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# The Growth Mindset: Action and Practice for Educational Leaders

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Concordia University-Portland  
College of Education  
Doctorate of Education Program

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The Growth Mindset: Action and Practice for Educational Leaders

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Concordia University–Portland

College of Education

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the College of Education  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in  
Higher Education

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Concordia University-Portland

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## **Abstract**

Carol Dweck is known for her definition of the growth mindset. Benefits of leading with the growth mindset versus the fixed mindset are playing a significant role in educational settings today. Educational leaders are working to create a culture and environment that exemplifies positive outcomes for all stakeholders. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to gain an understanding of the growth mindset of educational leaders. Two research questions guided this study: What are the experiences of educational leaders regarding the growth mindset? What are the experiences of educational leaders regarding the growth mindset as these experiences relate to training teachers and staff members? The sample was a purposeful sample consisting of 11 educational leaders in a large suburban district. Participants were principals, assistant superintendents, superintendents, and district department leaders. The data collection instruments were face-to-face interviews, member checking sessions, and a personal narrative. The inductive analysis model was used to analyze data collected from interviews and member checking sessions. Initial coding and pattern coding was used to identify codes and to collapse and reorganize these codes to identify emergent themes. The key findings of this study were that participants understood the connection between core leadership attributes and how these attributes contribute to the culture of an organization to support growth mindset initiatives. The interviewees suggested schools need transformational leaders who are passionate, resilient, and willing to take risks. Participants viewed evaluating and measuring the impacts of the growth mindset as a key factor in supporting implementation.

*Keywords:* educational leaders, growth mindset, grit and growth mindset initiative, mindset theory

## **Dedication**

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my cousin, Aaron Joseph Badon, Sr. He is the first person who recognized me as an educator. His gentle nudge that led me from the accounting world to the world of education started my journey as an educational leader. The unconditional love and support he gave me while he was living and after his transition to the heavenly world continues to motivate me to work hard when things are difficult. His message to “never quit” no matter what resonates when I am weary. He was a true picture of the growth mindset. This work would make him proud.

## **Acknowledgments**

First, I want to thank God, my father, who has positioned me here at this time in my life to be a beacon for others and allowed me to serve others through His divine plan for the work He has called me to do.

Next, I want to acknowledge my committee chair, Dr. Heather Miller. She has worked diligently to equip me with everything I needed to persevere through this program. She was not only an amazing facilitator of my learning but an amazing mentor who exemplified excellence in the process. She is my role model. Dr. Tom Cavanagh has given me such insightful direction to help me work through data collection and analysis in a way that turned on lightbulbs in my mind as a seasoned learner. I am thankful to him and Dr. Brian Roland, who is so flexible and supportive with his advice to improve upon my work. Without each of these valuable members, I would not be at this place in my career. I am grateful.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

A school system's leaders fulfill many roles: supervisors, instructional leaders, motivators, counselors, facilitators, coaches, and mentors (Brandstatter, Giesinger, Job, & Frank, 2015; Chase, 2010; Dweck, 2010; Hugelschafer & Achtziger, 2014; Karwowski, 2013; Martin, 2015). To effectively carry out any of these responsibilities, the educational leader must bring to the workplace a sound mindset that provides direction and order to the staff. The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding about the experiences of educational leaders regarding the growth mindset as it relates to teachers and staff members. The growth mindset is the belief that one's abilities to improve can change over time if resources are provided and used, if there is deliberate practice, and if failure is considered an opportunity to gain additional knowledge.

The growth mindset pervades the workplace (Brandstatter et al., 2015; Chase, 2010; Dweck, 2010; Hugelschafer & Achtziger, 2014; Karwowski, 2013; Martin, 2015). The growth mindset has been contrasted with cognitive abilities, intelligence goals, metacognition, and servant leadership, as well as in ethical decision making. The potential implications of this study include gaining information of how educational leaders use the growth mindset in leadership practice and how this practice relates to training teachers and other staff members. In addition, from a social perspective, this study was designed so educational leaders can consider their own experiences with growth mindset in their professional roles.

In the first chapter I introduce the various components of the study, including the background, problem statement, purpose of the study, and conceptual framework. In addition, research questions, rationale, relevance and significance of the study, definitions of terms, and assumptions, delimitations, and limitations are discussed. The chapter concludes with a summary.

## **Background, Context, History, and Conceptual Framework for the Problem**

Over the past 10 years, the growth mindset has been discussed by researchers on leadership and student academic development (Crum & Sherman, 2008; Duckworth, 2016; Dweck, 2006; Kennedy, Carroll, & Francoeur, 2013; Martin, 2014). Researchers have investigated the growth mindset in coaching, ministry, and leadership training programs. The growth mindset is a valuable tool to help lead to fluid understanding of the necessity to grow the mindset and use it for effective leading practices (Chase, 2010; Crum & Sherman, 2008; Duckworth, 2016; Dweck, 2006; Karwowski, 2013; Kennedy et al., 2013; Martin, 2014). That the mindset determines interaction and disposition toward intelligence and academic performance is fundamentally important to the research presented in this dissertation.

In recent years, scholars have begun to study measuring and changing non-cognitive attributes other than cognitive ability (Duckworth & Yeager, 2015). Duckworth and Yeager (2015) discussed trait malleability. “Skill terminology usefully connotes malleability. However, referring to skills may implicitly exclude beliefs (e.g., growth mindset) and other relational attitudes” (p. 238). Although for decades cognitive ability has been the only precursor to measuring intelligence, research has supported the need to precisely measure positive personal qualities other than cognitive ability that contribute to students’ well-being and achievement (Duckworth & Yeager, 2015).

Companies no longer seek to employ leaders who merely exhibit successful managerial skills versus; they want leaders who can empower employees and act as change agents in an organization (Evers & Lakomski, 2013; Fullan, 2011; Mette & Scribner, 2014; O’Doherty & Ovando, 2013; Urick & Bowers, 2014). This change was spearheaded by increased attention to site-based and school-based management practices aimed at giving leaders the authority and

autonomy to act on the best interest of the organization. Creating and sustaining successful organizations requires the ability to adapt leadership styles to accommodate employees and build purposeful relationships that foster trust, collaboration, and empowerment (Arokiasamy, Abdullah, & Ismail, 2014; Evers & Lakomski, 2013; Hauserman, Ivankova, & Stick, 2013).

The educational leader emerges as a transforming agent who can steer the organization in a way that empowers all stakeholders. Rather than act like a dictator, this facilitator embraces the reality that everyone can change and can always improve through deliberate, purposeful instruction and practice, regardless of the task (Dweck, 2006; Hayes, 2014; Mills, Huerta, Watt, & Martinez, 2014; Park, 2012). This premise is the opportunity to transition the organization from good to great. It is an empowering attribute of leadership today as it uses the growth mindset as the vehicle to create a culture of opportunity.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, purposeful practice is an optimal learning method for the educational leader who is committed to transforming an organization and leading the change cycle (Evers & Lakomski, 2013; Fullan, 2011; Mette & Scribner, 2014; O'Doherty & Ovando, 2013; Park, 2012). Fullan (2011) introduced the term *simplicity* to explain a task that is easy to describe yet difficult and complicated to execute. Similarly, although the viewpoints of an educational leader are somewhat simple to explain, successfully leading an organization is extremely complicated. This premise gives direction to the study that examines the experiences of educational leaders as they relate to the growth mindset.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The concepts I discuss in the literature review, as well as Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development (ZPD), Piaget's (1951) cognitive development, and constructivism, provide a foundation for the study. According to Piaget (1951) and his views of cognitive

development, when teachers provide opportunities for students that are rigorous, engaging, and motivate them as well, academic success is greatly enhanced. In addition, Vygotsky's ZPD also provides a connection for learning that is accomplished collectively when less proficient learners are coupled with more proficient learners. All students benefit from this partnership and academic abilities improve. Constructivism provides a clear lens through which to study the growth mindset in educational leaders' experiences. Constructivism promotes active learning that creates understanding and knowledge through experiential learning and reflection.

In order to effectively understand the research questions, the qualitative case study is most appropriate. Qualitative case study uses an emergent approach to inquiry in which data are collected in a natural setting (Creswell, 2013). The constructivist view is evident in the emergent design of the research as phases or processes may change or shift after data collection occurs (Creswell, 2013). The research questions provided an opportunity to construct learning in a meaningful way and offers suggestions to provide practice that benefits teachers and students. Using the interview process, member checking, and personal narrative provided a means to collect, analyze, and explain data. This research was designed to assist leaders, staff, and students both individually and collectively by providing a sound basis for future learning and best leadership practice.

In part because of the wide definitions of the growth mindset, there was a gap in understanding how educational leaders use the growth mindset in leadership practice. Moreover, researchers have insufficiently studied how growth mindset can be used to train teachers and other staff members. This gap in knowledge prevents leaders from implementing effective, meaningful, lasting staff development opportunities for teachers and other staff members and

precludes them from using the mindset as a viable tool for improvement. This study was designed to address these gaps.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Although researchers have studied growth mindset, only a few have focused on the growth mindset as a foundation for training teachers and staff members. Authors of the reviewed literature shared the successes of the growth mindset in many forums but did not state the nuances of educational leaders utilizing the growth mindset as an anchor and threshold to train teachers and other staff members. The problem this study addressed illustrated educational leaders' experiences of the growth mindset and how the growth mindset relates to teacher and staff training.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this case study was to gain an understanding of the experiences of educational leaders regarding the growth mindset. The results were intended to provide a basis for training and staff development practice. In addition, the study added to the body of research regarding the growth mindset and educational leadership practice.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions follow:

1. What are the experiences of educational leaders regarding the growth mindset?
2. What are the experiences of educational leaders regarding the growth mindset as these experiences relate to training teachers and staff members?

### **Rationale, Relevance, and Significance of the Study**

The growth mindset is a current, real-life case in progress. To answer the research questions, I undertook a qualitative case study approach. Case study research begins by

identifying a clear case that can be bounded and described within parameters such as place and time (Creswell, 2013). One of the defining features of the case study is that results present an “in-depth understanding” of the case (Creswell, 2013). The study involved collecting multiple forms of qualitative data to develop this in-depth understanding. Studying the experiences of educational leaders regarding the growth mindset is an intrinsic case study where the focus is on the case itself as evidenced by the participants (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995).

I considered additional qualitative methods for this study. Ethnography would not be an appropriate approach because the study does not seek to understand language or cultural concerns of the educational leaders presented in the study (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995). Phenomenology was closely considered as a viable means as this methodology describes the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon of the participants. In this study, the growth mindset is not a phenomenon, thus exempting phenomenology as an appropriate method for the study. Grounded theory was not considered an option as it involves abstract theory of a process or action (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995). Because the growth mindset is not a common phenomenon but an attribute that uniquely exists in educational leaders, the qualitative case study best met the needs of this study. This case study involved collaboration with stakeholders and seeks to improve educational leadership practice by examining and explaining the growth mindset as it relates to the roles and responsibilities of educational leaders (Herr & Anderson, 2014).

Although the literature has addressed the growth mindset in leadership, academic achievement, and other arenas, the research is thin on the experiences regarding the growth mindset of educational leaders as it relates to teachers and staff. The case study is significant to educators, administrators, and teachers in that the results may provide information to assist in

leadership mentoring programs, designing teacher training opportunities, and in implementing successful staff development in educational districts. This study offers a body of research that may transfer to current training programs in educational districts where there is a need. The potential implications of this study include gaining information of how educational leaders use the growth mindset in leadership practice and how this practice relates to training teachers and other staff members. In addition, from a social perspective, this study proposes opportunities for some transferability by encouraging others who review this research to consider their own experiences regarding the growth mindset in educational leadership roles.

### **Definition of Terms**

Although most of the following terms are familiar to educators, a glossary is provided to clarify their definitions as used in this study:

*Creative mindset:* Beliefs about the stable versus malleable character and the nature of creativity (Karwowski, 2014).

*Deliberative mindset:* In the pre-decisional phase, before a goal is adopted, the mind accurately appraises and weighs the pros and cons of committing to a goal (Brandstatter et al., 2015).

*Educational leaders:* For research purposes in the study, educational leaders are superintendents, principals, assistant principals, athletic directors, and central office administrators.

*Flow:* A term coined by Csikszentmihalyi explaining that people do their absolute best when they become riveted and at one with what they are doing (Hallowell, 2011).

*Grit:* The power of passion and perseverance (Duckworth, 2016).

*Growth mindset:* The growth mindset is based on the belief that one's basic qualities are can be cultivated through one's efforts. Although people may differ in every way—in their initial talents, aptitudes, interests, or temperament—everyone can change and grow through application and experience (Duckworth, 2016; Dweck, 2006; Martin, 2015).

*Implemental mindset:* In the post-decisional phase, the mind is set to think about how to implement goal pursuit (Brandstatter et al., 2015).

*Leadership mindset:* How individuals' personal beliefs about the antecedents of leadership ability (whether innate or learned) influence their leadership behavior and ultimate effectiveness (Chase, 2010).

*Mindset theory:* Offers insights into the way people characterize their performance and respond to failure or disappointment. Mindset theory offers promise to educators because it is a trait that can be manipulated and thereby used to help students develop appropriate responses to failure, which could, in turn, allow them to improve performance (Dweck, 2006; Ravenscroft, Waymire, & West, 2012).

### **Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations**

#### **Assumptions**

Assumptions in the study are out of a researcher's control, but if they were not present, the study would not be relevant (Simon, 2011). In the study, an underlying assumption was that educational leaders are responsible for providing professional development to teachers and staff members. I assumed this practice will not go away and educational leaders will continue to train teachers and staff members in the future (Evers & Lakomski, 2013; Fullan, 2011; Mette & Scribner, 2014; O'Doherty & Ovando, 2013; Park, 2012). I also assumed this training must be designed to meet the needs of the diverse population that educators serve and use the strengths

and weaknesses of each individual as well as the organization itself. In the study, I assumed the participants would be honest and truthful during the interviews.

### **Expected Findings**

Each phase of the study was expected to reveal educational leaders' experiences regarding the growth mindset. Interviews, member checking interviews, and personal reflections explored in-depth perceptions and experiences of the growth mindset and how educational leaders interact with their peers, staff member, and students. In Chapters 4 and 5 I describe these experiences and report patterns and themes that are consistent among leaders, as well as significant differences their perceptions and experiences. I also discuss my experiential learning gained from the research. The results contribute to educational leadership practice by filling a gap in the literature regarding the growth mindset in educational leaders.

### **Delimitations**

Delimitations represent aspects of a study that the researcher can control. The issue presented in the study, sharing the experiences of the growth mindset as it relates to educational leaders, is the first delimitation of the study. Selecting participants from a school district that had participated in a growth mindset initiative for the past 4 years contributed to the usefulness of the information discussed in the interviews and data collection. Participants included principals, assistant principals, district administrators, superintendents, head band directors, and head athletic directors. The interview questions were aligned with the literature reviewed in this study and are another delimitation. The research was conducted in the natural setting. That is, all interviews, member checks, and personal reflections occurred in the workplace for each participant.

## **Limitations**

Limitations in research are those factors that are out of a researcher's control and potential weaknesses in the study. The study depended upon the availability of participants as well as the unique circumstances that are occurring at one time. In addition to time, generalizability was another limitation because of the research population and setting used in the study. The site and population had been exposed to the Grit and Growth Mindset Initiative for the past 4 years. Not all school districts have experienced this district-wide practice.

To address these limitations, the timing of the interviews, member checks, and personal reflections was critical. The 1-hour interviews, all of which I conducted, took place at different sites at the interviewees' discretion. The interview questions were read the same way to each participant. The member check interview assisted in this limitation by validating responses from the first interview. Although the results of the study are not generalizable, the information discovered presents opportunities that contribute to understanding the growth mindset as it relates to educational leadership. The interviews were confidential to protect the participant. I anticipated that the participants would be honest, and they could withdraw from the study at any time.

In light of the limitations and delimitations, I triangulated the data through interviews, member checks, and narrative, the three forms of data used in the coding and analyses. The study also involved extensive engagement with the participants throughout the data collection process as well as in sharing the findings of the study. Personal reflection, rich and thick description and coding, and reflexivity were all areas to reinforce the credibility of the study.

## **Summary**

Chapter 1 began with an introduction to the study and an in-depth background section. The growth mindset, the focus of the study, was defined to provide clarity throughout the dissertation proposal. I explained the problem and purpose of the study and the deficiencies in the research regarding the problem and how the research questions added to educational research. The qualitative case study was explained and aligned with the conceptual framework to guide the study.

Chapter 1 included the rationale, relevance, and significance of the study, definitions of terms, and assumptions, delimitations, and limitations. In Chapter 2 I present a complete literature review with current studies that relate to the issue of the study. Chapter 3 explains in detail how the study was conducted. I explain the choice of design and subsequent procedures and measures to collect data. In Chapter 4, data analysis and the results of study are shared, along with the data analysis and findings.

In the concluding chapter, Chapter 5, I share the conclusions and their meaning. I present and evaluate the results of my research with personal insight and interpretation and the implications for the educational community and how it informs literature regarding the growth mindset.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

The quality of school leaders is the most important factor in successful schools (Derrington & Campbell, 2015; Donkor, 2015; Kennedy et al., 2013; Miller & Martin, 2015; Ng & Chan, 2014; Smith & Addison, 2013). To address the growing problems in schools, leaders must be equipped with resources and relevant training to satisfy the demands of staff members and a diverse student population. Educational leaders are responsible for providing training for future principals and aspiring administrators. It is of great priority that schools continue to seek best practices for offering aligned, purposeful experiences that maximizes the potential of each school leader (Crum & Sherman, 2008; Della Sala et al., 2013; Donkor, 2015; Renihan & Noonan, 2012; Thessin & Clayton, 2013).

Two clear practices are consistent in preparation programs for educational leaders. Aspiring administrators can benefit from hands-on internships and mentorship opportunities (Derrington & Campbell, 2015; Donkor, 2015; Kennedy et al., 2013; Miller & Martin, 2015; Ng & Chan, 2014; Smith & Addison, 2013). Creating and implementing effective professional development for staff members is a complex responsibility. The mindset of the leader is a valuable attribute that allows leaders to meet the needs of staff members while serving the diverse learners inhabiting schools today (Donkor, 2015; Duckworth, 2016; Dweck, 2006; Kennedy et al., 2013; Miller & Martin, 2015; Ng & Chan, 2014; Smith & Addison, 2013, Yeager & Dweck, 2012).

This dissertation has four main sections. The first chapter is an introduction which is followed by a review of relevant literature. This chapter includes a conceptual framework for the study. In the second chapter, I explain the methodology of the qualitative study including data collection and analysis procedures. The next chapter discusses the findings in respect to the

research based on the data analysis. The concluding chapter summarizes the results and discusses future implications of the study for educational leaders.

The literature review has five main purposes. The first is to define the growth mindset and discuss how it relates to leadership. The second purpose is to define the attributes of the transformational leader and discuss the connection with the mindset. In the third section, I discuss the historical aspects of the instructional leader compared to the transactional leader and the type of leadership that is needed in the 21st century. The fourth section examines leadership and student achievement and how the transformational leader contributes to successful practice. The fifth section shares information about training and preparation programs while spotlighting best practice and offering insightful implications for future models.

### **Conceptual Framework**

School leaders are the most important determinant of successful progress and performance as measured by student achievement and campus accountability (Derrington & Campbell, 2015; Donkor, 2015; Kennedy et al., 2013; Miller & Martin, 2015; Ng & Chan, 2014; Smith & Addison, 2013). As a result, effective training and preparation programs are essential in adequately positioning future educational leaders in advantageous, strategic positions to be successful. Constructivism is the framework of this dissertation topic of study. Constructivism promotes active learning that creates understanding and knowledge through experiential learning and reflection (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995).

In principal training and preparation programs, providing experiential learning through internship and mentoring can better develop future leaders. Infusing growth mindset training into training and preparation programs can also enhance future leaders' abilities and equip them with the skillset and character attributes necessary to directly impact the direction of the organization.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe and explain attributes of the growth mindset and how these attributes contribute to effective leadership in the educational setting. The study was designed to better understand what support educational leaders believe are critical to successful transference of these hard and soft skills to the workplace. The study was designed to answer the following questions: What are the experiences of educational leaders regarding the growth mindset? What are the experiences of educational leaders regarding the growth mindset at is relates to training and staff development?

The foundational guiding questions provide an opportunity to construct meaningful learning to provide sound practices that contribute to successful educational programs. The literature review defines the growth mindset and attributes that bridge the growth mindset to that of a transformational leader. The review explores the relationship between instructional leaders in comparison to transactional leaders and shares relevant literature findings that correlate leadership and student achievement. Lastly, the literature provides a comprehensive spotlight on existing training programs for future principals and educational leaders today.

## **Review of Research Literature**

### **The Growth Mindset**

The literature review is a comprehensive spotlight of the growth mindset in educational settings and how this mindset has empowered leaders from all walks of life. The transformational leader and attributes that distinguish this leader from others are vested in the relationship between believing in the abilities of staff and deliberately focusing efforts to nurture them professionally so that transference occurs to students. In addition, existing training preparation programs are analyzed in this review for alignment with the complex, intricate, and high-demands of the responsibilities of educational leaders.

Defining the growth mindset is important before discussing and outlining its purpose and value. Leadership, in and of itself, is a difficult concept to explain (Bradberry & Greaves, 2012; Chase, 2010; Hallowell, 2011; Martin, 2014), as is growth mindset. Researchers have discussed the growth mindset as a passion for working hard, taking advantage of resources and supports available, and sticking to the task even when it is difficult (Dweck, 2006; Hallowell, 2011; Hugelschafer & Ahtziger, 2014; Martin, 2014; Karkowski, 2013; Ravenscroft et al., 2012).

Over the past 10 years, the growth mindset has received increasing attention in leadership and student development (Crum & Sherman, 2008; Duckworth, 2016; Dweck, 2006; Kennedy et al., 2013; Martin, 2014). Researchers continue to investigate the growth mindset in many forums, including coaching, ministry, and leadership training programs. In doing so, there is support for the realization that presuppositions and implicit individual beliefs regarding intelligence reflect orientations toward how the growth mindset manifests in an individual's disposition toward the nature and development of intellectual abilities (Chase, 2010; Martin, 2015). The growth mindset is an important tool for shaping the understanding of these implicit theories. This practice leads to fluid understanding of the necessity to grow the mindset and to use it effectively in leading others (Chase, 2010; Crum & Sherman, 2008; Duckworth, 2016; Dweck, 2006; Karwowski, 2013; Kennedy et al., 2013; Martin, 2014). This viewpoint is significant in that it gives credibility to options for educational leaders today. Understanding that the growth mindset ultimately determines interaction and disposition toward intelligence and academic performance is fundamentally important to the research presented in this dissertation.

