a climate of emotional safety and keep our school physically safe.

#### Strong/Shared Leadership

- I share leadership in our school by empowering others to make decisions and/or take action, while still providing strong leadership that supports character education.
- I provide strong, consistent leadership in sustaining character education in our school.

#### Empowerment

- Students are empowered to make decisions that impact the learning and broader school environment.
- Teachers are empowered to make decisions that impact the learning environment.
- Our school provides opportunities for students to participate democratically in decision-making.

#### Assess Culture and Climate Annually

- We assess our school's culture, climate, and character education activities.
- Our school assesses culture/climate at minimum annually.
- Teachers collaborate in assessing effective character education.

#### Opportunities for Moral Action

- We integrate service learning into the curriculum.

#### Moral Reflection

- Students are given opportunities to reflect on their character and moral actions.
- We build in reflection time for service learning projects.
- Our school provides opportunities for students to reflect on their own character.

#### Social Emotional Learning

- Our school teaches the students social and emotional competencies (e.g., healthy relationship skills, self regulation skills).
- Social and emotional learning is integrated into the academic curriculum.

#### Direct Teaching about Character

- We directly teach and integrate character into our curriculum; (e.g., building an ethical vocabulary, discussing moral dilemmas).

#### Peer Interactive Strategies

- Teachers use peer interactive strategies (e.g., cross-age buddying, class meetings).
- My school holds regular class meetings.

#### Professional Development

- Character education is a priority in our ongoing professional development.

#### Relationships

- We implement explicit initiatives to ensure that every student has

- opportunities to build positive relationships with adults.
  - Students are taught relationship building skills.
  - There are frequent opportunities for students to establish relationships with each other.
  - I hold faculty and staff accountable for building positive relationships with each other.
- 

**School and student performance measure.** Participants were asked to self-report on a number of outcome variables that are most often the focus of school improvement plans. The school performance questions were designed to indicate whether or not their character education efforts are having an impact on the specific variables of academic performance, office discipline referrals, attendance, and school climate as measured by climate surveys given to staff, students, and parents/community members. Together these are called outcomes.

**Award measure.** Finally, a school's applications for and possible winning of character education awards would indicate if the school takes their character education efforts seriously and has been recognized by authoritative organizations such as Character.org or CharacterPlus. Table 19 shows questions asked for the outcome and award measures.

Table 19

*Self-Reported School Performance Data (Outcome Variables)*  
*(Questions Created For Research)*

---

School Performance Data Variables

Scale: (a) Declined, (b) Remained stable, (c) Improved

In the past three years, my schools data has

- Academic Data
- Office Referrals / Behavioral Data
- Attendance Data
- Student Climate Survey Data
- Staff Climate Survey Data
- Parent / Community Climate Survey Data

Character Education Recognition

Scale: (0) no award, (1) applied for award, (2) one state award, (3) multiple state awards  
 (4) national award received

- Have you ever applied for and/or received any recognition for your character education initiatives? If so, please list the recognition and year(s).
- 

### **Sampling Strategies**

There are various sampling strategies available for a mixed-methods approach falling into either a probability or a non-probability sampling technique. We used the non-random sampling technique of purposive sampling. The population was first narrowed to leaders who graduated from LACE, then to people who have been lead principals for at least three years, and then to people with whom contact could be made. Questionnaires were sent to 192 school leaders who met these criteria. For the qualitative interviews 17 principals volunteered to be interviewed and all 17 were interviewed, thus no additional sampling criteria applied.

### **Research Setting and Participants**

The setting for this portion of the research was K-12 schools that have leaders who have had exposure to and understanding of character education philosophies and

practices through LACE. The participants were all current education practitioners. The setting of the specific schools was not controlled.

Current school leaders were chosen as the participants, in part, due to research that highlights the connection between effective school leaders and successful schools (Berkowitz, 2011b; Bryk & Schneider, 2011; Fullan, 2003; Judge & Bono, 2000; Senge et al., 2000). Participants were principals who had been a building principal for at least three years in the same school and who had completed LACE. LACE graduates have experienced a full year of professional development in character education and have been exposed to experts in the field, current research, and a variety of literature describing the theories and methods of character education.

Access to the LACE database of participants was obtained from Dr. Marvin W. Berkowitz. Dr. Berkowitz is the Director of the LACE program and is an Endowed Professor of Character Education at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. He is also our dissertation adviser. Survey participants were selected exclusively from the LACE database of approximately 700 teachers, counselors, assistant principals, and central office staff who have attended LACE.

### **Survey Design**

After identifying questions from other instruments and creating additional questions as detailed above, the survey was assembled in an on-line survey program called Qualtrix (See Appendix B). Questions from each section were mixed among each other and grouped under appropriate, matching response scales. A coding system was established to group all questions with their specific topics for analysis (see Appendix E for the survey).

We asked 14 school leaders who had attended LACE, but had not been building leaders for three years, to pilot the survey to help determine the clarity of questions, the amount of time it took to complete the survey, and any other issues that could impact the survey results. Those participants were not eligible to be in the actual survey. The average time for pilot participants to complete the survey was 30 minutes. The volunteer participants provided both verbal and written feedback on the clarity of questions in order to help ascertain the face validity of the questions. These steps helped determine if any questions should be changed or eliminated from the final survey. Overall, the feedback from this process was very positive and no changes were required before putting the survey in the field.

### **Survey Distribution**

When our criteria was applied to all LACE graduates, 192 school leaders were eligible for whom contact information was available. All 192 possible participants were contacted through email with a link to the survey inviting them to complete the questionnaire. The email introduced two of the four researchers as fellow LACE graduates and all four as advisees of Dr. Berkowitz, the LACE Director. Participants were told that their answers would be kept in confidence and that their name would be entered into a drawing for a participation prize if they emailed their interest to us.

Throughout an initial 6-week window 42 completed surveys were submitted. Another 29 had inactive email accounts and new email addresses were not available. Every effort was made to obtain correct contact information. This reduced the total number of possible subjects to 163. A spreadsheet with every participants' name, contact

information, email bounce-back reports, confirmatory completion of the survey, willingness to be interviewed, and more was maintained.

A second email was sent and 21 more completed the survey while nine responded that they had not been building principals or that they had been out of that role for some time and were not comfortable completing the survey. A third email was sent along with a video plea from Dr. Hal Urban and eight more responded. A fourth and final email was sent with a video plea from Dr. Marvin Berkowitz that generated five more responses for a total of 78. Altogether 76 did not respond. Since surveys were anonymous we had no way of knowing if the 78 participants were from urban, rural, or suburban settings, but we do know that 28 (36%) were male and 38 (49%) were female, while 12 (15%) of the 78 did not respond to the gender question.

The final question of the survey asked participants if they would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview. If they were, they were prompted to directly email the researchers to protect the confidentiality of their survey responses; we were unable to link them to their completed survey. There were 17 participants who completed the survey who agreed to be interviewed and all 17 were interviewed. All of them signed a confidentiality waiver that granted us the use of their data in the study (see Appendix C).

### **Quantitative Data Collection**

By the end of the survey window 78 principals had completed the survey, and the survey was closed. The survey was anonymous, so minimal tracking of participants was done during data collection. Participants were asked to provide consent before participating in the survey. Clicking to begin the survey provided consent. See Appendix D for the consent waiver. Finally, participants were provided Amy Johnston and Julie



Frugo's e-mail addresses and were asked to e-mail their name and that they completed the survey if they wished to be entered into a drawing and/or interviewed. Of the 78 principals, 29 emailed back and 17 volunteered for follow up interviews.

### **Quantitative Data Analysis**

Once the quantitative data from the 78 surveys was collected analysis began. A Cronbach's Alpha was run on ECES, Vulnerable Leader, Transformative Leader, and Professional Growth Leader, as well as their subcomponents. Additionally tests of reliability were also run to check skewness and kurtosis for these measures.

For ECES, due to an unequal number of questions being asked for each of the 16 practices, a mean score was created for each practice. The total ECES was the sum of the 16 mean practice scores.

Leaders were asked to report on the six outcome variables with a response of declined, remained stable, or improved data on academics, attendance, behavior, and climate surveys of staff, students, and parents/community. Pearson correlations were run between ECES and each of the three leadership models, six individual outcome data points, and a summary of all outcome data points.

For the award/recognition variable, participants reporting no awards applied for or earned were scored a 0, participants applying for an award were scored a 1, participants reporting one state award were scored a 2, participants reporting multiple state awards were scored a 3, and participants reporting a national award were scored a 4.

For each of the three leadership frameworks, a Pearson correlation was run among them and all their subcomponents. A Pearson correlation was also run among ECES, each leadership framework, and all subcomponents. Finally a Pearson correlation was run

among Vulnerable Leader, Transformational Leader, Professional Growth Leader, and ECES and the outcomes and award data.

### **Qualitative Data Collection**

The qualitative research began after the quantitative data were collected. Due to the low number of principals offering to be interviewed, and in order to investigate the topic as thoroughly as possible, all 17 principals who volunteered were interviewed. Thus, no additional selection criteria were needed. Emails were sent to the 17 volunteers to arrange for interviews. The anonymous results from the survey were not linked to the selection of the participants or to the analysis of their interview data.

Interview questions to address each of these areas of research were drafted and revised with the help of faculty advisers. Working closely with our qualitative advisor, Dr. Althof, we sought to create questions that would both address all four areas of research and shed more light on the topics that the quantitative survey could not. We sought to make the interviews last one hour or less. Interviews were designed to be semi-structured. It was decided for some questions to be open-ended, while others had items written on note-cards from which the participant could choose and comment. See Appendix F for a full list of survey questions.

The qualitative interviews allowed a deeper look at the data and ultimately a richer perspective on the research questions. By definition, qualitative explorations allow researchers to “obtain more detailed, specific information that can help explain the results of statistical tests” (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010, p. 299). The follow up interviews were designed to do just that.

The school settings of the principals who completed the quantitative survey and qualitative interviews varied in terms of location, size, socio-economic status, and type of population. Table 20 shows that principals interviewed came from diverse types of school settings.

Table 20

*School Setting Demographics of Principals Interviewed*

---

Geography

- Urban: 7 schools
- Suburban: 7 schools
- Rural: 3 schools

Size

- Under 300 students: 3 schools
- 300 – 500 students: 3 schools
- 500 and more students: 11 schools

Type of School

- Elementary: 8 schools
- Middle Schools: 6 schools
- High School: 3 schools

Socio-Economic Status

- Above 50% students receiving free / reduced lunch: 9
  - Below 50% students receiving free / reduced lunch: 8
- 

All the interviews were conducted in a location of the principals' choosing. During these interviews, through open-ended, semi-structured interview questions, we sought to better understand the leaders' perspectives and to gain deeper insight into possible connections between Vulnerable Leaders, Transformational Leaders, Professional Growth Leaders, and their effective implementation of character education practices as measured by the ECES.

Our first interview was conducted with two of us present, which allowed us to refine technical and substance components of the interview, i.e. specifics on recording

devices, phrasing for questions, types of follow-up questions, etc. After that, either one or two members of the research team, depending on logistics, conducted interviews. All interviews were recorded and transcribed.

### **Qualitative Data Analysis**

Qualitative interview transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis.

“Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). Thematic analysis was chosen because it is very flexible, it allowed the team to move quickly through the transcripts, and it worked well with the semi-structured format of the interviews. Thematic analysis was chosen over grounded theory analysis mostly due to the limited complexity of our data. Participants were not asked to report personal experiences, but responded to structured questions concerning aspects of their professional responsibilities and behaviors. Therefore, no analytic strategy was needed for gaining an in-depth understanding of peoples’ experiential and epistemological perspectives. For this reason, thematic analysis suited our needs because it “can offer a more accessible form of analysis, particularly for those early in a qualitative research career” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 81).

To analyze, code, and identify themes from the transcripts the following steps were followed (Braun & Clarke, 2006):

1. In order to become familiar with the data, we each manually transcribed our individual interviews (approximately 4 per person). We shared these transcripts and each of us read all the transcribed interviews multiple times.

Each of us made copious notes and recorded ideas in the margins of each transcript.

2. Next, based upon our identified meaning units, (sometimes phrases, single sentences, or multiple sentences) we began generating initial codes. This was an inductive process as we did not have preconceived notions of what the data would reveal. Since this was a collaborative effort, we initiated this step by listing every question of the interview in a Word document. Individually, each of us bulleted what they saw in their interviews as possible codes. After one researcher completed the task, the list was passed to another researcher. Each time new codes were added and existing codes were strengthened with evidence from additional interviews. There were 167 initial codes generated during this inductive process.
3. Once the list was generated with the initial codes, we discussed and analyzed each code and began the process of organizing code groups, which led to preliminary themes. At this point the process shifted from data-driven inductive analysis to deductive theoretical thematic analysis. We jotted potential themes on a white board where we could literally see the big picture. Multiple steps were taken to merge the 167 initial codes into 27 preliminary themes.
4. The 27 preliminary themes were revised into a final list of five themes. Each theme is able to stand-alone. A thematic map was developed to track these themes and their supporting data (See Results chapter).

Additionally, the interviews allowed for triangulating data between the initial theories and hypotheses, the quantitative data, and the qualitative data. It was important to have the literature review perspective, the quantitative data perspective, and the qualitative interview data perspective in order to fully and accurately understand the data.

To ensure a thorough, systemic analysis of the qualitative data, we consistently referenced and followed best practice qualitative research guidelines identified by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014): (a) noting patterns and themes throughout the interviews, (b) checking for plausibility throughout the interview data, (c) determining clusters within the data, (d) counting responses, (e) comparing and contrasting the data presented, (f) noting relations between variables, (g) finding intervening variables, (h) building a logical chain of evidence, and (i) making conceptual or theoretical coherence.

### **Institutional Review Board Approval**

An Institutional Review Board (IRB) process was completed prior to any data being collected in order to ensure protection of the human subjects in the study. For this study, there were no at-risk or protected populations being surveyed; only consenting adults were included in the sample. Participants had the choice to participate in both the survey and the interview. An application for an expedited review was submitted and approved.

Pursuant to IRB and university guidelines, all data have been stored in locked and secured confidential digital and physical storage devices. Access to the data has been limited to the researchers and the dissertation advisors.

**Confidentiality**

Participants were told that their names would not be shared in the published dissertation or in any other way. Data were kept using secure methods. Transcripts of interviews, audio recordings, and raw data will be maintained indefinitely in a secure location, in order to allow potential future research using the same data.

This study only engaged consenting adults, it was fairly straightforward, and did not use deception of any kind. Additionally, this research did not involve moral conflicts. It centered on professional characteristics and practices and how they impact character education implementation. Questions did not ask about personal or private topics. Confidentiality of sources was considered; appropriate access to the LACE database was obtained; and systems to confidentially and securely manage the data were created.

**Quality Criteria**

Throughout the data collection and data analysis processes, multiple steps were taken in order to ensure the quality of the data. We worked to create a reliable survey that had face validity by having multiple team members check every step, and by getting regular guidance from the dissertation advisers. Additionally, an expert in statistical analysis was utilized to ensure the quantitative analyses were accurate, the appropriate analyses were run, and the interpretations were appropriate. To ensure the quality of the interviews, we worked to keep a reflective stance and be aware of potential biases throughout the process. During the interviews and the coding and theme identification process, the collaborative nature of this dissertation proved to be invaluable. Our conversations, crosschecks, and reviews of data quality, data analysis, and data conclusions all served to protect the integrity of the research.

## **Chapter 9: Results**

In this chapter the quantitative results from the 125-question survey completed by 78 school principals and the qualitative results collected from interviews of 17 principals are analyzed. Both the quantitative and qualitative data were studied for correlations between and among all aspects of our logic model (Figure 2). For clarity, the results are presented below in two main sections: quantitative survey results and qualitative interview results.

### **Quantitative Results**

Before beginning specific correlation analyses identified in the methods chapter, the reliability and internal consistency of the survey needed to be established. A Cronbach's alpha was calculated for each of the four primary scales: effective character education practices as measured by the ECES, Vulnerable Leadership, Transformational Leadership, and Professional Growth Leadership, as well as each subscale of the three leadership frameworks. Each of the four primary scales proved to be reliable and internally consistent with each showing exceptionally high Cronbach's alpha scores. Each also showed good skewness and kurtosis, all of which indicate excellent internal coherence.