In addition, this research suggests the importance of the deliberate versus the implemental mindset (Hugelschafer & Ahtziger, 2014, p. 32). Gender and risk aversion are influenced by the mindset. In comparing and contrasting the deliberate and implemental

mindsets, it is necessary to further clarify the meaning of the mindset. Mindset refers to states of mind that manifest when posed with a specific task and how a person carefully deliberates and plans how to attain or achieve the desired goal (Hugelschafer & Achtziger, 2014, p. 32). The mindset helps determine goal completion and is a fundamental component of leadership development (Crum & Sherman, 2008; Duckworth, 2016; Dweck, 2006; Kennedy et al., 2013; Martin, 2014).

The literature divulges the paradigm shift in exploring the growth and fixed mindset as two extremes of the same continuum. The mindset relates to effort and creativity (Dweck, 2006; Karwowski, 2013; Ravenscroft et al., 2012); thus, both the fixed and growth mindset may exist simultaneously. People exist with both an entity and incremental mindset for various purposes. Individuals can be fixed minded in how they view their ability to grow as an artist, but growth minded in how they view their ability to get stronger through strength training and exercise (Crum & Sherman, 2008; Duckworth, 2016; Dweck, 2006; Karwowski, 2013; Kennedy et al., 2013; Martin, 2014; Ravenscroft et al., 2012). Thus, duality explains why some people work harder than others at tasks that they do not feel they can get better at (Brandstatter et al., 2015; Chase, 2010; Karwowski, 2013; Martin, 2014). This research supports the fixed and growth mindsets as being synonymous with entity and incremental mindsets. Most people are inherently either fixed or growth minded in regard to creativity. In addition, the mindset contributes to successful or unsuccessful problem solving (Brandstatter et al., 2015; Chase, 2010; Karwowski, 2013; Martin, 2014). Research suggests fixed mindset or entity mindset negatively correlates with problem-solving challenges; conversely, growth or incremental mindset positively associates with embracing challenges and solving problems effectively and creatively

(Blandstatter et al., 2015; Hugelschafer & Achtziger, 2014; Karwowski, 2014; Ravenscroft et al., 2012).

Students and leaders, therefore, must possess a growth mindset. Students show great improvement in exam performance and academic achievement when they demonstrate growth-minded action (Duckworth & Yeager, 2015; Halamish, Nussinson, & Ben-Ari, 2013; Ravenscroft et al., 2012). Creating opportunities to grow the mindset and encourage the growth mindset approach greatly improves student performance in all educational settings (Cseh, Davis, & Khilji, 2013; Dweck & Yeager, 2015; Halamish et al., 2013). In addition, the mindset of an individual explains why a person may choose to work harder on a particular task or simply to give up. The growth mindset is a necessary component of grit. In reaching successful achievement in life, effort counts twice in the process (Duckworth, 2016). It takes effort to improve a skillset, and using this skillset effectively requires more effort—and thus the need to foster the growth of mindset so that the willingness to apply effort is purposeful and deliberate.

Intelligence is a vital attribute in explaining how individuals build schema and experiential learning. Studies regarding growth goals have suggested people develop specific behaviors and actions that can impact deeper learning patterns and schema (Martin, 2015; Rixom & Mishra, 2014). Similarly, Chase (2010) examined the importance of leadership mindset and stated a person with a “growth mindset would believe that leadership abilities could be learned and acquired through effort and experience (pp. 296–297). Thus, both intelligence and the mindset are not fixed but are malleable. Effective, successful leaders continue to grow on the job daily. Although talent, interests, and attitudes vary among individuals, most people can improve and change given the opportunity to work hard, implement new strategies, ask for help, and never give up (Duckworth & Yeager, 2015; Dweck, 2006; Shaw & Newton, 2014). The

literature explains the value in maximizing learning potential and leadership endeavors by creating and leading with a culture that embraces and uses the growth mindset (Brandstatter et al., 2015; Chase, 2010; Duckworth, 2016; Duckworth & Yeager, 2015; Dweck, 2006; Karwowski, 2013; Martin, 2014; Shaw & Newton, 2014).

Another key attribute of leadership is vision. Vision is the ability to present a mental image of the direction an organization needs to travel, direct the organization toward the result successfully, and to do this when individuals do not see viable options (Bradberry & Greaves, 2012; Hallowell, 2011; Shaw & Newton, 2014). Growth-minded leaders recognize the effort needed and willingness to take risks to move the organization in a new direction and pursue it wholeheartedly. Comparably, vision is the ability to influence others and make the vision seem unreal or mystical. In essence, both vision and influence are outcomes of possessing a growth mindset and understanding that people can change and improve with deliberate practice, increased effort, and a willingness to not give up (Chase, 2010; Duckworth & Yeager, 2015; Dweck, 2006). Vision, then, becomes vitally significant to equip leader with another resource in their toolkits to provide the opportunity to reach all individuals and direct them to new levels for the greater good of the organization.

Taking a closer look at role of deliberative versus implemental mindsets, individuals experience different mindsets in their pursuit of goals (Brandstatter et al., 2015). Both deliberative and implemental mindsets exist in leaders simultaneously in leadership roles. The implemental mindset is not necessarily inferior to the deliberative mindset. Instead, the implemental mindset obviously helped the respective participants to act swiftly on their goals; with a deliberative mindset people act in a more relaxed way toward achieving the goal (Brandstatter et al., 2015). Researchers also have found that implemental mindset (the growth

mindset) is beneficial for goal striving, higher motivation, and self-regulation (Brandstatter et al., 2015; Rixom & Mishra, 2014; Shaw & Newton, 2014). Hallowell (2011) referred to reaching peak performance and finding flow as outcomes of deliberate, intentional, focused efforts to finding purpose. Optimally, this is the intentional and desired outcome that leaders have for their employees. Similarly, this same outcome is what principals have for their teachers, and teachers have for their students.

In recent years, scholars began to study attributes other than cognitive ability (Duckworth & Yeager, 2015). “Skill terminology usefully connotes malleability. However, referring to skills may implicitly exclude beliefs (e.g., growth mindset) and other relational attitudes” (Duckworth & Yeager, 2015, p. 238). Although for decades cognitive ability has been the only precursor to measuring intelligence, findings support the need to measure with precision the many positive personal qualities other than cognitive ability that contribute to student well-being and achievement (Duckworth & Yeager, 2015, p. 246). Similarly, leaders can best communicate a growth mindset to their people by conveying that job skills are learned as opposed to inherited. Leaders must emphasize that they value passion and dedication over talent. Leaders are willing to stretch themselves and challenge themselves to take risks on challenging problems. Leaders who convey these growth mindset values and live by them present opportunities for transference. People become who they are around when they see value and merit in abilities to achieve success (Buttner et al., 2014; Duckworth & Yeager, 2015; Dweck, 2006; Rixom & Mishra, 2014).

In fact, policymakers have shown an increase in using measurement criteria for attributes other than cognition for diverse purposes (Brandstatter et al., 2015; Duckworth & Yeager, 2015; Martin, 2015). If a deliberate mindset is used in one task, the mindset often influences information processing and the ability to see the same mindset in a subsequent task, even if this

task is completely different (Buttner et al., 2014). Thus, mindset carries over to subsequent tasks. The ability to recognize the value of leading with a growth mindset is essential for successful leadership today. This principle is supported in the belief that there is merit in carrying the growth mindset over to situations and problems as they arise in an organization and using this passion to find resolution.

Leadership continues to evolve in educational institutions. Researchers have studied the value and importance of ethically sound, intellectually proficient, and transformational leaders. Ethical decision-making continues to capture the attention of academics (Brandsetter et al., 2015; Buttner et al, 2014; Chase, 2010; Martin, 2014; Rixom & Mishra, 2014). Analyzing concrete and abstract mindsets, the literature has noted the ethical behaviors that result. When considering an abstract mindset, a focus on supporting a greater social good is prioritized over the desire to remain honest. This is significant because when a leader's thoughts and actions are not grounded in honesty and integrity, a tendency to behave unethically is greatly increased. The willingness to work harder, implement new strategies, and refuse to give up grounds the growth mindset. In adopting, growing, and leading with this noncognitive growth mindset, opportunities for achievement and success are limitless (Cseh, Davis, & Khilji, 2013; Duckworth, 2016; Duckworth & Yeager, 2015; Dweck, 2006; Hallowell, 2011; Martin, 2015; Rixom & Mishra, 2014). Thus, the literature supports efforts and finds optimism in growing the mindset to one that values challenges and works harder when the task is not as clear to find resolution in any situation regardless of the obstacles or challenges presented.

### **Transformational Leadership**

The attributes and characteristics that manifest in the thoughts and actions of a transformational leader are noteworthy. Great leaders find it difficult to explain exactly what

makes their leadership so effective (Hunzicker, 2013; Moolenaar & Slegers, 2014; Parco-Tropicales & Guzman, 2014; Wahab, Fuad, Ismail, & Majid, 2014). In most cases, it is not simply one characteristic that contributes to the overall effectiveness of a leader but the unique connectedness of many factors that encompass the transformational leader. This section of the literature review explains the attributes of a transformational leader and how they align, infuse, and implement the growth mindset as a necessary component to positively contribute to leadership effectiveness.

**Building relationships.** Every organization seeks to implore an organization that exuberates a culture of innovation, positivity, and is sound in creating and maintaining strong relationships. To grow this culture, lasting partnerships are needed to create a fertile ground for empowerment. The core principle necessary to encompass a culture of collaboration and empowerment is trust. When trust is present, there is a stable foundation and consistent evidence of practices that encourage all stakeholders to participate in successful knowledge management that steers the organization in a positive way (Hauserman & Stick, 2013; Ibrahim, Ghavifekr, Ling, Siraj, & Azeez, 2014; Jacobs, 2013; Willenberg, 2014).

Implementing a culture of collaboration is an attribute that transformational leaders pursue that vests energy in working with members of the organization in a necessary fashion that brings the best out of each member (Hunzicker, 2013; Moolenaar & Slegers, 2014; Parco-Tropicales & Guzman, 2014; Wahab et al., 2014). There are no miracle tools or devices to do this. Creating this culture originates and resides in the mindset of the leader. Rosen (2013) argued that tools alone rarely create collaboration, but “they are a key component in the transformation in a collaborative organization” (p. 145). Transformational leaders must consistently seek “best fit” practices that are specific to the needs of the organization. There is

no “one-size-fits-all” strategy that works for every leader. An effective leader recognizes that each member of the organization has potential and brings something unique to the table (Mohammed et al., 2014; Moolenaar & Slegers, 2014; Wahab et al., 2014). This reality creates opportunities that unite people with a shared vision that works for the greater good of all stakeholders.

Transformational leaders foster a commitment to motivating employees to take initiative to establish platforms that successfully grow the organization (Hunzicker, 2013; Moolenaar & Slegers, 2014; Parco-Tropicales & Guzman, 2014; Rosen, 2013; Wahab et al., 2014). Providing a forum to delegate and trust employees results in a willingness to work hard for the order and tasks as they arise. The tools that contribute to successful or unsuccessful implementation of a transformative culture are evident in leadership style and how power is used to motivate employees. Leaders who fail to empower and motivate their staff often believe that workers are motivated only by negative consequences (Hunzicker, 2013; Moolenaar & Slegers, 2014; Wahab et al., 2014). Thus, ineffective leaders think that if they make consequences severe enough, people will be discouraged from going in the wrong direction. Although power can be an effective attribute of effective leadership, it can also be a double-edged sword and backfire if not used properly. The transformational leader is observant of effective use of power and is careful not to abuse the authority that can easily transfer and translate to some form of intentional abuse and become disempowering as a result.

Another attribute that manifests in the stability of a transformational leader is the ability to take a stand in the face of adversity. A leader must be courageous in the workplace in order to accomplish tasks that can be problematic or confrontational. When a leader lacks confidence and courage, it is difficult to stand firmly when others attack because of personal interests and

agendas. Leaders must embrace the diverse population of employees as well as the population served (Hauserman & Stick, 2013; Hunzicker, 2013; Moolenaar & Slegers, 2014; Parco-Tropicales & Guzman, 2014; Wahab et al., 2014; Willenberg, 2014). When staff and students view their leader as courageous, empowering, and motivational, they follow suit.

Another strength that is relevant and required in a transformational leader is operating daily with sound ethics and integrity. Integrity means being consistent with what one says, what one does, what one values, and how one supports what is valued (Bradberry & Greaves, 2012; Hunzicker, 2013; McCombs, 2013; Parco-Tropicales & Guzman, 2014). Integrity is the force that provides the mindset and work ethic to take risks when necessary and know when to pull back the reins. There is resolve in knowing that leaders who do their best to act on behalf of those they serve do so because of an inner willingness and commitment to integrity.

Compassion is another key attribute among transformational leaders. To unite and build a successful team, compassion fosters acceptance and hope that every person matters. Phil Jackson's talents as a "Zen master" is evident in the statement, "The key to success is compassion" (Jackson & Delehanty, 2013, p. 18). This type of compassion is not charity but is compassion for all human beings and all life. Such compassion breaks down barriers that divide people. Although most leaders are assertive and aggressive, leading with compassion gives way to meaningful relationships that help the organization grow. It is essential for a leader and his or her staff to learn to open their hearts so that they can collaborate with one another in a meaningful way through empathy and compassion (Bradberry & Greaves, 2012; Hunzicker, 2013; Jackson & Delehanty, 2013; McCombs, 2013; Parco-Tropicales & Guzman, 2014; Willenberg, 2014).

**Growing the mindset in leaders.** The growth mindset positively contributes to the effectiveness of a transformational leader. The growth mindset is the ability to see potential in everyone and to create opportunities for individuals to grow and improve as a result (Burnette, VanEpps, O'Boyle, Pollack, & Pinkel, 2012; McCombs, 2013; Parco-Tropicales & Guzman, 2014). In working with a staff, the growth mindset is vital to aid in infusion of grit, integrity, perseverance, and resilience into the workplace. The Bleacher Report posted "The 50 Greatest Coaches of All Time" (Pumerantz, 2012). Bowerman (2012) stated that if you are alive and possess a physical body, you have the potential of being an athlete. This statement embodies the belief and commitment to finding purpose and significance in every member of the team. This statement exemplifies the understanding that everyone has something to contribute and with hard work and practice everyone can improve. Bowerman's statement incorporated Dweck's message of the growth mindset among Olympic athletes, musicians, and every day people (p. 164). Dweck (as cited in Heath & Heath, 2010) observed,

People who have a growth mindset believe that abilities are like muscles—they can be built up with practice. That is, with concerted effort, you can make yourself better at writing or managing or listening to your spouse. With a growth mindset, you tend to accept more challenges despite the risk of failure. (p. 164)

This connection presents significance in the world of leadership. Leaders who lead with a growth mindset interact with others with a sense of optimism. The transformational leaders operate with the understanding that all things are possible if given support, needed resources, appropriate coaching strategies, and the opportunity to practice the necessary tasks in purposeful and meaningful conditions.

Lastly, embracing the Greater Than Yourself approach is a nonnegotiable attribute of a transformational leader. The Greater Than Yourself approach is a term coined by Farber (2009). This principle of leading rests in the ability of leaders to invest in another person in a way that raises him or her above oneself (Farber, 2009). Most often leaders become so consumed and caught up in themselves they lose sight of this valuable point. Effective, successful, transformational leaders are called to create a positive driving force in the workplace and to see others reach their limitless potential. True leadership embraces the opportunities that lie in watching people who are admired and loved succeed (Farber, 2009; Ibrahim et al., 2014; McCombs, 2013; Moolenaar et al., 2015). As leaders continue to direct, purposeful interaction with people create experiences that result in staff members reaching their potential and becoming great, and the entire organization succeeds. This is what a transformational leader strives for and what leading is all about.

### **Leadership: Instructional or Transactional?**

In light of the last 3 decades of educational leadership literature, there has been a paradigm shift from seeking to employ leaders who exhibit successful managerial skills versus leaders who exemplify the ability to empower employees and act as change agents in an organization (Evers & Lakomski, 2013; Fullan, 2011; Mente & Scribner, 2014; O'Doherty & Ovando, 2013; Urlick & Bowers, 2014). This shift was spearheaded by increased attention on site-based and school-based management practices that aimed to give leaders the authority and autonomy to act in the best interest of the organization. However, the elevation and onset of power to organizational leaders also presented problems in ensuring leaders were equipped with the ability to do more than manage employees. Creating and sustaining successful organizations requires the ability to adapt leadership styles to accommodate employees and build purposeful

relationships that foster trust, collaboration, and empowerment (Arokiasamy et al.; Evers & Lakomski, 2013; Hauserman, Ivankova, & Stick, 2013).

The educational leader emerges as a transforming agent who is responsible for steering the organization in a way that can empower all stakeholders. This ability is no longer grounded in the premise of authoritarian or dictatorial practice. This facilitator embraces the reality that everyone can change and, through deliberate, purposeful instruction and practice, regardless of the task, one can always improve (Dweck, 2006; Hayes, 2014; Mills, Huerta, Watt, and Martinez, 2014; Park, 2012). Utilizing this premise as the opportunity to transition the organization from good to great, is an empowering attribute of leadership today.

In addition, instructional leaders understand that the best source of learning is day-to-day experiences that reshape and engage the brain to learn new schema that are transferable to new and different tasks. The transactional leader, in comparison, prefers to develop systematic, logical practices that follow a set guideline for implementation. However, in organizations today, there are no predictable circumstances that all warrant the same systematic approach to solving conflicts and finding resolution to complicated issues. Instead, a new form of leadership that is shared with stakeholders, distributed with administrative teams, collaborative with team members, and focuses on developing relationships that take employees to higher levels of learning and professional performance in the workplace (Hauserman et al., 2013; Mette & Scribner, 2014; Mills et al., 2014; Park, 2012; Urick & Bowers, 2014).

This is a mind-boggling realization as educational leaders confront 21st century students and new, rigorous knowledge and skills. Reflecting on purposeful, deliberate learning in an organization day to day is a step in the right direction. Purposeful practice and deliberative doing is an optimal learning method for the instructional leader who is committed to

transforming an organization and leading the change cycle (Evers & Lakomski, 2013; Fullan, 2011; Mette & Scribner, 2014; O’Doherty & Ovando, 2013; Park, 2012). Fullan (2011) introduced the term *simplicity* to explain a task that is easy to describe yet difficult and complicated to execute. Similarly, although the viewpoints of an instructional leader are somewhat simple to explain, successfully leading an organization is complicated and difficult

Distinguishing the instructional leader compared to the transactional leader rests in a core attribute termed “impressive empathy.” This term suggests leaders should consider their audience and consider perspectives that differ from one’s own. A transactional leader operates without this mindset and governs what is best as a result of managerial order and logical sequences (Arokiasamy et al., 2014; Evers & Lakomski, 2013; Fullan, 2011; Mette & Scribner, 2014). Instructional leaders not only strive to accomplish personal and collective organizational goals, whether they be academic, behavioral, interpersonal, professional, or systemic, but they also are mindful and careful to interact in a respectful way with those who disagree. Thus, combining moral leadership and impressive empathy hold an instructional leader accountable for his or her actions not only from the perspective of the human world, but by some divine order that dictates and governs behavior. This is an essential comparison between an instructional leader and a transactional leader. Where the transactional leader often loses sight of the opposition, the instructional, transformational leader does not. An instructional leader takes great purpose in understanding the viewpoints of the opposition. In doing so, the educational leader can effectively practice self-reflection and operate with the mindset of those who disagree. This practice separates transformational leaders from transactional leaders and creates the opportunity to reach the masses of who are really served (Arokiasamy et al., 2014; Evers &

Lakomski, 2013; Hauserman et al., 2013; Mette & Scribner, 2014; Mills et al., 2014; Park, 2012).

### **Successful Leadership**

Successful leadership requires everyone working toward a common goal with clear, concise direction to move the masses. When leaders barrel towards their goals without a heart or care for others, it usually ends in chaos and disorder (Hayes, 2014; O’Doherty & Ovando, 2013; Park, 2012; Urick & Bowers, 2014). Hitler was a highly intelligent, goal driven, mission-oriented leader. However, he did not possess “impressive empathy” and had no sense of concern for those who disagreed with his mission or human life. This, ultimately, was his downfall. This is a reality in organizational leadership today. Instructional leaders foster organizations of learning that commit to this practice as necessary to successfully lead others toward task completion (Hayes, 2014; O’Doherty & Ovando, 2013; Park, 2012; Urick & Bowers, 2014).

Lastly, effective communication is a critical leadership attribute for working together to accomplish tasks and reach goals. Schmuck, Bell, and Bell (2012) argued that communication is one of the most powerful tools to unite teams and create an atmosphere for change. Specifically, collaboration is a component of communication that recognizes that the process is not one sided. Establishing a forum of collaboration and communication require all parties to accept the value and worth that each party brings to the table. Without a trusting acceptance of others and a solid foundation of respect, communication, collaboration, and competition, an organization will never exist cohesively or efficiently. The educational leader selects employees for their unique abilities and the potential to nurture them and utilizes the power of teamwork to cultivate the organization to limitless heights. As a result, learning and problem solving are emphasized in day-to-day functional performance. Addressing the needs of employees daily requires selecting

people who are passionate about what they do and are good at what they do in order to solve problems effectively. Change leaders who instruct and transform staff members must to put the right people in the right places doing the right things so they will shine (Arokiasamy et al., 2014, Evers & Lakomski, 2013; Fullan 2011; Hallowell, 2011; Hauserman et al., 2013; Hayes, 2014; O’Doherty & Ovando, 2013). Great leaders embrace this realization as best practice and use this as fuel to steer the organization in relevant, purposeful, and successful learning.

### **Leadership and Achievement**

Leadership is doing the right thing, operating with integrity, empowering others to see a collective vision, and effectively serving those to whom they are accountable and responsible for (Bradberry & Greaves, 2012; Chen & Wong, 2015; Friedman, 2011; Peters, 2012). To serve successfully, a leader drives the workplace through sound ethical judgment daily. This characteristic of leadership is vital to the success of an organization. Maintaining consistency between what one says, what one does, what one values, and what the organization values contributes to the direction that the organization follows (Bradberry & Greaves, 2012; Hallowell, 2011; Heath & Heath, 2011; Onu, Obiyo, Igbo, & Ezeanwu, 2012).

This section of the literature review discusses leadership as service and begins with ethical leadership. In addition, this section explains that leading with creativity, leading with confidence, leading as an action researcher, and leading through transformation are critical components to empowering a staff to understand the significance of collective participation and how these factors contribute to student achievement and the overall success of the educational organization.

## **Ethical Leadership**

### **Leading with Creativity**

In addition to a sound ethical stance, leadership respects creative expression from all members of the team. Creativity is often thought of as only the arts, design, or advertising, when in fact, creativity is all these things and more (Friedman, 2011; Onu et al., 2012; Robinson, 2011). This realization equips the leader with passion and drive to bring out creative abilities in each member of the working team whether it be teachers or students. This expectation and mindset inevitably creates the opportunity to reach the next level of accomplishment and achievement and to make progress. Workers' ability to flourish and thrive in the work that they have done leads to the ultimate sense of happiness and fulfillment (Chen & Wong, 2015; Dweck, 2006; Friedman, 2011; Hallowell, 2011; Heath & Heath, 2010; Onu et al., 2012; Robinson, 2011). Effective leadership drives others toward a constant quest for committed attention to partner with others and help every member of the organization succeed. In this vein, the leader seeks to bring out creative expression of all team members by fostering the belief that everyone has creative potential and everyone contributes to the overall success of the organization.

The effective leader recognizes that creativity is also a vehicle to connect and empower others. Every person in an organization has something to offer. The leader is responsible for uncovering these strengths and maximizing them in the organization. The primary role of an effective leader is to emphasize and expose what creativity looks like and why it makes sense (Chen & Wong, 2015; Dweck, 2006; Friedman, 2011; Hallowell, 2011; Heath & Heath, 2010; Onu et al., 2012; Robinson, 2011). With this belief, leaders can encourage others to work in a diligent, disciplined manner in the workplace. Creativity inspires leaders and others to find meaningful ways to deliver information so they experience why there is merit in changing our

thinking and why creativity works. Creativity supported and respected in an organization connects individuals to others and to the mission at hand. This purposeful direction fosters conditions to achieve at the highest levels (Birney et al., 2012; Chen & Wong, 2015; Friedman, 2011; Hallowell, 2011; Onu et al., 2012; Peters, 2012). An effective leader creates a working environment where creativity is respected, appreciated, and valued by all stakeholders which leads to enhanced opportunities for student achievement.

### **Leading with Confidence and a Growth Mindset**

Effective change leaders must be both confident and humble (Birney, et al., 2012; Chen & Wong, 2015; Elias et al., 2014; Fullan, 2011; Klar & Brewer, 2013). Leaders cannot lose sight of the goal when approaching complex, intricate problems; instead, they attack them with confidence. Leaders also recognize the power of the brain (Duckworth, 2016; Dweck, 2006; Friedman, 2011; Hallowell, 2011; Klar & Brewer, 2013; Yeager et al., 2016). The brain requires food and nourishment and can be stifled or cultivated just as most other organs in the body. It is the responsibility of the confident leader to provide experiences that allow the brain to work and grow in others. The confident leader is deliberate about practice, works on being a resolute leader, galvanizes motivation, builds collaboration and understands the impact and implications this has on growing a staff professionally and improving student achievement (Birney et al., 2012; Chen & Wong, 2015; Dweck, 2006; Elias et al., 2014; Fullan, 2011).

The most powerful aspect that a confident leader exhibits and possesses is a growth mindset. A growth mindset not only allows the opportunity to walk in confidence, understanding that everyone, students and staff, can always improve and get better, but also allows the opportunity to interact with people with hope and optimism (Chen & Wong, 2015; Duckworth, 2016; Dweck, 2006, Elias et al., 2014; Friedman, 2011; Klar & Brewer, 2013; Louis, Dretzke, &

Wahlstrom, 2010; Yeager et al, 2016). The belief that a student or a teacher can improve alters the interaction and energy spent on this person. In contrast, the belief that there is no hope for an individual also dictates the level of interaction that exists with this person. The growth mindset allows an effective leader the ability to walk competently and confidently knowing that even if we leaders fall short in some area, it is not fatal. The growth mindset allows a leader to continue moving forward stronger through each situation as they surface and equips the leader with the necessary drive and discipline to tackle them with the understanding that given new strategies, additional support, and the belief that leaders can improve and nothing is impossible. The growth mindset is not only a critical factor in the change process but also an integral factor in leading and improving student achievement (Chen & Wong, 2015; Duckworth, 2016; Dweck, 2006, Elias et al., 2014; Friedman, 2011; Klar & Brewer, 2013; Louis et al., 2010; Yeager et al, 2016).

Confidence determines the stability or the timidity that transpires in an organization. The leader sets the tone and creates the culture and climate of an organization. A leader recognizes how important it is to stay alert, attentive, and confident. Others follow and gravitate to the same level of confidence present in the leader. If a leader is passive and submissive, so tends to be the staff. People want and need confidence from their leaders, especially when times are dangerous and in very real sense unpredictable (Chen & Wong, 2015; Duckworth, 2016; Dweck, 2006, Elias et al., 2014; Friedman, 2011; Klar & Brewer, 2013; Louis et al., 2010; Yeager et al, 2016). The key to confidence is finding the proper balance for it all. Leaders must find resolve in potential problems and not shy away from problems. An effective leader confronts all situations with confidence, knowing that there is resolve if the problem is addressed appropriately and

effectively. A leader also recognizes that too much confidence results in arrogance or cockiness. Thus, there is a need to balance confidence in leadership and to be mindful of the extremes.

### **Leaders as Researchers**

The effective leader possesses a natural tendency to actively engage in ongoing research. As a quantitative researcher, the leader is an expert in data analysis and can see significance in the correlation between elements that have positive or negative effects on student progress and performance. There is an advantage to use the confidence interval in quantitative data analysis along with sound methodology in sampling to conduct research. If the sampling is not a true sample of the population, then the data is irrelevant and is not generalizable. According to Adams and Lawrence (2014), it is “impossible to study everyone in a population” (p. 27). Thus, researchers and leaders must narrowly focus the data, ensure the numerical data are clean and valid, align the sampling methodology to be representative of the population, and prepare the written results of the data in a manner that the audience can access and interpret the data successfully.

Effective leadership respects the need for ongoing research to improve instructional practice and improve student achievement. There is a need for both quantitative methodology as well as qualitative studies in the educational institutions. Problems regarding general operation procedures, instruction, and behavior can be resolved through clean, concise, well- planned qualitative research. Conducting interviews, scripting behavioral observations, coding for rich description, analyzing information for topic, and looking for patterns all give recourse to finding answers to problems in the workplace. The effective leader may use both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to implement change when necessary and to continuously seek best practices to improve teaching and learning for all stakeholders.

## **Leading Through Transformation**

Effective leadership is transformational. Learning is defined as using prior interaction and interpretation to construct new meaning and experiences in regard to future actions (Mezirow, 1991). *Weltanschauung*, or one's worldview reflects the epitome of an effective leader's interaction in the world today. Learning is a daily with a constant process of intentional practices that forces people to decide what is important and to find a means to carry these experiences to completion. Grit is the piece of the puzzle that keeps functional behavior moving forward and is empowering to the servant leader. Grit, as defined by Duckworth (2016), is the ability to continue working hard for a long period of time to achieve something that is difficult. Leaders must draw upon grit each day. Partnered with the growth mindset, the effective leader demonstrates a willingness to focus attention on creating opportunities to grow learners at every threshold in the organization.

Successfully navigating the intricate world of leadership and gaining knowledge requires reflection (Birney et al., 2012; Elias et al., 2014; Friedman, 2011; Mezirow, 1991). Reflection drives the effective use of one's thinking. Reflection allows increased awareness of perception and reactions to these perceptions. There are distinct advantages in seeing reflection as the intentionally reassessment of prior learning to reestablish validity by identifying and correcting distortions in content (Birney et al., 2012; Elias et al., 2014; Friedman, 2011; Mezirow, 1991). Adult learners are expected to be able to self-reflect and use this to self-evaluate and solve intricate problems (Birney et al., 2012; Elias et al., 2014; Friedman, 2011; Mezirow, 1991). This is key to bringing rationality into adult decision-making and effective leadership.

## **Reflection and Autonomous Thinking**

Reflection in all of its forms: content, process, premise, self, conscious, unconscious, and critical are all measures that strengthen the pathway for the creation of autonomous thinking (Bradberry & Greaves, 2012; Birney et al., 2012; Chen & Wong, 2015; Elias et al., 2014; Friedman, 2011; Klar & Brewer, 2013; Mezirow, 1991). The true purpose of reflection in any form is to lead the learner to self-awareness, efficacy, and autonomous thinking. These situational variables are the countless encounters that allow reflective learning to transpire and transcend learning experiences. Through autonomous thinking and purposeful, consistent, constant reflection, leaders can transform our existing meaning schemes and replace them with focused transformed meaning perspectives that are generalizable and applicable to similar situations. Fostering greater autonomy in thinking is both a goal and method for adult educators (Birney et al., 2012; Elias et al., 2014; Friedman, 2011; Mezirow, 1991). Autonomous thinking is essential in guiding the direction of and the successful practice of leading others. As reflective practices improve and become part of daily interaction and daily learning, autonomous thinking is greatly enhanced.

Transformational learners and leaders must embrace the broader perspective in reflective practice. That is, they must not only consider learning and empowerment from an individual perspective but the collective learning that results naturally and communicatively as a result (Bradberry & Greaves, 2012; Birney et al., 2012; Chen & Wong, 2015; Elias et al., 2014; Friedman, 2011; Klar & Brewer, 2013; Mezirow, 1991; Peters, 2012; Yeager et al., 2016). Ethical leadership, leading with confidence, and recognizing the power of action research results in transformed thinking and actions. Leadership that is built upon this framework provides optimal forums for professional growth of staff that ultimately promotes improved student

learning and achievement (Birney et al., 2012, Chen & Wong, 2015; Elias et al., 2014; Friedman, 2011; Klar & Brewer, 2013; Louis et al., 2010; Onu et al., 2012; Peters, 2012; Yeager et al., 2016). Mezirow (2003) added, “Transformative learning involves critical reflection of assumptions that may occur either in group interaction or independently” (p. 61). This reality empowers the transformational leader.

Finally, the effective leader understands that for any organization to reach peak performance, change will occur and is inevitable. The leader exists and gives direction to the organization by recognizing and implementing ongoing quantitative and qualitative research to solve the complex and intricate problems that surface. Heath and Heath (2010) stated, “Big changes can start with small steps” (p. 83). To create and maintain an organization that strives for excellence, the leader must be a change agent and lead the change.

Leadership through service provides many collaborative forums to create a work environment that strengthens the realization and collective understanding that when everyone works and contributes to the success of a common goal all is possible. An effective leader understands, respects, and protects the practice of building positive relationships in the workplace. Connecting people to each other and building positive relationships is imperative in order to reach excellence. A leader shines in an organization when there is a constant focus of bringing out the best in all stakeholders. Finding gateways to create this bonded, reciprocated approach to leading is, essential. Effective leadership begins with ethical thinking, leads with creativity, leads with confidence, leads as an action researcher, and leads through transformational learning. These are critical components that empower a staff to understand the significance of collective participation and how these factors contribute to the success of any organization. An effective leader is committed to working hard for those who make things

happen in an organization, who, in turn, work hard to empower the client. This connection creates a solid foundation and platform for student achievement.

### **Training Programs for Educational Leaders**

**Leadership training programs.** Leaders must be prepared to meet the needs of diverse student populations. Thus, there is a need to equip educational leaders with the skills and mindset necessary to provide instructional leadership, team building skills, character education, and motivational effectiveness. Twenty-first century principals need skills and strategies to provide positive working relationships that engage the teacher and student (Donkor, 2015; Miller & Martin, 2014; Smith & Addison, 2013; Thessin & Clayton, 2013). School administrators are constantly seeking new strategies to empower teachers to create and implement instructional strategies that motivate students and engage them in the learning process. This section of the literature review explains current leadership training processes, examines effective components of successful programs, and discusses implications for future training programs.

Effective leadership involves keeping a close eye on implementing change when needed. Organizational development is a clearly stated, systematically planned, sustained effort at system self-study and improvement, focusing on change in formal and informal procedures, processes, norms, or structures using behavioral science (Schmuck, Bell, & Bell, 2012). The goal of organizational development is to address educational issues by improving the quality of life for both the individual as well as the organization. This is a priority of an effective leader and is paramount in preparing leaders to head educational organizations. The leader in organizational change or school improvement is an active learner in the process (Donkor, 2015; Fullan, 2011; Green & Bowden, 2012; Renihan & Noonan, 2012). Effective leaders no longer sit on a pedestal and direct the actions of others. Leaders are interactive agents in the process. Leaders, teachers,

and students must be actively engaged in the change process. Effective leadership training programs function with the intent to create, interactive, purpose- driven experiences that maximize efforts for the instructional leader and collectively for all stakeholders to improve the organization.

In addition to leaders becoming proficient and effective in organizational development, leadership training programs offer support in teaching leaders to understand the effectiveness of assessment practice. Assessment leadership training requires the leader to be knowledgeable of the context of the campus regarding size, community, grade levels, diverse population, as well as the staff that is in place to serve them. A key component in this training involves preparing leaders in the task of growing assessment literacy in school professionals and paraprofessionals (Derrington & Campbell, 2015; Renihan & Noonan, 2012; Sal et al., 2013; Thessin & Clayton, 2013). The responsibility of training well- prepared educational leaders contributes to the demand for increased sets of leadership knowledge, leadership appreciation, and leadership skills specifically in leading professional development, using achievement data in the classroom, school-wide planning, and site-based decision making, and in creating a campus culture of collaboration (Derrington & Campbell, 2015; Eyal & Ruth, 2011; Renihan & Noonan, 2012; Sala et al., 2013; Thessin & Clayton, 2013).

Training and staff development are useful practices in carrying out successful leadership programs (Brezicha, Bergmark, & Mitra, 2015; Derrington & Campbell, 2015; Eyal & Roth, 2011; Fullan, 2011). The leader engages in self-reflection throughout the training and educational setting and assimilates the purpose of critical analysis and how it affects collaboration, teamwork, and motivation. Leaders in this type of training program can practice what they are trained to do daily in order to discover new strategies and create opportunities for

improvement. This classical design model helps the leader become more aware of personal strengths and weaknesses as well as being more responsive to students and parents (Derrington & Campbell, 2015; Renihan & Noonan, 2012; Sala et al., 2013; Schmuck et al., 2012; Thessin & Clayton, 2013). The training model that focuses on training and education process creates a shared belief that satisfies the demands and needs of the leader, staff, students, and organization. As a result, the campus as a whole, under the guidance of an effectively trained leader, evolves to the next level of excellence can make positive, sustained progress.

**Successful leadership programs.** One of the key components of training effective leaders involves mentoring (Donkor, 2015; Green & Bowden, 2012; Sala et al., 2013). Principals and school leaders require ongoing professional learning to effectively build school capacity that increases student achievement while being able to meet the increased challenges associated with accountability. While training and intensive support in best practice is helpful, they impose large financial costs that rural districts are not able to fund (Donkor, 2015; Green & Bowden, 2012; Sala et al., 2013). As a result, mentoring has become a valuable practice in successful leadership programs. Principals in training programs benefit from purposeful mentoring relationships that commit to ongoing professional development that expand and deepen leadership capacities (Donkor, 2015; Green & Bowden, 2012; Sala et al., 2013; Thessin & Clayton, 2013).

In addition to purposeful mentoring programs, another successful practice in preparing educational leaders is the administrative internship. Other than effective classroom instruction, the school leader has the greatest impact on student learning (Brezicha et al., 2015; Donkor, 2015; Eyal & Roth, 2011; Fullan, 2011; Green & Bowden, 2012; Sala et al., 2013). The administrative internship is an experience where the aspiring school leader assume roles at

school sites to gain hands-on leadership. Although there is disparity in the requirements, implementation, and evaluation of these internships, this practice continues to be a leading venture in educational leadership training programs (Thessin & Clayton, 2012). In addition to the advantages of the hands-on leadership experience in the internship, aspiring administrators also learn lessons in establishing relationships built on collaboration, teamwork, dedication, and trust (Donkor, 2015; Dweck, 2006; Eyal & Roth, 2011; Farber, 2009; Fullan, 2011; Hallowell, 2011; Palmer, 2004; Smith & Addison, 2013; Thessin & Clayton, 2013).

### **Implications for Future Training Programs**

In light of the review of the literature relevant to leadership training programs, one theme emerges clearly. Educational leadership training programs continue to fall short of hitting the mark in adequately preparing administrators for the strict demands of the roles and responsibilities that the job entails (Donkor, 2015; Miller & Martin, 2015; Ng & Chan, 2014; Smith & Addison, 2013). Specifically, administrators need innovative ways to lead in an age of uncertain allocation of resources, to direct efficient and effective use of resources, and to improve equity and equal opportunities for all racial and ethnic groups in the workplace (Donkor, 2015; Miller & Martin, 2014; ad Smith & Addison, 2013). These areas require a unique ability to encourage each member of the organization to function at his or her best.

To meet the changing needs of staff and students, leaders must be suitably trained and mentored. Leaders must complete internships that reflect best practices for building a climate and culture in the organization that is committed to high quality instructional practices geared toward student progress and success. Leadership practice varies greatly from campus to campus (Crum & Sherman, 2008; Miller & Martin, 2014; Ng & Chan, 2014; Smith & Addison, 2013). However, purposeful and intentional efforts in training programs that address the difficult areas

such as diversity, social justice, and meeting the needs of all students cannot be overlooked. Training programs currently lack focus on instructional leadership that centers attention on student achievement (Ng & Chan, 2014; Smith & Addison, 2013; Thessin & Clayton, 2013). Training programs have fallen short in these areas and have resulted in ill-prepared leaders to direct professional development for staff and quality learning for students.

Training programs to lead the venture toward successful leadership practice involve a paradigm shift in thinking. First, leadership training programs must set high but achievable goals for staff students and the organization, ask difficult questions and find complex solutions, and maintain orderly learning environments for all stakeholders (Donkor, 2015; Green & Bowden, 2012; Ng & Chan, 2014; Smith & Addison, 2013; Sala et al., 2013; Thessin & Clayton, 2013). A foundation grounded in rigorous thinking and calculated problem solving creates a platform to pursue needed areas of improvement in current training programs that center on managerial tasks and related responsibilities but fall short of the true issues that are problematic for educational leaders.

Next, training programs must be geared to facilitate learning opportunities that teach how to encourage teachers' beliefs in their students' abilities to achieve (Duckworth, 2016; Dweck, 2006; Kennedy et al., 2013; Ng & Chan, 2014; Rahn, Jaudas, & Ahtziger, 2016; Smith & Addison, 2013; Thessin & Clayton, 2013; Yeager & Dweck, 2016). This involves growing the mindset in leaders so that they can nurture the mindset in staff members. Growing the mindset involves vesting time and energy in studying the power of the brain, creating opportunities for employees to use new resources and strategies, and providing the forum for challenging decision-making processes that encourage risk taking. These task-oriented activities steer leaders towards effectively transferring the byproduct embracing this mindset and empowering

staff as a result. The mind is a malleable entity that can be shaped and formed in a manner that focuses attention on implementing new strategies, imploring deliberate practice, building mentoring relationships, and practicing a commitment of increased effort and hard work in the face of adversity.

When designing and implementing training programs for educational leaders, there are clear advantages of embedding the growth mindset culture and practice into successful mentorships and internships. The literature suggests that educational leaders focus attention on embracing change, recognizing potential in organizational development, setting achievable goals, growing the mindset in staff and students, and taking necessary risks to provide a sound basis to formulating educational leadership training programs (Duckworth, 2016; Dweck, 2006; Kennedy et al., 2013; Ng & Chan, 2014; Rahn et al., 2016; Smith & Addison, 2013; Thessin & Clayton, 2013; Yeager & Dweck, 2016). Such training programs will support the changing needs of our culture, society, and world.

### **Review of Methodological Issues**

The research on the growth mindset, transformational leadership, student achievement, and training and preparation programs has been conducted both qualitatively and quantitatively. Researchers who have analyzed leadership effectiveness and achievement used both correlational studies and linear regression studies (Brandstatter et al., 2015; Buttner et al., 2014; Karwowski, 2014; Rahn et al., 2016; Ravenscroft et al., 2012; Rixom, & Mishra, 2014; Sala et al., 2013; Mills et al., 2014). Responses from multiple-choice assessments and structural equations were also used to quantitatively analyze and explain the data in 24 of the 55 articles reviewed in this chapter.

Qualitative data collection was evident in 27 of the 55 articles. The review of literature, interviews, observations, informative case studies, questionnaires, focus groups, as well as longitudinal case studies were all dispersed throughout the qualitative studies reviewed. The primary sources of data collection in the qualitative research were structured interviews (Crum & Sherman, 2008; Cseh et al., 2013; Dweck, 2006; Friedman, 2011; Hunzicker, 2014; Klar & Brewer, 2013; O'Doherty & Ovando, 2013; Thessin & Clayton, 2012; Yeager et al., 2012). There is also clear support for the longitudinal case study design (Brezicha et al., 2015; Derrington & Campbell, 2015; Martin, 2014). The results of case studies have provided rich, thick perceptual understanding that is useful in securing an appropriate and effective methodology for the research presented in this dissertation.

In addition to pure quantitative and qualitative research methodology, I identified three mixed-methods studies in the review (Hauserman et al., 2013; Miller & Martin, 2014; and Ng & Chan, 2014). Mixed-methods studies would be the most difficult to interpret and align with the purpose and framework of the research questions in this study. The extensive study of the growth mindset, attributes of the transformational leader, leadership and achievement, and review of existing training and preparation programs support the need for a qualitative study that seeks to understand the perceptions of the successful educational leader and how the mindset contributes to their overall effectiveness.