#### **Scale Reliability**

In order to fully analyze each of the four areas of research, all the scales needed to demonstrate reliability. Face validity was established in the pilot process. For the reliability, a Cronbach's Alpha analysis was run. The range for all subscales was .596-.990, noting scores above .7 are considered to have good reliability. Table 21 shows the scales' reliability scores.



Table 21  
Scale Reliability

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Primary Scale Cronbach's Alpha</u>	<u>Subscale Variables &amp; Cronbach's Alpha Score</u>
Vulnerable Leader	.981	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Openness (O) = .780</li> <li>• Authenticity (A) = .865</li> <li>• Y (H) = .990</li> </ul>
Transformational Leader	.865	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Idealized Influence (II) = .709</li> <li>• Inspirational Motivation (IM) = .734</li> <li>• Intellectual Stimulation (IS) = .849</li> <li>• Individual Consideration (IC) = .686</li> </ul>
Professional Growth Leader	.853	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building Learning Capacity (BLC) = .652</li> <li>• Teacher Empowerment (TE) = .596</li> <li>• Adult Culture (AC) = .615</li> </ul>
Effective Character Education Score	.926	N/A
Performance Outcome Variables	.754	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic Data</li> <li>• Behavior Data</li> <li>• Attendance Data</li> <li>• Student Climate Data</li> <li>• Staff Climate Data</li> <li>• Parent/Community Climate Data</li> </ul>
Climate Summary Score	N/A	Additionally, there was a combined climate data score, which included all three of the student, staff and parent/community climate measures.
Awards	N/A	Finally, participants self-reported on the frequency and specifics of character education awards their schools won. Answers were scored on a scale that weights awards 0-4.

Looking at Table 21, the Cronbach's are generally high. Vulnerable Leader has an exceptionally high overall score of .981 with each of its subscales above .7: Openness = .780, Authenticity = .865, and Humility = .990. Transformational Leader has an overall score of .865, with three of its four subscales above the .7 threshold: Idealized Influence = .709, Inspirational Motivation = .734, Intellectual Stimulation = .849, and only

Individual Consideration scoring just below the threshold with a score of .686. Professional Growth Leader also has a very high Cronbach's alpha of .853, but interestingly none of its subscales were above the .7 threshold, indicating that it is the aggregate of the scale that holds reliability and not necessarily the subcomponents – thus the subcomponents were not included in further analysis. The ECES scale also had an exceptionally high score of .926. Cronbach's alpha scores were not computed for outcome variables or awards due to the response structures.

Correlation analyses were then calculated between all of the above variables. All the results are displayed in the Correlation Matrix (See Appendix G), with significant results identified with asterisks. Specific quantitative results from the four main variables will now be reported.

### **Correlations Among Leadership Frameworks and ECES**

Correlations among the four main scales' subscales and the outcome variables were run to create a matrix of over 150 correlations. Before identifying each of the subscale and outcome variable correlations, it is noteworthy that significant correlations were found between all of the primary scales. As noted in Table 22, correlations among Vulnerable Leaders, Transformational Leaders, and Professional Growth Leaders' total scores were significant with correlation scores ranging from .367 - .763.

Table 22  
*Correlations Between Four Primary Scales*

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	<u>VL</u>	<u>TL</u>	<u>PGL</u>
ECES	.585**	.367**	.550**
VL	n/a	.763**	.702**
TL	.763**	n/a	.567**

*Note.* \* p < .05; \*\*p < .01

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**Effective Character Education Score**

A Pearson correlation was run for the ECES with: (a) Vulnerable Leader and its subcomponents; (b) Transformational Leader and its subcomponents; (c) Professional Growth Leaders total score; (d) outcomes summary; (e) individual outcomes; (f) climate summary; and (g) awards. Of the 10 correlations run among ECES and the leadership frameworks and the subcomponents of Vulnerable Leader and Transformational Leader, 7 were significant with an overall range of .223 - .592. A correlation of .585 was found between the total Vulnerable Leader measure and ECES; Transformational Leader total measure correlated at .367 and Professional Growth Leader at .550. Table 22 shows these Pearson correlations. These high correlations suggest principals who self-reported traits of Vulnerable Leader, Transformational Leader and/or Professional Growth Leader are likely to utilize effective character education practices.

There is very little correlation between ECES and outcomes and awards. The exception is with student climate, parent/community climate, and climate summary, which all had strong correlations. Staff climate did not. The ECES was not designed to measure performance outcomes but character education practices. The outcome data was self reported and this may have been a factor in the low correlation. We could have gotten hard data from DECE if we had not made anonymity part of our methodology and that may have shown a stronger correlation.

There is very low correlation between ECES and awards. This may indicate that the first thing the effective practices (as measured by the ECES) impact is the school climate, but that it takes time for this to happen. It is possible that it takes longer to see effective practices have an impact on academics, behavior, and attendance. See Table 23.

Table 23  
*Correlations of ECES to VL, TL, PGL, Outcomes, Climate, and their Subcomponents*

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<u>Measure</u>	<u>r</u>
VL	.585**
VL: O	.287*
VL: A	.485**
VL: H	.592**
TL	.367**
TL: II	.329**
TL: IM	.322**
TL: IS	.231*
TL: IC	.223
PGL	.550**
Outcome Total	.260*
Academic	.050
Behavior	.148
Attendance	.015
P/C Climate	.336**
Student Climate	.360**
Staff Climate	.184
Climate Total	.365**
Awards	.279*

*Note.* \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$

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### **Vulnerable Leadership**

Vulnerable Leadership is a measure of a leader's intrapersonal characteristics and ability to be Open, Authentic, and Humble. Several existing scales, supported by questions created for this research, were used for this scale and subscales. See Methodology chapter for the particular scales used.

A Pearson correlation was run for Vulnerable Leader total and each of its subcomponents with: (a) Transformational Leader total and its subcomponents; (b) Professional Growth Leader total; (c) ECES; (d) outcomes summary; (e) individual outcomes (f) climate summary; and (g) awards. Table 24 shows these Pearson correlations:

Table 24  
*Vulnerable Leadership Correlations*

	<u>VL Total</u>	<u>VL:</u> <u>Openness</u>	<u>VL:</u> <u>Authenticity</u>	<u>VL:</u> <u>Humility</u>
TL Total	.763**	.532**	.671**	.615**
TL: II	.613**	.519**	.498**	.457**
TL: IM	.635**	.384**	.530**	.587**
TL: IS	.551**	.386**	.517**	.423**
TL: IC	.541**	.277*	.545**	.463**
PGL Total	.702**	.278*	.642**	.710**
ECES	.585**	.287*	.485**	.592**
Outcome Total	.198	.277*	.077	.133
Academic	.169	.241*	.078	.100
Behavior	.069	.147	-.033	.059
Attendance	-.091	.008	-.139	-.079
P/C Climate	.091	.108	.026	.086
Student Climate	.290*	.360*	.161	.191
Staff Climate	.239*	.208	.154	.218
Climate Total	.234*	.258*	.150	.161
Awards	.030	.062	-.066	.091

*Note.* \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$

A total of 35 significant correlations were found from among the 64 correlations run for Vulnerable Leader. Among those 35 significant correlations, 24 were found to be significant with a  $p$  value less than .01. A correlation of .585 showed a very high correlation between Vulnerable Leadership and the ECES, which was one of the main correlations for the Vulnerable Leadership research question. Specifically connected to that correlation, all three of the subcomponents of Vulnerable Leader also correlated to ECES: Openness (.287), Authenticity (.485), and Humility (.592). Additionally, there were exceptionally high correlations amongst all three of the leadership frameworks: Vulnerable Leader total was significantly correlated to Transformational Leader total at .763, and Vulnerable Leader total was significantly correlated to Professional Growth Leader total at .702. Finally, there were only a few significant correlations between

Vulnerable Leader and performance outcomes or awards, namely climate variables, with Vulnerable Leader total significantly correlated to climate total at .234.

### Transformational Leadership

A Pearson correlation for Transformational Leadership total and each of the four subcomponents was run with: (a) Vulnerable Leader and its subcomponents; (b) Professional Growth Leader total score; (c) ECES; (d) outcomes summary; (e) individual outcomes; (f) climate summary; and (g) awards. Table 25 shows these Pearson correlations:

Table 25  
*Transformational Leadership Correlations*

	<u>TL Total</u>	<u>TL: II</u>	<u>TL: IM</u>	<u>TL: IS</u>	<u>TL: IC</u>
VL Total	.763**	.613**	.635**	.551**	.541**
VL: Openness	.532**	.519**	.384**	.386**	.277*
VL: Authenticity	.671**	.498**	.530**	.517**	.545**
VL: Humility	.615**	.457**	.587**	.423**	.463**
PGL Total	.567**	.378**	.511**	.392**	.521**
ECES	.367**	.329**	.322**	.231*	.223
Outcome Total	.055	.053	.01	.02	.129
Academic	.155	.179	.038	.026	.233*
Behavior	.028	.004	.033	.205	.118
Attendance	-.144	-.448	-.320	-.279	-.087
P/C Climate	-.045	-.089	.040	.071	-.019
Student Climate	.133	.200	-.042	.084	.104
Staff Climate	.027	.022	-.122	.100	.055
Climate Total	.034	.025	-.081	.091	.046
Awards	-.110	-.059	.035	-.126	-.202

*Note.* \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$

Correlations between Transformational Leadership and Vulnerable Leadership, as well as all subcomponents of Transformational Leader and Vulnerable Leader are significant. The lowest correlation among these subcategories is between the Vulnerable Leader component of Openness and the Transformational Leader component of

Individualized Consideration with a correlation of .277. When comparing Transformational Leadership to Professional Growth Leadership, both the total Transformational Leadership and all of the subcomponents were significant. When comparing ECES to Transformational Leader, correlations between ECES and Transformational Leader total, Idealized Influence and Inspirational Motivation were significant while ECES and Intellectual Stimulation (.231) and Individual Consideration (.223) were not. There were no significant correlations between Transformational Leader and performance outcomes or awards.

### **Professional Growth Leadership**

Measures used to analyze Professional Growth Leadership were created for this study. Eighteen questions were developed from literature surrounding best practices in both professional development and character education. As was shown earlier in Table 21, the PGL total scale was reliable, while the three subcomponent scales did not meet the .7 threshold for the Cronbach's alpha reliability (Building Learning Capacity = .652, Teacher Empowerment, .596, and Adult Culture = .615). As the statistical analyses were all done at the same time, the correlations between each of the PGL subcomponents and all of the other variables were still run. Those correlations, even though the subcomponents of PGL were not reliable, are shown in the overall correlation matrix (Appendix G), however they are not shown or discussed here or in the discussion chapter.

For the total Professional Growth Leadership score, Pearson correlations were run with: (a) Vulnerable Leader and its subcomponents; (b) Transformational Leader and its subcomponents; (c) ECES, (d) outcomes summary; (e) individual outcomes; (f) climate summary; and, (g) awards. Table 26 shows these Pearson correlations:

Table 26  
*Professional Growth Leader Correlations*

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	<u>PGL Total</u>
VL Total	.702**
VL Openness	.278*
VL Authenticity	.642**
VL Humility	.710**
TL Total	.567**
TL: II	.378**
TL: IM	.511**
TL: IS	.392**
TL: IC	.521**
ECES	.550**
Outcome Total	.209
Academic	.137
Behavior	.002
Attendance	-.043
P/C Climate	.260*
Student Climate	.278*
Staff Climate	.138
Climate Total	.258*
Awards	.089

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*Note.* \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$

The correlations between Professional Growth Leadership and Vulnerable Leadership were exceptionally high. The PGL total score also correlated significantly to every single subcomponent of Transformational Leader and Vulnerable Leader. The correlation to Vulnerable Leader total (.702) and Vulnerable Leader: Humility (.710) was particularly high. PGL total score also significantly correlated to ECES (.555).

There were some significant correlations between Professional Growth Leader and climate. The parent/community correlations were represented in Professional Growth Leader total (.260). PGL total also correlated with student climate (.278) and climate summary (.258). There were no significant correlations between Professional Growth Leader and outcomes or awards (.089).



### **Qualitative Results**

Qualitative interviews were conducted with 17 principals who graduated from LACE and presumably had a good understanding of character education and how its effective implementation can positively impact schools. These semi-structured interviews included questions regarding effective practices in character education as measured by ECES, as well as questions regarding characteristics of Vulnerable Leadership, Transformational Leadership and Professional Growth Leadership.

As we quote from the interviews below, we provide an in-text citation with the interviewee's name code, identify it as an interview, and give the line numbers of the quote in the transcript. As these are personal communications, there are no references for the interviews in the reference section. All 17 interviews were conducted during March and April of 2016 so no specific date is given in each citation.

After we conducted and recorded each interview, we each manually transcribed our interviews. We shared transcriptions with one another and each of us read all 17 transcribed interviews multiple times, so we could become familiar with the data. During this process we each recorded notes in the margins of the interviews. After all interviews were transcribed and shared, we began to analyze the transcripts through an inductive process. This bottom up process allowed us to begin coding without trying to fit meaning units into our preconceived notions. We shared all interview transcriptions with one another so that each of us could become familiar with all the interviews.

After this, all transcriptions were returned to the researcher who conducted the interview with notes from all team members. One researcher developed a list with all identified meaning units in their interviews. This document was sent to other members of

the team so they could add to the existing list and include more codes. This inductive process ended with 167 initial codes. Throughout the process, the researchers reviewed the codes both with a lens for the four individual research topics as well as potential overarching themes that might transcend any one individual research topic.

When reviewing initial codes, we discussed and analyzed each code and began the process of organizing groups, which led to 27 initial themes. At this point, the process shifted from a data-driven inductive analysis, to a deductive analysis, and finally, to a concept-driven content analysis. “A deductive content analysis is used when the structure of the analysis is operationalized on the basis of previous knowledge and the purpose of the study is theory testing” (Elo & Kyngas, 2007, p. 109). This top down process was used to analyze the interviews with the lens of the four individual research areas. The lead questions in this analysis were how the interviewees discussed the effective character education practices, the Vulnerable Leadership framework and its subcomponents, the Transformational Leadership framework and its subcomponents, and the Professional Growth Leadership framework and its subcomponents.

For the next step in our analysis, we returned to the inductive thematic process. We jotted potential themes on a white board and created thematic maps so we could literally see the big picture and how it tied to the concepts on our logic model. The 27 initial themes were revised into a final list of five themes, based on the principals’ impassioned responses and frequent or strong use of words and phrases. Each of the themes was able to stand on its own and capture the most important concepts of the interviews.

Before discussing the five themes, it is important to identify some limitations of the interview process. One limitation was differences in the way the interviews were conducted. Even with attempts to conduct them the same way, transcripts reveal that each different interviewer asked different follow up questions and/or explained some questions differently. Another limitation is that some of the questions had specific terms, such as Openness that may have been understood differently by participants. Third, as we are not experienced qualitative researchers, there were certain missteps early in the process of working with the transcripts and codes to identify themes; eventually those missteps were corrected. Finally, removing bias from any research is difficult, but it is an even bigger challenge for coding and analyzing qualitative data. Even with those limitations for the qualitative analysis, the research team feels confident about the integrity of the themes identified.

In the following section, findings around the individual areas of research will be presented and then the five themes will be described.

### **Effective Character Education Practices**

The 16 effective character education practices identified in Chapter 7 make up the ECES. The first three questions of the qualitative interviews dealt with effective character education practices.

The first question in this section of the interview was, “As a LACE graduate and school leader who believes in character education, can you please identify what you think are the three most effective character education practices employed in your school and why?” There were no prompts or lists to guide the principals. The follow up question was, “Which had the greatest impact on character education success at your school?”

Without any guidelines or restrictions given by the interviewers, the principals mentioned a total of 27 different practices. The interviewees were free to mention any practices they wanted. Those starred align with or relate to one of the 16 effective strategies identified in Chapter 7. The 27 are: (1) building relationships,\* (2) developing core values,\* (3) role modeling,\* (4) embedding character education in the curriculum,\* (5) intentional teaching of character education,\* (6) professional development,\* (7) service learning, (8) class meetings, (9) student empowerment,\* (10) student voice, (11) accept kids and families, (12) advisory program, (13) buddy day,\* (14) data tracking,\* (15) diversity, (16) faculty/staff voice, (17) goal setting, (18) improved instructional strategies, (19) involve students, (20) parent buy-in, (21) positive behavior support, (22) school culture,\* (23) school-wide book study, (24) school-wide meetings, (25) shared leadership,\* (26) start with adults, (27) student council.

This question provided no list of practices, limitations, definitions, or guidelines regarding effective practices and, as a result, the principals mentioned a wide range of practices. Here are several quotes from the principals that illustrate why they prioritize certain practices: “It [character education] all centers on relationships, it all centers on relationships with kids” (Ken K., interview, 7-8). “One of the things we try to do is really set good examples for students” (Dan D., interview, 7). “Being accepting of kids and their families the way they are, despite how they come in with baggage or no baggage or struggles or not struggling, just accepting the individuals for who they are” (Doris D., interview, 13-15).

In the 27 practices mentioned, the principals named eight of the 16 effective practices identified in Chapter 7. They also mentioned elements of three other practices

from the 16. The practices not mentioned in whole or part were developmental discipline, safe environment, assess culture annually, moral reflection, and social and emotional learning. The principals named 16 other practices they felt are important. This illustrates to a degree the difference between what the literature shows to be effective and what a small group of principals who have a great deal of experience and a good deal of exposure to character education concepts value or consider to be effective in their schools. Surprisingly, the principals only named 8 of the 16 best practices identified by the literature, far less than half of the 27 practices the principals mentioned. The principals didn't mention five of the 16 practices at all.

For the second question, principals were shown 16 note cards. Each note card listed one of the 16 effective practices identified by the research in Chapter 7. Question 2 asked, "Looking at the effective practices listed on these cards, which of these are most important to you and why?" Principals were not asked to limit answers to a certain number of practices, just to select those they felt were most important. When the choices of effective practices were limited to the 16, the results were different than when they could name any character education practices they valued without any limits.

In answering question two, one participant said, "You can make a case for all 16 of these and they all come together as one big web" (George B., interview, 58-59). Thirteen principals selected relationships as being important to them, while only five named relationships when unprompted in answering question one. An example from an interview was, "You can't do much with children if you don't have a relationship with them, and you have to build a relationship with the child and the child's family. If we don't have the relationship and they don't trust us, it's all a moot point" (Doris D.,

interview, 45-50). Another principal said, “If you don’t have the relationships in the first place you’re not going to get to the point of having [other character education practices,] so relationships have to always be worked at” (Byron S., interview, 68-72). One of the most significant findings from the interviews was the importance of strong relationships to both leading a school and creating an effective school culture. The importance so many principals place on relationships supports what we found in the literature reviews for all four areas of our research.

Ten principals identified core values as the next most important practice, while only five mentioned it in question one as being one of the most important. One principal who selected core values stated, “the first thing is identifying our core values and having that as the guide for everything we do in our school” (Kevin K., interview, 7-8).

Nine principals identified safe environment (physically and emotionally) as important, while none named it in question one. One leader stated:

My first is a safe environment physically and emotionally and that goes back to our hierarchy of needs. If people don’t feel safe, they’re not going to go any further. So we have to spend time developing an environment where students and staff feel they’re in a safe place, a good place. They know things will get handled in a way that is safe and responsible. (Byron S., interview, 55-60)

It is interesting that one principal mentioned Maslow’s hierarchy of needs to explain why physical and emotional safety is their most important practice. But if students don’t feel safe, as well as having food and other basic needs being met, they will not care about higher elements in the hierarchy including learning.

On question two, seven principals selected professional development, compared to three principals mentioning it in question one.

Professional learning and PD time is the vehicle through which we address our school goals. Our PD time and our PL time is centered on first of all what we want them to know and that assessment piece, then we bring the results back and discuss what worked and what didn't. Then we start exploring best practices to see what we need to do to make that happen. (Ken K., interview, 172-175)

Six principals chose school-wide character education culture, and one said, "when we all come together and we have those guiding principles as a whole unit, I think that strengthens us" (Doris D., interview, 52-53), while only one principal mentioned it in question one. Finally, five principals selected role modeling, while five principals answering question one also mentioned it. A principal said: "One of the things we try to do is really set good examples for students; proper ways to interact with one another, and also interact with them" (Dan D., interview, 7-8). The principals' selected more of the effective practices the research found to be most effective once the 16 choices were offered.

By having their choices limited to 16 effective practices, more principals identified several research based effective practices and said several of them were more important than the practices they named without the card prompts while answering question one. The top practices were (with the number of principals mentioning it in parentheses): relationships (13), core values (10), safe environment (9), professional development (7), school-wide character education culture (6), role modeling (5), shared leadership (4), direct teaching of character education (3), opportunities for moral action

(3), family and community involvement in school (1), empowerment (1), and social and emotional learning (1). See Table 27.

Table 27

*Effective Character Education Practices Selected by Principals in Question 2*

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1. Relationships (13)
2. Core Values (10)
3. Safe Environment both Physically and Emotionally (9)
4. Professional Development (7)
5. School-wide Character Education Culture and Focus (6)
6. Role Modeling (5)
7. Strong/Shared Leadership (4)
8. Direct Teaching about Character (3)
9. Opportunities for Moral Action (3)
10. Family and Community Involvement in School (1)
11. Empowerment (1)
12. Social Emotional Learning (1)
13. Developmental Discipline (0)
14. Assess Culture and Climate Annually (0)
15. Moral Reflection (0)
16. Peer Interactive Strategies (0)

*Note.* The number of principals that mentioned the practice is in parentheses.

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Building and having good relationships was the effective practice most principals mentioned as important followed by core values and a safe environment. No principals selected four of the 16: developmental discipline, assess culture annually, moral reflection, or peer interactive strategies.

Question three dealt with the role their leadership played in implementing character education strategies. Question three asked: “What role did your leadership play in the effective implementation of these strategies, as compared to the role of the teachers?” All but two principals said that their initial leadership was critical to initiating character education practices in their schools, but that over time faculty and staff began to take leadership roles in character education. One principal said “when we formed that



team and expanded that team to include different staff members, they pretty much took the lead...the teachers directed it. The teachers developed the initiatives and the activities and the process” (Byron S., interview, 117-121). The interviews showed a clear pattern of character education being championed by the principal for a beginning period of time while faculty and staff learned about character education from the principal and other sources of information. However, once the faculty and staff caught the vision of what character education could do to transform the school and the students, they became champions and leaders.

These 17 principals, all LACE graduates, demonstrated a good understanding of effective character education practices during the interviews. They could spontaneously name a number of effective character education practices, discuss which practices were valuable to them and why, and talk about the role their leadership played in helping others understand and practice effective character education practices. Interestingly, these leaders with experience in character education did not identify many of the 16 effective practices discussed in this research, until they were prompted with the names of the practices on a note card. Prompting with cards appeared to be the catalyst for leaders to recall what they may have once considered a best practice. Even with prompts, none of the principals considered developmental discipline, annual assessment of school climate, and moral reflection to be effective or important. This could be due to a misunderstanding of what those practices are. Discipline is a significant issue in all schools and it is surprising that it was not selected as important, but developmental discipline may not be understood or valued. Performing an annual assessment of the school culture is both time consuming and can be expensive if an outside service provider

is used. Moral reflection is important and it would be interesting to follow up on why this was not selected at all. More interpretation of this section of the interview will be discussed in the following chapter.

### **Vulnerable Leader**

Qualitative interview questions were designed to better understand if leaders think the components of Vulnerable Leadership (Openness, Authenticity, and Humility as defined in this dissertation) are key to effective character education leadership. Interviews determined that all of the participants agreed that Openness, Authenticity and Humility are important to effective leadership. The Vulnerable Leader framework and its three components were not shared with the participants during the interview; the questions addressed the underlying characteristics and concepts of the framework. Looking more closely at the interview transcripts helped better understand what sense interviewees make and what value they place on the various components of being a Vulnerable Leader. Looking more closely at the transcripts also helped to later identify and understand potential overarching themes that transcend any one individual area of research. First, conclusions specifically connected to the three components of the Vulnerable Leader interview questions will be discussed.

The first question of this section of the interview was, “Now we are going to talk about three specific characteristics: openness, authenticity and humility. We will start with openness. Is openness important to effectively leading a school? Why or why not?” The follow up question was, “If yes, can you give a few specific examples of how you practice openness?” Consistent in the answers was that openness was important to the principals in their leadership styles and practices. Three main threads appeared as to why

and how the principals thought openness was important because it: (a) it allows for the best ideas to come forward, (b) it allows for more “buy in” to an organization or vision, and (c) it helps build healthy communication and relationships.

First, one of the prevalent ideas about why openness was important to the leader was because being open allows for more good ideas to enter the decision-making processes, i.e. the leaders appreciate input. One participant put it this way: “[Being open] is what creates the invitation to allow others to be part of the entire process” (Paul M., interview, 164-165). Another participant put it this way: “You have to be open to all possibilities and all ways of thinking” (George B., interview, 215). Will B. shared: “There are so many times people come to me with things I never, ever would have thought of” (interview, 148-149). The commentary thread was about principals needing to be open to listening to others’ ideas and ways of thinking so that the best ideas, ones not necessarily held by the principal, could come forward.

Second, there was also a connected notion that being open leads to more buy in, which ultimately can lead to a stronger organization. For example, Paul M. shared: “Having an openness about you is what invites others to help positively affect the whole organization” (interview, 167-168). Principals being open to input and open to critique show their staff that the principal doesn’t need to have all the answers. It also allows the principal to create a space for others to want to contribute. One principal’s comment illustrates this point particularly well:

In order to have good, honest dialogue you need to be open to hear things that you don’t want to hear – like hey this is what we are doing but when it doesn’t go well and people are not... if you don’t have that open and honest dialogue then people

are not going to tell you its not working then you can't fix it, you can't change it and you just increase the level of frustration and you reduce the odds of it working out. (Kerry A., interview, 185-190)

This level of openness connects to the Vulnerable Leader component of thinking deeply, i.e. thinking deeply on input from staff and being open to input helps facilitate a collective sense of ownership of the school.

Finally, openness was also frequently positioned as an important part of healthy communication, which serves as a foundational building block for relationships. "It's a key to communication. Oh, it's a big huge key to thinking outside your familiarity box. It's a key to gathering information. It's just a key" (Sandy V., interview, 231-233). Or, as Lilly H. said, "I think openness leads to a good line of communication" (interview, 112-113). The notion of authenticity was also interconnected with these responses, with the commentary thread being that open communication helps build authentic relationships. Being open to input and sharing leadership was mentioned in almost every interview as an important part of leadership.

Overall, openness was consistently commented upon to be an important part of effective leadership. The next question in the section was about authenticity: "Next we will talk about authenticity and being yourself in the workplace. Is authenticity important to effectively leading a school? Why or why not?" The follow up question was, "If yes, can you give a few specific examples of how you practice authenticity." Similar to Openness, the answers were consistent that Authenticity was important to the principals in their leadership styles and practices. Three main threads appeared about why and how the principals thought Authenticity was important: (a) genuinely showing who you are is

important, (b) authenticity cultivates trusting relationships, and (c) actions and behaviors have to be driven by that core authentic self.

First, a prevalent and recurring idea was that of leaders truly being themselves and being self-aware. Participants talked about how important it is to not pretend they are someone they are not, care about something they don't, or know something they don't. Cheryl D. shared: "People can detect the smell of phony within 5 min" (interview, 82-83). Phoniness, or not genuinely caring, was commented upon as easily identifiable and dangerous to an organization. For example, Ken K. shared: "Authenticity, you have got to know that someone is real. You've got to know that your boss is real. We have all worked for a stuffed shirt person we were afraid to approach because we don't know what is going on with them" (interview, 347-350). Many of the participants commented that being genuinely aware of who they are and showing that true self to their staff is an important part of their effective leadership.

Another recurring thread was being authentic helps build trusting relationships amongst the community. Kerry A. reflected upon how being authentic and empathetic helps her build trusting relationships: "When people can open up about themselves personally the work stuff becomes real easy... I think when you can speak to someone on a personal level and show that empathy... they are like, *wow – I really appreciate your understanding*" (interview, 218-229). By opening up about themselves and genuinely caring about a person, staff can begin to trust and relate to their leader. Dan D also spoke about staff relating to the principal. "You have to be relatable to an extent. You have to be who you are, genuine and true to you as an individual" (interview, 179-180). Byron S. also spoke about how authenticity builds relationships within the school: "I think when

you are authentic, as a leader, and people see you are you are, that builds relationships with staff” (interview, 318-319). Authenticity has the power to cultivate trusting relationships. It can help show staff that a leader is both a real person and genuinely cares about the staff. Another principal put it this way: “It goes back to the trust thing and do you care about me. Can I trust you? Do you care about me? Are you committed to excellence? The two things, can I trust you and do you care about me?” (Ken K., interview, 345-347). Finally, a different principal sums it up this way: “I have found that being who I really am was sort of the turning point in me helping build the relationships I have with everyone I have” (Matt S., interview, 216-217).

The final thread of the conversations about authenticity was the need for the consistency and regularity of that authenticity. In order to build the trusting relationships, principals commented how they must *always* be authentic – whether in the building or not. “I can’t put on a fake face and be somebody different when I go to Wal-Mart or when I go to church. Being that authentic person you know who I am and what I stand for and probably what my ideas are in most cases” (Val H., interview, 278-281). Principals commented that each and every one of their decisions had to come from an authentic self. “It’s back to the core value of how you... your fellow belief in people. And yourself. That’s displayed through how you act yourself” (Paul M., interview, 206-207). Their reason for making their decisions had to come from a genuine place. George B. shared that “you genuinely have to care about what you are doing in education and who you are working with” (interview, 232-233).

Overall, authenticity was consistently commented upon to be an important part of effective leadership. The next question in the section was about humility: “Finally we

will talk about humility. Is humility important to effectively leading a school? Why or why not?" And the follow up question was, "If yes, can you give a few specific examples of how you practice humility?" Similar to openness and authenticity, humility was important to the principals in their leadership styles and practices. Answers about humility showed that most all of the interviewees did not believe it was their job to have all the answers or to showcase themselves as the driving reasons for a school's success; rather they valued celebrating the success of others instead of their own. Three main threads appeared about why and how the principals thought humility was important: (a) being selfless and other-oriented, (b) owning mistakes to show humanity, and (c) building trusting relationships.

First, principals commented on the overall nature of Humility as being important. Threads of what was important to them related to the ideas of a leader being selfless and other-oriented, i.e. caring more about the organization and staff than themselves. "Yes you have to be humble enough to know it is not for your glory – it goes along with that idea of being a servant" (Val H., interview, 294-295). George B. expressed it this way: "Something I learned in my counseling program was, don't you dare take on your clients victories as your own" (interview, 260-261). In the conversations about selflessly looking outward instead of inward, principals comments underscored their priority on the organization overall, rather than themselves, in determining the success of the school: "So, realizing that I'm just one piece of the puzzle and hopefully I can make that puzzle and team stronger, but it's not about me, it's really about others" (Kelsey E., interview, 206-208). Or, Kerry A. commented how it is important for others to share the spotlight and the celebrations: "Show that you are letting others get those recognitions and

celebrations because that's your goal to make them feel good about themselves. That's how it carries on and progresses" (interview, 236-238). This sense of other-orientation and selfless prioritization of the organization was definitely a big part of why and how the participants thought Humility was important to their leadership.

Another thread about why principals rated Humility as important is that they think owning up to their mistakes is a way of showing that they are humans, too. It was interesting that two participants voluntarily evoked the word vulnerability in their commentary about Humility, even though the word "vulnerability" had not been used anywhere in the interview questions or commentary from the interviewer. Cheryl D. commented: "You have to show vulnerability. You have to own up to your mess-ups. People respect that, it makes you human" (interview, 91-92). Dan D. expressed a very similar thought: "You have to show vulnerability, you have to be able to own up. As you lead, you are in the front, so if you mess up, you have to own up to that" (interview, 89-190). Sandy V. shared the same idea: "You have to be able to say I was wrong. I made a mistake. And that allows others to see you as a human being, not just the title. Sometimes people get wrapped up in the title and don't look at you as a human being" (interview, 260-263). Each of them reflected on how being humble and owning mistakes helped their staff see them as someone equally capable of making and admitting failures.

The final thread of why and how the principals thought Humility was important was that they see it as another way to build trusting relationships. Byron S. expressed very clearly the sentiment that many others shared: "It builds trust. It builds relationships with staff. If they see that it's all about you, that you're above mistakes, you're above sharing credit or lack of credit or whatever, you're going to lose a lot of trust to a lot of



people” (interview, 329-332). Similarly, Matt S. shared that “humility is what has allowed me to, maybe not necessarily to build, but maintain all the relationships I have with all the people with whom I’ve had them with” (interview, 234-235). The qualitative data from the interviews clearly supported the notion that Humility can help cultivate trusting relationships. That, combined with owning mistakes to show a human side, and being selflessly other-oriented all combine as to why and how leaders think Humility is important to their effective leadership.