### **Synthesis of Research Findings**

The literature review seeks to define the growth mindset, the attributes of the transformational leader, instructional leadership compared to transactional leadership, leadership and the connection to student achievement, and training and preparation programs for future

educational leaders. The following information explains the collective findings for each of these themes in the research.

The growth mindset continues to receive increasing attention in leadership and student academic development (Crum & Sherman, 2008; Duckworth, 2016; Dweck, 2006; Kennedy et al., 2013; Martin, 2014). Researchers continue to investigate the growth mindset in many forums, to include coaching, ministry, and leadership training programs. In doing so, there is support for the realization that presuppositions and implicit individual beliefs regarding intelligence reflect orientations toward how the growth mindset manifests in an individual's disposition towards the nature and development of intellectual abilities (Chase, 2010; Martin, 2015). The growth mindset is an important tool for understanding these implicit theories and the necessity to grow the mindset and use it for effective leadership practices (Chase, 2010; Crum & Sherman, 2008; Duckworth, 2016; Dweck, 2006; Karwowski, 2013; Kennedy et al., 2013; Martin, 2014). The growth mindset is an attribute that ultimately determines interaction and disposition toward intelligence and academic performance in oneself and in others. This concept is fundamentally important to the research presented in this dissertation.

Transformational leaders foster a commitment to motivating employees to take initiative to establish platforms that successfully directs the organization (Hunzicker, 2013; Moolenaar & Slegers, 2014; Parco-Tropicales & Guzman, 2014; Rosen, 2013; Wahab et al., 2014). Providing a forum to delegate and trust employees results in a willingness to work hard for the order and tasks as they arise. The tools that contribute to successful or unsuccessful implementation of a transformative culture are evident in leadership styles and how power is used to motivate employees. Leaders who have not empowered and motivated their staff often believe that it is necessary to administer negative or painful consequences in order to motivate

people to comply with directives (Hunzicker, 2013; Patterson et al., 2002; Wahab et al., 2014). Thus, ineffective leaders think that if they make consequences severe enough, people will be discouraged from going in one direction or another. Although power can be an effective attribute of effective leadership, it can also be a double-edged sword and backfire if used properly. The transformational leader is observant of effective use of power and is careful not to abuse the authority that can easily transfer and translate to some form of intentional abuse and become disempowering as a result.

The educational leader emerges as a transforming agent who steers the organization in a direction that empowers all stakeholders. This ability is no longer grounded in the premise of authoritarian or dictatorial practice. This facilitator embraces the reality that everyone can change, and, through deliberate, purposeful instruction and practice, regardless of the task, one can always improve (Dweck, 2006; Hayes, 2014; Mills et al., 2014; Park, 2012). Utilizing this premise as the opportunity to transition the organization from good to great is an empowering attribute of leadership today.

In addition, instructional leaders understand that the best source of learning is day-to-day and this experience reshapes and engages the brain to learn new schema that is directly transferable to new and different tasks. The transactional leader, in comparison, prefers to develop systematic, logical practices that follow a set guideline for implementation. However, in organizations today, no predictable circumstances all warrant the same systematic approach to solving conflicts and finding resolution to complicated issues. Instead, this requires a new form of leadership that is shared with stakeholders, distributed with administrative teams, collaborative with team members, and focuses on developing relationships that take employees

to higher levels of learning and professional performance in the workplace (Hauserman et al., 2013; Mette & Scribner, 2014; Mills et al., 2014; Park, 2012; Urick & Bowers, 2014).

A transformational learner and leader embraces the broader perspective in reflective practice—that is, to not only consider learning and empowerment from an individual perspective, but to also consider the collective learning that results naturally and communicatively as a result (Bradberry & Greaves, 2012; Birney et al., 2012; Chen & Wong, 2015; Elias et al., 2014; Friedman, 2011; Klar & Brewer, 2013; Mezirow, 1991; Peters, 2012; Yeager et al., 2016). Ethical leadership, leading with confidence, and recognizing the power of action research results in transformed thinking and actions. Leadership built upon this framework provides optimal forums for professional growth of staff that ultimately promotes improved student learning and achievement (Birney et al., 2012, Chen & Wong, 2015; Elias et al., 2014; Friedman, 2011; Klar & Brewer, 2013; Louis et al., 2010; Onu et al., 2012; Peters, 2012; Yeager et al., 2016). Mezirow (2003) added, “Transformative learning involves critical reflection of assumptions that may occur either in group interaction or independently” (p. 61). This reality empowers the transformational leader.

The effective leader understands that for any organization to reach peak performance, change is an essential factor. The leader, as an active researcher, exists and gives direction to the organization by recognizing and implementing ongoing quantitative and qualitative research to solve the complex and intricate problems that surface. Heath and Heath (2010) stated, “Big changes can start with small steps” (p. 83). To create and maintain an organization that strives for excellence, the leader must be a change agent and lead the change.

The literature states that existing educational leadership training programs have not adequately prepared administrators for the strict demands of the roles and responsibilities that the

job entails (Donkor, 2015; Miller & Martin, 2015; Ng and Chan, 2014; Smith & Addison, 2013). Specifically, administrators are continuously seeking new ways to lead in an improve equity and equal opportunities for all employees in the workplace (Donkor, 2015; Miller & Martin, 2014; Smith & Addison, 2013). These areas require a unique craft at imploring best practice with a deliberate mindset to maximize the potential of each member of the organization.

### **Critique of Previous Research**

The reviewed literature uncovered advantages of possessing and leading with the growth mindset (Dweck, 2006; Hallowell, 2011; Hugelschafer & Ahtziger, 2014; Martin, 2014; Karkowski, 2013). The literature review provides clear direction for leaders pursuing the growth mindset to improve the effectiveness of an organization. In contrast to the vast literature that supports the infusion of the growth mindset concept into leadership practice, scant research disputes this practice as a viable attribute of leadership qualities today (Birney et al., 2012, Chen & Wong, 2015; Elias et al., 2014; Friedman, 2011; Klar & Brewer, 2013; Louis et al., 2010; Onu et al., 2012; Peters, 2012; Yeager et al., 2016).

Transformational leadership is widely supported in schools today as evidenced in many sources of literature in the review (Hunzicker, 2013; Moolenaar & Slegers, 2014; Parco-Tropicales & Guzman, 2014; Wahab et al., 2014). The literature review exhibits support for leaders who are committed to encouraging, motivating, and empowering staff members. In turn, this style of leadership has a positive effect on student outcomes (Bradberry & Greaves, 2012; Chen & Wong, 2015; Friedman, 2011; Peters, 2012). The literature supports the need for a leadership vision and style that values professional development that is purposeful and aligned to the needs of the organization and the unique population. In addition, the preponderance of literature reviewed suggested leaders cannot be insensitive to employees, disengaged from

building relationships, and disregards an employee's ability to improve (Evers & Lakomski, 2013; Fullan, 2011; Mette & Scribner, 2014; O'Doherty & Ovando, 2013; Urick & Bowers, 2014). In fact, the literature reviewed strongly supports the transformational leader who recognizes and grows the unique potential in employees and views this leader as a viable contributor to the success of the organization. (Duckworth, 2016; Dweck, 2006; Kennedy et al., 2013; Ng & Chan, 2014; Rahn et al., 2016; Smith & Addison, 2013; Thessin & Clayton, 2013; Yeager & Dweck, 2016).

Lastly, the literature regarding training and preparation programs focused on two main protocols in strengthening school leaders' abilities. The internship and mentoring are the most common models (Donkor, 2015; Fullan, 2011; Green & Bowden, 2012; Renihan & Noonan, 2012). The literature explained that criteria and prerequisites differ from program to program, alluding to inconsistencies in this practice from region to region, state to state, and program to program (Crum & Sherman, 2008; Miller & Martin, 2014; Ng & Chan, 2014; Smith & Addison, 2013). In addition to lack of consistency in training programs, there is lack of specific training in diversity, social justice, and empowering employees included in leadership preparation coursework as evidenced in the literature (Duckworth, 2016; Dweck, 2006; Kennedy, Carroll, & Francoeur, 2013; Ng & Chan, 2014; Rahn et al., 2016; Smith & Addison, 2013; Thessin & Clayton, 2013; Yeager & Dweck, 2016).

## **Chapter 2 Summary**

In Chapter 2, I summarized perspectives analyzed and reviewed in the literature regarding the growth mindset, transformational leadership and student achievement, and training programs deemed to be effective in preparing future leaders. The growth mindset perspective is the foundational platform that drives the heart of the literature review. This principle states that

a person's intellectual ability is not a fixed entity. The claim offers a unique perspective to empower staff and students in organizations of learning and other functional institutions (Burnette et al., 2012; McCombs, 2013; Parco-Tropicales & Guzman, 2014). The transformational leader continues to lead the forum in school leadership endeavors (Hunzicker, 2013; Moolenaar & Slegers, 2014; Parco-Tropicales & Guzman, 2014; Rosen, 2013; Wahab et al., 2014). Leadership that commits to embracing challenges, taking risks, growing abilities in others through experience, reflection, and compassion present opportunities for sustainable change and success (Evers & Lakomski, 2013; Fullan, 2011; Mette & Scribner, 2014; O'Doherty & Ovando, 2013; Urick & Bowers, 2014).

The single most important factor in determining student achievement is the instructional leader (Chen & Wong, 2015; Duckworth, 2016; Dweck, 2006, Elias et al., 2014; Friedman, 2011; Klar & Brewer, 2013; Louis et al., 2010; Yeager et al, 2016). The instructional leader becomes the transformational agent in an organizational setting. Infusing sound instructional strategies that respect diversity and engage all members of the unit provide optimal conditions for student learning and academic achievement. Instructional leadership is grounded in confidence. Confidence determines the stability or the timidity that transpires in an organization. The leader sets the tone and creates the culture and climate of an organization. A leader recognizes how important it is to stay alert, attentive, and confident. Others follow and gravitate to the same level of confidence present in the leader. If a leader is passive and submissive, so tends to be the staff. People want and need confidence from their leaders, especially when times are dangerous and in very real sense unpredictable (Chen & Wong, 2015; Duckworth, 2016; Dweck, 2006, Elias et al., 2014; Friedman, 2011; Klar & Brewer, 2013; Louis et al., 2010; and Yeager et al, 2016).

Lastly, in the review of literature I discussed and explained successful leadership programs. The internship provides hands-on experiential learning in the daily roles and responsibilities as well as special projects to grow leadership abilities in future administrators (Duckworth, 2016; Dweck, 2006; Kennedy et al., 2013; Ng & Chan, 2014; Rahn et al., 2016; Smith & Addison, 2013; Thessin & Clayton, 2013; Yeager & Dweck, 2016). Although internships and mentoring have proven to be successful practice, there is still lack of consistency in the organization of these protocols from program to program (Donkor, 2015; Miller & Martin, 2015; Ng & Chan, 2014; Smith & Addison, 2013).

More than half of the research I analyzed was qualitative (see, e.g., Crum & Sherman, 2008; Cseh et al., 2013; Friedman, 2011; Green & Bowden, 2012; Hunzicker, 2014; Klar & Brewer, 2013; O'Doherty & Ovando, 2013; Thessin & Clayton, 2012; Yeager et al., 2016), primarily through structured interviews, longitudinal case studies, and focus groups. Quantitative methodology was also undertaken (e.g., Brandstatter et al., 2015; Buttner et al., 2014; Della Sala et al., 2013; Karwowski, 2014; Mills et al., 2014; Rahn et al., 2016; Ravenscroft et al., 2012; Rixom & Mishra, 2014), along with three mixed-methods studies. The quantitative data assisted in building a solid foundation for the research in this dissertation. The review of the methodology helped me organize a plan of action for preparing an aligned qualitative study to answer the guiding questions set forth in this dissertation.

### **Argument of Advocacy Incorporating the Conceptual Framework**

This review of literature developed a unique conceptual framework using the growth mindset, transformational leadership, and training and preparation programs for educational leaders. The literature suggested a need to examine the experiences of the growth mindset in leadership abilities to yield socially significant findings. Specifically, the research questions

were: What are the experiences of educational leaders regarding the growth mindset? What are the experiences of educational leaders regarding the growth mindset in training teachers and staff members?

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

The qualitative case study was the most appropriate method for exploring and understanding educational leaders' experiences and perceptions of the growth mindset in their roles and responsibilities in schools. In case studies, the researcher develops an in-depth analysis of a case, program, or event in one or more individuals (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995; Suri, 2011). In this study I used structured interviews, follow-up interviews (member checking interviews), and a personal narrative as the primary means of data collection. The interview and narrative process presented the opportunity to explain and interpret the factors that educational leaders attribute their experiences regarding the growth mindset in leadership practice.

Additional qualitative methods were considered for this study. Ethnography would not be an appropriate approach because the study does not seek to understand language or cultural concerns of the educational leaders presented in the study (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995). Phenomenology would be a viable means had I intended to explore the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon. In this study, the growth mindset was not a phenomenon, thus exempting phenomenology as an appropriate method for the study. Grounded theory was not considered an option as it involves an abstract theory of a process or action (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995). Because the growth mindset is not a common phenomenon but an attribute that uniquely exists in educational leaders, the qualitative case study met the needs of this study. This case study involved collaboration with stakeholders. I sought to improve educational leadership practice by examining and explaining the growth mindset as it relates to the roles and responsibilities of educational leaders (Herr & Anderson, 2014).

#### **Research Questions**

The research questions for the study follow:

1. What are the experiences of educational leaders regarding the growth mindset?
2. What are the experiences of educational leaders regarding the growth mindset as these experiences relate to training teachers and staff members?

In Chapter 3, I describe the role of the researcher as a participant and identify processes to obtain participants in the study. The research questions were developed to determine experiences of the growth mindset. The interview questions are discussed, along with the participation selection process, researcher-developed instruments, data collection procedures, and the data analysis plan. The chapter concludes with a conflict of interest assessment and ethical issues in the study.

### **Purpose and Design of the Study**

The purpose of this case study was to understand the growth mindset for educational leaders in a school district in central Texas. The issue this study addressed was the experiences of the leaders in the district regarding the growth mindset and how these experiences contributed to interaction and training teachers and staff members. To gather data to support the purpose, interviews with 11 educational leaders were conducted, transcribed, and analyzed. The resulting themes were addressed and clarified in second interviews, in this case, member checking interviews. Lastly, the personal narrative was used to further explain, confirm, and further analyze the experiences found in the first and second interviews.

The data collection, analysis, and conclusions were useful in the educational world in light of the complex problems facing educational leadership. An additional purpose of this study was to recruit and maintain teachers and educational leaders. The study contributed to the vast body of research for leaders and leadership teams to implement best practice to improve organizational and professional development and student achievement. In addition, this study

adds to scholarly research in the field of transformational leadership and may improve educational leader effectiveness.

## **Research Population and Sampling Method**

### **Site Description**

The school district is the largest employer in the central Texas city, with approximately 2,660 full-time employees. All employees are encouraged to bolster their education through staff development programs and workshops and continuing education programs. Within the district, there are 319 administrative professionals, 1,357 teachers (with average of 10 years of teaching experience), 390 paraprofessionals, and 613 auxiliary employees. Student enrollment is 21,584 with a student teacher ratio of 15.8 to 1. In addition, the attendance rate is 96.8% with a dropout rate of less than 5%.

Through all the years of growth in a small town in central Texas, the school district has consistently been the heartbeat of the town. The first school, built in 1893, was a one-room wood structure with a wood-burning stove and 23 students taught by Miss Nannie Rogers. More than a century later, the district has 23 campuses, 1,357 teachers, and more than 21,000 students. District demographics are: 37.6% White, 30.3% Hispanic, 15.4% Black, 10.2% Asian, 2.8% multiracial, 0.4% American Indian, and 0.1% Native American.

The district mission statement includes references to a partnership with the community as well as assisting students to perform at their highest potential. In conjunction with this mission statement, the vision of the district expects to graduate students who are responsible and resilient, passionate lifelong learners, complex thinkers and problem solvers, effective communicators, and respectful citizens of global interdependence and civic accountability. The district demographics, mission statement, vision, and innovative qualities provide optimal conditions to

research the study. The school board and superintendent have a district goal to create resilient learners. This philosophical understanding of the district aligns with the purpose of the study and creates optimal conditions to conduct this qualitative case study. In addition, the district is in Year 4 of the Grit and Growth Mindset Initiative, which provides participants with relevant information to assist in exploring the experiences implementing the growth mindset in educational practice.

### **Research Population**

The district employees, primarily the targeted population of the study, has several unique attributes. All are familiar with the World Class Schools Initiative, which has embedded and built a foundation on the growth mindset. The Grit and Growth Mindset Initiative was piloted in 2012 at one of the middle-school campuses. The following year, the Initiative evolved and went district-wide and became active at every campus. To date, the Grit and Growth Mindset Initiative looks different at each campus, but it continues to be a driving force in World Class Schools Initiatives. All the participants in the study are district principals, assistant superintendents, and central office administrators, all of whom have a master's degree or higher. District administrators must also have completed a minimum of 3 years of educational leadership experience prior to becoming a principal or assistant superintendent. These district administrators vary in race and ethnicity to include White, African Americans, and Hispanics.

### **Sampling Process**

Purposeful sampling was used to select participants (Creswell, 2013, Patton, 2015; Stake, 1995). A purposeful sample of 11 educational leaders in this central Texas school district participated in the interviews. Homogenous samples are appropriate and effective when research explores a phenomenon that directly impacts their profession and practice (Suri, 2011).

Purposeful sampling provides the opportunity to explain experiences and perceptions and how this insight presents in-depth understanding and meaning (Patton, 2015; Stake, 1995; Suri, 2011).

### **Instrumentation**

Three different forms of instrumentation were used: (a) the first interview, (b) the member check interview, and (c) the personal narrative. Interviews are supported by the constructive paradigm for narrative production (James, 2016). In qualitative research, the process of face-to-face interviews provide a rich and in-depth experience to help researchers gain understanding of how people construct their lives (Creswell, 2007; James, 2016).

**Interviews.** Interviews are supported by the constructive paradigm for narrative production (James, 2016; Suri, 2011). In qualitative research, the process of face-to-face interviews provide a rich and in-depth experience to help gain understanding of how people construct meaning in life (Creswell 2007; James, 2016; Suri, 2011). Interview questions and cite references are included in Appendix A. The member check interview, also known as member validation, involves the initial interview answers being taken back to the site and reviewed and scrutinized by the participants. Member checks were used to verify the accuracy of the participants' words from the first interviews. All information warranting clarification was included in the write-up and responses from these interviews (Koelsch, 2013).

**Personal narrative.** The personal narrative explains experiences that I have encountered regarding the growth mindset in leadership practice. My professional experiences in leadership roles as both an assistant principal and principal in two different states and in varying grade levels from kindergarten through eighth grade contributed to the information analyzed in the first interviews and member checking interviews. I expected to find common themes regarding

leadership practice among administrators regarding effective strategies that demonstrate the growth mindset.

### **Data Collection**

Three types of data were collected. The two interviews were the primary means of data collection, triangulated by the personal narrative. The first interview was conducted with 11 educational leaders in the central Texas district. The specific site for the face-to-face, recorded interview was determined by the interviewee but took place where the participants work in the district jurisdiction. Sites differed from participant to participant as their jobs, roles, and responsibilities differ in the district. Data were analyzed and coded accordingly as themes manifested. A review of the relevant literature suggested most qualitative researchers use the structured interview as a means of data collection (Arghode & Wang, 2015; Evers & Lakomski, 2013; Friedman, 2011; Lauckner, Paterson, & Krupa, 2012; Mette & Scribner, 2014; O'Doherty & Ovando, 2013; Peters, 2012; Snyder, 2012). Interview questions were created and aligned using relevant research documented in the literature review to address the research questions. (See Appendix A.) Only questions approved by the IRB were used in the process. Confidentiality was respected in the interview process.

In the member check interview the interviewee received questions and responses from the first interview. Each response was confirmed and verified. In addition to validating responses from the first interview, any additional questions that arose as a result of the themes uncovered in the first interview were addressed in this member checking interview. Again, these interviews were recorded and scripted.

A personal narrative was used to assist in the triangulation of data to effectively analyze all data collected in the study. The personal narrative clarified any ambiguity and added depth

and understanding to the information provided for the first interview and member checking interviews. The personal narrative followed qualitative research protocol and was aligned to the research questions to assist in coding and data analysis process. The narrative provided insight and helped to interpret data analysis through my experiences as an educational leader.

### **Identification of Attributes**

The growth mindset continues to make a mark in leadership practice (Arghode & Wang, 2015; Cseh et al., 2013; Duckworth, 2016; Duckworth & Yeager, 2015; Dweck, 2010; Duckworth & Yeager, 2015; Karwowski, 2013; Rixom & Mishra, 2014). Leadership is vitally significant and ultimately determines the success or failure of an institution of learning. Effective leadership is a primary indicator of high performing schools across the nation (Arokiasamy et al., 2014; Chase, 2010; Hugelschafer & Ahtziger, 2013; Martin, 2015; Shaw & Newton, 2014; Urick & Bowers, 2014).

The growth mindset was first defined by Dweck in 2010. Dweck explained the growth mindset is a passion for stretching oneself and sticking to a task even when it is extremely difficult and not going well. This premise is the construct to which the growth mindset creates potential for learning and leading. Educational leaders today must interact with employees in a way that leads to successful student learning. Understanding the growth mindset and experiences that demonstrate it are important and can determine interaction and disposition toward intelligence and academic performance for stakeholders. This premise gives credibility to the study as a necessary vehicle for further explanation regarding educational leadership.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

The literature that supported the study offered several means of data analysis. Qualitative research typically uses multiple forms of data such as interviews, observations, documents,

reflections, rather than relying on a single data source (Creswell, 2013; Hatch, 2002; and Suri, 2011). In this study, the interview questions were created and aligned to the research in the literature review. I collected all data using these self-created instruments. (See Appendix A.) To establish themes that cut across all these data sources, the data included the first interview, the member check interview, and the personal narrative as the three data sources.

### **First Interview**

In the first interview procedures, all responses were carefully transcribed from the recordings. These scripted data records were coded according to similarities, themes, and attributes that align to the research in the literature review and demonstrate growth mindset characteristics. Inductive and deductive data analysis was used to build patterns, categories, and themes from the bottom up by organizing the data into increasingly more abstract sources of information. Inductively I worked back and forth between the themes and the data a comprehensive set of themes emerges. Then, deductively, I reviewed the data for the themes to determine if more evidence is needed to support these themes, which determined if additional information is needed. This was addressed in the member checking interview.

The interview process requires two levels of coding. The first was open coding. I sought out distinct concepts and categories in the data scripted and recorded from each participant. This information formed the basic units of the analysis. From here, I organized the data into first level concepts, or master headings, and second level concepts, or subheadings. I used color-coded highlights to distinguish concepts from categories. Different colored highlights were used to determine broad concepts and distinct categories. At the end of this process, these concepts with categories transferred and created a brief outline with concepts being the main headings and categories as subheadings.

The concepts and categories were determined in open coding to confirm that they accurately represent the transcribed responses and to explore and explain the relationship between the concepts and categories. I used axial coding, a more direct approach at looking at the data to make sure I had identified all important aspects. Lastly, transferring all the final concepts and categories into a clear and concisely organized data table provided a list of all major concepts and categories with an explanation of each. This data table was the basis of organizing the results and preparing a discussion for the research conducted.

### **Member Checking Interview**

In the follow-up interview or member checking interview, responses were verified and confirmed. Again, all responses were carefully scripted from the recordings. These scripted data records were coded according to similarities, themes, and attributes that align to the research in the literature review and demonstrate growth mindset characteristics. Inductive and deductive data analysis was used to build patterns, categories, and themes from the bottom up by organizing the data into increasingly more abstract sources of information. Inductively I worked back and forth between the themes and the data until there a comprehensive set of themes. Themes from member checking were carefully analyzed and compared to themes from the first interviews. Attributes and themes were addressed in the personal narrative.

### **Personal Narrative**

The personal narrative presented an anchor in the data analysis process. This narrative provided firsthand experiences in the educational settings. Open coding was used to break down the data into distinct units of meaning by analyzing words and phrases and connecting them to the growth mindset in relation to the themes found in the interviews (Gallagher & Wallace, 2016). The personal narrative served as a platform for exploring changing perceptions of

learning as they relate to educational leaders. The personal narrative was analyzed in relation to the concepts and categories defined in the first interview and member check interview.

Honoring the qualitative process, I kept the focus of the data on the learning and meaning that the participants hold regarding the growth mindset rather than the meaning that I had regarding this issue. The process of this qualitative design was emergent. Thus, as the research was underway, some themes changed after data collection (Creswell, 2013). The primary understanding formed a qualitative perspective to learn about these experiences from participants and to accurately convey this in documentation.

To minimize bias, I developed a complex picture of the growth mindset as it relates to educational leaders by reporting multiple forms of data and perspectives as evidenced in the interview questions, member check interviews, and personal narrative. As a result, a holistic perspective was established by examining the experiences of educational leaders regarding the growth mindset. The data analysis focused on careful coding and writing with regard to the participants' views. The member check interviews served as an additional validity check for this purpose.

To make sense of the data from the interviews, I needed to take apart the data as well as put it back together (Creswell, 2013). I used qualitative analysis procedures to hand code and analyze the interview responses from both the first interviews and member checking interviews. I analyzed each line of text to assign codes as well explore connections and relationships between concepts and categories as to further understand the data as they were presented.

Data analysis for the case study proceeded as follows:

1. Coordinated date and time of each interview.
2. Copied interview instrument and prepare tape recorder for the actual interview.

3. Conducted the interview.
4. Started coding the data. Open coding and axial coding (as described above).
5. Organized and prepared data for close analysis.
6. Read and looked at all the data again. I formed a general sense to reflect on the overall meaning and to explore key relationships between concepts and categories.
7. Created a detailed data table listing and defining concepts, categories and relationships between them. Used the coding to generate a description of the growth mindset experiences from the participants as well as themes for analysis.
8. Interpreted the findings and results through data triangulation of first interview, member check interview, and the personal narrative to explain key concepts and the relationships between them as they related to educational experiences regarding the growth mindset.

### **Limitations of the Research Design**

#### **Limitations**

A case study is a unit of analysis that reflects the behaviors of similar entities. Limitations are constraints that are largely beyond a researcher's control but that can affect the study outcome (Simon, 2013). Limitations of the study are factors that present potential weaknesses in the study. Thus, limitations restrict the extensity to which a study can go. In addition, the generality of the findings in a case study are never clear (Simon, 2013). Specifically, time is an immediate factor that limits the study to a snapshot or a moment that is dependent upon availability of participants as well as the unique circumstances that are occurring at that given time. In addition to time, generalizability is another limitation because of the research population and setting used in the study. The site and population had been exposed to

the Grit and Growth Mindset Initiative for the past 4 years, giving these educational leaders a vested understanding of the growth mindset. As the principal of a junior high campus in the district where the research was conducted, I had extensive experience in the growth mindset as it related to educational leadership in two settings: middle school (fifth and sixth grades) and junior high (seventh and eighth grades). This presented a limitation to the study because not all school districts or administrators have experienced this district-wide or campus specific practice.

To address these limitations, the timing of the interviews, member checks, and personal narrative was critical in getting clear and specific data. The interviews were conducted at different sites to the interviewee's discretion and were conducted by one person. The interview questions were read the same way to each participant and were limited to one hour. The member check interview assisted in this limitation by validating responses from the first interview. Generalizability is difficult to ascertain in the study given the unique population and site used in data collection. However, to address this limitation, I interviewed a relatively small number of participants. The interviews were confidential to protect the participant. I expected participants would be honest. Although the results of the study were not generalizable, the information discovered presented opportunities that contribute to understanding the growth mindset as it relates to educational leadership.

### **Delimitations**

Delimitations are those characteristics that arise from limitations in the scope of the study (Simon, 2013). Delimitations result from specific choices made to direct the study. The issue presented in the study, sharing the experiences of the growth mindset as it relates to educational leaders, was the first delimitation of the study. Many facets of educational leadership effect successful practice. Selecting participants from a school district that had participated in a

Growth Mindset Initiative for the past 4 years contributed to the usefulness of the information discussed in the interviews and data collection. Participating educational leaders at the site included principals, assistant principals, district administrators, superintendents, head band directors, and head athletic directors. Researcher-developed interview questions aligned with the literature reviewed in this define the boundaries of the research. The research was conducted in the natural setting. That is, all interviews, member checks, and personal reflections occurred in the workplace for each participant.

Considering how the limitations and delimitations affect the credibility of the study, I used triangulation to assist in the data collection and analysis. First interviews, member checks, and reflection were the three forms of data used in the coding and analyses. The study also involved extensive engagement with the participants throughout the data collection process as well as in sharing the findings of the study. Personal reflection, rich and thick description and coding, and reflexivity were all areas to reinforce the credibility of the study.

## **Validation**

**Credibility.** Internal validity establishes credibility of whether the research results correctly reflect the study and if the results are supported by the data. Strategies to increase validity and credibility within the study includes (a) data triangulation, examination of experiences from interviews, member checking, and personal narrative; (b) engagement, the interviews will occur face-to-face in private environments; and (c) current, relevant peer-reviewed literature (Creswell, 2013). Piaget's (1958) constructivist theory guides the study data.

Strategies to form external validity are limited because of the participants in this case study because the participants represented a district where the growth mindset initiative has been in place for the last 4 years. The conclusions of this study may not be valid to different

populations; but one may consider transferability if the study participants are like the participants in other districts and if similar conditions apply. The degree of generalizability and transferability is limited to a case-by-case basis and unique individual circumstances.

**Dependability.** Dependability in this study is established by including (a) descriptive reports of the actual experiences of participants as they relate to the growth mindset; (b) triangulation of data from first interviews, member checking interviews, and personal reflections; and (c) reflective interpretation of the conclusions that incorporate implications for positive insight into educational leadership practice. Researcher self-reflection was included to create an open narrative that assist in sharing personal experiences with the growth mindset to assist in interpreting the findings of the research (Creswell, 2013).

### **Expected Findings**

Each phase of the study revealed results that are important concerning educational leaders' experiences regarding the growth mindset. First interviews, member checking interviews, and personal narrative explored in-depth perceptions and experiences of the growth mindset and reveal how educational leaders interact with their peers, staff member, and students. In Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, I describe these experiences and report patterns and themes that are consistent from leader to leader. I also report significant differences in leader perceptions and experiences. Discussion in the personal narrative extends the experiential learning discovered in the interviews and contribute to the perceptions regarding the growth mindset in the sample population. The results of the study contribute to educational leadership practice by filling a gap in the literature regarding experiences concerning the growth mindset.

## **Ethical Issues**

### **Conflict of Interest Assessment**

There was no substantial conflict of interest in this study. At the time of the study I was the principal of a campus in the district where the research was conducted. The study was designed to contribute to improved educational leadership actions and practice as they relate to the growth mindset. This research explored educational leaders' experiences regarding the growth mindset and how this learning can improve procedures and interventions in training teachers and staff members. Effective strategies for leading contribute to the development of best practices within educational organizations and become an integral part of institutions of learning.

### **Researcher's Position**

Effective leadership is a primary indicator of successful schools. Leadership attributes and characteristics vary from leader to leader, although some quality traits are consistent. The growth mindset has received increasing attention in leadership and student academic development (Bradberry & Greaves, 2012; Dweck, 2006; Hugelschafer & Achtezger, 2014; Karwowski, 2013; Martin, 2015). My years of experience as a principal in Texas and Louisiana provided me with the forum to pilot and implement the Grit and Growth Mindset Initiative at my current campus. When the faculty and staff at both my campuses became acquainted with the growth mindset and specific strategies to grow the mindset, we collaborated effectively with each other and implemented it, which resulted in making progress and improvement within the school.

The literature has suggested staff and students with a growth mindset show the greatest improvement in work performance, task completion, and exam performance (Chase, 2015,

Karwowski, 2013; Martin, 2015; Ravenscroft et al., 2012). Staff, students, and families were informed of the initiative and attended informational nights regarding the importance of the growth mindset and the effects of the mindset on achievement, school progress, and student engagement. The school staff participated in monthly staff development sessions that engaged them in growth mindset learning. The staff also implemented Mindset Monday instruction to students regarding transforming the fixed mindset. The Grit and Growth Mindset Initiative continues to hold high ranking in the superintendent's goals for the district as well as maintain high priority with district school board.

### **Ethical Issues in the Study**

A district letter of approval was obtained for the superintendent to conduct the qualitative case study. The IRB at Concordia University provided authorization to use human subjects in this study. The sample was comprised of 11 educational leaders from the district who participated in interviews, member checking interviews, and personal reflections; all participants completed an informed consent form explaining guidelines, interview process, and procedures of the study. The face-to-face interviews occurred at a time chosen by each participant. Member checks took place after all the first interviews were completed (Creswell, 2000; Koelsch, 2013) in the participants' work settings. Member check interviews took after the first interview for each participant. After all the first interviews and member check interviews were completed, the personal narrative was completed.

### **Chapter 3 Summary**

This methods chapter detailed the research design and methodology of the qualitative case study. I examined the experiences of educational leaders regarding the growth mindset. The research was conducted in one school district. I gathered interview data and wrote a

personal narrative concerning the growth mindset and analyze these attitudes and experiences. The review of current reviewed literature ascertained a growing interest in the growth mindset; yet despite this information, little evidence was found to explain the experiences of educational leaders.

Participants were informed of procedures for data collection and analysis. Signed consent was obtained. Interviews occurred using researcher developed instruments that were aligned to reviewed literature. Issues of trustworthiness included internal validity, external validity, credibility, and dependability. The process to gain district approval, ethical concerns, and consent documentation was provided. The methods described in this chapter were techniques explained in literature and prior research practice (Creswell, 2013; Hatch, 2010; Stake, 1995). In Chapter 4, I restate the purpose and research questions and describe the data analysis and results.

## **Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results**

### **Introduction**

This case study was designed to explore the experiences of educational leaders regarding the growth mindset. A case study provides an opportunity to examine a contextualized contemporary phenomenon within boundaries (Hatch, 2002). In this chapter, I present a description of the sample that was used for this qualitative case study. The research methodology and analysis of data collected by means of structured interviews, member-checking interviews, and personal narrative are discussed. The findings are summarized before data and results are presented.

### **Description of the Sample**

I sent 15 invitations to participate in this qualitative case study to educational leaders in Texas. Of the 15 invitees, 11 took part in the study. Among the 11 participants, four were principals of secondary campuses, three assistant superintendents, three directors from central office in the areas of communication, student outreach, and advanced academics, and a district superintendent. The lowest degree that any of the participants possessed was either a master of arts for curriculum and instruction or a master of arts in educational administration. Educational leaders ranged from 15 to 35 years of experience. All of the participants have been described in pseudonym to protect their identity and maintain confidentiality.

### **Description of Participants**

**Bruno.** Bruno (all names are pseudonymous) was in his second year as a principal after 7 years as an assistant principal in a suburban district. He previously taught special education reading and worked as the campus behavior specialist prior to his administrative positions. He had worked a total of 15 years in education. Bruno was a 37-year-old African-American male.

Bruno believed that leadership is based on trust. As a leader, he attempted to be consistent in doing what is best for his students. He thought that, through consistency, staff could trust the best interest of children will always be at the core of decision-making practices.

**Sandy.** Sandy had been in education for 17 years. She had taught third through sixth grades, and in her last 3 years in the classroom setting. She was responsible for teaching a class titled, “True Grit” to fifth- and sixth-grade students. This class focused on how we learn from failure, how we build resilience, and how to have a growth mindset in our daily lives. This campus initiative transitioned to a district wide Grit initiative that was now in Year 5. Currently, she was a district administrator who as responsible for leading the RISE mentoring program where she matches adults in the community with students requesting mentoring. Sandy was a 42-year-old White female.

Her philosophy of leading was to lead by example. She thought one cannot grow in others what one is not living in herself. She believed that relationships are the cornerstone to leadership and people who think that others care about them beyond what they provide for an organization will work double time for a leader. She believed that we can always get better and fostering our own growth mindset will help establish a culture around us that also believes that growth was possible.

**Dwayne.** Dwayne was currently the director of operations, maintenance, and facilities. He previously served 7 years as a high school principal. He had worked in education for 17 years in sixth through 12th grades as a teacher, coach, and campus administrator. He had worked in both rural and urban districts with varying demographics and socioeconomic levels. Dwayne was a 45-year-old White male.

His years as an educational leader taught him that making a difference in the life of a student is achieved through listening and sharing the educational experience versus just telling them what to do and how to do it. His goal was to always walk away from any encounter or experience with a better understanding of the person or the situation. This allowed application for future events.

**Barbara:** Barbara had been an administrative leader for 22 years. She was the veteran principal in her district, serving as a principal for 18 years. She strives to ensure her campus was a high achieving campus. Barbara was a 54-year-old Caucasian female.

Barbara demonstrated and relied upon strong leadership values and strong ethics as she performed her role of principal, instructional leader, manager, and role model to her staff and students. She worked hard to excel in working with teachers, parents, school and district employees on issues such as curriculum, student performance, discipline, staff development and evaluation, campus culture, safety, ethics, policy, and overall campus management.

Barbara was an inspirational communicator who motivated and united diverse people and interests to achieve common goals. She was passionate and proven in meeting the needs of diverse and at-risk learners. She believed it was essential to create a safe, stimulating, and challenging learning environment in order to achieve the highest levels for all students.

**Daphne.** Daphne had been an administrator in public schools for 3 years. She currently led a small but mission driven alternative campus that supported the districts two, traditional high schools. Before entering the administrative ranks, Daphne taught for 15 years and had instructional experience that reached from elementary to high school. Daphne was a 45-year-old African-American female.

Daphne believed that every person can grow beyond their past, beyond their previous

challenges, imposed limitations, and former successes. She thought the greatest gifts leaders give to each person's journey are hope and opportunity. She believed hope allows us to aspire to be better, to be greater. She thought opportunity provides the impetus for forward movement through experience and the journey of growth is a lifelong endeavor that consistently challenges us to be and to become the best version of ourselves.

**Lucille.** Lucille had been a teacher of children and teachers for more than 40 years. As a classroom teacher, she taught every core content in multiple grade levels, coached academic and athletic teams, and developed innovative programs to support teachers in the development of advanced and diverse learning strategies. In leadership roles, she had supervised programs for gifted and talented, bilingual/ESL, advanced placement, dual credit, and numerous academic competitions including Academic Decathlon, Future Problem Solvers, Quiz Bowl, and Robotics. She was innovative. She strived to find equity for all students and for developing leadership in others.

Lucille's educational philosophy was, "Love learning, love learners." She believed leaders love learning and have great enthusiasm for helping others learn, everything else falls into place. The best of educational leaders work tirelessly to develop the gifts of others and to help them appreciate who they are and how they learn. Leaders who love learning and love learners never stop their own education; they listen to and value others, and constantly work to improve the success of students and employees. Lucille was a 65-year-old Scottish female.

**Wilma.** Wilma was in her 24<sup>th</sup> year in education. She currently serves as the executive director of communications in a suburban school district. In her current role, she worked closely with the community to foster positive, effective, supportive relationships for the district she works in. Wilma was a 48-year-old White female.

In her early years in education, she taught journalism, photojournalism, broadcast journalism, yearbook, newspaper, graphic design, and English. She enjoyed nurturing student leaders and believed in their potential to lead their peers, even in tough situations. Her former students were grateful for the leadership skills learned in her classes, as they were able to apply them to their jobs as adults.

**Abraham.** Abraham had served as superintendent in three school districts for a total of 26 years. Prior to the serving as a superintendent, he served as principal of a private high school, as a Peace Corps biology teacher in Africa, and worked medical administration as an enlisted member of the U.S. Air Force. Abraham was a 61-year-old White male.

In his leadership philosophy, Abraham placed a primary emphasis on personal accountability, grit, and on measurable goals and results. As society changes, he believed the public schools are absorbing an even larger role and he was concerned about this trend. He thought there was there must continue to be personal accountability among students, parents, and staff so that the role of educating children remains a joint responsibility.

**Roxanna.** Roxanna began her teaching career teaching English to high school students in private schools in Puerto Rico. Upon her move to Houston, she taught ESL to high school Vietnamese. She served 2 years as a counselor in a middle-school setting and quickly transitioned to an administrator job for the next several years where she was a dean of Instruction, assistant principal, and principal. She presently served as the assistant superintendent for intermediate education in a suburban district.

Roxanna believed that it takes a village to educate a child. She thought the only way to improve our nation and our culture is for the village to educate every child with love, respect, and dignity. In doing so, Roxanna believed they will become productive members of family,

community, and a nation if we are able to develop their individual talents. Roxanna was a 66-year-old Hispanic American female.

**Raven.** Raven had been in education for 19 years. She had served as principal in a middle-school setting with fifth- and sixth-grade students in a suburban area. She had previously served as a junior high teacher, coach, counselor, and assistant principal. Raven was a 45-year-old African-American female.

Raven's understanding that everything people do in life requires hard work and discipline. It requires people to make mistakes and learn, grow, and become better from these mistakes. She believed that surrounding ourselves with others who are motivated will encourage us and challenge us to do better in all aspects of life.

**Gretchen.** Gretchen was the assistant superintendent of instructional programs in a large suburban high performing district. She credited the attention to strong district initiatives, strong sense of community, and strong commitment to high performance to be why the district was extremely successful regardless of the diverse demographics of the district. She had spent 35 years, her entire career, in education as a teacher, assistant principal, principal, and an assistant superintendent. She strongly believed that first instruction from a high-quality teacher is key to student success. Gretchen was a 64-year-old White female.

### **Research Methodology and Analysis**

In this qualitative study, I used a case study design in order to understand the experiences of educational leaders regarding the growth mindset in Texas. The case study was exploratory because it described the experiences of Texas educators within the context of real life (Yin, 2003). Two questions guided the research study: What are the experiences of educational

leaders regarding the growth mindset? What are the experiences of educational leaders regarding the growth mindset as it relates to training and staff development?

I used structured interviews and member checking as data collection methods in the study and the inductive analysis model (Hatch, 2002) to analyze these data. In the following section, I explain the coding steps I followed in detail. I conducted face-to-face interviews at multiple sites and recorded each interview using Voice Memos and Rev.com to transcribe all recordings. After completing each interview and receiving the transcriptions of each, I met with each interviewee again, reviewed the transcription for accuracy and clarity, and followed up with two additional questions to assist with data collection.

### **Data Collection**

I collected these data in two phases. First, I conducted structured interviews. Second, I conducted member checking and follow-up interviews. These two phases contributed to the last method of data collection, a personal narrative. The personal narrative explains how my experiences as an educational leader allowed me to interpret the interview data of each participant, to analyze these data in respect to the growth mindset, and to share findings that contribute to the field of educational research.

### **Structured Interviews**

I conducted the first round of interviews with each of the eleven participants over a period of 2 weeks. I collected interview data from each participant during prearranged, 60-minute interview sessions. I conducted each interview at a time and location that was convenient for the participant. Locations included my office, participant offices, and the district educational support center administration building. I recorded each interview using Voice Memo. I also took notes in my researcher's journal as I listened to each participant's responses. I wrote

clarifying statements to help summarize participant responses and to help me process meaning as the interviews progressed.

In the initial interviews, I asked 10 prewritten questions that I aligned with current literature regarding experiences with the growth mindset. Questions 1 through 3 inquired about hiring practices and making improvements in their current department. Question 4 gave participants the opportunity to discuss their greatest failure. Questions 5 and 6 gave participants the opportunity to explain how data drives decision making and how this practice lends to making a measurable impact on the organization. Question 8 explained how working on a team contributes to educational leadership practice. Questions 9 and 10 provided the opportunity for participants to discuss what was most important in their leadership position and how they had improved over the course of the last year.

### **Member Checking and Follow-Up Questions**

I conducted member checking with each participant over a period of 2 weeks. I provided a copy of the transcription from the initial interview for review. In member checking, I confirmed that all information was accurate and legible, and asked each participant two additional questions. I utilized member-checking sessions to triangulate the set of data and provide greater validity to the study. The format of each session was conversational between each participant and me. The first question asked each participant to define success. The last follow-up question allowed the opportunity for each participant to share what factors, elements, or conditions are necessary to educate and inform a staff regarding the growth mindset. Rev.com transcribed and prepared member-checking interviews for coding.