When the threads from the questions about each of the three components (Openness, Authenticity, and Humility) are compared to the subcomponents from the proposed Vulnerable Leader framework (see Chapter 4), it is exciting that the threads are very closely related to subcomponents. Table 28 shows first the subcomponents and then the data threads from the interviews.

Table 28  
*Qualitative Data in Support of Vulnerable Leader Framework*

VL Component	Open	2. Authentic	3. Humble
VL Sub-components	A. Willingness to Change B. Thinks Deeply C. Values Creativity D. Appreciates Input	A. Possesses Self Awareness B. Guided By Internal Moral Perspective C. Self-regulates Behaviors D. Trustworthy Behaviors	3. Leads Selflessly B. Prioritizes Organization C. Is Other-Focused D. Models Moral Integrity
Data Threads From Interviews [Subcomponents Represented are Bracketed]	(1) Allows for the best ideas to come forward [Connects to A, D, B] (2) Allows for more “buy in” to an organization or vision [Connects to D] (3) Helps build healthy communication and relationships [Connects to Interpersonal dimension]	(1) Genuinely showing who you are is important [A] (2) Authenticity cultivates trusting relationships [D] (3) Every decision and behavior has to be connected to that core authentic self [C]	(a) Being selfless and other-oriented [A, B, C] (b) Owning mistakes to show humanity (c) Building trusting relationships [C]

As is shown in the brackets above in Table 28, most subcomponents were identified in one of the data threads from the interview data. It was interesting that morality did not appear as clearly, both in Authenticity: Guided By Internal Moral Perspective and Humility: Models Moral Integrity, which can possibly be explained because moral compass and general pro-social nature was already evident in the overall approach to the practices within ECES.

The final question of this section of the interview asked participants to rank and prioritize the three components of the Vulnerable Leader framework, “Of these three characteristics (Openness, Humility, and Authenticity), how would you rank them in order of importance?” with a follow up question of “Why?” When asked this question, 12 of 17 principals ranked Authenticity as most important, 2 principals marked Humility as

most important, and 3 principals marked Openness as most important. It is interesting that so many participants identified Authenticity as the most important to them. It is also interesting that multiple participants noted how important each of the three components, in their own way, is in building trusting relationships. Those observations will be discussed in the next chapter.

### **Transformational Leader**

When interviewees were questioned about components of effective leadership, they were shown 24 note cards with a single Transformational Leadership component on each card. These traits, listed in Table 8, include: (1) charismatic, (2) ethical, (3) role model, (4) strong work ethic, (5) admired, (6) risk taker, (7) frequently charismatic, (8) strong vision, (9) values/ideas articulated, (10) stimulates enthusiasm, (11) builds confidence, (12) communicates clearly, (13) encourages creativity, (14) welcomes challenge, (15) seeks diverse opinions, (16) encourages risk, (17) flexible, (18) open, (19) creates a supportive climate, (20) provides new learning, (21) accepts differences, (22) develops others, (23) serves as a mentor/coach, (24) builds relationships.

The first question in this section of the interview asked participants to select only three cards that represented the three most important leadership components for effectively leading a school. Of the 17 principals interviewed, all initially struggled with the task and had difficulty selecting only three cards from the 24 choices. As they looked through the choices many commented that they were all important and interconnected. One principal said, "Only three? Ah man, this is hard!" (Paul M., interview, 131). After giving them time to grapple with the options and prioritize, 13 principals stated that building relationships was one of the most important; eight indicated strong vision was

important, and five stated creating a supportive climate was in the top three. Developing others, clear communication, and being ethical were selected by four principals each as the top three.

The second question in this section asked principals to select three components that were least important for effectively leading a school. All of the interviewees initially indicated that it was impossible to select three because they were all important. One processed the request with, "Least important? Hummm this is hard. They are really all important. I don't know if I can pick three" (Paul M., interview, 131-134). When pressed to prioritize the least important, 15 said that being admired was not really that important in being effective leader. Ten indicated being charismatic was not critical to being effective.

The third question of this section asked the principals to identify the component that was most difficult for them to put into practice. These answers varied greatly. Some examples of responses include:

- "I guess flexible because in some ways I'm not flexible ... like I have to be careful if I'm going down a path I can't just say yep this is what we are doing I have to articulate why and discuss slowly this is why we are doing it" (Tom H., interview, 170-173).
- "I provide new learning because time is our enemy. Staying ahead of the game is tough to do sometimes" (George B., interview, 179-181).
- "I'd say developing others... I'd say anything that you have less control of developing others is hard ... building confidence is hard" (Matt S., interview, 186-187).

The final question in this section asked principals to select three things that should be taught to prospective principals. Five participants indicated they should be taught how to develop others. Four indicated the following were important: building confidence in others, encouraging risk, stimulating enthusiasm, providing new learning, and welcoming challenge.

Table 29 illustrates the top five responses for the four questions about the 24 traits of Transformational Leadership. Relationship building, creating a supportive culture, having a strong vision and developing others were all mentioned as most important, so much so that they articulated each should be taught to future principals. Having a strong vision was articulated as one of the most challenging tasks for principals. Stimulating enthusiasm was selected as least important as well as challenging. There was more agreement in what these principals saw as important than in tasks they felt were least important and challenging. This may be due to differences in personality, experience, and district support and will be examined in the Discussion Chapter. Table 29 reflects the Transformational Leader characteristics selected by principals during the interviews.

Table 29  
*Frequently Identified TL Characteristics*

Transformational Leader Characteristics	Most Important	Least Important	Most Challenge	Should Be Taught
Relationships	x			x
Supportive Culture	x		x	x
Strong Vision	x			x
Develops Others	x			x
Flexible	x			
Admired		x		
Charismatic		x		
Welcomes Challenge		x		
Open		x		
Stimulates Enthusiasm		x	x	
Accepts Differences				x
Provides New Learning			x	
Encourages Creativity			x	
Encourages Risk			x	

Of the 24 characteristics of Transformational Leaders, three are also considered to be effective practices: relationships, role modeling, and supportive (or character focused) culture. This interesting finding will be discussed in the final chapter. Additionally, several Transformational Leader characteristics are also supported in the Vulnerable Leader research. Subcomponents of Vulnerable Leader research that intersect with Transformational Leader characteristics include: (a) values creativity, (b) appreciates input, (c) exhibits trustworthy behaviors, (d) other-focused, and (e) models moral integrity. These connections will also be addressed in the Discussion Chapter.

**Professional Growth Leader**

The interviewees were asked four questions regarding professional growth at their schools. The questions included: (a) What guides you in creating a culture of professional learning? (b) Describe the kinds of opportunities teachers have to collectively learn both within and beyond the school? (c) How does professional learning contribute to your school goals? (d) How and in what ways do you use your time for your own professional learning? All of these questions were intended to be big picture, open ended, and aimed at going deeper into their thoughts on the three sub factors of the Professional Growth Leader: Building Learning Capacity, Teacher Empowerment, and Positive Adult Culture. The questions were intentionally written for the principals to describe opportunities and ways they prioritize and create a culture that is connected to professional growth.

Three main ideas developed from principal's responses regarding how they created a culture of professional learning: (a) having no say in professional growth, (b) professional growth is a collaborative process, and (c) professional growth differs from professional development. Three of the 17 principals explained that they have no control over creating a professional growth culture due to the hierarchical environment of the school district. According to those three principals, the learning is specifically outlined for their buildings based on the professional development schedule and initiatives that the district sets out for them.

In contrast, the other 14 principals discussed finding ways as a leader to create such a culture. They mentioned collaboration to some degree as a factor in creating professional growth. Additionally they articulated that there is a difference between professional growth and professional development. For example, "professional growth is

more continual whereas PD is seen as a more specific thing that people need to learn about” (Denise L., interview, 67-68). This leader appears to understand that professional growth is deeper and more intentional than traditional professional development, which is often superficial and short-lived. Ten of the 17 principals reported professional growth had to do with the needs of the teachers or the students. Another five of the 17 principals reported that the school vision was the guiding factor for developing that culture. Interestingly, only two of the 17 principals identified character education as playing a part in creating their learning culture.

When asked to articulate the kinds of opportunities that are provided to aid in teacher’s professional growth, the answers varied. Although each school seemed to have their own approach to activities, many of the principals spoke about the importance of collaboration. One principal highlighted the idea of using a collaborative process in order to learn in all of the questions that revolved around professional growth. She reiterated how critical it is to intentionally plan for collaboration. She said, “it is my job to arrange countless opportunities for teachers to work collaboratively and learn from each other” (Lilly H., interview, 83-85).

When discussing the idea of goals and how they are aligned to professional growth in the school, most principals described the need for them to be connected. However, while principals found it ideal to have goals drive the learning, there were several of them that indicated how difficult that actually was to implement. Principals mentioned reasons that it can be a struggle such as teacher interest not always lining up with areas in which they may struggle. “You always have a few teachers interested in something specific when it comes to professional growth and goals, but it may not be



what I think they should be working on. I do look for ways to connect them to others, whether visiting another school or going to a workshop and I usually go with them, I think that is important” (Kelsey E., interview, 108-110). Another frequently mentioned obstacle is goals being mandated from the district or state level that are disconnected to the actual growth and development of the teacher.

Listening to the principals discuss how they use their own time for learning and what role they play in professional growth was helpful in understanding how much they view this as a priority in their position as the school leader. Although not all participants agreed that they should make time in their schedules for their own learning, most articulated the value of making that happen. One principal said, “I make it a priority to learn. I spend time doing legwork so I can help facilitate that same learning with the teachers and colleagues” (Matt S., interview, 131-134).

The responses from the interviews with the 17 principals revealed some important ideas around how professional growth is implemented in their schools. The interviews indicated some priorities: going deep into learning is essential to the teacher’s progress in mastering the art of teaching, learning with the teachers and staff is important, facilitating collaboration needs to be intentional, and professional learning is an ongoing thing.

### **Five Themes**

Along with analyzing the codes and patterns for the four individual research topics, the next step was to analyze the entirety of the qualitative data to look for codes and themes that transcended any one of the four primary research topics. After developing 167 initial codes from the interviews, we worked together to combine and merge those into initial themes, eventually identifying 27 initial themes.

We analyzed those 167 codes and looked for similarities and connections. During this process we discussed and reflected on four primary questions: (a) Where is there overlap? (b) What words mean the same thing? (c) Where do concepts connect? (d) What could be combined to generate initial themes? We also listened for impassioned responses and frequent or strong use of words and phrases in the recorded interviews. During this process it became clear that many of the ideas linked together. For example, the initial codes of “relationships allow students to trust you,” “relationships are the most important,” “everyone in schools needs to have solid relationships,” and “find opportunities to build relationships” merged into an initial theme regarding the importance of relationships. It was also noted that there were outlier comments, i.e. ones that were made by a single interviewee and did not at all resonate with other comments throughout the 17 participants. For example, Danni L. shared, “We did this survey and I got the survey back that said I was not empathetic and it really surprised me, I was like “Yes I am!” (interview, 139-141). Leaders who are truly open and authentic would probably have a better gauge of what their employees thought of them.

Five themes were generated based on the frequency they were mentioned and on the urgency, passion, and time spent in discussion during the interview. In a thematic analysis, themes do not need to be entirely separate, which is the case for this research. The five themes identified as traits of effective leaders are: (a) possesses self-awareness, (b) develops strong vision, (c) shares leadership, (e) builds relationships, and (f) creates a supportive culture.

**Possesses self-awareness.** Based on our interview data, possessing self-awareness was revealed as an important theme. While the term self-awareness can be complex, for

this research, self-awareness is described as the awareness of different aspects of one's own traits, behaviors, and feelings. As a leader, these tie into knowing individual strengths and areas of need, being willing to admit fault, continuously reflect, and grow as a leader. Key components of Vulnerable Leadership, Openness, Authenticity, and Humility, may also contribute to leaders possessing self-awareness. One leader alluded to this connection when he said, "Until I was authentic, I wasn't able to be effective. Once I saw that, once I got in the mirror, it started my journey to see who I really was, but that was something I had to do myself" (Matt S., interview, 263-265) Several initial codes support the creation of the theme self-awareness, including: "being reflective," "willingness to make and own mistakes," and "being honest with yourself." In total, nine of the 27 initial themes supported the theme, possesses self-awareness. One principal talked about being self-aware this way, "Yeah, you have to be comfortable with who you are and understand who you are if you're ever going to know where you want to be with yourself or what direction to be with yourself, or what you might need to do to improve yourself" (Paul M., interview, 186-188). Possessing self-awareness developed as a theme because the data showed it to be important for effective leaders. Much of the interview discussion surrounding Openness, Authenticity and Humility seemed to relate to the concept of being self-aware: many principals acknowledged how important these traits are to leadership.

Several principals also identified being self-aware as an important building block for relationships. One principal put it this way: "In my experience, I have found that being who I really am was sort of the turning point in me helping build the relationships I have with everyone I have" (Matt S., interview, 216-217). The idea that people need to

know themselves before they can enter into honest relationships came up in several interviews.

**Develops strong vision.** Another theme was labeled “Develops strong vision.” A vision is an ability to know or believe what should happen or be done in the future. An interesting finding was that some school leaders discussed the need for a strong personal vision for their schools while others discussed the need for a strong, shared vision that is developed together with school stakeholders. While these certainly are very different ways of considering the importance of vision, in analyzing the initial codes from the 17 interviews, both were found to be important.

Some leaders come to schools with a vision for where they want to lead it. Often leaders are sought and hired for their strong vision. One principal put it this way: “Strong vision provides the needed focus to get you where you need to be” (Kerry A., interview, 134). Another principal put it this way: “Strong vision is critical to improvement because it provides direction” (Tom H., interview, 136). Progress is difficult without strong vision.

Several principals spoke about having a strong vision, both personal and school-wide, being an important building block in building relationships. When leaders build authentic relationships with stakeholders, empower and develop others, and help develop the school’s values and culture, this often leads to the school’s vision becoming a reality. This became clear based on the responses from the principals such as: “Strong vision allows everyone to come together. Being able to mesh your idea and vision with what the teachers and students are saying is a balancing thing” (George B., interview, 82-84). Another principal reflected that a strong vision allows a team to come together to

accomplish important things: “When there is a strong vision then everyone can come together and can put their full force into getting something accomplished” (Danni L., interview, 121-123). Interestingly, the idea of strong vision was in the top five choices of what principals consider one of the most challenging jobs of a leader. The delicate balance of offering a vision while being open to other visions may be why it is considered challenging. The transition from coming into a school with a strong vision for the school and creating a vision with the stakeholders of a school is taxing for leaders as well as those they serve. Not only do leaders have to be willing to let go of the traditional view of the leader's vision being the guiding focus for the school, but the stakeholders do as well. Many traditional schools expect the leader to lead and the staff has little experience or comfort doing what they may consider to be the job of the principal. The hierarchical nature of traditional schools has not allowed or prepared teachers or students to truly share leadership. Creating a shared vision with student, staff, and parent voices may well be the first step in helping others to own their role in leading their school.

Three of the 27 initial themes supported the revised theme of develops strong vision, but the complexity of the conversations around this concept, as well as the fact it was considered one of the most important traits, one that should be taught and one that is most challenging, gave it enough strength to be one of the final five themes.

**Cultivates shared leadership.** Shared leadership in schools refers to a collaborative approach to leading, as opposed to autocratic leadership. Due to the complexity of leading a school, a single leader may not possess all the skills to be effective; therefore, sharing leadership can have a significant impact on the success of a school. Throughout the interviews, principals spoke about sharing leadership by giving

others the responsibility to have a voice in making important decisions. This way of thinking allows everyone to be involved and feel valued. It builds trust and unity in a school. People who know they are valued, contributing members of a group tend to be more engaged in the mission of the school. One principal boiled it down to trusting faculty to be part of the vision and work of leading the school, saying that his faculty knows they can trust him, that he is committed to excellence, and that the faculty can be part of the decisions and excellence with him (Ken K., interview, 235-238).

Several initial codes informed the development of this theme, such as: “teams make all decisions,” “strong, shared leadership begins with the principal,” and “effective leaders make decisions with the input of others.” All 17 interviews indicated the value of a process where leaders share and involve others in the leading and decision-making. Specifically, interviewees mentioned teacher voice, empowerment of teachers and staff, and role modeling as important to this concept. One principal said, “shared leadership is a process that must begin with trust” (Matt S., interview, 8).