## **Data Analysis**

I used the inductive analysis model as discussed by Hatch (2002) to analyze these data collected during the initial interview and member-checking interviews. To assist in coding these data, I used the analysis methods as explained by Saldana (2016). Specifically, I used the initial coding model, which is open coding (Saldana, 2016). In this first cycle, I broke down these qualitative data into concise parts, analyzed the data with careful eyes, and compared the data by looking at similarities and differences from participant to participant. After using the initial coding model for first cycle coding, I used pattern coding (Saldana, 2016) to group those codes into a smaller number of categories. In that, I identified 85 codes and collapsed them down to 25 clear and concise codes. I was able to regroup and reorganize the data to identify emergent themes.

### **Coding**

After a review of Hatch (2002), Patton (2002), and Saldana (2016) concerning coding techniques, I read each transcription carefully with one key question in mind. I read each transcription and made notes in the margins answering the question, “What type of leader is this?” This was my first frame of analysis in analyzing the participants’ responses. This question provided an operational lens to analyze the participant responses. The next time I reviewed each transcription, I examined the responses through a different frame. I considered the questions, “What motivates this educational leader, and how do they define success?” Focusing on these frames provided additional points to clarify participant responses and further contributed to data collection. These frames provided direction for breaking data into manageable parts for coding.

I began an extensive process of analyzing each transcription for codes. Saldana (2016) explained, “A code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language based on visual data” (p. 4). This definition clarified how to assign codes to the body of data. In doing so, this process resulted in a unique color coding process to indicate repetitive, regular, or consistent occurrences or patterns (Saldana, 2016). For example, the Greater Than Yourself Principle is a concept that states leaders work to grow their employees to a higher state or to become better than themselves (Farber, 2009) do. In my code bank, Greater Than Yourself was color-coded orange. So, when Sandy stated, “I define success as doing something that makes the people and the world around them better,” that phrase was coded orange. As another example, *culture* was color-coded green—for example, when Barbara said, “I think building that idea that we’re all in this together regardless of whether you’re the teacher, or the principal, or the custodian, or whoever.” In some cases, phrases were double-coded as they could easily fit in two or more codes. For example, Gretchen said,

It takes time to build that work ethic and collegiality and that sense of responsibility and the opportunity for people to see the bigger picture for both the district and for what their role is. Therefore, I am very careful in hiring, in training, in mentoring so that people will perform at the level we expect.

I coded this statement as culture, seeing the bigger picture, and having high expectations for staff. It was color-coded green for culture, yellow for seeing the bigger picture, and blue for having high expectations.

I initially identified 85 codes that emerged from these data. Next, I reduced and collapsed these data to 25 codes. I completed a table of the 85 codes and was able to organize

them into categories that aligned with 25 clear codes. I reviewed these data closely in alignment with the 25 codes and identified five themes: (a) core leadership attributes, (b) culture, (c) success defined, (d) transformational leadership, and (e) evaluation and measuring the impacts of the growth mindset.

### **Interview Data**

After collecting these data during both interviews, I analyzed each question posed to the 11 participants. (See Appendix C for interview transcriptions and coding.) The frames of analysis overarching questions that I used provided direction and a concise purpose when asking these questions. I scripted in the margin during the interview to process by margin clarify what type of leader I was speaking with and what motivated this leader. Even though these questions were not part of the interview questions, they were essential in framing the way I looked at the data. The margin scripting when reading each transcript prior to coding provided parameters of how I would look at and code the experiences of the participants. To analyze these interview data, I first color coded each transcript using Saldana's (2016) initial coding process. This created a coding bank of 85 codes that surfaced in the participant responses. As I completed this process with all the initial interview transcripts, I began to see commonalities in the participants' responses. I was then able to group these codes according to these commonalities. I utilized Saldana's (2016) pattern coding method to collapse codes down to 25.

### **Member Checking Data**

After conducting these brief member-checking sessions, I analyzed participant responses coding responses in accordance with the existing code bank. I was able to see commonalities in participant responses in these follow up sessions as well. I organized this information by

explaining emergent themes and patterns resulting from collapsed codes during the analysis process. (See Data Table in Presentation of Data and Results).

### **Summary of Findings**

The findings of the study revealed that the participants understood the connection between core leadership attributes such as being honest, serving others, being a clear communicator, being a confident decision maker, being available, being flexible, being a good listener, and having high expectations for staff and students success provided the best environment for sharing growth mindset practice. The educational leaders perceived that these attributes were essential in providing direction and purpose for staff development and collegial learning. Educational leaders also discussed culture as being an influential element in preparing a staff for growth mindset initiatives. Although leaders expressed varying aspects of culture, most tended to focus on building strong relationships, working together with pride, support, and commitment, and, moving in the right direction. Several participants identified creating a culture of restorative practice and presenting a climate that supports being better than yesterday as essential elements to support the growth mindset.

Participants discussed defining success as a precursor to changing the attitudes and behaviors of staff members regarding the growth mindset. Participants emphasized the importance of operating with a “Greater Than Yourself Principle” and empowering others to want to work hard to benefit others. Many participants said that dreaming big for stakeholders and leading with passion to leave behind a legacy of learners is the ultimate objective of all leadership practice. Educational leaders discussed the impact that visionary leadership has on teacher buy in. Teachers, they said, are best able to support initiatives when they see a purpose behind their work and it aligns to the vision of leadership.

Educational leaders said that leading schools today requires a transformational leader. Participants describe the transformational leader as one who is resilient, risk taking, thinks outside of the box, confronts brutal facts, leads with passion, understands compassion, possesses empathy for staff and students, and respects the unique attributes that each person possesses and how these attributes contribute to the team. Educational leaders said that creating opportunities to teach and understand the growth mindset are vitally important in the job of a transformational leader. Teachers and students are able to embrace change and balance both fixed and growth mindset thinking when an environment of transformation exists. The transformation leader is also a practitioner of active research. This leader recognizes the need for literature to support transition through active observation and reflective practice.

The educational leaders viewed evaluating and measuring the impacts of the growth mindset as one of the most important factors in supporting implementation. Although the participants discussed evaluation and measurement from various standpoints, they noted that sustainability and alignment significantly affect the manner in which leadership approaches growth mindset practices. Participants discussed the need for all educational leaders to practice data driven decision making with an intentional focus. The findings revealed that educational leaders value transparency in the decision-making process. However, in order to do so, educational leaders must evaluate themselves and be honest regarding existing conditions in the work environment as well as being prepared to evaluate themselves against others.

Overall, five themes emerged that supported both research questions:

1. Educational leaders possess or do not possess core leadership attributes that create optimal conditions for supporting growth mindset initiatives.

2. Educational leaders create a culture in the workplace that is conducive to supporting growth mindset initiatives.
3. How educational leaders define success determines the likeliness of supporting initiatives regarding the growth mindset.
4. The transformational leader creates an environment conducive to supporting growth mindset initiatives.
5. Evaluating and measuring the impacts of the growth mindset is vitally important to educational leaders.

### **Presentation of the Results**

I analyzed these data from the first interview and member checking interviews by applying the inductive analysis model Hatch (2002). I analyzed these data, specifically the coding process, using Saldana's (2016) initial and pattern coding models. I presented the results of my analysis in this section.

#### **Structured Interviews and Member Checking**

During these data collection and analysis procedures, patterns within these data began to emerge. These codes revealed the meaning of these data (Hatch, 2002). In total, 85 codes emerged from these data, which I reduced and collapsed to 25 codes, as discussed below.

**Code 1: Direct leadership.** All 11 educational leaders indicated direct leadership was an important characteristic in leading an organization. The attributes that the participants discussed specifically were the following: possessing a take-charge attitude, exhibiting clear communicator skills, being an active and good listener, being flexible and available to staff. Bruno said "This year we can't be unsure of what to do. We have to pick our spot and know what to do and when to do it." Sandy said, "If I have people taking risks, doing things outside of

their comfort zone, or doing things outside of their element, it tells me they are not afraid to step into something uncomfortable.” Barbara summarized when she said the following:

I look for folks who are confident in their decision to teach. They are confident in their knowledge of their content area. However, to be successful here, especially with middle-level students and to be successful in the community we serve, you must be open to new ways of doing things. You must be open to new ways of communicating, new ways for shaping the path for kids, and new curriculum innovations. You must be confident in your style, in your content, in your ability to manage and lead kids, but you must be open to change.

Each educational leader expressed the value of direct leadership in both hiring practice as well as day-to-day leadership responsibilities. “I don’t think that our teachers in the district are going to greatly improve unless my department takes more of a lead in that process,” said Gretchen. “Growth can be stagnant, and my people need to take the lead.” Lucille speculated that one of the most valuable aspects of leading is always listening to learn more and looking for teachers who test the limits and extend their thinking beyond the normal boundaries:

Leaders are willing to listen and to try to do something differently even when they know it is really bad. If things were okay, or even really good, why would you want to change things? It is the old adage; if it is not broke do not fix it. So, if it’s good or even really good, in order for people to change you must make a compelling argument as to why they need to risk everything they’re doing that’s good to do something new or different. That is a much more difficult thing to sell. Everyone recognizes a bad situation and is willing to jump on board and make changes. However, to take something from good to great, or

from great to fabulous is difficult. It takes someone listening, thinking outside of the box, and willing to take the risk.

**Code 2: Trust.** Participants noted that trust is a foundational element in leading others. Leaders must present themselves as credible and trustworthy agents in the workplace. In addition, a leader must believe that his or her staff is capable of doing the job they are hired to do. Raven said, “I have learned that designating, allowing other people to take on some of the workload, and delegating others to do it, versus me doing it all, is what has to happen. Because that’s what you have to do, and learning to trust people that they’re going to get it done is critical.” Roxanna said, “If there’s no truthfulness, or no honesty, then how can you trust the order of where you are?” William explained,

The support must be there similar to a cheerleader. You have to be able to say I trust you. Are they going to make mistakes? You bet, were human, but without trust, they are not going to take risks. They must be empowered to take the risks and leaders empower others by trusting them.

When trust is evident in the workplace, there is an opportunity to motivate and empower others to work but there is also a willingness to step in and help in guide when needed. Lucille said,

I had trouble working with an online course in a team thing because it was artificial. It was not real world. Because, if you are doing things in a group work setting in a real-world situation you know the people you are working with. You know their strengths, you divide the tasks according to strengths and gifts, not according to everybody has so many pages or questions to answer. You also know their personalities and you have a

professional respect that if someone cannot do the job, you trust them to let you know with enough time so that you can assist, because everyone at some point needs help.

**Code 3: Confident decision maker.** Educational leaders noted that employees who are confident in both their abilities to solve problems and make decisions are able to achieve greater results in the learning environment. Lucille said, “You want every person to use their skills to the absolute best of their ability. The key is recognizing your personal gifts and growing them.” Sandy said, “This work has helped me grow my confidence in my ability to know that it’s better to not avoid conflict or confrontation, but to face it head on and find resolution.” Dwayne said:

When assessing whether a person is a best fit for a task, you look at what people have in their rooms and on their walls. You look at how they talk and what they focus on. If they are focusing on themselves, I do not want to talk to them. If they are focusing on their school, their kids, their community and know what they are doing and what they are looking to improve, I want to talk to these people. That is why this new job has allowed me, I believe, to be a better leader. I would have been a better principal if I was confident in delegation and relinquishing some of the things to others and not trying to do it all by myself. I do not know maintenance and operations as I know education. I have to be confident in the decisions I make and trust the people carrying them out.

Educational leaders explained that confident decision making is an attribute that is vitally significant in leadership. They said that hiring confident employees presents opportunities for collective professional development. This attribute empowers and motivates employees to want to work hard for their successes. Gretchen said, “Someone who has good intelligence and a strong work ethic, I think you can mold and grow better than you can someone who may be knowledgeable but not have the attitude.” Daphne said, “Being able to not remain on a path just

because it is familiar takes confidence and boldness. Being willing to step beyond is the only way to step into the next thing.”

**Code 4: Positive culture. Organization is moving in the right direction.** The participants noted that when the culture in an organization is positive, the organization moves in a forward direction. Gretchen said, “It takes time to build that work ethic and collegiality that sense of responsibility, and the opportunity for people to see the bigger picture for the district and what their role is.” Lucille noted, “Everyone has good ideas. We need to allow them opportunities to do things in different ways to sometimes get better results than they thought\.” Bruno said, “If I’m in it, I want to win. If someone’s keeping score, I want to win it, and this spirit starts to spill over onto everyone.”

Educational leaders explained that a positive culture that is moving in the right direction provides clarity and direction. “Just reading the vibes on everybody, walking in the building and seeing and being able to read the tension as well as motivation is powerful for an organization,” said Bruno. Sandy said, “You have to be a person who is willing to know your people, care about your people, and lead them in the right direction so that there is no doubt to where you are heading,” Dwayne argued,:

You want somebody who has ability, has growth ability and has self –awareness to recognize that they do not know everything and the ego or lack of ego to realize they need humility to grow. The team recognizes that they can learn from anyone. They can learn something from the custodian all the way up to the superintendent. Somebody can give you something to help you get better and move forward in a positive direction.

**Code 5: Culture. Departments working together with pride, support, and commitment.** The educational leaders said that when departments work together with pride for

the organization they support each other and collectively the campus benefits. Lucille said, “It doesn’t matter how much skills you have if you don’t have pride in your organization and don’t have the attitude that’s conducive to learning, growing, and moving forward.” It is powerful, explained Bruno, when a department leader is prideful in task completion because everyone came together to make it happen. Sandy stated,

I think if you can get your team to understand, or buy in to, the growth-minded place it is going to feed down into the people that they work with. You can see it in any campus and any department in any organization if you have a leader that shows support for employees, takes risks, it is a free place to make mistakes, we can always grow.

Dwayne added, “Without a doubt, you want to staff organization with those who know where they are but know that there is support for each other and potential always for growth and work towards that growth.” Educational leaders explained that the culture of the campus is a major contributor to building collegiality in staff. Participants spoke of working together to establish this. “The teachers and the principal have to choose that were all kind of together, in and out. Building that idea that we’re all together regardless of whether you’re the teacher, principal, custodian or whatever is vital to success,” said Barbara. Roxanna summarized this concept:

This campus, all the departments work so well together, there was such a culture, and there still is I believe. There is such a culture of cooperation, of pride, of support, of achieving, of direction to doing what is best for kids at the same time, bringing pride to the school. That culture was there.

**Code 6: Culture. Not accepting mediocrity.** Educational leaders said that creating a culture where mediocrity is not the norm is essential to fostering growth mindset experiences.

Barbara said, “We create as many of those opportunities as possible to ensure that every kid can participate at the highest levels, and if they’re not doing well, we have tons of support.”

“I had to ensure that any training that I provided did not close or provide absolutes, did not close off creative thought, opportunity for input, or those types of things,” said Daphne.

Raven explained, “We’re constantly looking at our data from a smaller spectrum all the way to a larger spectrum to make good decisions and to make necessary changes that we have to in order to be successful.”

Participants stated that accepting the status quo or being satisfied with the way things are is also an obstacle to the culture of a campus. Roxanna said, “They impacted the love for the campus, that culture of achieving, but at the same time recognizing students for who they were and what we need to do to get them there. It was beautiful.” Wilma said,

I think it is important for any of the employees, especially in the communications department, to have a growth mindset because we work in a world and in an organization that we must constantly evolve with social media and we are constantly involved with what others say around us.

“Adversity helps but when you are in the middle of the storm, you’re not sure that you’re really improving,” said Abraham. Bruno concluded,

It is surprising to me that the kids that are at the highest level would have parents that are not. It is the kind of reflection of the overall mindset with people being okay with okay. We do not want that at our campus. It is important to have that teacher that is pushing these kids the hardest to get them to the highest level. Not that my kid is in a room and doing just fine doing in doing just enough to get by.

**Code 7: Culture. Building relationships.** The participants noted that building relationships is essential to creating a positive campus culture. “He truly promotes love for everybody and he shows it in how he interacts with the community and the things he does,” said Bruno. Lucille said,

Instead of focusing on what you do not do well and where the deficits are, you focus on the strengths. I think too many times as teachers and educators we worry about the struggling kid who is on the bottom who cannot do certain things. Instead, we should focus on what can he do, what should she be able to do, and take the time to build a relationship with this child to give them opportunities to find one thing they are good at and build on it.

“A strength of mine,” said Sandy, “is building relationships so that there is trust there. So, when I do need to have difficult conversations they know it’s coming from a good place.” Educational leaders explained that relationships build connections not only collegially but also to a purpose. Daphne said,

I do believe as far as teachers and their ability to move beyond where they are to the place they can be is that until you give someone the experience that expands them beyond their current mode of thought, they will not ever think differently. First, you must unlock their thinking. Then, the brain can prepare to do something differently.

Barbara said, “We want to help kids, sort of, see the connection. That what they do is not reflective of who they are.” Positive relationships between educators and students are to create purpose in the learning environment that guides the organization towards successful gains for all stakeholders. “I think we would’ve seen more of the teacher buy into students’ success, more of

the teachers understanding the needs of the children by building relationships versus trying to teach the content,” said Roxanna. Daphne said,

There has to be a connection between leadership and all of the educators on the campus. There has to be respect. Respect and connectedness. Trust must be valued and evident. Relationships are critical. I know my people better than when I entered initially last year. Because I know them better, I am able to assist them with their dreams better. I am able to put them in situations to learn and grow.

**Code 8: Culture. Find good fit personnel to staff the organization.** The participants stated that finding people who align to campus goals, vision, and purpose optimize potential for making progress towards success. Raven said, “We have to decide is this person what we actually thought this person was going to be. If not, we continue looking for people that we think will be good for our campuses.”

“The most important thing I do,” said Roxanna, “is hire the right staff, hire the right principals for the campus. I think that is the best use of my leadership skills.” Abraham stated, I have an insight into personalities in person. The Lord has always given me that from the time I was little. I am able to figure out people can work together and how this one has this strength and that one has that strength and how they provide an anchor to the decision-making process. My job is to make people realize their value to the rest. Everyone must understand how they all play a role.

Barbara explained, “You may have a great candidate, but they many not fit your organizational needs. Make sure the right people are doing the right things, gives me time to do the things I think are important.” Sandy summarized this notion:

I go to each campus and meet with each principal individually. We discuss what we need to do at your campus, because your culture is different. Therefore, again, facilitating that personal relationship and not just throwing out ballpark stuff hoping that it hits a few. However, getting personal. So, if you are working with a campus full of teachers, how intently do you know your teachers? How much do you know them outside of who they are as a teacher? How do they align to what you want to see happen at your campus? These are the questions we need to answer.

**Code 9: Culture. Model, reward, and praise.** The participants said acknowledging the efforts of staff and student to build a culture and climate of empowerment. “You always give people worthy work. Give them something a little bit higher than they are currently doing, and that motivates them and keeps them loyal to you,” said Barbara. “I’ve learned as a leader, as a principal working with both staffs and students, you reward what you want to see. You model what you want them to follow,” said Roxanna. Wilma stated,

You have to give them the tools they need to be successful, the support they need and then model the behavior or the actions that you want. They may need an article or something to understand a little better but then also the training and role modeling. Then, just the support, being the cheerleader.

**Code 10: Empowering others.** Educational leaders said that one of the most valuable aspects of leading others are to empower them to want to do the jobs they are called to do. “I give them autonomy to do what they need to do. In the end, they know exactly what has to be done and what the expectation is,” said Raven. “I finally learned that if you want people to do a good job, you have to let them,” said Gretchen. Dwayne said,

Even though you are the leader, you relinquish authority and your employees are sitting there coordinating and collaborating with each other. They are going to create a district standard based off their own suggestions. This has never been done before, but it is the growth of them as powerful employees.

Abraham said, “That’s the job of the leader. It’s one of my strengths I believe to be able to sit and get the best out of people.” Gretchen said, “I always felt like my job was to make kids realize they could.”

“The desire is huge,” said Daphne. “When you say how you define success then, it is when a teacher has conceptualized, for themselves, that success is being able to overflow that to other people,”

Participants said that empowering others allows staff and students to maximize their potential. Bruno said, “Success is that we have provided an opportunity for every student to find and to maximize their potential in their own way.” Dwayne said, “When a general maintenance guy is there with an electrician, the electrician can show him something to make him better at his job and confident in his job and grown in his job.” Abraham explained empowerment as making a lasting impact,

Everything is organized. Everything done the right way. It is not just kind of a haphazard thing. To me, they’re an example of they grew from something small to something very large that are impacting the entire world and they know exactly what they are doing.

**Code 11: Greater Than Yourself.** Many participants key components of leading with a “Greater Than Yourself” mindset. Steve Farber (2009) explained this principle as,

The idea of Greater than Yourself is that it is not your job to simply help, or to be a coach, or a mentor—at least not in the ways most people do. Your job is to do whatever you can, to act in such a way that you extend and offer yourself to another, with the expressed purpose of elevating that person above yourself.

Raven said, “Going in early, putting in the time, going above and beyond to reach kids. Those are the people that are making our campus successful.”

Dwayne said, “I know there’s more in you than you are giving me at this table, and it is up to me to pull it out of you.” Abraham said, “If you want to be happy and successful, you got to look at yourself and say, ‘This is what I’m willing to do to achieve that goal.’” Sandy said, “I make it a goal in my life to always try to bring value to every person or relationship or project.”

Lucille stated, “My greatest gift is recognizing and growing gifts in others. That is my greatest gift and that is what I do best.” Daphne said

I make it a goal in my life to try to bring value to every person, relationship, or project. Leaders will gladly give up his time, give up wisdom, give up his resources to see his team benefit. He is driven by passion to see kids excel.

Sandra said, “I define success as doing something that makes people and the world around them better. It is a series of things that you accomplish as you continually work to grow yourself and those around you in a positive way.”

**Code 12: Authentic leadership.** The participants said that attributes of authentic leadership are evident in growth mindset thinking. “You have to have goals in mind. They have to be clear and concisely stated goals,” said Daphne. Gretchen said, “If you are leading and no one is following then you’re not leading.” Bruno said, “We need to establish a realistic understanding of where we are.”