Of the five themes supported by the process, two themes demonstrate more connections, more frequency of mention, and more intensity than the other three: builds relationships and creates supportive culture.

**Builds relationships.** Relationships are the way in which people are connected. They are reciprocal in nature, and they are critical for organizational success. Relationships intersected in some way with many of the 167 initial codes and a case could be made for the importance of relationships to self-awareness, shared vision, and shared leadership. This theme appeared with the most frequency and intensity throughout all the interviews and across the various sections of the interviews.

Several codes support the creation of the relationships theme, including “relationships allow students to trust you,” “relationships are foundational,” and “relationships are the basis of everything that needs to happen.” All of the interviewees spoke about the importance of relationships and this theme repeatedly came up in many contexts throughout every interview.

For example, one principal shared, “If you don’t build relationships with staff and students you may as well just go home” (Denise L., interview, 43-44). Another shared, “If you don’t have relationships, you don’t really have anything” (Sandy V., interview, 65-66). And one principal shared, “Relationships - definitely most important I believe” (Matt S., interview, 43). Again and again, these school leaders expressed how important building relationships are to them in leading their schools. Leading a school is directly tied to helping develop individuals, however you have to know who they are as individuals in order to move that forward. Relationships are also important to effective leadership because they enable leaders to develop others. Without trusting, professional relationships in place, leaders would have no ability to help those they lead to grow and develop. “If we don’t have the relationship and they don’t trust us, trying to help or develop teachers is all a moot point” (Doris D., interview, 49-50).

Relationships are critical to school improvement because when relationships are grounded in honesty and trust, people are more willing to take risks, seek help, and reach out. This builds a strong staff who in turn work together to improve the school. Most of the principals commented that building relationships is a critical step for a school to make forward progress: “I don’t think you can really do a whole lot with anything unless you have relationships. It is the foundation to getting anything accomplished” (Denise L.,

interview, 115-116). This theme of building relationships is woven throughout all themes and is thus one of the core themes developed during the interview process.

**Creates supportive culture.** The final theme is “creates supportive culture.” The terms climate and culture are sometimes confused. For the purpose of this theme, we see culture as embedded sustainable values, beliefs, and practices of a school, whereas climate can change, much like a passing storm. A change in climate may alter the mood or feel of a school, but it will not change a deeply embedded, intentionally developed culture. A supportive culture is one where role modeling is critical, there is an understanding that the adult collegiality and trust are foundational, and teacher and student voice is valued. Some of the comments from the interviews that indicated the importance of a supportive culture were: “supporting teachers,” “how to build a positive school culture should be taught,” “willingness to make and own mistakes,” and “being a strong role model.” Creating a positive, supportive culture was considered to be an overarching goal of many of the interviewed principals, equally important to any school goal. As one principal put it, “A culture of character is as important as academics” (Matt S., interview, 69). Another principal underscores the importance of creating a supportive culture this way: “If you don’t have the right culture, the right climate, you’re not developing [character education practices]. You’ve got to know ways to go about doing that, and then everything else falls into place” (Byron S., interview, 377–399).

Many principals also indicated that a supportive culture is a critical anchor for positive and professional relationships in the school. One principal commented about relationships building a culture of safety that can propel progress: “When I get the relationships in play and I can successfully build that relationship first among my



administrative team, then with the DCs, then with the teachers, then folks start to feel safe taking risks, then some pretty good things can happen throughout the building” (Ken K., interview, 218-220).

Character education practices and foundations are a key part to a supportive culture: “Character education school-wide focus is foundational to a positive culture” (Val H., interview, 164). Overall, the theme of creates supportive culture underscores the relational nature of this type of school leadership. Principals mentioning this theme so frequently in their conversations points to the core nature of this theme. Without a supportive culture, schools struggle to make real progress. One principal expressed it this way: “a [negative school] culture can kill a school. If you don’t have the right people, and everyone going in the right direction, you’re wasting your time” (George V., interview, 39-40). Not having a supportive, positive culture can certainly hinder character education efforts.

The quantitative and qualitative results show that there are very strong relationships among and between our four primary areas of research and most of their sub-components. School leaders who internalize and practice the characteristics and traits that are an essential component of each leadership framework—Vulnerable Leader, Transformational Leader, and Professional Growth Leader—and who utilize many of the effective character education practices identified in this research, should be able to bring significant improvements to their schools. Those improvements should bring about vital school cultures with strong adult and student relationships, trust, voice, professional learning, and an emphasis on academic improvement as well as intellectual, moral, performance, and civic character.

### **Chapter 10: Discussion**

In this Dissertation in Practice we examined various character education practices and leadership frameworks with the intention of proposing a paradigm shift for effective school leadership and a list of effective character education practices for leaders to consider. We ultimately seek to improve school leaders, because we believe effective leaders can and should cultivate schools that are places for intellectual, moral, civic, and performance character development (Shields, 2011). In this chapter we share our conclusions about effective frameworks and practices in the field of educational leadership, character education, democratic and civic education, and school governance. We conclude by proposing a new framework for character education leadership.

Early in our work, we created a logic model, which framed the entire study. The logic model (See Figure 2) identified three leadership frameworks: Vulnerable Leadership, Transformational Leadership, and Professional Growth Leadership. We questioned if these frameworks would lead to the use of effective character education practices (measured by ECES). The logic model also showed our hypothesis that using effective character education practices would lead to improved outcomes (academic, attendance, behavior, and climate) and recognition for character education excellence. Our initial hypotheses revolved around the prediction that high scores in any or all of the leadership frameworks would correlate with higher use of effective character education practices and that both would correlate with higher outcome scores and recognitions. Our research questions and hypotheses were generally, but not unequivocally, supported by both quantitative and qualitative results. Moreover, we are pleased about the broader, overarching practical conclusions we can draw for the field.

### **Leadership Frameworks**

From the onset, we wanted to study what makes great character education school leaders. We wanted to know what enables some school leaders to thrive while others struggle, and how some school leaders make a difference in character education while others do not. Two new leadership frameworks were created and an existing model was applied to leadership in character education. There are strong relationships in the data that speak to the potential power each leadership framework has on influencing effective character education leadership and in implementing effective character education practices.

**Vulnerable Leader conclusions.** The concept of vulnerability has had such negative connotations that it may be hard for many in leadership circles to view it as a positive leadership trait. Through our research, we know that effective leaders in character education are unashamed of their vulnerability and understand its power in building relationships and developing a positive school culture. Leaders who have studied character education deeply cannot deny the power of relationships and the role Openness, Authenticity, and Humility play in developing, reciprocating, and sustaining relationships.

Our first research question was: Are leaders who score higher in Vulnerable Leadership (characterized by Openness, Authenticity, and Humility) more likely to report using effective character education practices? To investigate this research question, a reliable measure for Vulnerable Leader was first created. And our data showed that Vulnerable Leaders are more likely to report using effective character education practices.

Our analyses of the results found a very strong relationship between the total Vulnerable Leader score and the Effective Character Education Score (ECES). Each of the three subcomponents of Vulnerable Leader was also strongly and significantly related to ECES. Of the three, it is not entirely surprising that Openness was not as strongly related to ECES as Authenticity and Humility. During the interviews, it became evident different leaders had different impressions of what the term Openness meant, perhaps because it has become an overused, misunderstood buzzword in many educational circles. Some principals asked for clarification while others covered a range of what Openness may include. Many indicated they had an open mind, others said they were open to input, and many quickly responded that their door is always open. Yet many teachers have walked through the open door of a closed minded principal. Our results may have been more informative had we used the term “open to input.”

There were no significant relationships between Vulnerable Leader and outcomes and recognitions with the exception of a significant positive correlation to the climate summary score. The relationship, or lack thereof, between each leadership framework and outcomes will be discussed later in this chapter.

The results from the interviews also support the connection between Vulnerable Leader characteristics and the use of effective character education practices. The five themes identified all connected to the Vulnerable Leader framework. They provide support for the interaction between a Vulnerable Leader’s inner work and relationships to people in the organization. The qualitative research themes: Builds Relationships, Shares Leadership, and Creates a Supportive Culture all connect to Vulnerable Leaders who understand the importance of caring about and developing others (interpersonal). The

themes Possesses Self Awareness and Develops Strong Vision are also prominent in Vulnerable Leaders unafraid of admitting failure, owning mistakes, and seeking ongoing self-improvement (intrapersonal).

Along with the connection between Vulnerable Leader characteristics and the use of effective character education practices being shown, it is pertinent to note the Vulnerable Leader conceptual framework was also supported and a reliable measure was created. The answers from the survey showed a strong relationship between the ECES and the overall concepts of the Vulnerable Leader framework. The interviews also supported the framework, as was shown in Table 28 in Chapter 9. All but two of the twelve subcomponents of Vulnerable Leadership were discussed during the interviews. While future research into the Vulnerable Leader framework is warranted, for now both the quantitative and qualitative data support this new leadership framework and its relationship to ECES.

**Transformational Leader conclusions.** While Transformational Leadership is not a new concept, it is not a heavily emphasized model in educational leadership. This is both surprising and disappointing because schools desperately need transformation and the premise of this model is that the way to transform organizations is to transform the people within them. Principals have the leverage to transform schools but without the knowledge of and desire to become Transformational Leaders, they are less likely to realize change.

Our second research question was: Are leaders who scored higher in Transformational Leadership (characterized by Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, Individual Consideration) more likely to report

using effective character education practices? To investigate this research question, an existing valid and reliable measurement was used. And our data showed that Transformational Leaders are more likely to report using effective character education practices.

Our analyses found a strong relationship between the total Transformational Leader score and the ECES. Three of the four subcomponents of Transformational Leader had a strong relationship to the ECES. It was no surprise that Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, and Intellectual Stimulation were related to leaders who implement effective character education practices. Being an ethical role model, having a strong vision, building confidence, encouraging risk and communicating clearly, all subcomponents of Transformational Leadership, are critical in initiating and sustaining effective character education practices. All 16 practices of the ECES should be implemented more effectively if the leaders are ethical role models who understand the power of relationships in working with all stakeholders. Effectively implementing character education involves a great deal of communication, sharing leadership, and empowering others to be integral in creating a school of character. Transformational leaders focus on transforming people, which really is the ultimate goal of leaders who emphasis developing the character in others.

It was puzzling, however, that Individual Consideration did not show a stronger relationship. Throughout this research, data supported the importance of creating a supportive climate and building relationships, subcomponents of Individual Consideration, as being fundamental to the successful implementation of effective character education practices. The weak connection between Individual Consideration

and ECES in the survey results was contradicted in the interviews. Every principal interviewed spoke of the importance of building relationships, developing others, and creating a supportive climate as important components of their character education efforts. Only four questions on the survey were devoted to Individual Consideration and only two of those were tied to relationships. This may have been insufficient for collecting useful data about the importance of relationships and building a positive climate. Another possibility may be Individual Consideration includes developing others as well as mentoring and coaching. A leader comfortable with authentically sharing leadership may feel peers develop, coach, and mentor one another and it is not only the job of the leader.

Finally, there were no significant relationships between Transformational Leaders and outcomes or recognitions with the exception of a positive relationship between Transformational Leaders and academic outcomes. More about Transformational Leaders and outcomes will be discussed later in this chapter.

In the interviews, principals identified relationships, supportive culture, and developing others as being important enough to be taught to future administrators. The principals interviewed graduated from LACE and have seen the difference relationships, developing others, and creating a supportive culture can have to the continued positive transformation of schools. While Transformational Leadership is not a specific model taught at LACE or in most college programs, we believe this research supports that it should be part of future principal training programs.

Interviews also supported how uncomfortable leaders of character education are with being admired or pretending to have all of the right answers. Having charisma was

also something many of the interview participants were uncomfortable with, even if they admitted to being naturally charismatic. The paradigm shift discussed in this dissertation supports that the leader who is all knowing and doesn't appreciate being questioned is being replaced by leaders who are Vulnerable, Transformational, and Professional Growth Leaders who are eager to learn with their staff.

One of the most unique findings in the Transformational Leadership qualitative data was that the principals interviewed considered Stimulating Enthusiasm to be one of the least important Transformational Leadership traits, but also one of the most challenging for them personally. We believe this may be tied to reluctance about being charismatic and admired. Effective character education leaders know it is important to develop a character education initiative from the ground up, and not force it from the top down; a charismatic leader who seeks admiration from others may struggle giving these ideas time to take root with input from others.

**Professional Growth Leader conclusions.** Professional Growth Leaders understand the importance of deep, ongoing growth for themselves and their staff. We believe that these leaders can not only sustain effective character education initiatives but also improve them over time. Our third research question was: Are leaders who score higher in Professional Growth Leadership (characterized by Building Learning Capacity, Teacher Empowerment, and Positive Adult Culture) more likely to report using effective character education practices? To investigate this research question a measure for Professional Growth Leader was first created, which in its entirety proved to be reliable, however the subcomponents were not shown to be individually reliable.



Our analysis revealed a strong and statistically significant relationship between the total Professional Growth Leader score and the ECES. From the interview data, the idea of a Positive Adult Culture (a Professional Growth Leader subcomponent) emerged as important. This makes sense as implementing effective character education starts with the adults. When teachers are a part of an environment where the adults get along, support each other, and have fun together, it in turn becomes a great model of character for the students. Principals continually mentioned that positive adult relationships created a better learning atmosphere for students. More about the relation between Professional Growth Leader and outcome scores will be discussed later in this chapter.

The interviews with the principals also supported the overall concept of the Professional Growth Leader framework. The discussion around the idea of professional growth as it relates to character education or to the whole school was often presented as foundational work. Principals discussed how helping others learn and continuing to learn themselves are part of their responsibilities as leaders. Three of the qualitative research themes: Builds Relationships, Shares Leadership, and Creates a Supportive Culture all overlapped with the three components of the Professional Growth Leader. Building relationships and Positive Adult Culture, sharing leadership and Teacher Empowerment, and creating a supportive culture and Building Learning Capacity each positively connect and interact with each other. Although there is future research that can and should be done in relation to the framework, it is powerful to discover that the quantitative and qualitative data support the Professional Growth Leadership concept as well as the relationship to ECES. Professional Growth Leaders who focus on making character education a priority in their schools may reap the benefits in improved outcomes for their

efforts. We believe ongoing professional growth centered on building character in students and in oneself will improve connections among people, which will improve school-wide outcomes.

**Integrated Leadership conclusions.** Even though each of these three leadership frameworks has a unique focus, they intersect in many ways. We conceptualize the integration of the three frameworks as a concentric model with the inner circles affecting the outer circles and the outer circles, in turn, affecting the inner circles. Vulnerable Leadership can be seen in the center followed by a Transformational Leadership ring and finally a Professional Growth Leadership ring. If a leader is willing to do the deep self-examination and perpetual personal growth (the heart work), they will then be ready for building relationships with others in order to transform people and practice. Once these are accomplished, a leader who steadfastly works to develop a staff that can transform a school with effective character education practices can maintain ongoing professional growth. And the dynamic nature of this system is that the relationships built and the focus on professional culture also affects the leader's perpetual personal growth: one cannot happen without the others.

One hypothesis was that there would be positive correlations among Vulnerable Leader, Transformational Leader, and Professional Growth Leader, as well as each of their subcomponents. As was shown in Table 22 in Chapter 9, there were strong and significant correlations among the three leadership frameworks' total scores.

A clearer picture of these correlations emerges when looking more closely at which subcomponents of which frameworks were correlated and when considering the qualitative data from the interviews. The strongest correlations were between Vulnerable

Leader and Transformational Leader total scores, as well as Vulnerable Leader and Professional Growth Leader total scores. This makes sense, as the Vulnerable Leader and Transformational Leader frameworks share a similar focus on a leader's ability and willingness to do the inner work on their own personal growth as well as their ability and willingness to prioritize relationships at the same time. While Professional Growth Leader and Transformational Leader total scores were significantly correlated, the correlation was not as strong.

The subcomponents of each leadership framework tell more of the story. The subcomponents of the PGL scale were not reliable, so we can only look more closely at the subcomponents of Transformational Leader and Vulnerable Leader. Doing so highlights the idea of leaders demonstrating Authenticity and Humility as foundational characteristics of effective character education leaders. Those two subcomponents of Vulnerable Leader are the only two subcomponents of any of the leadership frameworks that correlate strongly and significantly (identified as being higher than .6 Pearson's correlation with a  $p$  value less than .01) to the total scores of the other two leadership frameworks. This idea of leaders authentically being themselves and acting in an other-oriented and humble way will be discussed more in the following Implications of Practice section when a new leadership model is suggested.

The interview results provide additional observations about the correlations among all three of the leadership frameworks. From Chapter 9, the five themes identified as characteristics of effective leaders are: (a) possesses self-awareness, (b) develops strong vision, (c) shares leadership, (e) builds relationships, and (f) creates a supportive culture. For the Vulnerable Leader framework, the three themes of (a) possesses self-

awareness, (b) shares leadership, and (c) builds relationships are most directly connected. For the Transformational Leader framework, the theme of shares leadership is most strongly connected with the themes of (a) creates a supportive culture, and (b) builds relationships. For the Professional Growth Leader framework, the themes of (a) shares leadership, and (b) creates supportive culture are most directly connected. Of all the five themes and their connections to the three leadership frameworks, a focus on (a) ongoing personal growth, (b) building authentic relationships, and (c) creating a supportive culture emerged most consistently and most strongly in our data. Where these three frameworks intersect is where we point to a potential new model of leadership.

When integrated, these three separate frameworks have the potential to construct a new powerful character education leadership model. This new suggested model will be discussed in the Implications of Practice section below.

### **Effective Character Education Practices**

The overall effectiveness of character education is hard to measure because personal, ongoing interactions among people are the foundation of character education and they are hard to assess. Additionally, every principal and every teacher, working together or individually to implement effective character education practices, does things differently, which makes measurement challenging. What can and has been measured in this dissertation are 16 research-based practices that are effective when properly implemented. Many failed attempts at developing schools of character lie in reliance on practices and programs alone, instead of people. Practices alone can never replace effective relationships among the people who implement them and the effectiveness of any given practice lies in the heart and skills of those who use them.

For the study of effective character education practices there were two specific research questions: (a) can a research-based set of effective character education practices be identified and effectively measured? And, (b) is a greater use of effective character education practices related to better student and school outcomes? For the first question, a research-based set of effective character education practices was identified and measured. The literature review found significant research that identified effective character education practices researchers determined to be effective in schools. Most of those studies used valid and reliable methods to measure whether a practice was successful or not.

We were unable to find any established measures of the effectiveness of character education practices. All research examined in the literature review used different methodologies to determine the effectiveness of character education practices in their studies. We created the ECES to measure if our research sample utilized any of the 16 effective practices identified in Chapter 7 and it was found to be a reliable measure. The ECES did not ask questions that measured if the research sample considered a practice to be effective. We determined effectiveness based on the use of the practice and outcomes related to that use. Our quantitative survey found school principals identified a number of effective character education practices that brought about change in their schools. The results are detailed in Chapter 9. The ECES was found to work well to measure how the 16 effective practices identified in Chapter 7 related to character education. It also found that there is a strong relation between principals who utilize effective practices and those who exhibit characteristics of the three leadership frameworks. This question was found to be reliable. The qualitative interviews also found the principals identified a number of

character education practices that were effective in their schools, including practices not identified in the literature review.

With regards to the second question, the greater use of effective character education practices does relate to better outcomes, however the relationships between ECES and specific outcomes are not as strong as we believed they might be. This, as well as the relationship between ECES and recognitions, is discussed later in this chapter.

The effective character education practices do have a positive relationship to developing schools where students learn the importance and practice of good character. The research showed that the relationships between effective character education practices (measured by ECES) and outcomes are stronger if school leaders exhibit the characteristics of Vulnerable Leaders, Transformational Leaders, and/or Professional Growth Leaders. The ECES found that there is high correlation between the effective character education practices and the three leadership frameworks. This question showed the ECES to be a reliable measure.

### **Outcomes and Recognitions**

The character education recognition variable was not part of the overall outcome total nor was it addressed directly with its own hypothesis. Recognition was addressed with a single survey question and was not addressed in interviews. Our work led us to believe that there are a number of schools that implement effective character education practices well and never seek recognition. We also think there are some schools that implement only those practices required by a specific recognition program such as Character.org, some of which are among the 16 practices examined in this dissertation. These schools often implement practices on a surface level and fail to sustain the

momentum after recognition has been received. We believe schools that implement effective character education practices for the sole purpose of winning an award may not be led by Vulnerable, Transformational, and/or Professional Growth Leaders. It was included in our study because we believed it would help identify schools that focus on the implementation of effective character education practices.

One of the most disappointing findings in our research was the lack evidence to support our hypothesis that high scores on the Transformational Leader, Vulnerable Leader, and Professional Growth Leader measures would positively correlate to high scores on school outcomes. This hypothesis was not completely supported by quantitative results and not addressed in the interviews. The survey and interviews did not focus heavily on school outcomes. We address this in potential future research and in study limitations at the end of this chapter.

There was not a positive relationship between Vulnerable Leader and recognitions and outcomes with the exception the climate summary score. Humble leaders do not focus on praise, recognition, and admiration for themselves. It is not surprising that there is no relationship between Vulnerable Leader and recognitions. It is also not surprising that leaders who are Open, Authentic, and Humble create and sustain a positive culture and climate as reflected in the climate score. Regarding the other variables in the performance data, there was not enough information to draw conclusions as to why there were not positive relationships in the data. The question asked participants to self-report if there had been an increase, decrease, or lack of change in academic, behavior, climate, and attendance data. The question alone did not allow for elaboration and these types of data trends take time to establish.

Relationships between Transformational Leader and recognitions and outcomes were not strong with one exception between academic outcomes and Individual Consideration. One of the important characteristics of a Transformational Leader is the desire to help others by developing people, encouraging risk, and stimulating creativity. When leaders invest in their teachers and give teachers the freedom and support to do the same with their students, those connections and additional efforts can improve academics. This may support the importance of a supportive culture, supporting new learning, and building relationships as important to academic improvement, yet it is interesting in its isolation because we believe that effective character education practices will lead to improvement in all performance areas if they are implemented with fidelity over time by a staff who understands them deeply.

Relationships between Professional Growth Leader and recognitions and outcomes showed some significance related to climate. The total Professional Growth Leader score had a relatively strong connection to the parent/community and student climate measures. Interestingly, there was not a strong relationship among the total Professional Growth Leadership score and staff climate. After reflecting on the interviews with the principals it became clear that, although most mentioned the importance of creating a positive adult culture, it was also frequently stated that it was hard to maintain that culture due to many factors. This could be one of the reasons related to that missing relationship.

While none of the three leadership frameworks had overly positive relationships with the outcome variables, ECES was the one variable that did have a stronger relationship with the some of the outcome variables and a stronger relationship with the



recognition variable. The ECES found the practices had significant relationships to outcomes though not on the specific outcomes of attendance, academics, and behavior. It had a very significant relation to parent and community climate and to overall school climate, but less on student and staff climate. This may be due to the fact that the National School of Character award and the State School of Character award, two of the most highly recognized awards in character education, are based on evidence that schools are implementing some of the 16 effective practices in our ECES. Specific criteria that evaluators for Character.org, the organization that gives these awards, seek are: role modeling, family and community involvement, school-wide character education, core values, assessment of culture, opportunities for moral action, peer interactive strategies, and relationships. Eight of 16 ECES practices must be evident in schools recognized by Character.org for state and national recognition; therefore, it is not surprising there is a strong relationship between ECES and recognitions.

Unlike Vulnerable Leader, Transformational Leader, and Professional Growth Leader, ECES did show a positive relationship to overall outcomes. It was also evident there is a relationship between the implementation of effective character education practices and the overall climate survey data and specific climate survey information from parents/community and students.

In schools, there is a very strong connection among academics, attendance, behavior, and climate. When students feel safe, loved, and supported in a school with a positive climate and a supportive culture, they want to come to school. Strong relationships with teachers and other students also encourage student attendance and there is a decrease in discipline and an increase in communication. When students are not

removed from school or class, and they have caring connections with their teachers and one another, the pathways to learning are open and academics improve.

It is easier to document if a character education program or practice is being implemented in a school, but the real, long-term impact character education has on students is challenging to measure. It takes time, perseverance, and ongoing development for the ever-changing populations within schools to see sustainable improvement in the specific elements of academics, attendance, behavior, and climate. Even more challenging is finding a way to measure the life impact effective character education has on youth.

### **Implications for Practice**

As practitioners, we are most excited to report on what we think are potential implications for practice. The biggest implication is that there is a paradigm shift in the model of an effective leader. Both the literature reviews and the results from the three leadership frameworks allow us to draw broader conclusions and to suggest a potential new leadership model for the education field, which we are calling The Connected Leader.

**Paradigm shift.** Our questions, hypotheses, research, and data led us to realize the changing and progressive field of education needs a new and improved leadership framework ideal for these times and conditions. The role of the school leader is no longer the person with all the answers, but rather a person who helps others discover those answers. As learners themselves, leaders need to engage with the people they supervise in a collaborative way, as opposed to merely just imparting knowledge. Eighteen years ago one member of the research team became a head building principal and was given this

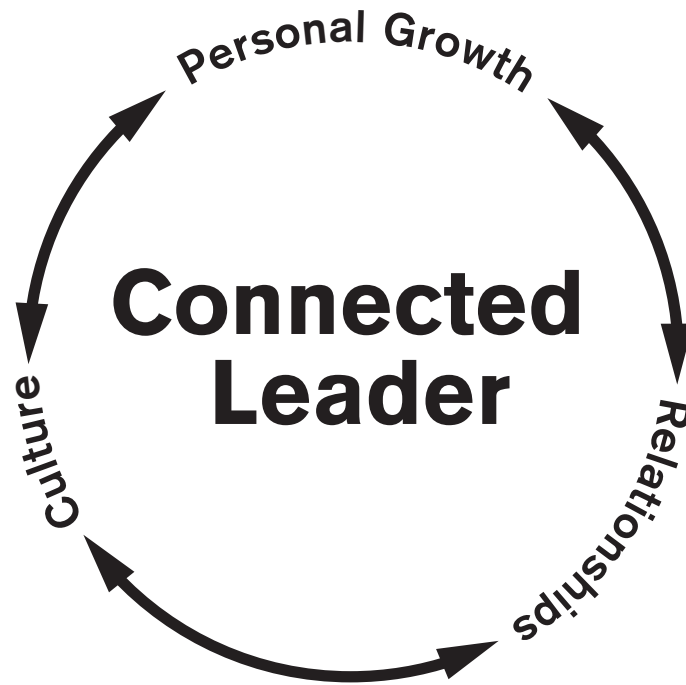
advice from a mentor: “Don't ever let them see you cry or sweat.” Our research, learning, and collective experiences as school leaders showed us that crying and sweating together are what usually build deep, caring relationships and a supportive culture conducive to learning and growth. Our initial research suggested a paradigm shift that involves effective school leaders having practical wisdom, being other-oriented, and being guided by a moral compass. Our results support this paradigm shift.

We suggest that autocratic, omnipotent leaders should be replaced by Vulnerable, Transformational, Professional Growth Leaders who understand the importance of fostering intellectual, moral, performance, and civic character and implementing effective character education practices with fidelity over time.

Unfortunately, in far too many schools, character education has become a watered down, packaged program. At its core, character education is about relationships, which create positive school culture and those cannot be rushed or forced. Too many schools want a quick fix for academics and discipline; they do not understand that effective character education is not in a program but in the school's people. A “been there done that” mentality about character education exists because it was not initiated, implemented and/or sustained by leaders who understand it. Character education work begins with a leader who is self-aware and vulnerable. These are hard sells to the “old school” leader who believed he was expected to be strong, right, and in-charge. Other-oriented leaders who have wisdom and a moral compass can and will improve schools when they understand that schools are transformed when the people in them are transformed and this begins with relationships. However, before those relationships can form, the school leader has to engage in a personal, reflective process.

Leaders who have never considered how characteristics of Vulnerable Leader, Transformational Leader, and/or Professional Growth Leader impact character education may have implemented practices before knowing themselves and developing their own vision for their schools. Our data strongly support correlations among Vulnerable Leaders, Transformational Leaders, and Professional Growth Leaders who understand how to use effective character education practices; therefore, we introduce the Connected Leader as a new model developed from our literature reviews and our quantitative and qualitative research results. How children learn is evolving and improving; therefore, leadership must also evolve and improve and we suggest that this new model fits these needs.

**A new model.** Connected Leadership illustrates the importance of ongoing connection to self and others to build and sustain a positive school culture. A leader with a focus on continuous personal growth and awareness of how they impact others may be in a better position to initiate and/or reciprocate caring relationships. When members of a school staff care for one another and invest in relationships that extend beyond professional courtesy, they are more willing to take risks without fear of failure or public humiliation and they are more willing to trust one another. A collegial, professional staff who have formed caring relationships is often successful at harnessing collective energy, creating a common vision, and becoming important change agents in their schools; this defines a positive, supportive culture. See Figure 3 for The Connected Leader model.



*Figure 3: Connected Leadership Model*

The framework is called the Connected Leadership model because it is essential for a leader to connect to self through personal growth, to stakeholders/constituents through relationships, and to the culture and climate of the school. These interactions and relationships create and support a positive connected culture within the school. The Connected Leader understands, possesses, and models the characteristics of Vulnerable, Transformational, and Professional Growth Leaders. The Connected Leader understands and can implement the effective character education practices identified in this dissertation.

The Connected Leader is necessary to school transformation because principals should no longer be expected to primarily fill the roles of building manager and strict disciplinarian. They should appreciate the power of connecting with students, staff and

stakeholders. Connected leaders will successfully mentor and develop teachers who stop being the “sage on the stage” and become the “guide by the side;” who no longer demand silence and conformity in the classroom, but use democratic practices that include students in classroom decisions and allow students to work and learn together; and who actively practice and teach the many facets of character education. Students will no longer be expected to be mere recipients of facts, but active learners who work cooperatively, think critically, are creative and innovative, communicate effectively, and apply learning to life, just as their teachers do.

This model is not a prescription or dogmatic recipe for effective leadership, but a suggested flexible model of an effective character education leader. The three components of the Connected Leader model follow.

***Personal growth.*** The foundation of this new leadership model is that good leadership starts within and is continually maintained through active and intentional ongoing growth. Many leadership concepts discussed in the literature review have an outward focus rather than an inward focus. Past leaders have been encouraged to be tough and non-emotional. These older concepts focus on what a leader does rather than who a leader is. This framework focuses on who the leader is and connects to the paradigm shift of effective leadership discussed in Chapter 3 where leaders are other-oriented, possess wisdom, and are guided by a moral compass. The Connected Leader is grounded in ongoing self-reflection and improvement and the underlying concepts of the Vulnerable Leader: they are actively choosing to be open to continual growth, reflection, and learning. Quantitative and qualitative results support the importance of leaders being Humble, Authentic, and Open. Leaders who seek to know themselves better and are

realistic about their strengths and weaknesses are often highly reflective, develop skills to self-regulate, and model moral integrity. These actions can develop leaders who are prepared to be ethical role models. These leaders will still use effective management practices, but do so in the spirit of the Connected Leader.

Two main themes that developed from our work correspond to this component of the Connected Leader: possess self-awareness and strong vision. Principals interviewed for this research indicated the importance of knowing themselves and having a clear personal vision as well as a vision for their school. School leaders can pretend to possess certain characteristics, and even convince others that they are real, but unless leaders have the courage to know themselves well and work to develop the character they claim they want to see in others, their leadership will not be genuine. Leadership requires a look in the mirror and the courage to understand and respond to what is reflected. It is difficult, if not impossible, to develop character education schools without leaders who acknowledge their own character, develop a vision for transforming character in others, and build learning capacity in others to sustain character growth.

After a leader has demonstrated the courage to face their insecurities and shortcomings and to recognize and utilize their strengths, they should be ready to move to the work that will ultimately lead to school transformation: building relationships.

***Relationships.*** Throughout this dissertation relationships are defined as a connection, association or involvement between people. Relationships are one of the most discussed concepts throughout this research, yet there is little evidence that relationship skills are explicitly taught and valued in most schools. Educators are constantly building relationships, yet they spend very little time learning how to be in

conscious, intentional relationships with each other and that is a void character education and social-emotional learning can fill. The importance of relationships was extant throughout the literature reviews and the quantitative and qualitative research results. Principals frequently mentioned relationships in their responses. It was so clear that principals considered relationships a priority that relationships became one of our core themes. Leaders expressed the value of connecting with others, building trusting relationships, and building a supportive community where people felt free to take risks and learn from one another without the fear of judgment. They shared that relationships were the catalyst for continuing to develop as professionals and a way to help good ideas come to fruition.