“We need to break all of that down and work together more in a team concept to where we are supporting each other, and we are learning from each other,” said Dwayne. Barbara said, “This job is about taking care of my staff, and making sure that they have emotionally, physically, and resource wise everything they need because we have been tested to the limit in this profession.” Daphne said,

I am not trying to tell everyone what to do. I will be honest with you. I am the person who pushes back and I need the full view. Where are we trying to go? What is the goal? Sometimes, when you are on a team, you do not have the answer to that question.

Therefore, driving toward that question becomes my natural response, which, oftentimes, makes people feel like I am trying to control where everything is going.

**Code 13: Leading with passion.** Participants said that passion with a purpose behind how they lead steers the direction of the organization. Dwayne said, “For me, as an educational leader, if you hunger to be better each day and you do something about it. It’s that cliché, you’re a lifelong learner.”

“Leading everything so that they see your passion behind it,” said Sandy. Daphne said, “I have a talented staff. I have people who are readily committed to investing in kids. It is not about the numbers. It’s about the kid and we’re going after him whole heartedly.”

Lucille said, “This job up until this point, there’s always been some new threshold that’s achievable. And so that’s kept me focused.”

“What I mean by that was the school and this not bragging, the school improved based on my passion and my effort,” said Dwayne. Sandy said,

I believe that you as the leader must have a growth mindset when it comes to working with and growing your employees, students, whomever you are leading. Your passion is

contagious and so I believe that is important. I believe that you must make it something that you expect. Inspect what you respect.

Dwayne stated, “What I mean by that was, the school, and this is not bragging, the school improved based on my passion and my effort.”

**Code 14: Dreaming big.** The participants said that having clear direction for accomplishing the unthinking provides opportunities to achieve success. Gretchen said, “I have to change the world and I don’t know how to do that. I’m going to think about it and I want you to think about it.”

“Doing what’s best for kids and letting them know that anything is possible, that they can do whatever they want to do. If they put their mind, they put the work and time into it, that they can do anything,” said Wilma.

Bruno said, “We have to have teachers that are pushing these kids the hardest to get them to the highest level.” Lucille said,

Instead of focusing on what you do not do well and where the deficits are, you focus on your strengths. I think too many times as teachers and educators, you worry about the struggling kid who is on the bottom who can’t, can’t, can’t...instead of thinking what can he do, what should she be able to do, and give them opportunities to find one thing they can pursue and master.

Daphne said,

We are not just educators. Our function is different. If we can get teachers to view our students as not those kids who can’t achieve, but those kids who are struggling right now, who are approaching the rocks, but to view themselves as a lighthouse who could make it. We are investing in that sort of thinking.

**Code 15: Visionary leadership.** Educational leaders noted that having a purposeful vision and leading the organization with this vision in mind positively steers the culture and ultimately the success of the setting. Barbara said, “I think you have to have an established culture of defined purpose.”

“The role of a principal is setting the path, keeping people on it, and holding up the light for others,” said Barbara. Daphne said, “If we can shift that view, then we’ll see different outcomes for our kids and our staff.”

Participants stated the relevance of having a sharp vision and being able to transfer this to stakeholders. Gretchen said, “I believe in putting a vision out there and putting an end goal in mind.” Lucille said,

In an interview one of the most important questions is, why do you want this job? The second questions are; if you had this job what would you do? Then, what is your vision if you were in this position? Where would you want to take this department? What do you think needs to happen here? Because a viable candidate would have researched the district, researched the position. This candidate would have some idea of the status of the organization and what they intend to do if hired.

Gretchen further noted,

You have to learn to create a vision and learn to share a vision and learn to have inclusive participants. You know the old saying, ‘If you’re leading and no one’s follow then you’re not leading. You have to have a vision and a goal. You have to take incremental steps along the way to get to that point. You must have a bigger vision of where you want to be in a year, of where you want to be in two years and make gradual steps along

the way of how you are going to get there. You cannot just tell people. You must have a plan in mind to make it work.

**Code 16: Balanced approach.** Participants noted that a balanced approach provides optimal conductions for fostering and creating growth mindset practice in the educational setting. Gretchen said, “My philosophy is that you hire for attitude and train for skill.”

“I believe I would rather staff my organization with mostly people who put in time and effort. However, a few who do believe their abilities are what they should be. So, I would do a balance of both,” said Roxanna. Abraham stated,

Parents are important because they have to look at kids and say, what is best for my kid. It may not be seven AP classes. It may be one or three. If your kid is playing soccer, maybe he does not need to be doing everything else. I mean the only answer I can think of is, I do not want to prohibit the person that needs to do it all. You end up trying to figure out the right balance.

Dwayne said,

I believe that if you have 100% growth mindset people it might not be a very effective campus. Because not everyone can be growing because there is a stability issue there that some people must be stable where they are and okay, we are holding status quo and then I will grow. There is a need for balance.

Bruno said,

For me, true success is finding a balance. It is that we have provided an opportunity for every student to find and maximize their potential in their own way. That is somewhat broad and it is not necessarily too easy to measure. Not every student is going to master state assessments or take all AP classes. But, what is it that were doing for each student

that moves them towards whatever their life's goal are is what we're are committed to doing, and it requires give and take from educators and the students.

Abraham said,

I have been here six and a half years and we put certain very specific things in place during that period. For example, a very high emphasis on advanced placement. Okay, well, now we have all these very outstanding results and so on, but the question that remains now is, is there a balance somewhere that we are missing? Yes, we pushed hard for this goal and to a very large degree achieved it, but now is there a balance with the other things that we need these kids to graduate with for their mental health and wellbeing and that sort of thing?

**Code 17: Risk taker.** Participants noted that being a risk taker supports opportunities for improvement and leading an organization successfully. Abraham said, "If you want to be happy and successful, you got to look at yourself and say, 'This is what I'm willing to do to achieve that goal.'"

"The only way it can happen," said Daphne, "is if my team is on board, so this campus has to be that sort of environment. One that is willing to go the extra step and take a risk."

Lucille said, "I am always looking for that person who is pushing the limit." Raven said,

It has taken all of us. It is not just me as the campus principal setting the tone. It is setting those expectations, knowing what we are doing, doing what is best for kids, and earning those distinctions. It is putting in the time and the work. I mean, our job does not end at 4:00 every day. We have teachers that are there at 6:00 am and leave at 7:00 pm. They are there early in the morning, work...Going in early. Putting in, staying late, going above and beyond to reach kids.

Roxanna said, “A leader takes risks and believes in others.” Similarly, said Sandy, “I look for people who are taking risks and doing things outside of their comfort zone.” Lucille stated, “I’m never satisfied. I am chronically discontent, so I take risks, and this is why I am a good leader.” Gretchen said, “People will go way past your expectation if you allow it.”

“Until you give someone the experience that expands them beyond their current mode of thought, then they won’t even think differently,” said Daphne.

**Code 18: Creating opportunities and experiences for learning.** The educational leaders said that to grow the mindset, it is essential that leaders create opportunities for purposeful learning experiences. Gretchen said, “Train people within that process. If you don’t they don’t own the goals or the learning.” Raven said,

It is putting in the work, showing that this can be done, and allowing them to experience it as well. We can sit there, preach all day long, and not make a difference. However, to show them, to put them in situations where it forces them that ‘aha’ moment comes, or the light bulb comes on that I did something differently; I chose to do it this way and look at the results. Sometimes they have to allow themselves to go through these experiences. We can do professional development all day long. We can sit there and send them to all types of training. Nevertheless, if we do not allow them to have those experiences, then they will not, especially if they have never done it before or never challenged themselves to do it. Sometimes we have to give them those experiences or allow other people to show them that they have bought into the mindset that this is what I am doing differently with my kids and it is working.

Lucille said,

I recognized with failure that I needed a sense of direction, and I needed an avenue. I needed a sense of direction and purpose, and I needed the resources to make that a reality. I needed a courageous supervisor, and I was given all those things. That courageous supervisor asked me to inform him of how it would work versus shutting down every idea and saying no. He asked good questions and created the opportunity for me to problem solve and get the job done.

Sandy said, "It starts with a leader who believes in growth and believes it is okay to lose something valuable in order to gain something that will affect more people in the long term." Dwayne said, "I am trying to make them realize they are part of the team and give them some personal motivation to get better. In doing that, I challenge them to improve their skills in job performance tasks." Raven said,

As leaders, we see that our staff have the necessary skills. They have those abilities to make the difference in the lives of our students even though they may not believe in themselves. However, we must put them in experiences for them to see that they are very capable of doing it.

Wilma said,

One of the missing pieces without the tools and the resources they may also need certain training. They may need an article or something to understand it a little better but then also the training and role modeling and stuff. Then, just the support, being the cheerleader. You have to be able to trust your people. Without that, they are not going to take risks. They have to be given experiences and the opportunities to do their job.

**Code 19: Action researcher.** Participants commented on their experiences and

commitment to active, ongoing, continuous research in the workplace. Lucille said, “We went to conferences, we visited other campuses, we basically took information from every possible source we could find. We are always, always researching.”

“As a researcher, we are constantly looking ahead and you’re looking at the ground that sitting there. It’s like fertile ground for you to grow,” said Wilma. Daphne said, “It’s not about the numbers. It’s about the kid, and so we are going after him whole heartedly.” Barbara said,

I always ask a couple of other kinds of questions. One of the questions I love to ask is ‘Tell me something you’ve read recently that has changed the way that you teach.’ That gives me insight, number one in their own personal staff development. It also eludes to whether they are abreast of content informant, visionary information, strategies, or philosophical learning. All of which are important for me as a principal.

Daphne said,

I had to assure any training that I provided did not close or provide absolutes, did not close off creative thought, opportunity for additional input, those sorts of things.

Therefore, I always had to involve that piece throughout. I had to assure that the experts in the field were the ones that were being utilized. Research, proven research, which was supported by desired outcomes, was always part of professional development.

**Code 20: Leaving a legacy.** Educational leaders said that contributing to the community and leaving a lasting impact in their respective roles was vitally important. Abraham said, “Maybe a strength of my personality is that I’m very conscious of not wanting to be popular so much as to be able to measure that I’ve made an impact.”

“To me,” said Bruno, “that’s the true success because it’s about the whole child. At some point they’re going to be out of school and we hope that they’ll be able to be successful citizens

in some way.” Daphne said, “My motivation to empower my staff feeds notion that if a student sees success as something greater than the individual self, then the entire community benefits.”

Abraham said,

Another thing, as you and I get older, we are moving into something called succession planning. For example, looking at your assistant principals you say to yourself that maybe one of these look as though they could become a good principal. You then begin to give them experiences so that they can prepare to become this principal. Essentially, we plan for our replacement with the optimistic hope that our vision will be carried out through them.

Barbara said,

The day-to-day operations of this school are going to be fine. It is when I am gone, who will carry on the mission and the vision. Not just for School D, but for every other school. I feel so honored that I feel like I have a piece of School B, because Bruno is there, I have a piece of School A because you are there. I can look out and see that. I understand the importance of influence. You see how others could have messed up. Nevertheless, at the same time, if there is anything good, I hope that is what goes forward.

**Code 21: Sustaining improvements and success.** The participants said that maintaining success was a constant struggle and required intensive attention to data and personnel needs. Gretchen stated, “You have to show people that they can and show people that they’ve done it. And so, with my kids, I would make it my job to know these data per child and go around and talk to kids daily.” Lucille said,

What we have found is that opening that equity and access to all students we have increased the achievement of the highest students as well. So, by aiming for that top and opening the doors for equity all the kids have come up. We now have about 65% of all students in grades 7 through 12 taking one or more advanced classes. That is up from 2% to 5% we had 10 years ago.

Daphne stated,

A successful teacher becomes, one who is not only seeing kids who are being academically successful, socially successful, but also those teachers are now able to transfer that information to their peers for lasting results. Be it in a formal environment or informal environment. They are able to articulate exactly what they did and how they did it to sustain marked improvement for students.

Dwayne said, “We need to break all that down and work together more in a team concept to where we are supporting each other, learning from each other, and making progress that builds year to year.” Roxanna noted, “Through unified efforts they impacted that love for the campus, that culture of achieving, the work required to maintain a status of excellence. It was beautiful.” Sandy said, “You can’t expect the results to last if you haven’t made it part of the culture. It’s about happiness, it’s about mindset.”

**Code 22: Data driven decision making.** Educational leaders said they analyze data daily and use it to make informed decisions in the workplace. Daphne said, “There has to be a willingness for change to occur. It forces teachers to look at their data. It forces them to know their kids. There’s a win-win on both sides.”

Barbara said, “We spend lot of time analyzing discipline. We separate disciplinary actions to look to see which kids are really struggling and what the underlying issue is, and then we pull those kids together. We are always looking for improvements.”

**Code 23: Accountability.** Participants noted that accountability from all stakeholders is critical in gaining support and for campus initiatives. It is also important to connect staff and students to the learning. Abraham said, “You got to look at yourself and say this is what I’m willing to do to achieve that goal.”

“I need someone on both sides who would be strong,” said Daphne, “but when I look at my campus accountability and what my campus will be judged by, and then I need to evaluate things a little differently.” Bruno said,

At the end of the day, if kids are not learning, then we can shut it down. That is the only reason why we open the doors. That is what it is all about, and success being whatever the child can be successful in doing. Whether it be in our fine arts, athletics, obviously academics, I just look at . . . I want everybody to get to masters, but I understand just look for progress. Let us see everybody growing, everybody being successful, and more kids figuring out their role in this world.

**Code 24: Evaluating existing conditions.** In conjunction with active research and continuous observations, participants said that leaders must be able to evaluate and compare themselves to similar learning settings. Sandy said, “You also have to be able to identify where you’re at so that you can get better in things.”

“We need to establish a realistic understanding of where we are,” stated Bruno. Daphne said, “A successful teacher is someone who evaluates and celebrates their strengths in their triumphs.”

Dwayne said,

It is not about the test scores. Were they a better individual? Were they hungry? Were they more passionate? Were they more connected? Were they more involved? Did they grow? I had a simple theory in my building that wanted every person to 'Be Better'. At first people asked why not, be the best? My response was "That's an end game. You can never be the best. You can only be the best for a moment.

Bruno stated,

So, if we want to implement a growth mindset, and we're wanting to understand that we need to continually stretch and push to move forward, and to be able to progress, not be fixed and stagnate in what we are then I think we have to have a real honest conversation about exactly what it is that we're doing currently.

**Code 25: Agents of change.** The participants said that being a change agent is a positive influence in the work environment and ultimately leads to empowerment. Sandy said, You can see it at any campus and any department if you have a leader who is in that. They take risks. It is a free place to make mistakes. Together, we can always grow. Then, you will see employees underneath them pushing for results. "It is the belief and expectation that regardless to what door you walk through, you could make positive gains with this individual," said Roxanna.

Daphne stated,

The way we conceive ourselves, the way we think about ourselves, that is really who we are. If a teacher sees herself or himself as the person who gives, you become the source you are looking to be. You are looking to be better so that you can make everyone around you better. It changes everything.

Dwayne said,

As an educational leader, if you hunger to be better each day and you do something. It is that cliché; you are a lifelong learner. If we instill in our students, in our parents, in our teachers, and as leaders, we do not forget that we are also a learner and learn from each of the people we engage with, I think that is success.

Abraham noted,

The growth mindset says stop making excuses and stop talking about what is outside of your control. The growth mindset says persevere through failure and through success. Keep at it. I am sure you heard read the 10,000 hours of practice idea. If you want to be a real coach, you have to put in the work.

Barbara said,

We are trying to get folks to understand that whom they are is important as what they do, and sometimes what they do is not reflective of who they are or who they want to be. Therefore, helping kids see that connection is what we work hard to do. It is sometimes what people see on the outside, it is not really who you are on the inside. We are trying to make that connection, and I think as we continue to get kids to feel better about trying and being patient with others, we will begin to see changes in behavior.

The initial codes as revealed in these data are organized in Appendix C. The second column explains the categorization and patterning revealed in the initial codes. Lastly, I present emergent themes aligned to the collapsed codes in the third column. Five themes emerged to support the answers to the research questions:

1. What are the experiences of educational leaders in the school district in central Texas regarding the growth mindset?

2. What are the experiences of educational leaders in the district regarding the growth mindset as these experiences relate to training teachers and staff members?

### **Summary**

Although several participants emphasized certain areas more so than did others, participants prioritized five areas of consideration regarding their experiences with the growth mindset: core leadership attributes, culture, success defined, transformational leadership, and evaluating and measuring the impact of the growth mindset in educational practice. The findings revealed that participants encouraged staff members in their departments through effective use of core attribute skills in the workplace. Participants suggested the culture of the work environment can either support or discourage the growth mindset practice. How an educational leader defines success was also deemed as a viable contributor to consistent growth mindset practice. The transformational leader emerges as a viable contributor to supporting growth mindset practice and ideologies. Lastly, educational leaders found it vitally important to evaluate and measure the impact of growth mindset initiatives in the workplace.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion**

The purpose of Chapter 5 is to present an overall discussion of this study, the conclusion, and future implications. I present key findings related to the literature review as discussed in Chapter 2 and additional supporting literature through the lens of constructivism as discussed and shared in the conceptual framework that grounded the study. I conclude this chapter with recommendations for practice, policy and future study.

### **Summary of the Results**

The study was guided by two central research questions:

1. What are the experiences of educational leaders in the school district in central Texas regarding the growth mindset?
2. What are the experiences of educational leaders in the district regarding the growth mindset as these experiences relate to training teachers and staff members?

These questions were created to address the topic of inquiry: educational leaders' experiences regarding the growth mindset in leadership practice and their experiences using growth mindset practice in training teachers and staff members. The interview, member-checking interviews, and personal narrative provided rich and descriptive information about the sample of educators.

The results indicated that the sample of educational leaders prioritized five areas of consideration regarding their experiences with the growth mindset. Core leadership attributes were an integral component to supporting growth mindset practice in the workplace. Educational leaders perceived that staff members buy in to new initiatives when leadership is direct, clear, and supportive, and that the culture in the workplace either supports or discourages growth mindset practice. Several leaders indicated that when the culture is positive, moving in a

positive direction, and encourages elevated expectations for staff and student learning, opportunities to implement growth mindset practices are enhanced.

How leaders define success determines the direction in which the growth mindset practice permeates the workplace. Results suggested educational leaders operated with a “greater than yourself” principle. This thought process lends to working toward unified goals that elevate all stakeholders in the workplace. Educational leaders use transformational thinking and practice to empower and engage staff in professional development. Several leaders indicated that thinking “outside of the box” and being a risk taker were critical attributes that transform thinking and provide vision for the organization. The results also suggested that evaluation and measuring the impacts of the growth mindset is a major concern for educational leaders.

### **Discussion of the Results**

#### **Results: Research Question 1**

The first research question was, What are the experiences of educational leaders in the school district in central Texas regarding the growth mindset? The participants thought that growth mindset practice was an internal nature supported by core attributes of leadership. Most participants indicated that being confident in decision making, a good listener, a clear communicator, and a direct, responsive leader positively supported their experiences regarding the growth mindset.

They indicated that leaders are responsible for creating a campus culture that supports these attributes and engages staff members in a way that direction is clear and purposeful. These results support two themes revealed in this case study. First, educational leaders possess or do not possess core leadership attributes that create optimal conditions for supporting growth

mindset initiatives. Second, educational leaders create a culture in the workplace that is conducive to supporting growth mindset initiatives.

How educational leaders define success determines the likeliness of supporting initiative regarding the growth mindset, a theme supported by leaders' intentional focus on accomplishing the vision of the organization. They stated that visionary leadership that focuses on serving others to maximize the potential in both staff and students yields the best results. When leaders simply focus on the numbers or test scores, they lose sight of the vision and will eventually lose direction in the organization.

### **Results: Research Question 2**

The second research question was, What are the experiences of educational leaders in the school district in central Texas regarding the growth mindset as these experiences relate to training teachers and staff members? Educational leaders followed various practices for training and professional development for their campuses or departments. Most leaders indicated there is a need to create engaging, innovative opportunities for staff to learn more about the growth mindset. The leaders focus on facilitating and utilizing unique, outside-of-the-box practices for staff to learn and grow from struggling and being forced to think differently regarding preconceived knowledge. Educational leaders indicated that training sessions must be a direct result of action research and active observation. The results of this study support the theme suggesting a transformational leader creates an environment conducive to supporting growth mindset initiatives. Educational leaders' personal encounters regarding the growth mindset shaped the professional development practices they provide for their staff members.

The theme of evaluating and measuring the impacts of the growth mindset was revealed through the educational leaders' continuous regard for accountability of student achievement and

success. Leaders indicated that sustainability is always a concern when they consider new initiatives. Key components include alignment, validity, selectivity, and data driven decision making. Most of the educational leaders identified themselves as change agents. They recognized their unique purpose to serve others and to leave a legacy that is connected to a greater cause. However, the results indicated that educational leaders require a clear, measurable method to evaluate and measure the impacts of the growth mindset to successfully implement practices in the workplace.

In sum, the results indicated that educational leaders' experiences regarding the growth mindset are evident when considering what type of employee to hire. Leaders indicate a need for professional staff members who are willing to work hard and take risks, even at the expense of failure. Thus, leaders can direct the way initiatives are implemented and carried out in the workplace. Educational leaders establish a culture for what they wish to see flourish in the workplace. Participants indicated that growth mindset practices can be implemented effectively if a culture is moving in a positive direction, is collaborative, is supportive, and embraces change. Educational leaders seek many thresholds to determine the effectiveness of initiatives that are implemented. The results indicate that training and staff development opportunities regarding the growth mindset must be carefully supported by research and must align with the department's vision.

### **Discussion of the Results in Relation to the Literature**

Growth mindset practices are evident at every level in the educational setting (Bettinger et al., 2018; Martin, 2015; Reavis, Miller, Grimes, & Fomukong, 2018; Seaton, 2017).

Educational leaders described their experiences with the growth mindset foundationally as an internal core attribute that drives the way they engage and motivate employees. Although these

practices vary from setting to setting, there is evidence that educational leaders in these academic environments support Dweck's (2000) work defining the term growth mindset as an individual's view that intelligence is malleable and can be developed. In high school settings, students show greater motivation to learn when they are led to construe their learning situation as one which they have the potential to develop their abilities (Karwowski, 2014; Yeager et al., 2016). Praise in the elementary and middle levels guides behavior and motivation to learn (Reavis et al, 2018). Educators in the middle grades strive to create challenging, empowering, and responsive settings as they implement growth focused assessments to develop knowledge and skills (Barnes & Fives, 2016). The growth mindset model posits that individuals who operate with this understanding can improve their performance outcomes through continuous learning, are motivated to face challenges, and are able to persist in the face of adversity (Chao, Visaria, Mukhopadhyay, & Dehija, 2017; Dweck, 2000; Seaton, 2017). Educational leaders stated that this is a primary goal for a direct, intentional, instructional leader.

Professional development is an essential responsibility for educational leaders. Teachers must see credibility in the presenters and relevance in the training, specifically to their practice, to buy into and support the information imparted by leaders (Chase, 2016; Evers & Lakomski, 2013; Mette & Scribner, 2014). Training teachers to endorse growth mindset practice requires educational leaders and staff to begin with a self-reflection to consider their own mindsets (Chase, 2016; Moolenaar & Slegers, 2014; Seaton, 2017).

Leaders described optimal conditions for training in growth mindset practice to begin with growth minded people who demonstrated growth minded practices in thought processes and daily actions. Strategies and interventions to promote growth mindset thinking can take many forms (Cseh, Davis, & Khilji, 2013; Duckworth & Yeager, 2015; Fraser, 2017). Training

educators to promote growth minded thinking also exists in many forms. Recent literature (Garwood & Ampuja, 2018; Reavis et al., 2018, Seaton, 2017) supports a targeted approach to effectively educate and train staff members. Identified themes of most useful aspects of implementing growth mindset training include knowledge, awareness of own practice, resources, and changes in practice (Seaton, 2017; Yeager et al, 2016).

Growth mindset training includes creating a better understanding of it using Dweck's (2006) foundational research as an anchor. Professional development sessions are designed to share the effect of growth mindset thinking on teaching and student learning (Ibrahim et al., 2014). In addition, best practice includes opportunities to explore information regarding the malleability of the brain and to provide reflection activities to allow feedback and follow-up of practices (Chase, 2015; Burnette et al., 2012).

Effective training utilizing the growth mindset strives to result in a change in practice for educators (Parco-Tropicales & Guzman, 2014; Seaton, 2017; Wahab et al., 2014). Educational leaders can change how teachers educate students about the growth mindset with a commitment to growing a common language and definitions to support growth mindset practice, encouraging and supporting staff to utilize the practice, utilizing practical and appropriate resources, and sharing this concept with parents and school practitioners. (Hauserman & Stick, 2013; McCombs, 2013; Seaton, 2017; Willenberg, 2014).

Educational leaders described culture as a primary support to educate teachers in growth mindset thinking. Evidence supports the need to create a culture that allows students to believe and value that their ability to learn is predictive of their effort and their perseverance (Bettinger, Ludvigsen, Rege, Solli, & Yeager, 2018; Dweck, 2000; Garwood, & Ampuja, 2018). This concept can be taught if role modeled from educational leaders and teachers embrace this

concept (Bettinger et al., 2018; Dweck, 2000; Garwood & Ampuja, 2018). Therefore, creating a training and learning environment that becomes permanent is one way to secure long-term improvements using growth mindset practice (Fraser, 2017). Transformational leaders embrace change, are committed to a greater cause, are visionary leaders, and think outside of the box. The transformational leader can carry out effective training regarding the growth mindset to create lasting effects in the educational setting.

Educational leaders set the tone in their respective departments. Leaders possess strong leadership internal attributes that steer the learning environment. A culture of collaboration, support, and direction that support high-expectations for staff and students is essential in building a foundation to support growth mindset thinking. Educational leaders stated that “Greater Than Yourself” principle was an understood factor in defining success for themselves and staff members. This concept embeds the desire and willingness for educational leaders to take risks to create learning experiences that empower staff members to want to work hard for themselves and their students.

An extensive body of research has positively correlated growth mindset with academic success (Barnes et al., 2016; Debacker et al., 2018; Fraser, 2017; Garwood et al., 2018; Reavis et al., 2018; Seaton, 2017). However, some of the results indicate some practices with growth mindset practice regarding at-risk students have not sufficiently considered contextual differences (Corradi, Nicolai, & Levrau, 2018). Recent literature contradicts the usually positive correlations between growth mindset and academic achievement (Bettinger et al., 2018, Chao et al., 2017; Corradi et al., 2018). The literature suggests that students respond to the growth mindset message either favorably or unfavorably. Students are more motivated to excel academically based on their personal sense of effort and control. The literature (Chao et al.,

2017; Yeager et al., 2018) has suggested how this self-awareness aligns in the context of their environment versus a growth mindset is a predictor of favorable outcomes. These results indicate there is a need for educational leaders to be able to measure and evaluate the specific impacts of growth mindset thinking and practice within the context of their educational settings with the unique population they serve.

### **Limitations**

#### **Sample**

Limitations are reflective of areas of potential weakness in a study. This study was limited to the experiences of a small sample of 11 educational leaders who are in a district that has implemented the growth mindset initiative for the past 5 years. The study design yielded a unique set of data through interviews and member checking. The information gathered from the interviews and member checking reflect each participant's experiences, not those of all educational leaders and, therefore, is bound only to the information and experiences of the participants within the study sample provided. The accuracy of each participants' contributions depended on the willingness of each participant to respond honestly and truthfully.

#### **Study Design**

The information I gathered and analyzed during this qualitative case study was limited by the specific interview questions. Data were collected via face-to-face at multiple sites. I collected, analyzed, and reported all data. Interpretation of the data was limited as my experience as an educational leader provided insight and direction throughout the analysis process.

## **Research Method**

One purpose of the case study is to present an in-depth understanding of the case (Creswell 2013). The most effective research method to answer the research question for this study was a qualitative case study. The study was designed to explore the experiences of educational leaders regarding the growth mindset. This unique concept is specific to human experiences in the academic setting and therefore limited to educational leaders. The results of the study are not generalizable because the study was completed in a district where the growth mindset concept is present and active. In addition, the context of all educational districts varies. With that stated, readers and leaders of districts can decide how this study might apply to them.

## **Data Collection**

These data were limited in scope, as the information came from one small group of educational leaders. The educational leaders served as the driving force in the case study. These data account for the interview and member checking information experienced with this group. I conducted interview data from multiple sites, which was a limitation. I was limited to one-hour interview sessions with each participant as well as 15-minute sessions to member-check and follow up.

Additionally, I only spent 1.25 hours with each participant. These small increments of time provide a limitation in that spending more time with each participant could account for deeper understanding. I had no interaction with the educational leaders outside of the specified time frame addressed in my research design as described.

The interview and member-checking analysis information I collected and analyzed is limited as well. I analyzed the data over a 5-month period in which I utilized inductive analysis

(Hatch 2002) to compile these data. The data analysis procedures I followed did not exceed the time frame and therefore are limited.

### **Implications of the Results for Practice, Policy, and Theory**

In this section, I discuss the implications of the results in context of practice, policy, and theory. I relate the results to the conceptual framework, constructivism, and explain implications of this study in relation to practice and policy in connection to the literature.

#### **Practice**

The gap in practice explored in this study is indicative of the need to understand how educational leaders use the growth mindset in leadership practice. Educational leaders use growth mindset thinking in hiring “best fit” teachers who support and align to attributes of the growth mindset. They ask questions in the interview process that evaluate whether the applicant possesses traits such as perseverance, resilience, and tenacity (Cseh et al., 2013; Duckworth and Yeager, 2015; Hauserman & Stick, 2013; Hunzicker, 2013; Shaw & Newton, 2014). These are all attributes of the growth mindset and demonstrate a willingness to work together with administration for a greater cause. Educational leaders discussed that if teachers have elevated expectations for students and teach them to have a growth mindset, they can help them overcome deficit thinking (Bettinger et al., 2018; Brandstatter et al., 2015; Garwood et al, 2018; Parco-Tropicales & Guzman, 2014).

Educational leaders must constantly evaluate their personal definition of success and what it means specifically for their department or for their organization. This requires active research and ongoing observation. In addition, educational leaders seek viable methods to measure the effectiveness of initiatives such as the growth mindset.

## **Policy**

Though the results of this study in no way represent all educational leaders who experience the growth mindset in the workplace, specifically in training programs, results of this case study indicated this sample of leaders want to see growth mindset practices more effectively in their settings. As more districts continue to shift toward implementation of growth mindset initiatives from a policy viewpoint, it would be in educational leaders' best interest to align training programs and professional development to teach about the malleability of the brain, align and train educators in vocabulary that encourages the growth mindset, align activities that demonstrate and apply growth mindset thinking, and align these growth mindset practices to individual departments (Bettinger et al., 2018; Chase, 2015; Hugelschafer & Achtziger, 2014; Martin, 2015)

In this district, I recommend that educational leaders complete a survey in which they assess their own mindset. Teachers should then be given the opportunity to complete the survey and begin the training process as described above. These educators indicated that they are willing to learn more regarding the growth mindset and to implement growth mindset practices. They indicated that this practice would support teacher instructional strategies and benefit students both in the short term and long term.

## **Constructivist Theory**

The results of this study suggest that educational leaders are building knowledge based on their own learning and perceptions they have acquired in their roles as educators. In relation to the conceptual framework of the study, constructivist theory, the educational leaders are making meaning of growth mindset practices regarding training and professional development, based on their own experiences.

Constructivist theory emphasizes multiple learners' active participatory roles with diverse perspectives. One key aspect of the constructivist view is the contextualized process of the learner constructing knowledge versus acquiring it. Vygotsky's views (as cited in Amineh & Asi, 2015; Gandez & Hursen, 2014) support the concept that knowledge leads to further cognitive development. In this study, educational leaders' experiences regarding the growth mindset contributes to a more in-depth understanding of this concept as they interact in their natural setting. Dewey (as cited in Antova, Chudy, Buchtova, & Kucerova, 2015; Vanderstraeten, 2002; & Xyst, 2016) explained that learners demonstrate knowledge through creativity and collaboration as they are provided opportunities to think for themselves. Dewey's viewpoints are supported in the case study. Educational leaders possess key attributes and information regarding the growth mindset. Leaders use this knowledge to implement practices in an organized way to carry out ongoing evaluation of their learning in the context of the work environment.

The constructivist theory encompasses the idea that learners build knowledge from within their own perspective. Another key concept within the constructivism theory is individuals develop new outlooks. As the data and results from this study indicated, educational leaders continue to make meaning of their own experiences regarding the growth mindset as they interact in the social setting in a new way. Constructivism criteria encompasses an enhanced and deepened understanding of the case and contributes to educational dialogue in the growth mindset. The results of this case study support this view.

The findings of this study suggest participating educational leaders did not consistently use growth mindset practices in the workplace because of such factors as novice versus veteran staff, department demographics, buy-in, and existing mindset of the employees. These concerns,

according to the leaders, were linked to ineffective hiring practices, organizational culture, and how the leadership team defined success. Creating effective training and professional development opportunities for staff members requires evaluating existing conditions and taking realistic steps to address organizational needs. The educational leaders expressed interest in learning methods and strategies to introduce and reinforce growth mindset thinking and practice in ways that can help themselves, their students, and their staff members.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

#### **Areas of Improvement**

Areas for improvement of this study for future researchers include adding observations of the participants in their natural setting as a data collection method. Conducting formal observations of the participants would provide another means to validate what the interview and member-checking data presented. To gain a more detailed, informative interpretation of educational leaders' perceptions, conducting the interviews and observation over a longer period is recommended to complement consistency and sustainability of the observed practices regarding the growth mindset. Replication of this study would benefit from sampling participants from a district that has not piloted the growth mindset initiative.

#### **Participants**

Adding participants to this case study could lead to outcomes that might interest community members and neighboring school districts. As for data analysis, an interpretive framework (Hatch, 2002) may support themes and ideas that never surfaced under the inductive analysis framework I used. These recommendations may lead to an in-depth, rich, more detailed case study experience where participant summaries and interpretations guide data analysis versus a unique coding process that can be ambiguous to the audience.

## **Additional Recommendations**

Additional recommendations include opportunities to study the experiences of teachers and students regarding the growth mindset, in addition to educational leaders' experiences as in this study. Effective teachers are the cornerstone of success in education. Teachers are the best place to initiate new concepts and systemic change (Fraser, 2017; Reavis et al., 2018; Seaton, 2017). A qualitative study that examines the experiences of teachers and students regarding the growth mindset may provide valuable insight to the greater community of educators. How teachers and students experience growth mindset thinking is shifting (Barnes et al., 2016; Bettinger et al., 2018; DeBacker et al., 2018), and the perspectives of teachers and students are an important part of this discussion.

An additional important recommendation for future study includes a quantitative methodological approach. Conducting a quantitative survey study for teachers, parents, and students that examines differences in experiences compared to educational leaders would be informative and helpful to educational leaders. This approach may take the study in an entirely different direction. However, educational leaders can benefit from results of this quantitative nature and use the results for further research opportunities.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I discussed the results of the study in detail and in context with both research questions. Educational leaders indicated that core leadership attributes are needed to support initiatives regarding the growth mindset. The educational leaders discussed the culture of the organization as a threshold for supporting initiatives regarding the growth mindset. Educational leaders provided varying definitions of success in the workplace. They perceived a clear definition of success to be a major factor in implementing growth mindset practices in the

workplace. These educational leaders perceived their roles as transformational. The educational leaders perceived there to be a barrier to conducting effective training and professional development opportunities to staff members due to lack of the ability of measuring the impacts of the growth mindset on student achievement. This dissertation has addressed the gap in practice in which constructivism framed the study exploring the experiences of educational leaders regarding the growth mindset. The methodology of qualitative case study was designed to learn more about this group of educational leaders and to provide a rich, thick story of their experiences in greater detail.

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## **Appendix A: Interview Questions**

### **Project Specific Research Tool 1: Face-To-Face Interview**

**NAME:**

**DATE:**

**TIME OF INTERVIEW:**

Thank you for participating in this qualitative study. This case study involves three data sources. All of which you will participate in. Today, we will complete the first interview. I will ask you ten questions that are aligned to sharing your leadership experiences regarding the growth mindset. I will record the interview for documentation and accuracy of the interview. Next, after careful scripting, I will arrange a second interview for us to member check. This interview will allow you to confirm the accuracy of the scripting and documentation of your responses from the first interview. Lastly, we will complete a post interview reflection where you will share your reflections of leadership experiences related to the growth mindset in your current leadership role. I appreciate your willingness to participate in this study. If you would like a copy of your interview, I will provide it upon your request. Remember, participation is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. Concordia University Office of Doctoral Studies has approved the proposed study and all requirements of IRB have been met.

#### **First Interview**

1. How would you prefer to staff your organization—with people who believe their abilities are what they are or those who are willing to put in time and effort to develop their abilities to the fullest?
2. How can you find people like that?
3. Thinking about successful schools in your district, what do you think you would have to change in your current campus?

4. What do you consider your greatest failures?
5. Tell me about a time you used data to plan in your current leadership role.
6. Tell me about a time you had a measurable impact on a job or an organization.
7. Give me an example of a person or organization that you admire and why you think they have made an important impact.
8. When working on a team, what is hardest for you?
9. In your role as a \_\_\_\_\_, how have you become better over the course of the last year?
10. What is most important to you in your current position?

#### **Concluding Questions:**

- Please describe your experiences regarding the growth mindset.
- Please describe your experiences regarding the growth mindset as these experiences relate to training teachers and staff members.
- Is there anything else you would like to add?

## **Appendix B: Member Checking Questions**

### **Project Specific Research Tool 2: Second Interview- The Member Check Interview**

The member check interviews will be utilized as a means of verifying the accuracy of the participant's words from the first interviews. The scripts from the first interviews will be shared and verified in these second interviews. All information warranting clarification will be included in the write- up and responses from these interviews.

**NAME:**

**DATE:**

**TIME OF REFLECTION:**

#### **Follow-Up Questions**

1. Given all of your experiences with the growth mindset in your leadership practice, what factors, elements, or conditions must be in place in order to educate and train staff members in this area successfully?
2. How do you as an educational leader define success? What is your definition?

\*After conducting the first round of interview questions, these questions resonated with me. The responses to these questions greatly contributed to data collection for analysis purposes.

### Appendix C: Initial Codes, Collapsed Codes, and Emergent Themes

Initial codes	Collapsed codes	Emergent themes
Take Charge Attitude Working Smarter Good Listener Available Flexibility Direct Leadership	Direct Leadership	Educational leaders possess or do not possess core leadership attributes that create optimal conditions for supporting growth mindset initiatives.
Serving Others Honesty Grounded Trust/Trustworthiness	Trust	
Flexibility High Expectations Willing to Compromise Confident Decision Maker	Confident Decision Maker	
Moving in the Right Direction Respecting the unique attribute that each person brings to the table Leaving a Legacy	Positive Culture: Organization Moving in the Right Direction	Educational leaders create a culture in the workplace that is conducive to supporting growth mindset initiatives.

(continued)

Initial codes	Collapsed codes	Emergent themes
<p>Connected to a greater cause</p> <p>Restorative Practice</p> <p>Better Than Yesterday Approach</p> <p>Relationships;</p> <p>Good Fit Staff</p> <p>Reward/ Celebrate success</p>	<p>Positive Culture: Working Together with Pride/Support/Commitment</p>	
<p>Status quo/ Mediocrity is acceptable</p> <p>Buy In</p> <p>Reward/Celebrate Success</p> <p>Good Fit Staff</p> <p>Not reliant on a one size fits all model</p>	<p>Culture: Not accepting mediocrity</p> <p>Culture: Building Relationships</p> <p>Culture: Good Fit Staff</p>	<p>Educational leaders create a culture in the workplace that is conducive to supporting growth mindset initiatives.</p>
<p>Thinking outside of the box</p> <p>Model/Role Model</p> <p>Reward/Celebrate Success</p>	<p>Culture: Model/Reward/Praise</p>	
<p>Greater Than Yourself</p> <p>Connected to a greater cause</p> <p>Restorative Practice</p> <p>High Expectations</p> <p>Conflicting philosophy between leaders and teachers</p> <p>Trust/Trustworthiness / Competition</p>	<p>Empowering Others</p>	<p>How educational leaders define success determines likeliness of supporting initiatives regarding the growth mindset.</p>

(continued)

Initial codes	Collapsed codes	Emergent themes
Greater Than Yourself Empowering Others Leaving a Legacy Growing Proficiency	Greater Than Yourself	
Balance fixed and growth mindset Teaching the Whole Child Take Charge Attitude Leading with heart	Authentic Leadership	
Thinking outside of the box Leading with heart Embraces Change Flow- Hallowell Better Than Yesterday Approach Voice of Reason	Leading with Passion	How educational leaders define success determines the likeliness of supporting initiatives regarding the growth mindset.
Embraces Change Fear of the unknown High Expectations	Dream Big	

(continued)

Initial codes	Collapsed codes	Emergent themes
Life Long Learner Time is Key Transparency	Visionary Leadership	
High Expectations Adding Value Dream Big Leaving a Legacy Intentional Focus Serving Others	Visionary Leadership	
Respecting the unique attribute that each person brings to the table Balance fixed and growth mindset Active Observer Intentional Focus Confronting the brutal facts Calmness Real	Balanced Approach	The transformational leader creates an environment conducive to supporting growth mindset initiatives.

(continued)

Initial codes	Collapsed codes	Emergent themes
Confronting the brutal facts Avoiding the Truth Fear of the unknown  Thinking outside of the box Embraces Change	Risk Taker	The transformational leader creates an environment conducive to supporting growth mindset initiatives
Balance fixed and growth mindset Relationships Believing in Others Resilience Explores all Options	Creating Opportunities and Experiences for Learning	
Supporting Literature Active Observer Reflective Practice	Action Researcher	
Leading with heart Empowering Others Better Than Yesterday Approach Greater Than Yourself Thinking outside of the box Risk Taker	Leaving a Legacy	

(continued)

Initial codes	Collapsed codes	Emergent themes
Time Is Key Evaluating Existing Conditions Evaluating Against Others	Sustaining Improvements and Success	Evaluating and measuring the impacts of the growth mindset is vitally important to educational leaders.
Intentional Focus Evaluating Against Others Avoiding the Truth Fear of the unknown	Data Driven Decision Making	
Data Driven Decision Making Sustainability Reflective Practice	Accountability	
Transparency Confronting the brutal facts Selectivity Alignment Validity	Evaluating Existing Conditions	
Embraces Change Clear Communicator Serving Others	Agents of Change	
Connected to a greater cause Leaving a Legacy Explores All Options		

(end)

## **Appendix D: Statement of Original Work**

The Concordia University Doctorate of Education Program is a collaborative community of scholar-practitioners, who seek to transform society by pursuing ethically-informed, rigorously- researched, inquiry-based projects that benefit professional, institutional, and local educational contexts. Each member of the community affirms throughout their program of study, adherence to the principles and standards outlined in the Concordia University Academic Integrity Policy. This policy states the following:

### **Statement of academic integrity.**

As a member of the Concordia University community, I will neither engage in fraudulent or unauthorized behaviors in the presentation and completion of my work, nor will I provide unauthorized assistance to others.

### **Explanations**

#### **What does *fraudulent* mean?**

“Fraudulent” work is any material submitted for evaluation that is falsely or improperly presented as one’s own. This includes, but is not limited to texts, graphics and other multi-media files appropriated from any source, including another individual, that are intentionally presented as all or part of a candidate’s final work without full and complete documentation.

#### **What is “unauthorized” assistance?**

“Unauthorized assistance” refers to any support candidates solicit in the completion of their work, that has not been either explicitly specified as appropriate by the instructor, or any assistance that is understood in the class context as inappropriate. This can include, but is not limited to:

- Use of unauthorized notes or another’s work during an online test
- Use of unauthorized notes or personal assistance in an online exam setting
- Inappropriate collaboration in preparation and/or completion of a project
- Unauthorized solicitation of professional resources for the completion of the work.

## Statement of Original Work

I attest that:

1. I have read, understood, and complied with all aspects of the Concordia University Portland Academic Integrity Policy during the development and writing of this dissertation.
2. Where information and/or materials from outside sources has been used in the production of this dissertation, all information and/or materials from outside sources has been properly referenced and all permissions required for use of the information and/or materials have been obtained, in accordance with research standards outlined in the *Publication Manual of The American Psychological Association*

*Dana Miles*

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Digital Signature

Dana Miles

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Name (Typed)

July 23, 2018

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Date