The importance of relationships is tied to components of Vulnerable Leadership, Transformational Leadership, and Professional Growth Leadership. It is also one of the 16 effective character education practices. The Vulnerable Leader framework is based on the interaction between the intrapersonal work and interpersonal relationships within the school. The Transformational Leader framework has a foundation of leaders who work to build authentic relationships with their followers. The Professional Growth Leader framework stresses relationships as key to developing the capacity of others. The self-reflective work of the Vulnerable Leader enables relationships to go from being superficial to a much deeper, genuine connection. These connections are strengthened through listening and learning about others, respecting differences, and appreciating strengths. Building confidence in others, welcoming challenge, and encouraging risk—all representative of the Transformational Leader—serve to connect people at a deeper level and build trust within the school community. When done well these relationships move



from professional to collegial to caring at a level representative of a family. This is the origin of a positive adult culture developed by a Professional Growth Leader. Without a positive adult culture there cannot be a positive school culture. An effective leader must be willing to devote time to developing and sustaining adult relationships. This work is hard and often uncomfortable, but it must be intentional, well paced, and ongoing. These invisible, warm, caring connections not only define the school to the outside community, but it motivates those within to be their best selves. A school community and culture is powerful when there is trust, mutual respect, and acceptance of one another, but it cannot happen unless building relationships is a priority of the leader.

*Culture.* Developing intellectual, performance, moral, and civic character (Shields, 2011) in students will not happen without a positive, caring school culture. The importance of good school culture is shown by this research. Assessing a school's culture includes measuring the very thing that helps form the culture, the climate. Climate is to culture as attitude is to personality. If a school has a poor climate and allows it to remain in that state, it will result in a dismal culture. The climate and culture of a school are also impacted by the very benchmarks on which school leaders are forced to focus. The sad irony is that the pressure to show improvement in the easily measured performance data of academics, attendance, and behavior prevents leaders from focusing on the very thing that will improve their data—character education including a culture of caring relationships, trust, empowerment, democratic governance, and professional learning. The principals we interviewed considered the culture of their schools to be so important that it developed into a major theme in this work.

Critical elements of building a positive, school-wide culture include leaders who help teachers and staffs grow personally and professionally by developing and empowering them. These elements are descriptive of both Transformational Leaders and Professional Growth Leaders. A leader also must be vulnerable enough to authentically empower and develop others. The principals interviewed spoke about how important, yet difficult it is to develop others. The development of others circles back to the importance of relationships. It is challenging, if not impossible, to effectively invest in others without first establishing caring and trusting relationships.

Continuous learning is a vital part of having a positive school culture. Adults in a school, including the principal, must want to continue to learn, to grow, to improve, and to push themselves. Both Transformational Leaders and Professional Growth Leaders push themselves, as well as those they serve, to expand their knowledge and experiences. No one can rest on their laurels thinking they have arrived or know enough. Educational research continues to push educators to think differently about how they teach and how students learn. In a school where the culture is positive and professional these changes are viewed as exciting and not threatening.

A vital part of creating a positive school culture is understanding that there is no uniform solution; no cookie cutter or silver bullet answer. Every school is unique and every school should strive to create and nurture a positive culture that may be hard to define with numbers, but is one that is palpable as outsiders enter the school. The leaders with characteristics of Vulnerable, Transformational, and Professional Growth Leaders—or Connected Leaders—are the catalysts behind successful character education schools.

**Connected Leadership conclusion.** We have worked to discover if there are specific types of leaders, leadership characteristics, or leadership styles that lend themselves to effective character education leadership and the effective use of character education practices. This DiP showed that Vulnerable Leaders, Transformational Leaders, and Professional Growth Leaders are effective character education leaders who use effective character education practices in their schools. This work has led us to a new leadership model, the Connected Leader, who has the self-knowledge, understanding, and skills to practice effective character education leadership and implement effective character education practices.

Connected Leaders will move schools away from a singular focus on academic data to focus on relationships, school culture, and the development of intellectual, moral, performance, and civic character in every student (Shields, 2011). This should lead to overall excellence, including academic excellence. Students who show up every day, who are honest, who are kind to each other, who work hard, and who are good should do better academically. Principals who are trained and expected to be engaged participants in their learning community will help teachers and students continue to grow. Schools will become places where the aim is to develop students into active, involved, responsible, and ethical citizens. Character education has the ability to develop students into sound citizens who can be successful in school, career, and life, but school leaders have to have the awareness, training, and commitment to make character education the priority in their schools.

Far too many students, teachers, and principals have been pushed by fear of failure instead of leading by doing what is right. The purpose of schools is to prepare

students for the future, but as President Teddy Roosevelt has been given credit for saying, “To educate a person in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society” (Roosevelt, n.d.). When schools focus on the power of working together to create a better world instead of separating students on the basis of GPA, athletic ability, talents, socio-economics, etc. we should have the opportunity to develop contributing members of society instead of educated menaces to society. Character education led by leaders unafraid of honest self-reflection, sharing leadership, and building trusting relationships will help schools continue to evolve and develop students prepared to mend a society that has been fractured by decades of most educators ignoring the importance of character education.

Connected Leaders are not autocratic and do not rely on charisma—nor are they flawless. Rather, they are democratic, vulnerable, risk takers who are unafraid to be flawed. They put their energy and heart into developing relationships and developing people. They know that great people create great cultures, which help bring about great schools.

This suggested framework is based on the underpinnings that leaders are self-aware, value relationships, develop others, and work to develop a positive culture within the school. This culture serves as the foundation for teaching character and ultimately developing young people who are equipped to be productive members of a democratic society.

### **Future Research**

Throughout this study much time has been spent grappling with how different leaders value and prioritize different components of their work. The principals

interviewed helped to answer some of those questions. Their survey and interview answers became key factors in the development of the Connected Leader model.

Education is a people business and there is a need for more Connected Leaders in the K-12 environment. More research about Connected Leadership is needed to best understand and operationalize what that means. Future research in this area could address this question:

- How does the model of Connected Leader operate when independently studied?

Still, the work is far from finished. Being a principal is hard work and doing it in the way that this dissertation describes requires even harder work. The limitations of this study, the principals' answers during the interviews and surveys, and our own new questions all point to possible future research. One major potential areas of future research includes preparation and ongoing training. This starts with the development of the leaders themselves:

- Focus more closely on self-improvement and leader growth
- What kind of preparation and training is needed in order to develop Connected Leaders who can be change agents in their schools?
- How can administrator preparation programs be encouraged to embrace more innovative ways to create leaders with the skills and characteristics of Connected Leaders?
- What can be done to help support and educate principals currently leading schools to change from using the old paradigm to becoming Connected Leaders?

- Since the Connected Leader has an element of self-improvement and reflection, how might merging a counseling component into educational leadership coursework impact this framework?

Principal preparation should include the in-depth study of existing leadership models as well as a study of the Connected Leader. A study comparing Vulnerable Leadership, Transformational Leadership, and Professional Growth Leadership and how they relate to improved school outcomes may provide future leaders with concrete examples regarding how effective leadership transforms schools and impacts students. Principal preparation should include understanding why character education should be the priority in schools and the benefits of implementing effective character education practices.

State education departments, as well as local school boards, need to be educated in the importance of and need for Connected Leaders who can lead character education efforts and real school improvement. As principals commit to ongoing professional growth as Connected Leaders they will be equipped to train staff in the importance of character education for every student.

In addition, there is a need to look at who is being recruited into the field. Our K-12 schools and the students in them are different than when the system for training principals was designed and school leadership programs need to reflect these changes. Those recruited into the field need to be willing to be change agents who understand and value the inclusion of character education; they need to embrace the concepts of the Connected Leadership model. Future research in this area could include:

- Does an increased focus on academic outcomes diminish a principal's ability to be a more Connected Leader who is committed to character education?

One thing this study has accomplished is that it helped create awareness about how character education and democratic school governance connect to the role of the leader. Through this study we have contributed a powerful set of ideas to think about the role leaders can take in leading schools of character. Moving forward, future research and deeper thinking should be conducted on how we can take this beyond the leader. Looking at creating tools for teachers and students would also be meaningful to the paradigm shift needed in education. In conclusion, effective school leadership, relationships, self-improvement, culture building, and character education are important and complex processes. Future research into them will only benefit the students of tomorrow.

### **Limitations of the Study**

While we took many steps to ensure the quality of this research design and implementation, and took many steps to carefully analyze the data and draw conclusions, every research study, including this one, has some limitations. While we took every reasonable step to minimize and manage those possible limitations, some remained:

- Self-reporting: the quantitative survey was based on self-reporting by school leaders, especially the performance data used for the outcome variables; we could have used hard performance data from DECE which may have produced more significant correlations;
- Linear logic model: our logic model was established in a linear way, whereas more of a system approach may have shown more dynamic interactions between the leadership frameworks and the character education practices;

- Focus on leaders: this dissertation focused primarily on leaders; more time could have been spent on teacher and student roles affecting our study;
- Additional effective character education leaders: the study chose to focus on participants who were both LACE graduates and at least three-year, head building principals. Naturally there are other effective character education leaders who do not fit these criteria (e.g., assistant principals, principals who are not LACE graduates, etc.) and were not in the study;
- Small sample size: surveys were sent to 192 principals but only 78 principals completed the survey;
- Uncontrolled variables: the focus on the school leaders was primarily an individualistic approach and certain contextual realities of the specific schools, such as location, size, socio-economic status, and demographics were not controlled;
- Connecting qualitative and quantitative data for participants: it was initially desired to connect scores on the surveys to answers in the interviews to be able to compare the data on an individual level, but to protect anonymity and because of logistics this did not happen and data was only compared in the aggregate;
- Subject familiarity: the field of character education in St. Louis is small and two of the research team went through the LACE training so some of the principals and schools were known to us;
- Character education practices literature review: the character education practices literature review examined 10 studies or reports. This was not exhaustive and more studies may have yielded different results;



- Unbalanced questions for ECES score: through the complicated creation of the 34 questions for the ECES score, it ended up that there was not an even number of questions for each practice; though a mean score was created for each practice, more questions for each practice and an equal number of questions per practice may have yielded different results;
- Transformational Leader scale: while the concept of a Transformational Leader is directly related to this study, the measure used was designed for a general leadership population and not a school leadership population;
- Interview protocol: with four different interviewers conducting interviews, each with relatively little experience in qualitative research and interviewing, the exact same protocol was not followed for all 17 participants (i.e. follow up questions or explanations of terms varied);
- Participant understanding of terms during interview: during the coding process, we became aware that some participants had different understandings of some of the terms (i.e. Openness) during the interview process;
- Outcome criteria: questions regarding metrics in academics, attendance, behavior, and climate may have been too limited; there was not enough substance in this part of the study to connect any of the leadership frameworks researched or the ECES to outcomes.
- Recognition criteria: many of the awards measured in the survey had criteria that were closely linked to the practices identified in ECES, which makes for a measure that is not as independent as could have been.

Even with these limitations, the research team feels confident about the results of the project due to the high correlations between so many elements of the study and the confirmation of the qualitative research, among other things. We hope many of the limitations can be addressed in future research in these areas. Leadership, relationships, self-improvement, and culture building are complex and difficult processes. However, there is real power in the concepts covered in the Vulnerable, Transformational, and Professional Growth Leader frameworks and the effective character education practices. And there is even more power in connecting these concepts into the Connected Leader model. We hope this new model can inspire leaders to have the courage and the power to put these concepts into practice and begin the process of transforming their schools into character education schools, which will benefit entire school communities, both students and adults, and hopefully help produce citizens with the intellectual, performance, moral, and civic character to make a difference in the world.

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## Appendix A

## Components and Subcomponents of the Vulnerable Leader

<b>The Vulnerable Leader</b>		
<i>The Vulnerable Leader seeks to connect to the interpersonal humanity of organizational stakeholders by being vulnerable, or having the courage to both understand and express one's core self, in an Open, Authentic, and Humble way.</i>		
<b>1. Open</b>	<b>2. Authentic</b>	<b>3. Humble</b>
Vulnerable Leaders are <b><i>open</i></b> to new ideas and experiences, and they creatively and mindfully seeks input from others within and beyond the organization.	Vulnerable Leaders <b><i>authentically</i></b> know their own strengths and challenges, as well as those of the organization, and they possess the courage to be guided by that knowledge.	Vulnerable Leaders embody <b><i>humility</i></b> in the spirit of a servant leader who puts the welfare of the group first and morally pursues the common good by modeling good character.
1A: Willingness to Change	2A: Possesses Self Awareness	3A: Leads Selflessly
1B: Thinks Deeply	2B: Guided By Internal Moral Perspective	3B: Prioritizes The Organization
1C: Values Creativity	2C: Self-regulates Behaviors and Decisions	3C: Is Other-Focused
1D: Appreciates Input	2D: Exhibits Trustworthy Behaviors	3D: Models Moral Integrity

Appendix B

Partial Image of Quantitative Survey in Qualtrix



Please rate the following statements with the scale provided. You should answer these based on what you do in your school.

	No at all	Once and a while	Sometimes	Fairly often	Frequently if not always
I talk about my most important values and beliefs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I specify the importance of having a strong sense of purpose	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I go beyond self-interest for the good of the group	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I act in ways that build others' respect for me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I display a sense of power and confidence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I consider the moral and ethical consequences of decisions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I emphasize the importance of having a collective sense of mission	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I instill pride in other for being associated with me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I talk optimistically about the future	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I talk enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I express confidence that goals will be achieved	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I articulate a compelling vision of the future	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I re-examine critical assumptions to question whether they are appropriate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I seek differing perspectives when solving problems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I get others to look at problems from many different angles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I suggest new ways of looking at how to complete assignments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I spend time teaching and coaching members of my staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Appendix C Interview Consent Form



**Department of Educational Psychology,  
Research and Evaluation**

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### **Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities Effective Leadership in Character Education Principal Interviews**

1. You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Amy Johnston, Julie Frugo, Kevin Navarro, and Brian McCauley under the supervision of faculty advisor Endowed Professor of Character Education at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, Dr. Marvin Berkowitz. The purposes of this research are to study leadership qualities and characteristics in building principals who have graduated from the Leadership Academy in Character Education (LACE).
2. Your participation will involve participating in an approximately 60 minute interview with one to three members of the research team.
3. There are no real anticipated risks associated with this research, yet there is a slight risk that some of the questions on the survey and/or in the interview could make you uncomfortable as it may appear we are asking performance based questions. You may choose to not answer any questions during the interview at any time.
4. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study; however, you will contribute to the understanding of transformational leadership, an awareness of the traits of authenticity, openness and vulnerability, a better understanding of the role of the principal in professional development and quality character education strategies as well as the impact LACE may have had on area principals.
5. Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to participate in this research study or to withdraw your consent at any time. You may choose not to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or to withdraw.
6. By agreeing to participate, you understand and agree that your data may be shared with other researchers and educators in the form of presentations and/or publications. In all cases, your identity will not be revealed. In rare instances, a researcher's study must undergo an audit or program evaluation by an oversight agency (such as the Office for Human Research Protection). That agency would be required to maintain the confidentiality of your data. In addition, all data will be stored on a password-protected computer and/or in a locked office.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call Amy Johnston at 314/691-4860 or Marvin Berkowitz at 314/516-7521. You may also ask questions or state concerns regarding your rights as a research participant to the Office of Research Administration, at 314/516-5897.

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I can request a copy of this consent form for my records.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D Quantitative Survey Consent Form

### Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities Effective Leadership in Character Education

1. You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Amy Johnston, Julie Frugo, Kevin Navarro, Brian McCauley under the supervision of faculty advisor Endowed Professor of Character Education at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, Dr. Marvin Berkowitz. The purposes of this research are to study leadership qualities and characteristics in building principals who have graduated from the Leadership Academy in Character Education (LACE).

2. a) Your participation will involve the following steps: If you agree to participate, the attached survey will be completed on line. The approximate length of time needed to complete the survey is 30 minutes. This survey will cover the topics of Transformational Leadership; Vulnerable Leadership (openness, authenticity, and humility); Professional Growth Leadership and how these leadership styles impact the implementation of best practices in character education. In this survey, we are seeking permission from each participant for a possible follow up interview. Up to 30 principals will be invited for a 40-60 minute follow-up interview in January. We are seeking both principals who feel character education is key to effective leading an effective school as well as leaders who do not see a need for intentional character education. These interviews will be conducted in the location of the principal's choosing. Approximately 300 participants may be involved in this research. b) The amount of time involved in your participation will be approximately 30 minutes for the online survey and 40-60 minutes for the follow up interview for up to 30 invited participants. All principals who complete the survey and agree to a possible follow up interview will be entered in a drawing and five will receive a token of appreciation from the research team that will have a value of approximately \$100.00 per incentive.

3. There are no real anticipated risks associated with this research, yet there is a slight risk that some of the questions on the survey and/or in the interview could make you uncomfortable as it may appear we are asking performance based questions. You may choose to not answer any questions. (Please see #5.)

4. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study; however, you will contribute to the understanding of transformational leadership, an awareness of the traits of authenticity, openness and vulnerability, a better understanding of the role of the principal in professional development and quality character education strategies as well as the impact LACE may have had on area principals.

5. Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to participate in this research study or to withdraw your consent at any time. You may choose not to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or to withdraw.

6. By agreeing to participate, you understand and agree that your data may be shared with other researchers and educators in the form of presentations and/or publications. In all cases, your identity will not be revealed. In rare instances, a researcher's study must undergo an audit or program evaluation by an oversight agency (such as the Office for Human Research Protection). That agency would be required to maintain the confidentiality of your data. In addition, all data will be stored on a password-protected computer and/or in a locked office.

7. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call the Investigator, Amy Johnston at 314/691-4860 or Marvin Berkowitz at 314/516-7521. You may also ask questions or state concerns regarding your rights as a research participant to the Office of Research Administration, at 314/516-5897.

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I can request a copy of this consent form for my records. By clicking the link to begin the survey, I consent to my participation in the research described above. The information at the end of the survey indicates how to provide my consent for a follow up interview. I can print a copy of the survey for my records.

Appendix E  
Survey Questions

Q1. SECTION 1: The following questions are based on the responses ranging from "Not at all" to "Frequently if not always". Please answer regarding a school you served at least 3 consecutive years as the building principal and implemented some level of character education. Please rate the following statements with the scale provided. You should answer these based on what you do.

*Response Scale: (1) Not at all, (2) Once and a while, (3) Sometimes, (4) Fairly often, and (5) Frequently if not always.*

1. I talk about my most important values and beliefs
2. I specify the importance of having a strong sense of purpose
3. I go beyond self-interest for the good of the group
4. I act in ways that build others' respect for me
5. I display a sense of power and confidence
6. I consider the moral and ethical consequences of decisions
7. I emphasize the importance of having a collective sense of mission
8. I instill pride in other for being associated with me
9. I talk optimistically about the future
10. I talk enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished
11. I express confidence that goals will be achieved
12. I articulate a compelling vision of the future
13. I re-examine critical assumptions to question whether they are appropriate
14. I seek differing perspectives when solving problems
15. I get others to look at problems from many different angles
16. I suggest new ways of looking at how to complete assignments
17. I spend time teaching and coaching members of my staff
18. I treat others as individuals rather than just as a member of a group
19. I consider an individual as having different needs, abilities, and aspirations from others
20. I help others develop their strengths

Q2. SECTION 2: The following questions are based on the responses ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree". Please rate the following statements on the scale provided. There is a mix of questions about who you are as a leader and what you do at your school.

*Response Scale (1) Strongly disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Neither agree nor disagree, (4) Agree, (5) Strongly agree.*

21. I am someone who is original, comes up with new ideas
22. I am someone who is curious about many different things
23. I am someone who is ingenious, a deep thinker
24. I am someone who has an active imagination
25. I am someone who is inventive
26. I am someone who values artistic, aesthetic experiences
27. I am someone who prefers work that is routine
28. I am someone who likes to reflect, play with ideas

29. I am someone who has few artistic interests
30. I am someone who is sophisticated in art, music, or literature
31. I am someone who intentionally creates opportunities for shared decision making with my staff
32. I am someone who regularly solicits input from staff, students, and parents
33. Faculty and staff in my school act as positive role models for students
34. We intentionally work on maintaining a school-wide culture of character education
35. Students are empowered to make decisions that impact the learning and broader school environment
36. Faculty, staff, and students embody our core values.
37. We intentionally create a climate of emotional safety and keep our school physically safe
38. We used a collective process involving multiple stakeholders (e.g., parents, staff, students) in creating our core values
39. Our disciplinary practices are designed for long-term character development
40. Character education is a priority in our ongoing professional development

*Q3. SECTION 3:* The following questions are based on the responses ranging from "Not at all" to "Frequently if not always". Please rate the following statements on the scale provided. There is a mix questions about who you are as a leader and what you do at your school.

*Response Scale: (0) Not at all, (1) Once in a while, (2) Sometimes, (3) Fairly Often, (4) Frequently, if not always.*

41. As a leader I say exactly what I mean
42. As a leader I admit mistakes when they are made
43. As a leader I encourage everyone to speak their mind
44. As a leader I tell you the hard truth
45. As a leader I display emotions exactly in line with feelings
46. As a leader I demonstrate beliefs that are consistent with actions
47. As a leader I make decisions based on my core values
48. As a leader I ask you to take positions that support your core values
49. As a leader I make difficult decisions based on high standards of ethical conduct
50. As a leader I seek feedback to improve interactions with others
51. As a leader I accurately describe how others view my capabilities
52. As a leader I know when it is time to reevaluate my position on important issues
53. As a leader I show I understand how specific actions impact others
54. As a leader, faculty and staff feel I can be relied upon
55. As a leader, my faculty and staff have confidence in the integrity of my decisions
56. Our students' parents take an active role in our character education activities and efforts



57. I share leadership in our school by empowering others to make decisions and/or take action, while still providing strong leadership that supports character education.
58. Teachers are empowered to make decisions that impact the learning environment
59. We assess our school's culture, climate, and character education activities
60. Students are given opportunities to reflect on their character and moral actions

*Q4:* Section 4: The following questions are based on the responses ranging from "Not at all" to "Frequently if not always". Please rate the following statements on the scale provided. There is a mix questions about who you are as a leader and what you do at your school.

*Response Scale: (1) Not at all, (2) Once and a while, (3) Sometimes, (4) Fairly often, and (5) Frequently if not always*

61. I am open to constructive critique of the professional learning activities at my school
62. Teachers have the opportunity to plan their own learning activities at my school
63. I provide structured time for teachers to observe each other
64. I plan activities designed to ensure continuous improvement in my school
65. I create opportunities for teachers to study what they do and how they might improve
66. I encourage teachers to practice applying new skills they have been studying through professional learning activities
67. I intentionally plan opportunities for teachers to build relationships with their peers
68. I seek professional development opportunities to hone my leadership skills
69. Our school provides students with opportunities for moral action (e.g., service learning, peer mediation)
70. Students are given opportunities to reflect on their character and moral actions
71. Our school teaches the students social and emotional competencies (e.g., healthy relationships skills, self regulation skills)
72. We directly teach and integrate character into our curriculum; (e.g., building an ethical vocabulary, discussing moral dilemmas)
73. Teachers use peer interactive strategies (e.g., cross-age buddying, class meetings)
74. We implement explicit initiatives to ensure that every student has opportunities to build positive relationships with adults

*Q5:* SECTION 5: The following questions are based on the responses ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree". Please rate the following statements on the scale provided. There is a mix of questions about who you are as a leader and what you do at your school.

*Response Scale (1) Strongly disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Agree, (4) Strongly agree*

75. My school holds regular class meetings
76. Students are taught relationship building skills
77. There are frequent opportunities for students to establish relationships with each other
78. Our school provides opportunities for students to participate democratically in decision making
79. We integrate service learning into the curriculum
80. Students do not have a voice in creating projects related to service learning
81. We build in reflection time for service learning projects
82. Our school has clearly defined core values
83. All faculty, staff and students know the definitions of our core values
84. We have a school wide character focus based on our values
85. Our school assess culture/climate at minimum annually
86. Our school provides opportunities for students to reflect on their own character
87. Teachers collaborate in assessing effective character education
88. I hold faculty and staff accountable for building positive relationships with each other
89. I hold faculty and staff accountable for building positive relationships with students
90. Social and emotional learning is integrated into the academic curriculum
91. I provide strong, consistent leadership in sustaining character education in our school
92. The overall discipline procedures involve discussions about our core values

*Q6.* SECTION 6: The following questions are based on the responses ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree". Please rate the following statements on the scale provided. There is a mix of questions about who you are as a leader and what you do at your school.

*Response Scale (1) Strongly disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Agree, (4) Strongly agree*

93. It is important for the principal to participate in honest conversations with staff
94. Staff see the principal as a partner in learning
95. Norms and structures for professional learning are created with staff
96. Professional learning at my school includes discussions and activities that are led by teachers
97. Trust is important when adults are engaged in learning
98. Teachers serve as peer coaches in professional learning
99. Reflection is a critical part of professional learning
100. There is an intentional process in place for teachers to learn from each other
101. Ongoing assessment of professional learning is important to the success of the school

*Q7:* SECTION 7: The following questions are based on the responses ranging from

"Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree". Please rate the following statements on the scale provided. There is a mix of questions about who you are as a leader and what you do at your school.

*Response Scale (1) Strongly disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Agree, (4) Strongly agree*

102. As a leader I recognize when employee morale is low without asking
103. As a leader I look for ways to make others successful
104. As a leader I nurture employee leadership potential
105. As a leader I treat all employees with dignity and respect
106. As a leader I ensure the greatest decision-making control given to employees most affected by decision
107. As a leader I listen carefully to others
108. As a leader I consider the effects of organizational decisions on the community
109. As a leader I encourage a spirit of cooperation among employees
110. As a leader I inspire organizational commitment
111. As a leader I believe our organization has a duty to improve the community in which it operates
112. As a leader I value diversity and individual differences in the organization
113. As a leader I sacrifice personal benefit to meet employee needs
114. As a leader I serve others willingly with no expectation of reward
115. As a leader I place the interests of others before self-interest
116. As a leader I prefer serving others to being served by others
117. As a leader I Inspire employee trust
118. As a leader I refuse to use manipulation or deceit to achieve his/her goals
119. As a leader I freely admit my mistakes
120. As a leader I promote transparency and honesty throughout the organization
121. As a leader I value integrity more than profit or personal gain
122. As a leader I model the behavior I expect from others in the organization

*Q11.*

*Response Scale: (a) Declined, (b) Remained Stable, (c) Improved*

123. Please indicate what trend your schools data has shown over the past three years:
  - Academic data
  - Behavior data
  - Attendance data
  - Student climate data
  - Staff climate data
  - Parent/Community data

*Q12.*

*Response: open text box*

124. Have you ever applied for and/or received any recognition for your character education initiatives? If so please list recognition and year(s).

Q13.

*Response: open text box*

125. What has most influenced you in the way you lead your school community?

Q17.

Thanks so much for your time! Please email [jfrugo@premiercharterschool.org](mailto:jfrugo@premiercharterschool.org) or [ajons10@gmail.com](mailto:ajons10@gmail.com) to let us know you have completed the survey and so we know to put your name in the prize drawing. Also if you are interested in participating in a follow up interview please indicate that as well!

Appendix F  
Qualitative Interview Questions

*Section One: Character Education Practices*

#1. As a LACE graduate and as a school leader who believes in character education, can you please identify what you think are the three most effective character education practices employed in your school and why? [Follow up: Of those three, which had the greatest impact on character education success at your school?]

#2. {Interviewer then spreads out in no order 16 note-cards on the table, each one with one of the top 16 CE strategies from Brian's research}  
Looking at the character education practices listed on these cards, which of these are also particularly important to you and why?

#3. What role did your leadership play in the effective implementation of these strategies, as compared to the role of the teachers? {After this question, remove the note-cards}

*Section Two: Fostering Professional Capacity*

#4 What guides you in creating a culture of professional learning?

#5 Describe the kinds of opportunities teachers have to collectively learn both within and beyond the school.

#6 How does professional learning contribute to your school goals?

#7 How and in what ways do you use your time for your own professional learning?

*Section Three: Leadership Styles*

#9 What do you think are some of the most important characteristics of an effective school leader?

#10 {Interviewer then spreads out note-cards with characteristics of Transformational Leadership –total of 24 note-cards, 6 characteristics for each of the 4 “I’s”} For the next four questions, please refer to the leadership characteristics written on these note-cards. Feel free to comment upon any selections you make. First, select the three characteristics that you think are most important for effectively leading a school?

#11. Now, select the three characteristics that you think are least important for effectively leading a school.

#12. Identify the three characteristics that are most challenging for you to put into practice?

#13. Of all of these characteristics, choose the three that you think should be taught to prospective principals? {After this question, remove the note-cards}

#14 Now, we are going to talk about three specific characteristics: Openness, Authenticity, and Humility. We'll start with Openness. Is Openness important to effectively leading a school? Why or why not? [Follow up: If Yes, can you give a few specific examples of how you practice Openness?]

#15 Next we'll talk about Authenticity, or really being self-aware and being yourself in the workplace. Is Authenticity important to effectively leading a school? Why or why not? [Follow up: If yes, can you give a few specific examples of how you practice Authenticity?]

#16 Finally, we'll talk about Humility. Is Humility important to effectively leading a school? Why or Why not? [Follow up: If yes, can you give a few specific examples of how you practice Humility?]

#17 Of these three characteristics (Openness, Humility, and Authenticity), how would you rank them in order of importance? [Follow up: Why?]

*Conclusion*

#18 Out of all the characteristics and practices we talked about today, do you think there are some that cannot be taught?

#19 Finally, is there anything else connected to all of this that you'd like to share? Something that we didn't ask about?

Appendix G  
Correlation Matrix

On Leading Character: Correlation Matrix

	Corbach's Alpha	TL Total	TL II	TL IM	TL IS	TL IC	PGL Total	PGL BLC	PGL TE	PGL AC	ECES	Outcome	Academic	Behavior	Attendance	P/C Climate	Student Climate	Staff Climate	Climate Summary	Awards
VL Total	.981	.763**	.613**	.635**	.551**	.541**	.702**	.535**	.560**	.718**	.582**	.198	.169	.069	-.091	.091	.290*	.239*	.234*	.030
Openness (O)	.780	.532**	.519**	.384**	.386**	.277*	.278*	.218	.176	.320**	.287*	.277*	.241*	.147	.008	.108	.360**	.208	.258*	.062
Authenticity (A)	.855	.671**	.498**	.530**	.517**	.545**	.642**	.530**	.472**	.650**	.485**	.077	.078	-.033	-.139	.026	.161	.218	.150	-.066
Humility (H)	.990	.615**	.457**	.587**	.423**	.463**	.710**	.500**	.638**	.705**	.592**	.133	.100	.059	-.079	.086	.190	.154	.161	.091
TL Total	.865						.567**	.506**	.399**	.554**	.367**	.055	.155	.028	-.144	-.045	.133	.027	.034	-.110
Idealized Influence (I)	.709						.378**	.311**	.215	.416**	.329**	.053	.179	.004	-.448	-.089	.200	.022	.025	-.059
Inspirational Motivation (IM)	.734						.511**	.444**	.439**	.470**	.332**	.010	.038	.033	-.32	.040	-.042	-.122	-.081	.035
Intellectual Stimulation (IS)	.849						.392**	.344**	.293*	.370**	.231	.020	.026	.205	-.279	.071	.084	.100	.091	-.126
Individual Consideration (IC)	.686						.521**	.534**	.347**	.475**	.221	.129	.233*	.118	-.087	-.019	.104	.055	.046	-.202
PGL Total	.853						.555**	.209	.137	.002	-.043	.260*	.278*	.138	.258*	.089				
Big4 Learning Capacity (BLC)	.652						.415**	.159	.198	-.058	.415**	.159	.198	-.058	-.056	.177	.209	.103	.177	.058
Teacher Empower (TE)	.596						.437**	.205	.083	.029	.009	.253*	.233*	.186	.253*	.001				
Adult Culture (AC)	.615						.485**	.148	.046	.022	.032	.198	.267*	.073	.198	.184	.198	.198	.090	
ECES																				
Effective Character Ed Score (ECES)	.926											.260*	.050	.148	.015	.336**	.360**	.184	.365**	.279*
Outcome Total	.754																			
Academic																				.075
Behavior																				-.171
Attendance																				-.085
P/C Climate																				-.011
Student Climate																				.197
Staff Climate																				.220
Climate Summary																				.151

\* significant at p < .05; \*\* significant at p < .01; \*\*\* significant at p < .001